

political and strategic alliances." Why might other nations be inclined to take this subject seriously? For one thing, declassified US government documents show that unexplained objects with extraordinary technical capabilities pose challenges to military activity around the globe.

For example, US fighter jets have been scrambled to pursue UFOs, according to North American Aerospace Defense Command logs and US Air Force documents. Iranian and Peruvian Air Force planes attempted to shoot down unexplained objects during air encounters in 1976 and 1980, and Belgian F-16's equipped with automatically guided missiles pursued UFO's in 1990. Further, the French report says that there have been "visits above secret installations and missile bases" and "military aircraft shadowed" in the US. Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the Apollo 14 astronaut who was the sixth man to walk on the moon, is one of many supporters of international cooperation on UFOs. Of the French report, he says,

"It's significant that individuals of some standing in the government, military and intelligence community in France came forth with this." Mitchell, who holds a doctor of science degree from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is convinced "at a confidence level above 90pc, that there is reality to all of this." He adds, "People have been digging through the files and investigating for years now. The files are quite convincing. The only thing that's lacking is the official stamp." He joins five-star Admiral Lord Hill-Norton, the former head of the British Ministry of Defense, in calling for US congressional fact-finding hearings into the UFO question. Hearings would include testimony by government witnesses from the Air Force, Army, Navy, NASA, private industry and intelligence operations with personal, first-hand knowledge of UFO phenomena and related projects.

#### THE ASTRONAUT AND THE INVESTIGATION

Despite the fact that Mitchell is a national hero and has been honoured with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the USN Distinguished Service Medal and the NASA Distinguished Service Medal, his request for an investigation has been ignored by U.S. officials.

Nonetheless, the public's interest in UFOs is undiminished. A ballot initiative underway in the US state of Missouri, and certified by the secretary of state in March, urges Congress to convene hearings. The initiative states that "the Federal Government's handling of the UFO issue has contributed to the public cynicism toward, and general mistrust of, government."

US Naval Reserve Commander Willard H. Miller has been communicating this same concern to high level officials for a number of years. With over 30 years in Navy and Joint Interagency operations with the US Defense Department, Miller has participated in a series of previously undisclosed briefings for Pentagon brass about military policy regarding UFOs.

Like many, he says he worries that the military's lack of preparation for encounters with unexplained craft could provoke a dangerous confrontation when, and if, such an encounter occurs; "precipitous military decisions," he warns, "may lead to unnecessary confusion, misapplication of forces, or possible catastrophic consequences."

And he says he is not alone in his concerns. "There are those in high places in the

government who share a growing interest in this subject," Miller reports.

Miller retired in 1994 from active duty on the Current Operations Staff (J3) of U.S. Atlantic Command, Norfolk, Virginia where he worked operations, intelligence, and special contingency issues. In a February, 2000 confidential memo prepared for this reporter, he spelled out the details of meetings with named officials - including the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, an Admiral on the Joint Staff, and the U.S. Atlantic Command's Director for Intelligence - between 1989 and 2000.

Miller concurs with the COMETA's observation that there is no evidence of hostility from UFOs "The only threat to the national security of the United States is the continued denial of undeniable physical UFO occurrences and sightings to a public growing increasingly frustrated with its government's weak explanations," Miller says.

Air Force Regulation 200-2, "Unidentified Flying Objects Reporting," prohibits the release to the public and the media any data about "those objects which are not explainable" while allowing disclosure only of the UFOs that have been identified as "familiar objects."

An even more restrictive procedure is outlined in the Joint Army Navy Air Force Publication 146, which provides communications instructions for reporting sightings relevant to US security. Anyone

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under its jurisdiction disclosing reports without authorization is subject to prosecution under the Espionage Act.

Even the President of the United States recently had trouble accessing information on the subject. In 1995, philanthropist Laurence Rockefeller provided UFO briefing materials to President Clinton, Hillary Clinton, and Presidential science advisor Jack Gibbons while they spent a weekend at Rockefeller's Wyoming ranch. Clinton then instructed Associate Attorney General at the Justice Department, Webster Hubbell, to investigate the existence of UFOs, as disclosed by Hubbell in his book, *Friends in High Places*. Despite this request from the Commander in Chief, Hubbell was unable to obtain information on



**BREAKING SILENCE:** US Naval Reserve Commander Willard H. Miller worries that the military's lack of preparation for encounters with unexplained craft could provoke confrontation. Leslie General Norlain forcing the establishment to think again about those lights in the sky. Pictures courtesy of Bernard Thouanel VSD photo archives.

the subject.

#### THE DECADES OF DISTRUST

In earlier decades, issues that remain pertinent today were openly discussed. In 1960, for example, US Representative Leonard G. Wolf of Iowa entered an "urgent warning" from R.E.

Hillenkoetter, a former CIA Director and Navy vice admiral, into the Congressional Record that "certain dangers are linked with unidentified flying objects." Wolf cited Gen. L.M. Chassin, NATO coordinator of Allied Air Service, warning that "If we persist in refusing to recognize the existence of the UFOs, we will end up, one fine day, by mistaking them for the guided missiles of an enemy - and the worst will be upon us."

These concerns were taken seriously enough to be incorporated into the 1971 "Agreement on Measures to Reduce the Outbreak of Nuclear War" between the US and the Soviet Union. The treaty states that the two countries will "notify each other immediately in the event of detection by missile warning systems of unidentified objects...if such occurrences could create a risk of outbreak of nuclear war between the two countries."

The French report may open the door for nations to be more forthcoming once again. Chile, for example, is openly addressing its own concerns about air safety and UFOs. The now retired Chief of the Chilean Air Force has formed a committee with civil aviation experts to study recent near collisions between UFOs and civilian airliners.

As the international conversation about UFOs unfolds, sightings continue, as they have for decades. Perhaps the most notable recent US sighting took place in March 1997. Hundreds of people across the state of Arizona reported seeing huge triangular objects, hovering silently in the night sky - a sighting that, as the state's Senator John McCain noted recently, has "never been fully explained."

As recently as Jan. 5, 2000, four policemen at different locations in St. Claire County, Illinois, witnessed a huge, brightly lit, triangular craft flying and hovering at 1000 feet. One officer reported witnessing extreme rapid motion by the craft that cannot be explained in conventional terms. Nearby Scott Air Force base and the FAA purport to know nothing.

The French Institute of Higher Studies for National Defense and the National Center for Space Studies remain several steps ahead of the United States military and NASA. Perhaps the report by the bold French generals - with its goal of "stripping the phenomenon of UFOs of its irrational layer" - will be a catalyst for authorities around the world to publicly examine the issue of UFOs in a new light. ■

