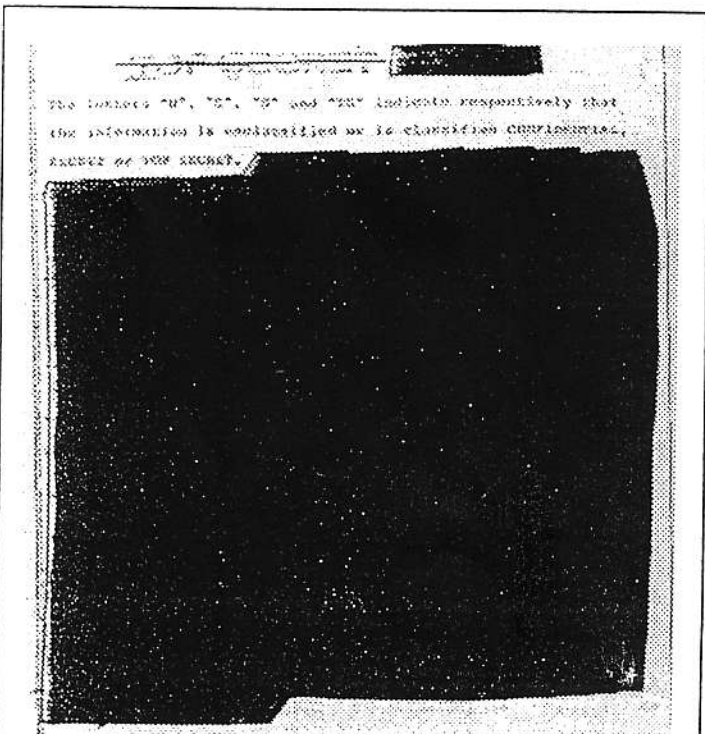


UFO Cover-up

Since the dawn of modern ufology in 1947, there has been a strongly held belief amongst UFO investigators, witnesses and the general public that there is a massive conspiracy in operation. This alleged conspiracy is run by the world's major governments and has many variations. Put simply, it can be said that the governments of the world know all about the UFO phenomenon, what is behind it and what is going on.

The usual belief is that governments are aware that aliens have been visiting Earth for many years. Not only that, but various government agencies are accused of being in possession of crashed UFOs, alien bodies and artefacts and they are covering these facts up and conspiring against their people. More complex variants on this theme include assertions that leading governments are actually in league with the aliens, either because a deal has been struck or because Earth simply has no choice - to argue with the aliens would be to invite certain destruction.

This may all seem a bit far fetched, but there is evidence that many governments do take UFO sightings seriously. Over the years UFO researchers have demonstrated that the US government has kept in-depth files on both UFO cases and UFO investigators. The Freedom Of Information Act in the USA has enabled thousands of documents to be acquired pertaining to official UFO study, most of them heavily censored in the interests of 'national security'.



A segment from a 21 page Top Secret affidavit giving the National Security Agency's reasons for withholding its documents on UFOs. As you can see it is heavily censored.

Is this evidence of a cover-up? To an extent, yes. But not necessarily a cover up of an alien presence. For example not one official document states unequivocally that there is an alien or extraterrestrial component to any UFO case investigated by a government department. Some documents in fact, such as a 1953 CIA memo seem to indicate that the UFO mythology may be being manipulated by the US government to cover-up its tests of its secret craft. This idea is known as the Federal Hypotheses and is a sub-strand of contemporary ufology. Yet other documents seem to demonstrate that whilst the US government accepts that there is a core UFO phenomenon it doesn't really know what is behind it.

'Leaked' documents such as the MJ-12 papers, purporting to be internal military memos alluding to crashed UFOs, appear on the scene regularly and hint at the possibility of there being a top-level cover-up within world governments.

But despite rumour and conjecture there is no clear cut evidence available to UFO researchers proving once and for all that any government is keeping 'the truth' from its people. What is clear however is that the majority of governments have conducted UFO studies over the years and that in itself should be of great interest to ufologists. The temptation to believe, without good evidence, that cover-ups and conspiracies to hide 'the truth' about UFOs exists is a dangerous one and can easily lead the incautious researcher down a dead end street.

The UK does not yet have a Freedom of Information act and it is extremely difficult to get copies of any official documents pertaining to UFOs in this country. This area of research is an interesting one for the budding ufologist though and advances can be made in obtaining official information about and attitudes towards UFOs by going through ones Member of Parliament, or by sensibly approaching local military establishments with well thought out questions. Those interested in pursuing this aspect of ufology are advised to read Tim Good's book *Above Top Secret*, which takes a look at the official treatment of UFOs by governments across the world. Jenny Randles' books and articles also contain useful information on this topic, particularly her *UFO Conspiracy*, and 1997 sees the publication of a new book on the subject by Nick Redfern. *UFO Times*, published by BUFORA, regularly features the results of Nick Redfern's research into recently released UFO documents held at the Public Records Office at Kew in London.

Believing in a gigantic cover-up is easy. Demonstrating that one exists and that it is covering up the presence of extraterrestrials on earth is a different matter altogether. BUFORA hold no position either way on the matter but weigh the evidence as it appears. There are stranger extensions of the cover up theory which have even more bizarre implications if true. One such concerns alleged secret military bases which are connected with UFOs...

MEN IN BLACK

One quite strange aspect of the alleged UFO cover-up involves the mysterious 'Men In Black'. As the title suggests these men, who usually travel in twos or threes, are dressed entirely in dark or black clothing. Their modus operandi is to visit the witness to a UFO event and to scare them into silence. Their cars were invariably black too, often brand new but of an old model; in American cases a Cadillac was the favoured model. The MIBs (as they have become known in ufolore) also appeared to have strange physical characteristics; some seemed to be wearing make-up, their movements often appeared to be out of synch and they generally seemed to be not quite normal.



The first documented case of MIBs paying witnesses a visit came in 1952. Albert Bender, head of the International Flying Saucer Bureau in Connecticut, USA suddenly closed the group down. His reason was this; he claimed to have been visited by three black clad men who appeared at his house driving a Cadillac and who warned him to cease his ufological studies. They appeared to have inside knowledge of the UFO subject and made it clear to Bender that not only did the US government know all about the alien presence on earth but that they would reveal all to the general public within a few years. When the expected release of information failed to take place Bender changed his story, claiming now that

the MIBs were in fact aliens in disguise. Bender told the story in full in his books *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers* and *Flying Saucers And The Three Men*.

The MIB mystery has plagued ufology and ufologists ever since with MIBs cropping up from time to time in both the USA and UK. Veteran American ufologist John Keel expounded his theories about them in the classic books *The Mothman Prophecies* and *Operation Trojan Horse*. Keel's view - if we understand him correctly, for he is a difficult writer to pin down - was that the MIBs existed but only as part of the witnesses perception. Arguments have raged as to whether witnesses who claim to have been visited by MIBs are just making the story up, hallucinating, or whether there is in fact some reality to the tales. If there is, then the obvious suggestion is that the MIBs are from the government attempting to silence witnesses or perhaps to make them look stupid when they reveal the surreal details of their MIB encounter. Other ufologists have posited that the MIBs are indeed aliens in disguise.

Theories abound, but evidence is in short supply. It should be borne in mind that whilst MIB lore is fascinating, it is not a major part of ufology.

MIBs in the UK?

One intriguing MIB case dates from 1964 when a Carlisle man, Jim Templeton, took a photograph of his daughter on the Solway Firth. Upon receiving the photos back from processing he noticed a strange 'spaceman' figure behind his daughters head. This was not visible when he took the now famous photo. Subsequently, the anomaly was brought to the attention of both police and to Kodak, the makers of the film. That might have been the end of the matter but then Templeton was visited by two black clothed men driving a Jaguar car. In true MIB style they behaved oddly, calling each other only by numbers, and by asking a string of strange questions about such things as the weather on the day of the incident. They drove Templeton to the site of the photograph and seemed upset when he wouldn't go along with their suggestion that he had simply caught a passer-by on film. Their anger developed to such a stage that they drove off, leaving a mystified Templeton to walk the five miles home, pondering the nature of his strange encounter.

Reported MIB visits are not common within the UFO subject, but they happen enough for investigators to treat them as a serious and inexplicable part of the phenomenon as a whole.

AREA 51

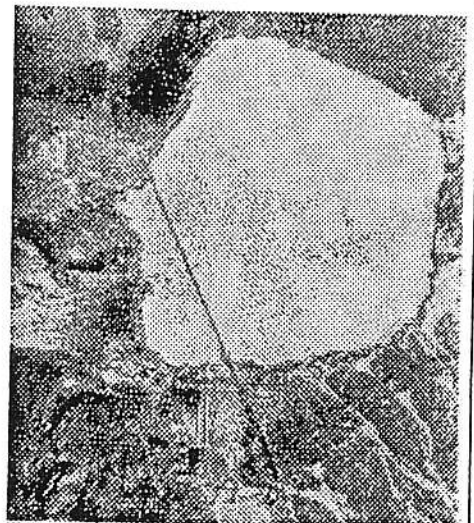
Area 51 is located deep in the heart of the Nevada desert, some 150 miles from Las Vegas. It is a top-secret military base also known as Groom Lake and is one of the many locations in the USA where crashed UFOs are reputedly kept.

Food for this belief comes in many guises, most notably from an astrophysicist by the name of Bob Lazar who came forward to reveal that he had worked on captured alien flying saucers there. To date Lazar's claims have not been either verified or disproved. Stranger versions of the story claim that the base goes deep under the desert and that, not only do captured UFOs exist, but that the new breed of top secret US aircraft such as the Stealth bomber and its successors have been aided in their design and propulsion by retro-engineering the captured craft.

Stealth bomber was tested there before it was admitted it even existed. So why the stories of alien craft? Sceptical ufologists would suggest that the USAF is quite happy for ufologists to think UFOs exist at Area 51 as this gives a perfect excuse for them to test whatever craft they choose, safe in the knowledge that if it is seen it will get reported as a UFO and will not be taken too seriously.

Locations such as Area 51 are fascinating. Clearly something is going on there in secret. Whether this is terrestrial or extraterrestrial in nature is a matter for debate and investigation. Whatever is taking place though Area 51 is now firmly on the UFO tourists itinerary. Its nearest town, Rachel, has now become a magnet for ufologists who stay in the Little A'le'Inn, buy the souvenirs on offer and drive as close as they can get to the base - 15 miles away from it before being stopped by fences and the mysterious 'cammo-dudes', who prevent further exploration. Tim Good's

Alien Liaison is a good introduction to this area of thought, whilst Jacques Vallee's book *Revelations* deals with possibly more sinister aspects of the theory, bringing in conspiracies, cover-ups and the Federal Hypothesis.



Aerial view of Groom Lake