

UFOs and the Condon Report - A Scientist's Critique

James E. McDonald

Presented to the Dupont Chapter of The Scientific Research Society of America (RESA)
Wilmington, DE (Feb. 12, 1969)

The Condon Report's negative conclusions and recommendations with respect to scientific study of UFOs are now a matter of public record. I dispute those conclusions, challenging and criticizing them on the following principal grounds:

The Report analyses only about ninety cases, a tiny fraction of the significant and scientifically puzzling UFO reports now on record.

It omits consideration of some of the most puzzling cases on record, famous cases that persons such as myself specifically urged the Condon Project to study. It even omits discussion of certain significant cases that Project staff actually investigated (*e.g.*, Levelland and Redlands).

Many of those cases which the Report does consider are of such trivially insignificant nature that they should have been ignored on the grounds that they are unrelated to the Project's prime mission, namely, seeking explanations of the kinds of truly baffling cases that have created the Air Force problem that led to establishment of the Colorado UFO Project.

Specious argumentation, and argumentation of scientifically very weak nature, abound in the Report's case-analyses. And, while broadly charging bias on the part of those who have taken the UFO problem seriously in the past, the Report exhibits degrees of bias in the opposite direction that deserve the sharpest of criticism.

To anyone intimately familiar with relevant report-details, some of the cases considered in the Report exhibit disturbingly incomplete presentation of relevant evidence; in a few instances, such defects seem little short of misrepresentation of case-information. However, I believe that the latter instances bespeak bias, not intent to deceive.

Despite all of the above, those who prepared the Report ended up with about a dozen (*i.e.*, about 15 per cent) of their cases in their "Unexplained" category. Some are extremely significant UFO cases (*e.g.*, Texas B-47 or Lakenheath); yet these Unexplained UFOs appear to have been casually ignored by Condon in recommending that UFOs be considered of no further scientific significance.

Irrelevant padding has thickened the report to a bulk that will discourage many scientists from studying it carefully. Detailed UFO report-analyses should have been the primary content of this Report, yet trivia and irrelevancies, or secondary material, are present in objectionably voluminous proportions.

The Report, it must be noted, does exhibit a few bright facets; but these are obscured by its high average defect-density.

In all, I believe that the contents of the Condon Report fail dismally to support the strong negative recommendations which Condon has presented in his own summary analysis. The strong endorsement by the National Academy of Sciences will, I believe, prove to be a painful embarrassment to the Academy, for it appears to be the epitome of superficial panel-evaluation by representatives of a scientific body that ought always to warrant the prestige its good name enjoys.

My own estimate is that absolutely no further general progress towards scientific clarification of the UFO problem will come until the inadequacies of the Condon Report are fully aired in as many ways as possible. I intend to devote all possible personal effort to that objective; and NICAP is in process of preparing an extended rebuttal report. So small a fraction of the scientific community is currently aware of the potential scientific importance of the UFO problem that this rebuttal will probably be slow in taking effect; but the Report seems so unrepresentative of good scientific work, so highly vulnerable to scientific criticism, that I believe its negative influence (except with respect to USAF decisions about Project Blue Book) will be quite short-lived.