

Introduction

I will never hide the truth because it's uncomfortable. I will deal with Congress and the courts as co-equal branches of government. I will tell the American people what I know and don't know, and when I release something publicly or keep something secret, I will tell you why. -- President Barack Obama, National Archives, May 21, 2009

This article assumes that since government and military officially consider UFOs a non-issue, and hence not a matter of national security, it can also be taken as read that any interference and/or activities in the field, official or otherwise, are completely unwarranted. Despite grand ideas concerning government transparency at the outset of the Obama administration, it would appear no real "change" has been forthcoming. President Obama has said if something is to be kept secret that he will "... tell you why." The problem with this is how does one pose the question to begin with? Attempts have been made to contact the White House concerning UFO secrecy, calls have been made, letters sent, but the administration refuses to acknowledge this. And so it would appear that the easiest way to not keep one's word, such as telling the American public why they can't have this information, is to pretend you didn't hear the question.

Progress of Transparency

On the day after his presidential inauguration (1/21/2009), Barack Obama signed off on what were supposed to be considered sweeping reforms concerning the declassification and accessibility of information. In practice, however, it would seem that those wishing to use the FOIA request system haven't seen much in the way of progress. Since this time, we have seen the launch of FOIA.gov and the implementation of technologies to bring disclosed information to light via the internet. The question, of course, is what information will be released even with these new tools in place? More low level/classification information than ever before? Should we really expect to see anything at Top Secret or above just because the president has requested a more open and tech savvy government? Probably not. As for the FOIA.gov site itself, on the page about how to submit a request, there is a list of agencies to which a request can be made there is currently no mention of the

[National Security Agency](#)

(NSA),

[National Reconnaissance Office](#)

(NRO),

[Defense Intelligence Agency](#)

(DIA), or the

[Office of Naval Intelligence](#)

(ONI). That said, neither are a great many US agencies.

Current Transparency Status

A nation under a well regulated government should permit none to remain uninstructed. It is monarchical and aristocratical government only that requires ignorance for its support. --

UFOs, Transparency, and Civil Rights

Written by Paul Robinson

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Thomas Paine, Rights of Man Organization implies the tendency to oligarchy. In every organization, whether it be a political party, a professional union, or any other association of the kind, the aristocratic tendency manifests itself very clearly. -- Grusky & Miller (1970)

Thomas Paine's quote, seen above, is clearly made in reference to the British Government as it was before, during, and after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is, however, missing a few other forms of governance, namely [Oligarchy](#) , [Plutocracy](#) , [Corporatocracy](#) , and

[Kleptocracy](#)

. Oscar Grusky and George A. Miller go on to argue the reasons why the republican government structure of Paine's day may not be so republican any more. As such, should we really expect to see anything in the form of more government transparency if the majority of its people are not its concern? Revocations of classification appear to be caught in a vicious circle. The problem would appear to be a simple one:

1. security gets tightened under concerns, founded or unfounded, about national security;
2. laws and policies concerning freedom of information become more strict;
3. transparency reforms are attempted;
4. reforms cannot be acted upon as the reasons for national security are a matter of national security in and of themselves;
5. rinse and repeat.

Aside from that which has been politically expedient to make transparent, e.g. spending on the [Troubled Asset Relief Program](#)

(TARP), nothing else has really come to fore as far as declassification is concerned. Indeed, TARP spending should be public knowledge. This is not, however, earth shattering information. Nor, apparently, are the abuses and vague / outright unknown appropriations thereof. There will probably not be new releases of UFO information, a la France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Brazil, Chile, etc., because that would mean having to officially declare unofficial interests, which allegedly came to a halt after

[Project Blue Book](#)

was closed in 1969. Yes, it is known by many researchers that information is being withheld, but the media is happy to ignore this and has been doing so for quite some time.

The President's Briefing

President Clinton, who had a clear interest in the subject of UFOs, was probably hoping that any such briefing would have come in the form of a presentation made by then CIA scientist Ronald Pandolfi. Instead, the task was handed off to UFO researcher and Naval Optical Physicist (retired), [Dr. Bruce Maccabee](#) . Suffice it to say that no previously unknown data was discussed. In the case of President Obama the story goes that this same task fell to UFO researcher, [Dr. Steven Greer](#) . It is doubtful that such

maneuvering by the CIA would likely instill much in the way of trust in the President.

FOIA Stonewalling & Exemptions Abuse

Some UFO researchers will tell you about problems they've incurred in their attempts to extract UFO data through [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA) applications. One of the newer modes of preventing information from getting out to the public has been to price searches beyond the ability of the average citizen to afford. Others have found that they get treated as repeat offenders, trouble causers due to the amount of applications they make. There are, of course, other methods that can be employed to withhold information. One technique has been to store records on sightings with the [North American Aerospace Defense Command](#)

(NORAD). In this case the records are made exempt from disclosure since NORAD does not qualify as a United States governmental agency. It is, instead, a combined U.S. and Canadian effort. Another technique is to place records in an inter-agency status. Simply, this would involve, for example, the CIA placing their files with the NSA. The CIA would not be able to include the files in FOIA searches since they are not in their possession. The NSA would not be able to include the files in FOIA searches since they belong to the CIA. Yet another example is a practice of placing sensitive files with government contractors, say, for the purpose of research and development. Again, the originating agency would no longer have those files in their possession and the contractor is exempt from disclosure since it is a private entity. A document outlining the use of

[Sensitive Compartmented Information](#) (SCI) by the [United States Department of Energy](#)'s (DOE) intelligence branch states:

8. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES.

a. The Secretary is the Senior Official of the Intelligence Community (SOIC). b. Heads of Departmental Elements shall:

(1) Require contractors, through the contracting officer(s), to conduct FII activities in accordance with this Order and other appropriate policy and procedural documents published by the DOE for management and operation of facilities and activities associated with control and accountability of FII, to include SCI.

(<https://www.directives.doe.gov/directives/current-directives/5639.8-BOrder-a/view>) This appears, essentially, to put highly classified information record archives into the hands of private industry and out of the reach of the FOIA request.

Self Censorship of the Fourth Estate

Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. -- Joseph Pulitzer

It was once hoped that the fourth estate would hold the government up to close scrutiny. Unfortunately, we have all been witness to politics shaping the agenda of the press around the world – the U.S. has not escaped this by any means. Does anyone really believe that Fox News is not right-wing or that MSNBC is not left-wing? No matter what your politics are, there probably exists a media outlet that is more than happy to pander to your beliefs and, more importantly, influence and shape those beliefs in the name of the Almighty Dollar. All profit making institutions must, of course, consider their reputation. They don't want to look bad in front of their rivals. But what do they consider to 'look bad'? The main stream media (MSM) is quite happy to trot out phrases like 'Little Green Men' and 'True Believers' in almost startling attempts to distance themselves from the subject. And while they would be more than happy to interview a man like, say, [Charles Manson](#), such a person is nowhere near the threat to their credibility as a military General speaking out on the subject of UFOs. They know that they will suffer attacks from their own organization, rival organizations, and readers who mysteriously always seem to tell them that such information is "not news." How does one decide what is and is not 'news' especially when one is not even in the field of journalism? In light of the fact that many blame today's MSM of producing nothing more than

[Yellow Journalism](#)

, and reports of UFOs are also considered to be a high demand part of that cadre, one has to wonder why reporting on such things as UFOs as often as possible is not a low-hanging fruit. The trouble, perhaps, comes with the saying, "There's no such thing as bad publicity." This could only be argued in the case of UFOs if it was featured heavily enough in the media to get people thinking about it. It isn't. The effect is one of self censorship. While it may seem like they're just looking out for themselves it also sends out the message that they are more than happy to put news blackouts on certain items. And when this happens the government knows that they are, at the same time, malleable and can be trusted not to mention whatever a governing body doesn't want them to mention, without them having to constantly look over the producer/editor/director/publisher's shoulder; their compliance is assured.

First Amendment Under Attack

Surrounding more publicized UFO events of both the past and present has been seen a pressure that has been brought to bear on the media and press to cease and desist. The excuse used has been that in publishing such stories, much embarrassment and ridicule has been visited upon the town or city most closely involved. However, what might, on the face of it, be considered self preservation nonetheless doubles as a governmental attack on the [First](#)

[Amendment](#)

, most notably, freedom of the press. One of the latest examples of this happening was when

[Angelia Joiner](#)

was pressured out of her job with the

[Stephenville Empire-Tribune](#)

after closely following and reporting on the 2008

[Stephenville Lights](#)

event, a UFO story that made waves in the media at the international level. We have also seen politicians such as

[Dennis Kucinich](#)

get ousted from running as a presidential hopeful on national TV after having his UFO sighting questioned. No one questions politicians who believe the planet is only 6,000 years old – that's OK.

Transgressions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

[Article 12](#)

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

The MSM has certainly been overt in its backing of Christianity and, for the most part, religious freedom in general. With some well publicized exceptions, people's religious beliefs are not the subject of near constant ridicule. The same cannot be said of people who voice their opinions of UFOs. Whether a person believes in UFOs or merely thinks reports of alien visitation might be true, you can be almost certain that they will be publically demeaned and humiliated without a second thought. That un/informed opinion is now considered news, and ultimately taken by the masses to be actual truth, means we can no longer trust that we are being accurately informed. And so it is that we see any coverage of the subject of UFOs accompanied by glib, childish comments and the compulsory presence of skeptics/debunkers. This is not something that you would see in a news article or chat show about religion. Since religion requires one to believe, not something required in the face of proven fact, one has to question why it is that we don't see James McGaha or Robert Sheaffer arguing with [Pastor Rick Warren](#) on the 'Larry King Live'. (Since the writing of this article began the show has gone on to become 'Piers Morgan Tonight'. No UFO stories thus far.) Cowardice perhaps? Simply not worth their time? Believers in religions can tend to be a little more fundamentalist. Suffice it to say that if people who believe in God were treated in the same manner – at a level as visible and vocal as the MSM – as those with an interest with UFOs, the outcry would be such that this kind of treatment would come to a screeching halt.

[Article 19](#)

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Again, assuming that the matter of alien visitation is officially considered a non-issue where

national security is concerned, we can also assume that Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is under attack. While not focusing on the outright, ad hominem attacks clearly seen to be transgressions of Article 12, Article 19 promotes the rights of a person to express those beliefs "through any media regardless of frontiers." This obvious extension of Article 12 outlines the right of an individual not only to hold beliefs without fear of ridicule, but to push them out to the public through the media. Instead, what we see is a media that decides what constitutes important news, tells its audience that this is what they the public want. The people then agree with them whole heartedly, forget rather conveniently that they were told this and then allow the same media to insist that they the public came up with those opinions of their own accord. The media (in some cases) tells the public that UFO sightings are to be ridiculed. And shortly thereafter, if they make another UFO report, the public tells the media that UFO sightings are to be ridiculed. The organization in question is then happy to let such information slide, no matter how startling the information that presents itself.

Civil Rights Implications

As mentioned in the previous section, the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (signed and ratified by the US in 1966), Article 19 mandates freedom of expression. And while ridicule – and I hope to write much more on that subject in another article – can be thought of as freedom of expression, too, it is also a tool of suppression, subjugation, and neutralization all of which can be seen as human rights violations to at least some degree.

Conclusions

In many issues that concern some kind of discrimination there are legal consequences that can be visited upon the malefactors. This, of course, usually only comes to light in cases of religious, sexual, racial, and age or disability–related discrimination. The First Amendment covers the first of these. Federal and State laws cover the rest. However, despite the fact that religion is considered paranormal and UFOs are considered by many to be paranormal, belief in UFOs are subject to outright public attacks. Aside from the First Amendment one can also assume that religion also possesses the protection known as 'safety in numbers'. Voices are needed to help overcome the discrepancy between how beliefs, ideas, and interests are viewed by others. Recently, we have seen such names as [Katy Perry](#) and [Sammy Hagar](#) speaking out on the subject of UFOs and aliens. If you are a celebrity, speak up and speak out. If you are anyone else, discuss with friends. And whoever you are, do not feel ashamed to mull over and shift your worldviews around the possibilities that UFOs may or may not represent.