



Former White House Aide, John Podesta, Says Government Should Open Up UFO Files

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White House Chief of Staff, John Podesta, (on right) briefs President Bill Clinton as they walk to the Oval Office in 1999, Washington, D. C.

Photograph courtesy White House files.

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Earthfiles, news category.

October 26, 2002 Washington, D. C. - A former Chief of Staff in the Clinton White House met with reporters at the Press Club in Washington, D. C. on Tuesday, October 22, to talk about Area 51 in Nevada and its relationship to UFOs. John Podesta was President Bill Clinton's Chief of Staff, is a visiting professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, and now runs a public relations firm in Washington called PodestaMattoon. Earlier this year he was hired by the State of Nevada to lobby Congress into rejecting using the Yucca Mountain site northwest of Las Vegas as a nuclear waste repository. He was not successful.

This week many were surprised to hear him say, "I think it's time to open the books on questions that have remained in the dark about the question of government investigations of UFOs." He said he was supporting the efforts of a new group called The Coalition for Freedom of Information, or CFI, that is working with the SCI FI cable television channel to obtain government records about unidentified flying objects. SCI FI Channel President, Bonnie Hammer, told reporters that at least 5 to 10% of UFO reports have not been explained as natural or artificial earth causes.

If the Air Force has had a scripted answer that "UFOs do not exist" for over fifty years, then why not open up every file the U. S. government has on them? John Podesta said that President Bill Clinton signed an executive order in 1995 that produced 800 million pages of declassified government documents. But even Clinton signed an executive order to PREVENT the release of information about Area 51.



The dirt road is Groom Lake Road. Papoose Lake is over the mountains on the far left. Photograph © by Tom Mahood.



U. S. Air Force No Trespassing Signs on the way from Mailbox Road onto the government property that includes Nellis AFB, Groom Lake, Papoose Mountains and Area 51. Photograph © November 24,1995, by Charles Ames.

This week I talked with Ed Rothschild, Executive Director of the new Coalition for Freedom of Information, and an executive in PodestaMattoon. I asked him what his goal is for CFI.

Interview:

Ed Rothschild, Executive Director, Coalition for Freedom of Information, and executive, PodestaMattoon (public relations firm), Washington, D. C.:

"The goal is to raise the issue of getting more information from government agencies that have information on unidentified aerial phenomena, more commonly known as UFOs. This has been a particular concern for many years and in recent years, the fact is that the Clinton Administration, for example, issued an Executive Order that classified agency documents that were more than 25 years old basically should be released to the public, unless there was really a significant national security concerns.

In light of all the events that have occurred, the sightings that have occurred, the incidents that have occurred in regard to these phenomena, one thing is getting the information out. Really, so scientists can examine it and come up with a study. And the whole idea of a coalition is to bring this to the attention to policy makers, particularly members of Congress and Senators and members of the House to say, 'Look, the public is concerned about this. We think these phenomena exist. They are real, but we should know what they are. Because if there are things flying around in our air space that could cause problems with commercial airlines or military aircraft, we ought to be identifying what it is and understanding what it is.

If the government has had a policy of denial about this subject for over 50 years, what physical evidence do you think you could get your hands on to investigate?

I'm not sure we are going to get physical evidence. You have different kinds of evidence. There is evidence of reports that can be gotten. There are reports dealing with radar sightings, people being interviewed over the years. There are a whole series of things that might be short of physical, but if there is physical evidence, it would be terrific. But I think there are plenty of other types of evidence that could be obtained.

Has John Podesta, in his work for the Clinton administration in Washington, ever been privy to anything off the record that seemed to him to support the fact that the government is suppressing information about extraterrestrial-related matters?

Not to my knowledge. I think what he said at the press conference we held is basically that his concern is getting all the information to the public, that the public really, if it has information, it can deal with it. This information should be made public. There is no reason not to and particularly, since the Air Force has said repeatedly that from their perspective, these kind of phenomena haven't been a threat to national security.

Yet, there are documents that exist that state very clearly that the reason for the policy of denial is concern about national security.

Precisely.

What is your understanding about the nature of Project Moondust and Operation Blue Fly?

From my understanding, they were projects, either Air Force or intelligence agency projects, to recover things that fell from the sky basically, that could have been anything from U. S., Soviet or other satellites, or unidentified objects. There were recovery teams that went out into the field on being notified that something had come down and basically picked it up and brought it back for whatever purposes to analyze.

Anything in the category officially of 'foreign' could also include extraterrestrial biological entities?

I wouldn't know what they meant by 'foreign.' All I know is that it was a broad category of unidentified flying objects at that time as I guess the Air Force and other agencies classified it.

What do you think will be the unfolding of events now that you have gone public with this appeal to focus on getting scientists and the public involved and getting more information out?

One of the things that we are doing which I think is very exciting: we are the Sci Fi Channel and the George Washington University the university is hosting and the Sci Fi Channel is sponsoring - a symposium on November 8 at the George Washington University with about five scientists and two aviation experts to talk about the potential for inter-stellar travel and looking closely at the unidentified aerial phenomena. We'll have a very interesting presentation there. It's going to be at a level that people can look at this and say, 'This is something for science to look at. We haven't done so and we need to do it.' Different scientists will explain the potential for other life in the universe and particularly, advanced beyond ours. One will talk about the fact that the new physics is multi-dimensional, so inter-stellar travel could be possible at some point. Maybe not for us! But maybe for some other entity, if that's possible. And people will talk about their whole research into unidentified aerial phenomena and the fact that of all of these things that are sighted, maybe 5 to 10% have never been completely explained either as a natural phenomenon or something manmade.

In this Sci Fi-sponsored meeting, what do you think the Sci Fi Channel would like to accomplish?

I think the Sci Fi Channel has several goals: clearly, they are interested in having more people watch their shows. I think that is certainly an interest. But they are also interested in exploring the important spread between science fiction and science fact. We all know in the 1860s that Jules Verne wrote his *Earth to the Moon*. In that time, it was science fiction. Today, it is science fact. So, as people write science fiction, a lot of the science fiction becomes true. I mean, it might take science a little bit to catch up where science fiction is! So, I think the Sci Fi Channel is saying, 'Well, in this particular category, we've had a lot of interest in

this and we think we want to do something more than just show shows on our network. We want to get engaged in the issue and think that is important, to get more information out there, because this thing has been hanging for 55 years at least, or since 1947, when there were a lot of sightings in the United States. We think we need to get the facts out and it needs to be explored by science.

Any connection to the Steven Spielberg series called '*Taken*' that is supposed to start broadcasting in December 2002?

That's one of the things they are doing. They are doing a whole series of things. That's one of the new programs that they are putting out that Spielberg is the producer of, I guess, a presenter of, and it's a 10-part series. In terms of their overall effort, yeah, all these things are inter-related."

More Information:

On November 8, 2002, the SCI FI cable channel will sponsor a symposium to explore the potential for interstellar travel and the evidence of unidentified aerial phenomena at George Washington University. Panelists will include eminent American scientists and aviation experts, including computer specialist and author of several mysterious phenomena-related books, Jacques Vallee. The event is open to the public on a reservation-only basis because there is limited seating. For information, call Cynthia Determan at 202-879-9309.

Press Release - Goal of The Coalition for Freedom of Information (CFI):

Scientific Credibility

For far too long, there has been a stigma in the scientific community that discourages research into the question of aerial phenomena. CFI supports efforts to promote discussions within the scientific community on the issues of interstellar travel and unidentified aerial phenomena. CFI hopes to foster a more open and rational environment in which scientific research into unidentified aerial phenomena can be conducted without censure or other negative repercussions.

Congressional Interest and Action

CFI will work to urge Congress to support a serious, independent scientific research effort and to seek release of still-secret government documents.

Serious Media Coverage

National media coverage of unidentified aerial phenomenon has been sporadic and sometimes tongue-in-cheek. Too often, the general public is not presented with the facts in an objective and authoritative way. CFI will encourage the media to seek out respected scientists and researchers to present their evidence and views.

Website:

http://freedomofinfo.org/mission_statement.html

<http://www.ufomind.com/area51/photos/>

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