

# WFO

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## The Sturrock Report: Cash-Landrum Case Reconsidered

The Medical Evidence

**PLUS:**  
**CALIFORNIA SIGHTINGS**  
**VIETNAM ENCOUNTER**





# LEADING THE WAY: French Agency, Hessdalen Project

The Sturrock-Rockefeller panel was able to assess some examples of UFO data collection and examination outside of the U.S. What they found might in some ways serve as fitting models for efficient—and official—American efforts.

**I**n reviewing the possibilities for improving the U.S. study and investigation of UFOs, the Panel took special note of two foreign operations that have effectively implemented UFO research in their respective countries.

In France, the space agency CNES has a specialized branch of service that investigates aerial phenomena, including UFOs. Established in 1977, GEPAN (Groupe d'Études des Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non-identifiés) originally worked toward coordinating collection procedures and analysis of UFO reports with French civil, military and law enforcement officials. A decade later, in 1988, GEPAN was replaced by SEPRA (Service d'Expertise des Phénomènes de Rentrées Atmosphériques), widening its mission to the investigation of re-entry phenomena, including satellite and launch debris and the like. Budget restrictions have lessened the resources for investigating UFO reports.

In Norway, a small group set up the Hessdalen Project in 1981, using specially-outfitted cameras and other scientific equipment to monitor increasing UFO activity reported in the Hessdalen Valley. The Project's five members were assisted by the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, the University of Oslo and the University of Bergen.

The following excerpts from the Panel report add further details about these exceptional—and official—UFO projects.

## GEPAN/SEPRA

The initial steps taken by GEPAN led to the following conclusions:

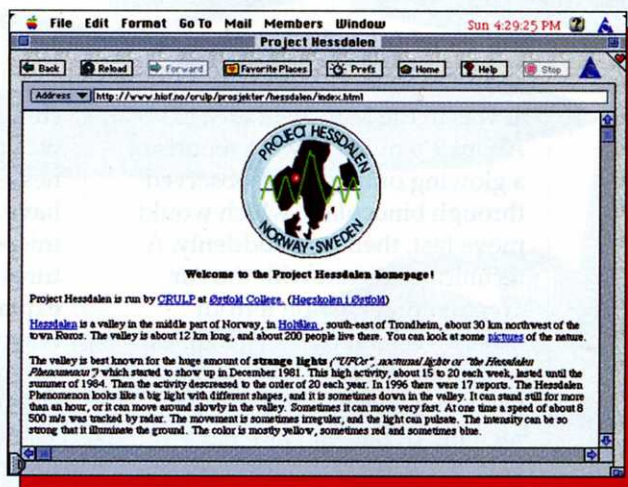
- Those events that remain unexplained after careful analysis are neither numerous or frequent.
- The appearance of some reported phenomena cannot readily be interpreted in terms of conventional physical, psychological or

physical nature and the psychological nature of the phenomenon. In order to fully understand a witness's narrative account, it was necessary to consider not only the account but the psychology and personality of the witness, the physical environment in which the event occurred, and the witness's psycho-social environment.

GEPAN negotiated agreements with the Gendarmerie Nationale, the Air Force, the Navy, the meteorological offices, police, etc. These organizations provided GEPAN with relevant reports, video tapes, films, etc., which were then processed and analyzed either by GEPAN or by associated laboratories. However, from 1979 on, GEPAN worked mainly with reports from the Gendarmerie since these reports proved to be best suited for GEPAN's purposes.

After 21 years of activity, the GEPAN/SEPRA files now contain about 3,000 UFO reports supplied by the Gendarmerie. About 100 of these reports were found to justify specific investigations. Of this number, only a few cases remain unexplained today. There have been attempts by SEPRA to increase the scope of the project at least to a European level, consisting of detection stations set up with a range of cameras, computers and other necessary technical devices, but this has not yet been successful.

During the GEPAN phase, the project produced many reports and investigations and technical documents concerning topics related to the study of UFO events. These reports were made publicly available. These reports are no longer being disseminated, but some information can still be requested from <http://www.hiof.no/>



<http://www.hiof.no/crulp/prosjekter/hessdalen>

psycho-social models.

- The existence of a physical component of these phenomena seems highly likely.

Following these initial steps, GEPAN undertook to develop a more theoretical but rigorous approach to these studies. It was clear at the outset that it would be necessary to consider both the





SEQUENTIAL ORBS—Hessdalen lights caught on film.

PROJECT HESSDALEN

### crulp/prosjekter/hessdalen

Hessdalen is a valley in central Norway, 120 kilometers south of Trondheim. The valley is 12 kilometers long and a maximum of 5 kilometers wide. The hills to the west and to the east rise to about 1,000 meters above sea level. Most people in the valley live at a height of about 800 meters.

In December 1981, the inhabitants of the Hessdalen valley began to report seeing strange lights. They were sometimes visible three or four times a day. There were hundreds of reports during the period 1981 to 1985, but the phenomenon began to decrease during 1984, and since 1985 there have been comparatively few sightings. Witnesses reported observations that seemed to fit into three different categories: Type 1: A yellow "bullet," with the sharp end pointing down. Type 2: A strong blue-white light, sometimes flashing, always moving. Type 3: A pattern comprising many light sources with different colors that moved as if they were physically connected.

Field work was carried out in the Hessdalen valley from January 21, 1984 to February 26, 1984, when up to 19 investigators were in the field at the same time. The project then involved three stations with observers and their cameras, some

cameras fitted with gratings to obtain spectroscopic information. At the principal station, observers used the following equipment: cameras, some fitted with gratings; an infrared viewer; a spectrum analyzer; a seismograph; a magnetometer; radar equipment; a laser; and a Geiger counter.

Lights that were recorded to be below the contours of the mountains must have originated in the Hessdalen region, but lights that were recorded to be above the crest line may have originated at a great distance. Without triangulation or other information, it is impossible to determine the distances of the lights. However, some of the events that were seen as lights were tracked also by radar. If taken at face value, the radar measurements would imply speeds up to 30,000 kilometers per hour. (Technical notes presented in the Appendix suggest the possibility of natural explanations.)

Observations continue to be

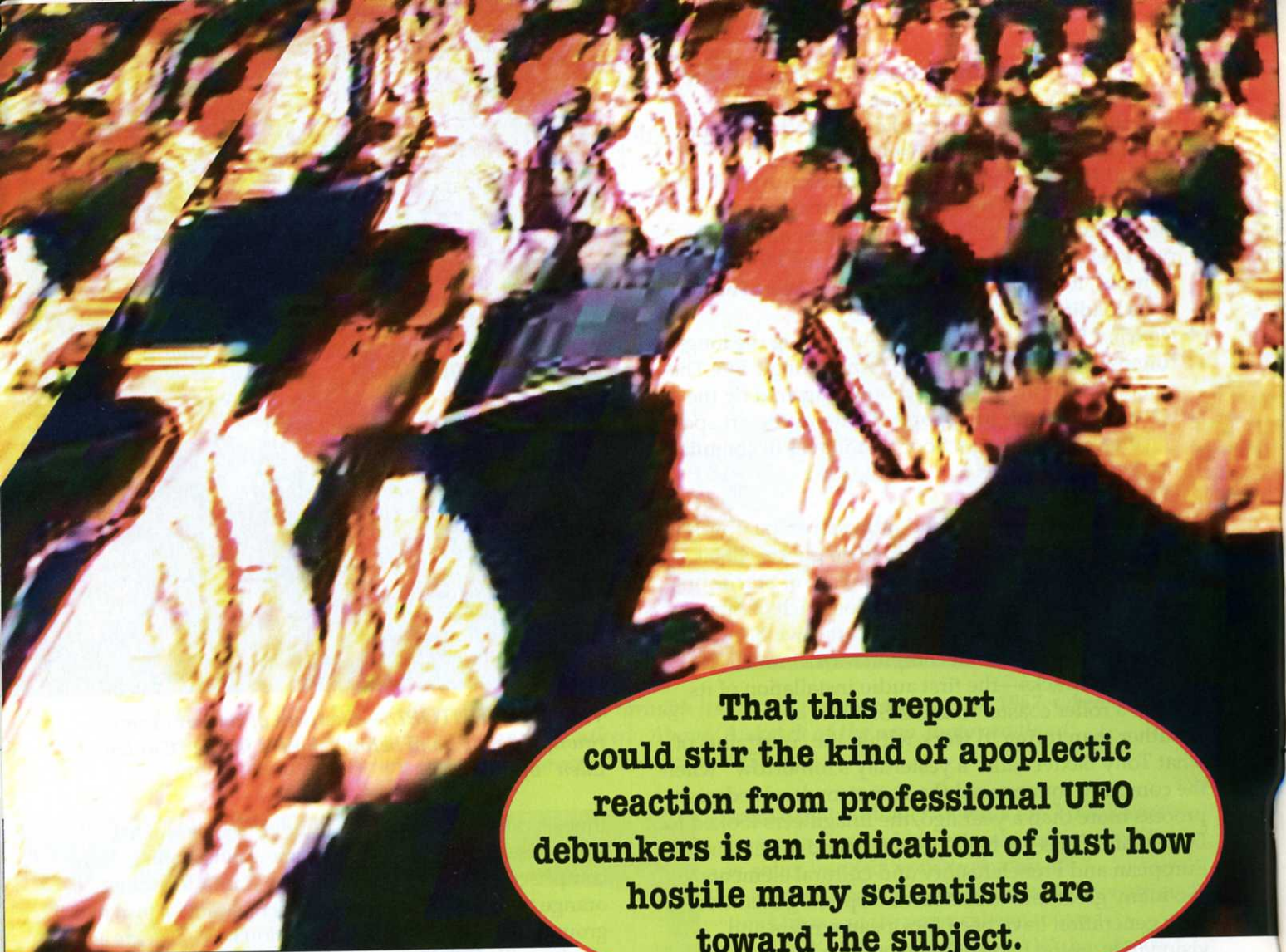
**Observations continue to be reported from the Hessdalen valley; the rate is now about 20 reports per year.**

reported from the Hessdalen valley; the rate is now about 20 reports per year. An automatic measurement station, for installation in Hessdalen, is now being developed and prepared at Ostfold College (Norway), which is the present base of Project Hessdalen.

#### PANEL SUMMARY RESPONSE:

The panel notes that in cases that involve repeated, semi-regular sightings of lights (such as are said to occur at Hessdalen in Norway and at Marfa in Texas), it is difficult to understand why no rational explanation has been discovered, and it would seem that a small investment in equipment and time should produce useful results. ●





**That this report could stir the kind of apoplectic reaction from professional UFO debunkers is an indication of just how hostile many scientists are toward the subject.**

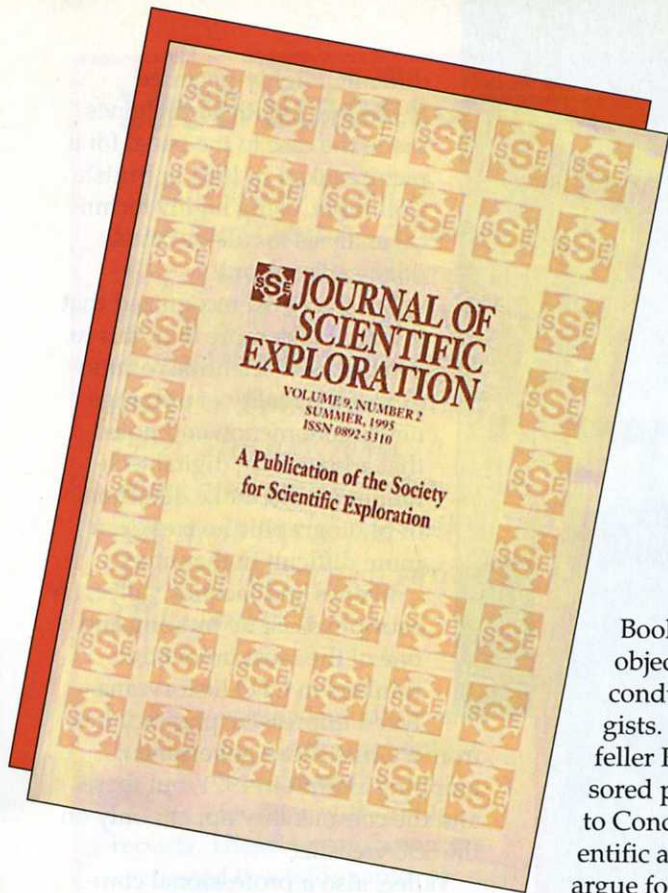
FORRESTSCAPES

# The Sturrock-Rockefeller **REPORT** by Scott S. Smith

*Anticipating a New Millennium of real objectivity and openness on the part of Big Science, the Sturrock Panel Report breaks new ground for an honorable pursuit too long ignored: UFO research.*

**C**onceivably the most important event in the history of the study of the UFO phenomenon was not Roswell in July 1947—whose UFO connection is still being debated—but the release of a report from a panel of independent scientists sponsored by the Society for Scientific Exploration on June 29, 1998. The radical conclusion of this distinguished panel, after considering evidence for the reality of UFOs presented by investigators: "(T)here was no convincing evidence pointing to the involvement of extrater-





Book Project before it, less objective than many of those conducted by amateur ufologists. The Sturrock-Rockefeller Report, as the SSE-sponsored project is known, is kind to Condon, only saying that scientific advances since then argue for reopening the issue.

The amusing reaction from the puppets in the media was epitomized by the criticism of the *The Washington Post* for running even news about the Report by—don't laugh—*The New York Post*, which raved on about how the other paper had been “taken for a good

restrial intelligence. The panel nevertheless concluded it would be valuable to carefully evaluate UFO reports since, whenever there are unexplained observations, there is the possibility that scientists will learn something new by studying these observations.”

That this could stir the kind of apoplectic reaction from professional UFO debunkers (see related story, “The Debunkers’ Response”) is an indication of just how hostile many scientists are toward the subject. They’ve acted as if a Trojan Horse had been hauled inside the sacred citadel of academia, declaring that there has never been any UFO event worth investigating and decrying any further effort. This attitude was set 30 years ago with the Colorado Project, headed by Dr. Edward Condon, a skeptic who was (as Kevin Randle documented in *Conspiracy of Silence*) asked by the U.S. government to put an end to public and scientific interest in the phenomenon. The conclusions in the Condon Report were actually at odds with the information in it, and some of the investigations were, as with the Blue

long ride” by the “lunatic fringe” of credulous academics “who overdosed on science fiction as a teenager, is a sucker for ESP and Eastern mysticism and is drawn to the kind of crank who claims that Martians built the pyramids.” Even more amazingly, the editor declared the idea that scientists might be afraid to speak out about UFOs because of fear of ridicule was “a big lie.”

Funded by Laurance Rockefeller, the SSE administered the panel’s work, which was published in the 12:2 issue of its *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. The director of the Project was Dr. Peter Sturrock, Professor of Applied Physics at Stanford University, winner of the 1986 Hale Prize in Solar Physics from the American Astronomical Society, the Arctowski medal in 1990 from the National Academy of Sciences, and the 1992 Space Sciences Award from the 40,000-member American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics for his “major contribution to the fields of geophysics, solar physics and astrophysics, leadership in the space science community, and dedication to the pursuit of knowledge.” Not quite the crank that CSICOP would have everyone believe, although he founded the

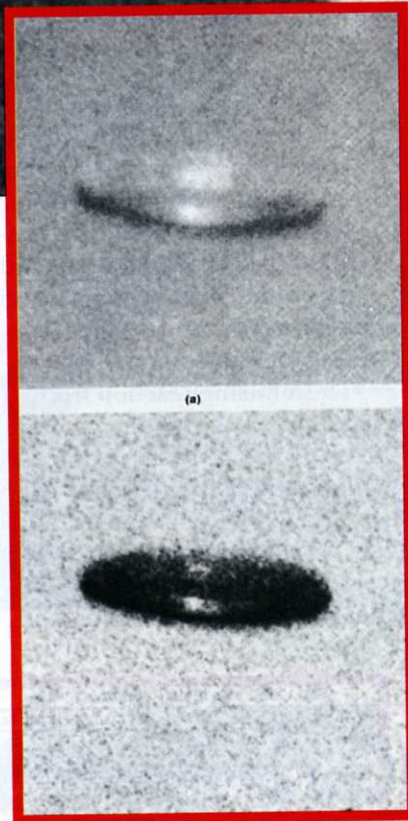


The *Journal of Scientific Exploration's* home page, which has full details of the Sturrock Report and related documents, can be reached at <http://www.jse.com>





*Dr. Richard Haines made a case to the panel for this Vancouver Island shot (above) taken in 1981. At right: closeup of the image printed on Panchromatic paper (top) and blue-green sensitive paper (bottom).*



SSE, a group of academics interested in researching controversial issues at the fringes of conventional science.

The co-chairs of the panel were Dr. Thomas Holzer of the High Altitude Observatory of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, and Dr. Von Eshleman, Emeritus Professor of Electrical Engineering at Stanford. Two other panel members were Dr. J. R. Jokipii and Dr. H. J. Melosh, professors of planetary science at the University of Arizona in Tucson, alma mater of the late Dr. James McDonald, one of the most famous astrophysicists ever to tackle the matter of UFOs. The others: Dr. James Papike, director of the Institute of Meteoritics and Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque; Dr. Charles Tolbert, Professor of Astronomy at the University of Virginia; Dr. Francois Louange, Managing Director of Fleximage in Paris; Dr. Guenther Reitz of the Germany Aerospace Center, Institute for Aerospace Medicine in Cologne, Ger-

many; and Dr. Bernard Veyret of the Bioelectromagnetics Laboratory at the University of Bordeaux, France. Serving as the panel moderators were two scientists with previous interest and involvement in cutting edge, if controversial, science: David Pritchard and Harold Puthoff.

The Report first looks at photographic evidence, the most controversial because the circumstances of filming are rarely independently observed and detection of fraud, let alone identification of a distant object in a photograph, is always

difficult. Highly-regarded researcher Dr. Richard Haines made the case to the panel for a picture taken in 1981 in British Columbia, using highly technical analysis to rule out mundane explanations.

But the Panel recognized that it would take more than this to convince the scientific community of the reality of a strange new phenomenon and noted that advances in digital techniques would make detection of photographic hoaxes even more difficult in the future.

Haines and Jacques Vallee, an astrophysicist by training and one of the most innovative thinkers in UFO history, analyzed impressive photos taken from a Costa Rican government mapping aircraft in 1971, but these and the commentary appear only on the SSE website.

Vallee, also a professional computer scientist, discussed the phenomenon of luminosity. Examining a 1956 Royal Canadian Air Force report of a "bright light which was sharply defined and disk-shaped," he and Navy optical physicist Bruce Maccabee argued that it could not have been lightning or a reflection of sunlight by clouds. Vallee then presented information reported by 300 witnesses on a French submarine in 1965 near Martinique. They observed a luminous disk which maneuvered 10 kilometers away and left a white trace in the sky. In 1976, there was another luminous disk seen by the director of a physics lab in Grenoble, France. The fourth case occurred in 1978 at Gujan-Mestras, France. A few others were briefly mentioned. The panel was dubious about distance estimates involved, but called for further research.

Jean-Jacques Velasco of the French space agency CNES talked about one of the 175 cases involving radar reports and visual observation of the same object which CNES and the U.S. Air Force's Project Blue Book collected. This occurred near Paris on January 28, 1994, when the crew of



# 1998 Science Panel Reports On UFOs

by Peter A. Sturrock

*Even without plaudits from the scientific community at large, the value of this special panel report is unmistakable. In his introduction, Panel Coordinator Peter Sturrock makes a point of orienting other scientists to the possibility of enlightenment regarding UFO research.*

**O**ver the last fifty years, people throughout the world have become familiar with UFO reports. These reports have been attributed to a wide range of causes including hoaxes, hallucinations, planets, stars, meteors, cloud formations, ball lightning, secret aircraft, and extraterrestrial spacecraft. Despite the abundance of such reports, and despite great public interest, the scientific community has shown remarkably little interest in this topic. This may be due in part to the fact that there are no public funds to support research into this issue, in part to the assumption that there are no data worth examining, in part to the belief that the Colorado study that led to the Condon Report (Condon & Gillmor, 1969) has effectively settled the question, and possibly in part to the perception that the topic is in some sense "not respectable." The relative importance of these four causes is unclear, but it seems likely that each has had some impact in dampening the interest of the scientific community in this subject.

The general perception in the scientific community is that, if UFO reports pose a scientific



Peter A. Sturrock

problem at all, it has more to do with psychology and the science of perception than with physical science. Indeed, most reports simply comprise narrative accounts of what someone saw or thought he saw in the sky. Sometimes the reports involve more than one witness, and sometimes an event is witnessed from two or more different locations. However, the fact is that physical scientists cannot get involved in the UFO problem unless there is physical evidence. The purpose of this workshop was to assess whether or not there is any such evidence. If the answer is no, then there is no way that physical scientists can contribute to the resolution of this problem. If, on the other hand, the answer is yes, then it should be possible for physical scientists to contribute to the resolution of this problem.

It should perhaps be stressed that it would be unreasonable to ask a panel of nine scientists, meeting for only a few days, to do

much more than make a preliminary assessment of some limited category of evidence related to this complex and controversial topic. It would certainly be highly unreasonable to expect such a panel to solve, in only a few days, a problem that has remained unsolved for 50 years. Science advances by the development of an informed consensus on well-defined questions (see, for instance, Ziman, 1968), but scientists can arrive at an informed consensus only if (1) sufficient research has been carried out, and (2) the results of that research have been presented to

and evaluated by the scientific community. For the UFO problem, these first two essential steps have yet to be taken.

Of course, this unofficial workshop that lasted only three days is a very modest undertaking compared with the two-year-long Colorado Project that was supported both by the Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency. Nevertheless, the intent and spirit of the workshop was such that all the participants would join with me in echoing the same aspirations as those articulated by University of Colorado President Dr. J.R. Smiley almost 30 years ago: "We hope and believe that [this report] will have the effect of placing the controversy as to the nature of unidentified flying objects in a proper scientific perspective. We also trust that it will stimulate research along lines that may yield important new knowledge." ●