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UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS, THE CIA, AND CONGRESS

In December 1963, former President Truman was questioned regarding his role in organizing a secret panel within the government to collect vital information concerning unidentified flying objects and to keep him informed of any significant developments that would affect U.S. foreign relations and the balance of power with the Soviet Union. He was asked if he knew that the Central Intelligence Agency had engaged in foreign and domestic covert operations to secure evidence from various sources. He was also asked the embarrassing question 'Did you authorize Operation Majestic Twelve?' To which he replied, "I never had any thought about it after leaving office." He added, "It was not my intention when I set up the CIA it would be injected into strange activities of that sort." He was upset when this subject was brought up and it was sensed that Mr. Truman was being coy and evasive. When he was shown documents which he signed, he seemed very surprised and asked, "where did you get this?" He was told that they came from the CIA. He quietly and without further comment said, "Oh!" After some reflection, he said, "Congress was in for a greater surprise, for what legislators were asked to create in 1947...and what they thought they were creating...was an intelligence arm of the government. What they did was hand the CIA, by that I mean, the Director of Central Intelligence the authority to withhold UFO information from the public, including Congress."

This question was repeatedly brought^{/up}, and as always, he was reluctant to offer any specifics regarding his role in establishing a secret intelligence organization dedicated to the UFO problem. Conflict arose within Congress when it was learned that several influential and controlling senators and congressmen had been briefed on several occasions by the CIA and the United States Air Force on just such an operation. Additionally, a Hoover Commission study expressed concern about the absence of congressional and other outside surveillance of government UFO intelligence activities. To the Hoover Commission, this lack of outside surveillance somewhat prophetically raised "the possibility of the growth of license and abuses of power where disclosure of costs, organization, personnel, and functions are precluded by law."

Yet, theoretically, constitutional control of Congress over CIA remains. With the burgeoning of the UFO intelligence establishment in size and importance, the question has arisen significantly on several occasions during the past twenty years whether or not Congress should regain some measure of real control over intelligence activities.

The issue of closer congressional surveillance came to a head in the first instance in Senate action early in 1956. The specific point at issue was whether Congress was to establish a standing joint committee on the CIA, similar to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, to provide a fuller and continuing look at United States UFO intelligence programs.

The CIA's UFO intelligence budget is concealed within the budgets of various government departments, mainly that of the Defense Department. The average member of Congress has no more knowledge than the average citizen of the annual expenditures or of the size and scope of CIA UFO operations. As members of the CIA subcommittees of the Committee on Armed Services and Appropriations, a few congressional members receive occasional briefings on CIA's UFO operations from the Director of Central Intelligence (which of course is at his discretion).

Ever since CIA was established, the Director has been authorized and in fact directed to make complete disclosure of CIA UFO activities to special subcommittees in both the Senate and House. The CIA is at times completely responsive to their questions, no matter how sensitive. For example, during the first 12 weeks as DCI Admiral William F. Raborn was called to 17 meetings with these Congressional committees. The legislative log for the year 1965 shows that DCI or his senior aides met a total of 34 times with four special subcommittees.

It is no surprise then that members of the national legislature who take seriously the constitutional provision that no money may be spent from public funds of the treasury without congressional approval, should become restless about the CIA's privileged position of UFO secrecy. Such unrest has had various manifestations. One was in Senator Joseph McCarthy's characteristic statement in the Senate debate: "I have roughly 100 pages of documentation covering...." Another, more

temperate, manifestation of unrest was in the Senate resolution to establish a joint Congressional committee on central intelligence, introduced in the Eighty-fourth Congress (1955) by Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana), with a total of 34 Republican and Democratic co-sponsors. This was only one-- though the most important--of a score of bills before Congress at that time with a similar purpose.

The Mansfield resolution was reported favorably out of the Rules Committee on February 23, 1956, by a vote of 8 to 1, with Senator Carl Hayden (D., Arizona) dissenting. The proposal would have established a joint committee to have legislative oversight of the CIA. It was to be composed of six members from each branch of Congress. The core of its membership would have been those senators and representatives already serving as CIA subcommittee members from the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees. The joint committee was to have a broad mandate to study (1) the activities of CIA; (2) problems relating to the gathering of UFO intelligence affecting national security; and (3) coordination and utilization of UFO intelligence by the various departments and agencies of government. All legislative proposals relating primarily to the CIA or to foreign UFO intelligence would be referred to such a committee for consideration. Senator Mansfield further proposed that the CIA keep the joint committee "fully and currently informed with respect to its joint committee activities." Of course, this proposal was not carried out by the CIA.

Arguments for a Joint UFO Committee

(a) Congressional surveillance has existed, since 1946, in the UFO atomic energy field, an area equally as sensitive as foreign intelligence.

(b) A specialized joint committee would "promote new confidence between Congress and the CIA."

(c) UFO studies of the CIA by ad hoc or temporary groups are not sufficient. The fact that most UFO reports and studies of CIA since its creation in 1947 have been highly secret has excluded Congress from details of CIA operations.

(d) A policy of "secrecy for mere sake of secrecy" invites abuse and prevents Congress and the nation from "knowing."

Arguments against a Joint Committee

- (a) Existing surveillance by members of the Appropriations and Armed Services Committee is adequate.
- (b) Functions of the CIA are essentially executive in character. The agency serves the President, the National Security Council, and other departments in a staff capacity.
- CIA*
(c) ~~CIA~~ has ~~been~~ intensely, repeatedly, and adequately investigated the UFO problem by various special commissions.
- (d) The proposed UFO Committee as a joint committee raised a constitutional issue of separation of powers between executive and legislative branches. It was argued that since CIA undertakes UFO intelligence activities only in accordance with National Security Council directives, any congressional action which seeks to interfere with or pry into this relationship "would tend to impinge upon the constitutional authority and responsibility of the President in the conduct of foreign affairs."
- (e) To compare CIA with the Atomic Energy Commission, or to use the atomic energy analogy, is invalid. CIA UFO activities was to be accepted "on faith." The CIA carries ^{on} ~~in~~ its work outside the United States boundaries. About this work only a few select members of Congress are advised on a "need to know."

Senate Resolution No. 210

...to keep itself fully and currently informed of the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State, and other agencies of the Government insofar as the activities of such agencies relate to foreign intelligence or counterintelligence. The committee's duties shall include, but not be limited to, review of intelligence and counterintelligence activities and legislative oversight of the coordinating of such activities among the various agencies concerned.

The CIA, it should be noted, was willing to supply the Foreign Relations Committee with substantive UFO intelligence information and had done so on numerous occasions. But it was adamantly unwilling to discuss "sources and methods" with the Fullbright Committee. If Senator Fullbright wanted to know, as he did in 1966, whether "Fullbright awards" had ever been used as "cover" for CIA UFO operations, the CIA leadership in 1966 was unwilling to discuss this or any other matter with him related to "sources and methods." Raborn explained that he had authority to brief congressional committees but discussion of CIA UFO activities, methods, and sources is another matter. The National Security Act makes the Director exclusively responsible for protecting the security of the sources.

