

A Crowdfunding Proposal: UFOs Deserve Better and More Public Investigation

Between 2007 and 2012, the *New York Times* reports, a secret US Department of Defense program received \$22 million to investigate reports of unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Although it no longer receives dedicated funding, the program apparently continues as a part-time effort pursued by personnel with other duties.

Among the public, opinion on UFOs runs the gamut from belief that the whole idea is a product of fevered imaginations to conviction that Earth is frequently visited by extraterrestrial beings possessed of technologies beyond our ken. But all along that spectrum there remain good reasons to investigate UFOs.

Unknown objects in traveled airspace represent a potential danger to commercial airline traffic. Finding out what they are makes sense. If they're harmless mirages, methods of screening them out can be developed. If they're dangerous physical phenomena — natural or artificial in origin — better ways of detecting and responding to them are called for.

The defense and security implications of advanced aircraft flying with impunity through a state's claimed airspace under the control of an unknown intelligence are obvious. Should that turn out to be the case, it seems to me that information on the phenomenon should be shared among states. If there's a threat, it is presumably to Earth itself, not only to a particular government. And even if not, the interests of science and of humankind in those facts do not stop at national borders.

The nature of the UFO phenomenon is such that investigations of it shouldn't be entrusted to any single government, or for that matter to government at all.

On the other hand, most current private sector investigations seem at first blush to labor under heavy confirmation bias. That is, those who are interested in investigating UFOs either want or don't want them to be alien spacecraft and therefore find reasons to conclude that that's what they are or aren't.

It seems to me that UFO research is the perfect endeavor for a respected university to get into using "crowdfunding" — asking the general public to contribute, then spending the money to hire qualified researchers from applicable fields (meteorology, aerospace engineering, etc.) who evince no agendas beyond dogged pursuit of the truth, and putting them to work.

It seems eminently doable. Wikipedia's list of top crowdfunded projects by amount raised lists 15 which have knocked down more than the \$22 million put into the Pentagon's hands

by Congress.

The extent of governments' involvement in such crowdfunded research should be limited to legal requirements that information generated by those governments be made available to the researchers, along with any security clearances required to examine it.

The truth, as *The X-Files* TV series told us, is out there. Isn't it about time we went and found it?