

ENDEMIC EXCESSIVE SECRECY IN GOVERNMENT

According to Air Force Captain Edward Ruppelt, the first director of Project Bluebook, after one year of analysis of existing reports on the UFO question the 1948 “Estimate of the Situation” concluded that UFOs were interplanetary vehicles. However, the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg refused to buy this conclusion and the report was rejected. If it is shown that the Majestic 12 group had its earliest beginnings in 1947 and its prime objective was to maintain secrecy on this phenomenon, as evidenced by the coverup of the Roswell incidents, then it is evident that the Air Force intended to maintain two realities. One was a public position on the nature of UFOs as an unknown phenomenon under consideration and another reality that UFOs were real and required intensive study in strict secrecy.

Today, seventy-five years later, the official public position of the DOD remains, unchanged and the USAF position is to remain mute on the subject. In fact, the calculus for the 1948 determination that UFOs were interplanetary vehicles remains the same. It is simply this: The speeds, maneuverability, operating characteristics of UFOs and their design technologies cannot be matched by any aircraft, from any nation, known to exist. Therefore, these objects cannot be from planet earth. Clearly, for seventy-five years the DOD/IC failed to confirm this obvious conclusion to keep this knowledge from the public. This fact further supports the on-going existence of a ‘secret group’ (cabal) studying the UAP within the structures of government.

As a step towards implementing this secrecy policy, the CIA organized the Robertson Panel in 1953. The Durant Report on the outcome and conclusions of this panel stated: “...reasonable explanations could be suggested for most sightings and by deduction and scientific method it be induced that other cases might be explained in a similar manner...The concept of a broad educational program integrating efforts of all concerned agencies was that it should have two major aims: training and debunking...The debunking aim would result in reduction in public interest in ‘flying saucers,’ which today evokes a strong psychological reaction. This education could be accomplished by mass media such as television, motion pictures, and popular articles...The panel took cognizance of the existence of such groups as the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization (APRO). It was believed that such organizations should be watched because their potentially great influence on mass thinking if widespread sightings should occur. The apparent irresponsibility and the possible use of such groups for subversive purposes should be kept in mind.”

These concepts may have established as guidelines for the continuing operations of the secret group that may have begun as MJ-12.

If such a group exists and has been able to maintain secret operations in the evaluation of information, act on that information, recover craft, assimilate new technology, transfer that technology, share information and cooperation with other nations, effectuate some mutual communications on UAP incidents in real time, it would be an organization with extensive capabilities and efficiencies. Such a secret group within government operations would need reliable funding sources, operate facilities and equipment to perform data collection and analyses, have liaisons with military and other intelligence agencies, and liaisons with civilian aerospace contractors. Each of the above organizational capabilities are certainly possible within our governmental structure.

In view of the historical give and take between governmental secrecy and the public quest for disclosure on the UAP, we could view this as a 'zero-sum' game. If we assign 'disclosure points' to this game, then the sum of the points would be government disclosure of the information that is being withheld from the public. These points would then be distributed to either the secret group or the public at any given time. If disclosure elements are positive points and secret elements are negative points, then the sum of the points held by both sides would always be zero. The greater the release of information in the form of valid witness testimonies and documentation, more points will accrue to disclosure advocates. If those holding the secrets have greater success in maintaining them, the secrecy group will maintain the advantage.

Of critical importance in the play of this game is public perception of the issue of the UAP. Given the predisposition of the public, widespread acceptance cannot be achieved by the American people unless it feels it is part of the process. Polling on this issue, although rare, indicates that the American people are evenly divided on the cause of UAP. A YouGov poll taken between September 9-12, 2022, shows that 34% of the public believes UFOs are controlled by non-terrestrial entities; 32% believe they have natural explanations; and 34% do not know the source. Considering the polling margin of error, the public is evenly split on the issue. In a 1996 Newsweek poll, only 20% believed that UFOs are controlled by aliens. The 2022 poll is a significant increase in those who believe in a non-terrestrial source. Another YouGov poll taken in July 2020 with over 8,000 respondents shows that 56% of the public believes that the government is hiding information about UFOs. 22% believed the government would tell the public if aliens were involved, while the same percentage (22%) did not know. In other words, more than half the public

in a survey with a relatively large sample size and small margin of error (+/- 3%), do not trust the government to be honest about the subject.

The polling shows a small but distinct advantage for the advocates of disclosure. The new whistle-blower protections added to the new legislation will allow new testimonies. The truths told by the aggregate of experiences of witnesses could break the hold on secrecy if the public demands its government confront and act on the truth of this evidence. Ultimately, the basic tenet of the people's need-to-know what their government is doing to meet their duties and responsibilities to reflect the will of the people will prevail, as it must.

In the U.S., the government has the absolute power to withhold information from the public. This power is derived from the preamble to the Constitution where it establishes the need for our government to "...provide for the common defense...and secure the blessings of liberty..." In other words, provide for our national security. Thus, maintaining secrets, which if divulged would give aid and comfort to any enemy of the United States is proper and necessary for our nation's security. Therefore, the imperative of secrecy in government has a status of the highest priority. Our government will have its secrets.

The Constitution does not speak to how much secrecy is necessary or if excessive secrecy could be detrimental to our democracy. It does, however, embody the principle that "We the people" have established our government for the purposes of union, justice, domestic tranquility, common defense, general welfare, and the blessings of liberty. If we are to have those blessings in America, it is necessary that we the people must remain informed as to how our government is proceeding to accomplish those ends. To help protect us from the potential corruptions of government, including the abuse of secrecy, the first amendment to the Constitution establishes the right of the people to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Every year the President receives a report from the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), the agency whose mission includes "ensuring that the government protects and allows proper access to classified and controlled unclassified information to advance the national and public interest." In its latest issue of this report, the director stated the following: "I believe more than ever that Americans must have faith in their government's honesty and openness... Fear and ignorance, the most corrosive and dangerous of all acids for a republic, will continue to eat away at the strength and resilience of our governing pillars if we do not neutralize them with candor and transparency."

The 2021 ISOO Report identified the following deficiencies in security programs (<https://www.archives.gov/files/isoo/reports/isoo-2021-annual-report-to-the-president-final.pdf>, 2021 ISOO Report):

Because of the ‘tsunami’ of digital classified information being created daily, makes it likely that most of it will never be reviewed for declassification.

There are inconsistencies in creating and maintaining Special Access Programs (SAPs) and Controlled Access Programs (CAPs). There is little oversight of these programs to ensure agencies are appropriately establishing and administering them.

There is an urgent need to update the primary national security authorities (offices and individuals who have the authority to classify information) that govern the Classified National Security Information (CNSI) system.

ISOO was unable to determine the number of ‘derivative’ classification actions because of the varied approaches agencies use. They have therefore ended this requirement. Derivative classification is information that is classified due to its relationship to ‘original’ classification of information. For the same reasons, ISOO has dropped reporting requirements for the number of OCAs by agencies. [OCA – Original Classification Authority] Agencies have little incentive to complete requests for appeals on time, resulting in more appeals.

The DOD is responsible for 74% of the 2,116 total Security Classification Guides (SCG) used by federal agencies. It has taken ISOO two years to review 130 of these DOD SCGs. Their finding is that 26% were deficient in the listing the OCA. In 15% of those reviewed, the rationale for classification was not provided. In 21%, the fixed date for declassification was not provided as required.

ISOO points to a significant concern where 16 of the SCGs that include exemptions to the automatic declassification at 25 years, the OCA responsible for the SCG does not have the authority to apply an exemption. ‘SCGs are the primary means for OCAs to make classification decisions and are essential to the proper functioning of the classification system. They are also the fundamental tool used for derivative classification—that is, carrying forward the classification decisions made by OCAs—which accounts for the great majority of classification actions.’ Deficient or inaccurate SCGs leads to the proliferation of illegitimate classified information and enables information to be classified at the wrong level. In FY 2021, 16 agencies have designated 671 Top Secret level OCAs and 817 Secret level OCAs.

The DOD is responsible for inspecting and monitoring contractors, licensees, and grantees under the CNSI. This is the National Industrial Security Program. There are 39 agencies across the executive branch that have classified contracts.

This program needs an overhaul as it is almost 30 years old and, according to ISOO, no longer supports our national security needs.

The Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB) was established as a means to conduct declassification reviews. Because Congress has been using the PIDB as a preferred vehicle for conducting declassification reviews without the expenditure of funds, the administrative cost burden has become significant on ISOO. ISOO cannot sustain their support with additional resources.

The defects stated above by internal government oversight have been persistent issues and therefore endemic aspects of the CNSI. It is, and has been, an essentially broken system for the insertion of secrecy in our government operations and allowing for review and removal of such secrecy in the interest of an informed public.

How do these 'corrosive effects' impact the disclosure of information on the UAP? First, it allows for the complexity of releasing information to severely impact the timing of those releases. Every facet of information will require review by the OCA and its concurrence that releasing it would not disclose sources and methods. And then it would require coordination between agencies to further validate its release. This could involve at least 16 other agencies!

The complex interaction of these issues was recently displayed by the failure of the ODNI to meet its requirement to issue an interim report for the UAP due October 31, 2022, per 50 USC 3373. Under that section of the law, a particular Office must be established to carry out eight specific duties to address the UAP. Those duties include the complexities of developing and standardizing the collection, reporting, coordination, and analysis of incidents across the defense and intelligence communities. In addition, these duties require the coordination with allies and partners of the United States.

Notwithstanding the gross deficiencies in the CNSI, the question is, whether individual officers, such as the President, members of Congress and other government agencies will allow the people to know what information they have in their possession that the public ought to know. And, if extreme secrecy will remain prevalent, will they take the actions needed to reform the system as they endeavor to assess the UAP?