

How Presidents Have handled The Topic Of UFOs

Written by Robert Barrow
Thursday, 01 December 1977 06:00 -

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Two men voiced their concern over the existence of UFOs before assuming the highest elective office in this country: Former President Gerald R. Ford and President Jimmy Carter. As House Minority Leader, Ford called for Congressional Inquiries into the nature of UFO sightings, but he did nothing on the subject while President. And Carter, who sighted a UFO himself prior to becoming President, has let the UFO issue slide into obscurity while in office.

For a tiny fraction of Americans and individuals in other lands, the 1976 Presidential elections had more at stake than economics, national defense and foreign policy. To those who have spent many years examining the subject of UFOs, the UFO was an important a campaign issue as any.

Of course, the situation was considerably less complex back in 1947, when UFO reports first began to see national prominence in this country. When a reporter asked President Truman, during a press conference, if he ever saw a "flying saucer," Truman merely laughed and shrugged off the topic by replying that his only familiarity with saucers was what he had read in the newspapers.

Thirty years later, UFOs are still with us, whatever they are. They did not go away, despite all the skeptical claims and "expert" assurances to the contrary. In the seventies, a growing number of trained and influential people are investigating UFOs in deadly earnest.

However, UFOs are not only a scientific concern. They are a Presidential enigma as well.

A few months ago, President Jimmy Carter, then on the campaign trail, told a reporter from the National Enquirer, "If I ever become President I'll make every piece of information this country

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has about UFOs sightings available to the public, and the scientists." This was hardly an ill-considered promise. In 1969, Carter and a group of friends saw what they believed to be a UFO.

"It was big," Carter told reporters, "it was very bright, it changed colors and was about the size of the moon." The thing remained in view about 10 minutes, and its identity is still unknown.

"One thing's for sure," commented the future President, "I'll never make fun of people who say they've seen unidentified flying objects in the sky . . . I am convinced that UFOs exist because I have seen one."

The big question for UFO researchers now is, can Jimmy Carter carry out his promise? My own concern is particularly spirited on this issue, because I recall another U.S. President who was once extremely involved with the UFO subject. However, once in office, he never again tackled the problem. His name? Gerald R. Ford.

Soon after I began my own pursuit of the UFO anomaly in 1963, I started an incessant letter-writing project, a practice to which I still resort occasionally. I wrote anybody and everybody who might be able to help me learn about UFOs.

During 1965 and 1966, I found many of my queries going to public officials. The late Senator Everett M. Dirksen, for instance, responded to my letter by indicating that, if there was a possibility of having congressional hearings on UFOs he would have no objections. The late Senator Robert F. Kennedy answered my letters several times, indicating skepticism - but also an open mind - on the existence of UFOs.

And then there were letters to and from Mr. Ford. But some background must be offered before continuing.

During early 1966, Ford's home state of Michigan experienced a variety of fascinating UFO sightings. These incidents, regrettably, became popularly known as the "swamp gas" sightings, although former Air Force consultant J. Allen Hynek only intended marsh gas as a probable

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explanation for reports in a couple of areas.

Ford, then a Michigan congressman and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, became outraged with the Air Force's investigation of the reports. In addition, his office was deluged with letters, telegrams and phone calls from anxious constituents and UFO observers who demanded that the official investigation should itself be investigated.

On March 25, 1966, the first of two important Ford press releases appeared. The minority leader was calling for a full Congressional UFO inquiry. On March 28, yet another press release surfaced; attached was a copy of a letter Ford was sending to the Chairman of the House Science and Astronautics Committee, and the House Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Ford's wishes were unmistakably clear. He wanted a Congressional inquiry, and quickly.

The Michigan Congressman got his wish. On April 5, 1966, Congress held an open hearing on UFOs, an unprecedented move. While the hearing failed to accomplish as much as it might have, it produced an Air Force promise that arrangements would be made for an impartial, civilian investigation.

On October 7, 1966, the Air Force announced that the University of Colorado would undertake an open-ended UFO study, free of government influence.

And this is where the letters I received from Mr. Ford enter the story.

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GERALD R. FORD
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Congress of the United States
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House of Representatives
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May 13, 1968

RECEIVED ON
MAY 16, 1968
-R.E.F.

Mr. Robert E. Barrow

Dear Mr. Barrow:

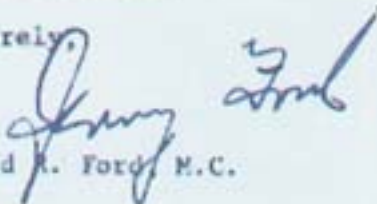
May I thank you most sincerely for your recent letter and for your interest in unidentified flying objects.

As you may be aware, I have repeatedly recommended that thorough investigative action be taken and the public be informed concerning this subject. I had called for an investigation of this matter in the Spring of 1966.

I can assure you that I share your concern and am disturbed by the recent article in Look magazine relative to the investigation of UFOs at the University of Colorado. I sincerely hope that the investigation will prove to be worthwhile.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,



Gerald R. Ford, M.C.

GRF:h

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