

document concluded that UFOs were interplanetary, according to those few individuals who saw it, including the former head of Project Blue Book in the early 1950s, Captain Edward Ruppelt. Ruppelt stated that at least one copy, legal-sized with a black cover stamped "Secret," survived its original destruction order. Since then, all attempts to locate the document have failed. The Air Force's responses to such inquiries have been strangely contradictory.

One letter to a UFO researcher by the Air Force's Director of Legislative Liaison, Major General W. P. Fisher, said, "There has never been an Air Force conclusion that flying saucers were real and were interplanetary space ships. The alleged 1948 document mentioned in your letter is nonexistent."

Yet, in 1967, the Air Force's Chief, Civil Branch of the Office of Information's Community Relations Division, Lt. Colonel George Freeman, said:

Regarding the 1948 "Estimate of the Situation" the late Captain Ruppelt in his book, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, provides the answer. The Top Secret Estimation was working its way up to the higher echelons of the Air Force. It got to the late General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, then Chief of Staff, before it was "batted down." The General wouldn't "buy" interplanetary vehicles. The report lacked proof and the Estimate died a quick death. Some months later, it was completely declassified and relegated to the incinerator. I am sorry, but we have no copies of this document.

The "Estimate" obviously survived destruction by several accounts. Knowledge of its location would be of great historical importance.

We have tried to give a rational assessment of UFOs. Old questions have been answered and new ones have been raised. To be sure, UFOs have not been given a fair day in court, which is why the subject remains cloaked in rumor and ambiguity. Some scientists are aware of the challenge placed before us, but the scientific community at large must shoulder some of the blame for the way the UFO phenomenon has been treated. Scholars have descended upon UFO enthusiasts in righteous indignation, accusing them of promoting pseudoscience and misinforming the public to an almost irreversible degree. Indeed, some of the criticism is well-deserved. Serious UFO researchers were, for some time, a small minority in a subject dominated by religious fanatics, pseudointellectuals, and a variety of space explorers, whose alleged trips to "lush, green Venus" and the marvelous cities on the far side of the moon titillated millions.

Inevitably, the wheat is separated from the chaff and the true nature of a mystery manifests itself. This is what present-day UFO logists are promoting—a serious look at real events, not a 1980s version of "Earth vs. Flying Saucers" or "Invaders from Mars."

The U.S. government is convinced that UFOs are a serious matter. It is only through a concerted effort by the world's braintrust that UFOs can be dealt with effectively, almost surely leading to the revelation of new truths.