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June 5, 1967

Secretary-General U Thant
United Nations
United Nations Building
New York, New York

Dear Sir:

I wish to thank you again for making it possible for me to meet with the United Nations Outer Space Affairs Group on June 7, to discuss international scientific aspects of the problem of the unidentified flying objects.

Enclosed is a copy of the statement which I am submitting, on June 7, to the Outer Space Affairs Group. It summarizes briefly my reasons for urging immediate United Nations action on the UFO problem. The problem is one of very large dimensions, so a brief summary of this sort can only present in barest outline the apparent nature of the UFO problem and possible modes of scientific attack. I believe that a serious and determined effort on the part of the United Nations to assemble information on the problem and to encourage immediate scientific attention to the problem among all member Nations would be a substantial step towards removing the "ridicule lid" that is now so powerfully suppressing public reporting of many UFO sightings. Many other UN actions could and should be taken to escalate world scientific concern for the UFO problem.

As I have indicated in my enclosed statement to the Outer Space Affairs Group, I believe that very serious consideration must be given to the hypothesis that these unconventional objects constitute some form of extraterrestrial probes. Until I undertook personal study of the problem I was not able to give credence to such an hypothesis. After a year's intensive study I must still regard it as only an hypothesis, but I must emphasize that my findings drive me strongly toward the view that this may be the only presently acceptable hypothesis to account for the quite astonishing number of credibly reported low-level, close-range sightings of machine-like objects that are now on record from all over the world.

I wish to offer whatever personal assistance or counsel you or your colleagues might be able to draw from my own experience in studying this problem. The UFO problem is an eminently international scientific problem. The United Nations has, I believe, both responsibilities and obligations to accelerate serious scientific study of the UFO problem throughout the world. To many serious students of the UFO phenomena, it appears conceivable that something in the nature of a global surveillance by UFOs has been underway in recent years. If there is even a remote chance that this view is correct, then our present ignorance of the purpose and plan of such surveillance must be speedily replaced by maximal understanding of what is going on. If the entire phenomenon is of some other nature, we need to know this. Present ignorance, present neglect, present ridicule all constitute regrettable features of our collective attitudes towards what may be a matter of urgent importance to all the peoples of the world.

United Nations scrutiny of these matters is, in my opinion, urgently needed.

Respectfully yours,

James E. McDonald
James E. McDonald
Professor

Enclosure

June 7, 1967

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS, SUBMITTED ON JUNE 7, 1967 TO THE OUTER SPACE AFFAIRS GROUP, UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION, BY JAMES E. McDONALD, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA.

For twenty years there has been a puzzlingly steady flow of reports, from countries in all parts of the world, concerning what have come to be termed unidentified flying objects (UFOs). The nature of the reported objects appears to be essentially similar in all of these reports, regardless of geographic locale.

During the past twelve months, I have been carrying on an intensive examination of scientific aspects of the problem of the UFOs, as reported within the United States. After interviewing key witnesses in dozens of important cases distributed over the entire 1947-67 period, after discussing the official investigatory procedures with U. S. Air Force personnel, and after personally checking a large number of other sources of information on American sightings, I have concluded that, far from being a nonsense problem, the problem of the UFOs is one of extraordinary scientific interest.

It is my conclusion that no official group in my country has conducted an adequate investigation of this problem. This conclusion is contrary to the impressions held by many persons both within and outside the United States to the effect that a competent scientific examination of American reports was being carried out. I fear that this widespread misimpression has long held up scientific attention to a problem of great international scientific interest. I have asked for the present opportunity to appear before the Outer Space Affairs Group because I wish to urge that all possible steps be taken immediately by the United Nations Organizations, through its scientific staff and through the scientific facilities of all its member Nations, to undertake a systematic global study of the UFO problem immediately.

There is now strong indication that the number of reports of close-range, low altitude sightings of completely unconventional aerial objects exhibiting machine-like features and displaying inexplicable performance characteristics has been increasing in the past few years. This is certainly apparent within the United States. I have the strong impression that the same increase is evident in many foreign areas. My own studies lead me to reject categorically the view that these are merely misidentified natural atmospheric or astronomical phenomena; many official explanations to this effect are almost absurdly erroneous. Nor is it possible to explain all these sightings with hypotheses of advanced technologies or secret test vehicles, with hypotheses of hoax or fraud or fabrication, or with psychological hypotheses. Each of the latter hypotheses does come into consideration

in a number of cases, but there is still left an astonishing number of other reports, made by highly credible observers over the past two decades, which cannot be so explained away. I believe that this large residuum of reports, now numbering hundreds to perhaps thousands of cases, demands the attention of the world's outstanding scientists. However, because of widespread official, journalistic, and even scientific ridicule, almost no scientific attention is currently being paid to this problem. This situation must, I urge, be altered with great despatch because the evidence, once one examines it closely as I have attempted to do in recent months, points overwhelmingly to some phenomenon about which all of us must quickly become far better informed. Official ridicule has to be replaced by high-caliber scientific scrutiny of this problem. Because of the global nature of the phenomenon, it immediately falls into areas where the United Nations Organizations must accept responsibility for encouraging immediate escalation of scientific examination of the problem.

It is my present view, based on what I believe to be sufficient scientific consideration of alternative hypotheses, that the most probable hypothesis to account for the UFO phenomena is that these are some type of surveillance probes of extraterrestrial origin.

I stress that this can, at present, be regarded only as an *hypothesis*; and against it stand many obvious scientific preconceptions, of course. I also emphasize that there are innumerable facets of the UFO phenomena which I can only describe as utterly bewildering and inexplicable in terms of present-day scientific and technological knowledge. I would also remark that if these objects are not of extraterrestrial origin, then alternative hypotheses that will demand consideration will be even more bizarre, and perhaps of even greater scientific interest to all mankind. Hence, regardless of what ultimate explanation is found for the UFO phenomena, the present scientific neglect and ridicule must be replaced by scientific concern and intensive study. My recommendation to the Outer Space Affairs Group is that it seek all possible means of securing worldwide attention to this problem.

The first need is for erasing the ridicule that is quite clearly suppressing open reporting of sightings of unconventional objects in the air and on the ground. I am personally quite familiar with the strong suppressive effects of that ridicule in my own country. My conversations with scientists and others from abroad convinces me the ridicule and scoffing in most foreign countries is comparable to that in the United States, and that only a tiny fraction of all reports are reaching official channels. This unfortunate situation must be quickly remedied, since all attempts to discern meaningful patterns of spatial and temporal distribution of the sightings are blocked at present by an obvious difficulty: One never knows whether a discerned pattern is only fortuitously related to some local and transient reduction in the ridicule with which reports are so frequently greeted.

Serious concern with an unknown and potentially very important problem must become the keynote of official handling of these UFO sightings throughout the world to eliminate the ridicule that is at present suppressing complete reporting.

Secondly, the existence of an already-available sensing system in the form of radar facilities must be recognized as exceedingly fortunate. At present, most radar sightings of UFOs are not getting into scientific hands, largely because most radar equipment is operated by military groups who have not admitted the existence of a real UFO problem and who tend, in almost all countries of the world, to ignore inexplicable high-speed radar target reports or else to withhold them from scientific attention. Understandable as this is at first glance, it must quickly be altered. No other technique now available compares with radar for gathering objective data on the movements and operating characteristics of the unidentified flying objects. One hopes that superior sensing devices will be developed as soon as the UFO problem is regarded with the seriousness it amply deserves; but for the immediate future, radar facilities offer greater promise of supplying scientific data on this problem than does any other equipment at hand.

A wide range of electromagnetic disturbances accompanying close passage or hovering of the unidentified flying objects is now on record throughout the world--despite this record not yet being admitted into what one would ordinarily call the "scientific record." Disturbance of internal-combustion engines coincident with close passage of disc-like or cylindrical unconventional objects is on record in at least several hundred instances. I know personally of dozens of quite credibly reported cases of that effect just within the United States in recent years. Often the disturbances are accompanied by broad-spectrum electromagnetic noise picked up on radio devices. In many instances compasses, both on ships and in aircraft, have been disturbed. Magnetometers and even watches have been affected. All these reports, far too numerous to cite in detail, point to some kind of electromagnetic noise or electromagnetic side-effects that offer promise for design of new sensing devices. But the latter devices will only be developed when competent engineers and physicists take seriously the rapidly growing body of reports of close-range, low-altitude sightings of these objects. Radar must be exploited in the short run, but new devices need to be developed to supply objective tracking and sensing techniques. Temporal and spatial variations in occurrences of UFO movements must be ascertained without the presently bewildering effects of psychological factors that suppress the fraction of all sightings that are openly reported. Some serious students of the UFO phenomena have been asserting for years that there are discernible patterns of UFO reconnaissance; I would grant the appearance of some of these patterns in the reports; but I would be unwilling to attempt to draw any firm conclusions therefrom, since I have seen too much evidence that we are getting

only a very tiny fraction of all sightings openly, or even confidentially, reported.

There is curious evidence, still too inadequately studied to warrant any firm conclusions, that unconventional objects apparently rather similar in nature to those that have been reported in our global air-space in the past two decades have been seen (in much smaller numbers) prior to the 1947 epoch of marked rise in sightings. If true, this has enormously important bearing on our ultimate interpretations of what is going on in the UFO phenomenon. Scholarly examination of that evidence needs to be carried out by persons in a wide variety of disciplines, scholars familiar with various historic aspects of technology and related fields. I shall not here attempt to elaborate details, but only stress that some students of the problem have assembled cogent evidence that the UFO phenomenon may be at least a half-century old, if not longer. This remark must then be followed by emphasis on the faintly disturbing point that the frequency of sightings increased by perhaps two or three orders of magnitudes either in 1946 or 1947--for reasons which we do not now understand in the slightest degree. That ignorance may not easily be removed; but until we start serious scientific scrutiny of the UFO problem we will continue in utter ignorance of what may be a matter of the utmost concern to all mankind.

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In summary, I again express my appreciation for this opportunity to meet with you to discuss this problem. I urge that the United Nations Organization immediately undertake a review of the UFO problem, possibly through the Outer Space Affairs Group. And I hope that all member Nations will be encouraged to institute review boards and study panels to examine UFO sightings in their own countries to achieve a rapid increase in worldwide scientific attention to this problem.

If there is any way in which I can personally assist, on the basis of my own recent scientific studies of this fascinating problem, I hope that your Group will call upon me. Many others whom I know would, I believe, be equally ready to assist in such capacity, in the hope that a long-neglected problem can be quickly elevated to one of high scientific priority. I know of no other current scientific problem that is more intrinsically international in character than this problem of the nature and origin of the unidentified flying objects. Hence, it seems indispensable to secure United Nations involvement in the study of this problem, the global importance of which may be truly enormous.