**Condon Report**

**From The Black Vault Encyclopedia Project**

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The **Condon Committee** was the informal name of the **University of Colorado UFO Project**, a study of [unidentified flying objects](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Unidentified_flying_object), undertaken at the [University of Colorado](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University_of_Colorado&action=edit&redlink=1) and directed by physicist [Edward Condon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Edward_Condon) from 1966 to 1968. The Condon Committee was instigated at the behest of the [United States Air Force](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Air_Force&action=edit&redlink=1), which had studied UFOs since the 1940's.

After examining many hundreds of UFO files from the Air Force’s [Project Blue Book](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Blue_Book) and from civilian UFO groups [NICAP](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/NICAP) and [APRO](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/APRO), the Committee selected 56 to analyze in detail for its final report; a document which, wrote astronomer [J. Allen Hynek](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/J._Allen_Hynek), was intended "presumably to settle once and for all ... the vexing problem of UFOs with which the air force had been saddled for 20 years." (Hynek, 192)

This final report (Formally titled **Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects** but commonly called the **Condon Report**) was published in 1968. It officially concluded that no UFO reports were anomalous, all UFO reports had conventional explanations, and further study of the subject would not be worthwhile. The Report’s conclusions were endorsed by the [National Academy of Sciences](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Academy_of_Sciences&action=edit&redlink=1), were generally welcomed by the scientific community, and have been cited as a decisive factor in the generally low levels of interest regarding UFOs among [academics](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Academic&action=edit&redlink=1) in subsequent years. Peter Sturrock writes that the report is "the most influential public document concerning the scientific status of this (UFO) problem. Hence, all current scientific work on the UFO problem must make reference to the Condon Report."[[1]](http://www.ufoskeptic.org/sturrock/1.html)

However, critics--then and now, including some of the Committee’s members--have charged that the Committee’s final report was biased, unscientific and shaped by the Air Force’s expectations. Furthermore, critics have noted that Condon's summaries of UFO case studies are often sharply at odds with the reports they attempt to describe. Committee Coordinator [Robert Low](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_Low&action=edit&redlink=1) has been similarly criticized.

Astrophysicist [Peter A. Sturrock](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Peter_A._Sturrock) writes that "The great weight attached to this report by scientists, by the public and perhaps by officers of the federal government, is based on the presumption that the study was, in fact, scientific. This has been disputed by a number of individuals," perhaps most notably physicist [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald) and astronomer [J. Allen Hynek](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/J._Allen_Hynek). (Sturrock, 37) Sturrock himself offered a detailed critique of the Committee, noting what he argues are often glaring errors and contradictions.

[Philip J. Klass](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Philip_J._Klass) offered another perspective, however, writing, "There was indeed a plot to mislead the public. *But Condon and Low were its victims, not its architects*. A small group of 'UFO-believers,' which included a U .S. congressman, secretly plotted to discredit the Colorado effort." (as in original) [[2]](http://www.project1947.com/shg/articles/siklass.html)

Among the most obvious discrepancies frequently noted by critics is the fact that while the Condon Report declared that all UFO reports had prosaic explanations, they simultaneously classified 30 percent of their 56 case studies as "unknown"; this was a higher percentage of unknowns than any previous Air Force UFO study. A few of the cases were judged most puzzling, even after detailed analysis, but Condon made no mention of these instances.

Beyond the Report’s disputed conclusions, the Committee was plagued with infighting and controversy nearly from its inception. Of sixteen original Committee members, two were fired, one resigned in protest, and another stepped down after facing legal troubles unrelated to the Committee. Citing work by Dr. [Michael D. Swords](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Michael_D._Swords), astrophysicist [Peter A. Sturrock](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Peter_A._Sturrock) notes "of the fifteen top staff members, at least twelve ... definitely disagreed with (Condon)" and his methods, ideas and conclusions. (Sturrock, 46) This infighting led to a high turnover rate amongst the staff; Historian David Michael Jacobs writes that "Condon was unable to maintain a continuous project staff; out of the original twelve, only (Coordinator Robert) Low and two other staff members remained with the project for its duration." (Jacobs, 230) However, other sources report that Low left the project under a cloud when he was suspected of harboring a hidden bias.

Eventually news of the controversy and infighting entered the [mass media](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mass_media&action=edit&redlink=1): A 1967 [political cartoon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Political_cartoon&action=edit&redlink=1) by [Pat Oliphant](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Pat_Oliphant&action=edit&redlink=1) of the [*Denver Post*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Denver_Post&action=edit&redlink=1) depicted Condon as the victim of [alien abduction](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Alien_abduction), being whisked towards an awaiting flying saucer by two [little green men](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Little_green_men). One of Condon's peers advises him, "Stay calm, Dr Condon--just tell them you don't believe in them!" Another scientist says, "Don't let this get out--it could just *ruin* our conclusions!"

**History**

**Background**

Beginning in 1947 with [Project Sign](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Sign) (which then became [Project Grudge](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Grudge) and finally [Project Blue Book](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Blue_Book)), the U.S. Air Force had undertaken a formal study of UFOs, which had become a subject of considerable public (and some governmental) interest.

Yet Blue Book had come under increasing criticism in the 1960’s. Growing numbers of critics--including U.S. politicians, newspaper writers, UFO researchers, scientists and some the general public--were suggesting that Blue Book was conducting shoddy, unsupported research, or worse, perpetrating a [cover up](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Cover_up). UFO researcher [Jerome Clark](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Jerome_Clark) goes so far as to write that Blue Book had "lost all credibility." (Clark, 592)

The Air Force wished to stop studying UFOs, yet they found themselves in a bind: If they simply ended Blue Book, they’d risk inflaming [cover up](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Cover_up) accusation, but UFOs had become such a controversial issue that no other governmental agency was willing to take responsibility for further UFO studies.

Following a wave of UFO reports in 1965, astronomer and Blue Book consultant Dr. [J. Allen Hynek](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/J._Allen_Hynek) wrote a letter to the [Air Force Scientific Advisory Board](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Air_Force_Scientific_Advisory_Board&action=edit&redlink=1) (AFSAB) suggesting that a panel convene to re-examine Blue Book, and offer some new ideas as to goals and directions. The AFSAB agreed, and asked [Brian O’Brien](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Brian_O%E2%80%99Brien&action=edit&redlink=1) to chair a committee.

The Ad Hoc Committee to Review Project Blue Book (also called the O’Brien Committee) convened for one day in February, 1966. All Committee members but astronomer [Carl Sagan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Carl_Sagan) had formal ties to the AFSAB. While none of the O’Brien committee accepted as viable anything so radical as the [extraterrestrial hypothesis](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Extraterrestrial_hypothesis) (or ETH), they did suggest that previous UFO studies had been lacking, and could be undertaken "in more detail and depth than had been possible to date" and that the U.S. Air Force should work "with a few selected universities to provide scientific teams" to study UFOs. (Clark, 593) The O’Brien Committee suggested that, ideally, about 100 well-documented UFO sightings should be studied annually, with about 10 man-days devoted to each case. (Saunders and Harkins, 25)

In late March, 1966, two days of mass UFO sightings were reported in Michigan. After studying the reports, Hynek offered a provisional hypothesis for some of the sightings: a few of about 100 witnesses had mistaken [swamp gas](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Swamp_gas&action=edit&redlink=1) for something more spectacular. At the press conference where he made his announcement, Hynek made repeated, strenuous qualification that swamp gas was a plausible explanation for only a portion of the Michigan UFO reports, and certainly not for UFO reports in general. His qualifications were largely overlooked, and the words "swamp gas" were repeated [ad infinitum](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ad_infinitum&action=edit&redlink=1) in relation to UFO reports, and the explanation was subject to national derision. Soon, a UFO hearing was scheduled for April 5, 1996, before the [United States Congress](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States_Congress&action=edit&redlink=1), directed by [L. Mendel Rivers](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=L._Mendel_Rivers&action=edit&redlink=1).

At the hearing, Air Force secretary [Harold Brown](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Harold_Brown_(Secretary_of_Defense)&action=edit&redlink=1) defended the Air Force’s UFO studies, but he also echoed the O’Brien Committee in stating that there was room for "even stronger emphasis on the scientific aspects". (Clark, 594) At the same hearing Hynek suggested that "a civilian panel of physical and social scientists ... examine the UFO problem critically for the express purpose of determining whether a major problem exists." (Hynek, 196)

Shortly after the congressional hearing, the Air Force announced it was seeking one or more [universities](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University&action=edit&redlink=1) to undertake a study of UFOs. The Air Force wanted a respected figure with no publicly declared opinions on UFOs to direct the study. Saunders writes that "a university-based study composed entirely of outsiders could get even Congress of Brown’s neck and quiet the public, which had been finding fault with the Air Force’s handling of the UFO problem since 1947." (Saunders, 25)

The Air Force ideally wanted to have several groups active at several universities, but it took some time to find even a single school willing to accept the Air Force’s offer. Both Hynek and [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald) suggested their own campuses ([Northwestern University](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Northwestern_University&action=edit&redlink=1) and the [University of Arizona](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University_of_Arizona&action=edit&redlink=1), respectively), but they were not accepted, because both men had become lighting rods for UFO-related controversy, though for very different reasons: to some, Hynek was tainted by his Air Force association, while McDonald was publicly discussing the [extraterrestrial hypothesis](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Extraterrestrial_hypothesis) as a viable explanation for UFOs. Astronomer [Donald Menzel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Donald_Menzel) was suggested to lead the project, but he was rejected because he was seen by many as a [debunker](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Debunk&action=edit&redlink=1).

[Harvard University](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Harvard_University&action=edit&redlink=1), the [University of California at Berkeley](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University_of_California_at_Berkeley&action=edit&redlink=1), the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Massachusetts_Institute_of_Technology&action=edit&redlink=1) and the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University_of_North_Carolina_at_Chapel_Hill&action=edit&redlink=1) were all asked to consider the UFO project, but all declined. Some schools were afraid of attracting controversy if they mishandled the study, but more often, UFOs were seen as a somewhat suspect field of study.

After the [National Center for Atmospheric Research](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Center_for_Atmospheric_Research&action=edit&redlink=1) declined to undertake the Air Force’s UFO study, its director [Walter Orr Roberts](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Walter_Orr_Roberts&action=edit&redlink=1) suggested that the Air Force ask physicist [Edward Condon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Edward_Condon) of the [University of Colorado](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University_of_Colorado&action=edit&redlink=1) to take the project.

**Enter Condon**

In the summer of 1966, Condon agreed to consider the Air Force’s offer. Condon was among the best known and most distinguished scientists of his time, but he required some persuading to accept the Air Force’s project. Condon would later report that Air Force Col. Ratchford had appealed to his vanity and sense of civic responsibility, telling him that the UFO project was indeed "a dirty chore", but a man of Condon's reputation would produce results far more readily accepted by the scientific community than if the study was undertaken by "just some ordinary guy." Lamenting his gullibility, Condon later said, "I fell for this. Flattery got him somewhere." (Jacobs, 208)

Despite his reticence, Condon was an ideal project director, from the Air Force’s perspective. Perhaps most impressively, Condon had years earlier bucked the [House Unamerican Activities Committee](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=House_Unamerican_Activities_Committee&action=edit&redlink=1) when it investigated him due in part to his wife’s [Czechoslovakian](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Czechoslovakia&action=edit&redlink=1) background; Saunders characterized Condon's tenacious encounters with the HUAC as "almost legendary" among fellow scientists (Saunders and Harkins, 33). Saunders writes that this and other occasions had created an impression that Condon "was a scientist who spoke the public language" and who was willing to point out governmental abuses where he saw them. (Saunders and Harkins, 33) Hynek noted that Condon "was noted not only for his scientific record, but also for his courage in speaking out on controversial issues." (Hynek, 192)

Condon asked [Robert J. Low](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_J._Low&action=edit&redlink=1)--an assistant dean of the university’s [graduate school](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Graduate_school&action=edit&redlink=1) program--his opinion of the University of Colorado undertaking the study. Low approved of the idea, and presented it to several professors and deans. Reactions were mixed. Some thought the UFO project could be worthwhile, but others rejected it as too controversial or too disreputable.

**The Trick Memo**

On August 9, 1966, Low wrote a memorandum intended to persuade the more reluctant faculty to accept the UFO project. This so-called "Trick Memo" explained how the University could perform the project without risking their reputation, and how the University UFO research project could arrive at a predetermined conclusion while appearing objective. In part, Low wrote:

"Our study would be conducted almost entirely by non-believers who, though they couldn't possibly *prove* a negative result, could and probably would add an impressive body of thick evidence that there is no reality to the observations. The trick would be, I think, to describe the project so that, to the public, it would appear a totally objective study but, to the scientific community, would present the image of a group of non-believers trying their best to be objective but having an almost zero expectation of finding a saucer." Low also suggested that if the study focused less on "the physical reality of the saucer", and more on the "psychology and sociology of person and groups who report seeing UFOs", then "the scientific community would get the message". (Clark, 594)

In the same article cited above, Klass suggests that the word "trick," as used by Low, did not have the "devious" connotation perceived by Americans, but rather that the [Oxford University](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Oxford_University&action=edit&redlink=1)-educated Low might have absorbed the British usage, meaning, "the art or knack of doing something skillfully." Low insisted he'd meant the word "trick" this way in the memo, and one of Low's colleagues reported that Low had sometimes used the word "trick" more in line with British usage, but Klass's interpretation of this memo, however, seems to be in the minority, with critics suggesting that Low's meaning is obviously deceptive, by its context.

The Trick Memo was filed with the Project’s documents in a file labelled "AF (Air Force) Contract and Background." There, wrote Saunders, "the memo sat, ticking like a [time bomb](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Time_bomb&action=edit&redlink=1)." (Saunders and Harkins, 130)

This Trick Memo would later come to public attention, and would generate considerable controversy. Though Committee member David Saunders had some sharp criticism for Low, he also wrote that even considering the Trick Memo, "to present Low as a plotter or conspirator is unfair and hardly accurate" (Saunders and Harkins, 128), though Saunders does suggest that it was "hasty and foolish to express such ideas on paper--especially foolish if Low really believed what he was saying." (Saunders and Harkins, 129) Similarly, Hynek wrote that "I believe Low has been unduly criticized for this memo. I can appreciate the dilemma Low faced. He wanted his university to get the contract (for whatever worldly reason) and to convince the university administration that they should take it ... He wanted to invoke a path of respectability. But the path he chose was unfortunate." (Hynek, 211)

Afterwards, Low approached several members of the school’s psychology staff--notably [William A. Scott](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=William_A._Scott&action=edit&redlink=1) and [David R. Saunders](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=David_R._Saunders&action=edit&redlink=1)--who agreed to aid for the project, though they were initially unaware that the prime focus of the study would be psychological. Saunders would become a co-principal investigator, would play a major role in the project, and also in the subsequent controversies and publicity. He was furthermore the only committee member with more than a passing interest in UFOs: he had recently joined civilian UFO research group [NICAP](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/NICAP), mainly to obtain its regular newsletter.

Critics (including Jerome Clark) have suggested that finances were factor in persuading the school to accept the Air Force’s project: The University of Colorado had recently seen substantial budget cuts, while the Air Force offered $313,000 for the study (the total funding would later rise to over $500,000). Condon dismissed this suggestion, noting that $313,000 was a rather modest budget for an undertaking scheduled to last more than a year with a staff of over a dozen. More bluntly, Condon also stated that the total funding for the UFO study was "less than we spend to kill one [Viet Cong](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Viet_Cong&action=edit&redlink=1) and we go in for that by the thousands." (Saunders and Harkins, 29)

**The Study Begins**

On October 6, 1966, the University of Colorado formally agreed to undertake the UFO study. Condon would be the director, while Low was coordinator and Saunders a co-principal investigator, along with astronomer [Franklin Roach](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Franklin_Roach&action=edit&redlink=1). The other primary Committee members were astronomer [William K. Hartman](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=William_K._Hartman&action=edit&redlink=1); psychologists [Michael Wertheimer](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Michael_Wertheimer&action=edit&redlink=1), [Dan Culbertson](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Dan_Culbertson&action=edit&redlink=1) and [James Wadsworth](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=James_Wadsworth&action=edit&redlink=1) (a [graduate student](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Graduate_student&action=edit&redlink=1)); chemist [Roy Craig](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Roy_Craig&action=edit&redlink=1); electrical engineer [Norman Levine](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Norman_Levine&action=edit&redlink=1); physicist [Frederick Ayer](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Frederick_Ayer&action=edit&redlink=1); and administrative assistant [Mary Louise Armstrong](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mary_Louise_Armstrong&action=edit&redlink=1). Several other scientists or experts would serve in part-time and temporary roles, or as consultants.

Two days after the Committee had formally accepted the project, the [Denver Post](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Denver_Post&action=edit&redlink=1) quoted Low as saying that the project had met the University's acceptance threshold by the narrowest of margins, and furthermore that the project was accepted largely because it was difficult to say no to the Air Force.

Public response to the Committee's announcement was generally positive; historian Jacobs argues that there was "optimism on all sides." (Jacobs, 225). Hynek characterized Condon's perspective towards UFOs as "basically negative", but he also assumed the Condon's opinions would change once he familiarized himself with the evidence in some of the more puzzling UFO cases. [NICAP](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/NICAP)’s [Donald Keyhoe](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Donald_Keyhoe) was publicly supportive, but privately expressed fears that the Air Force would be controlling things from behind the scenes. That a scientist of Condon's standing would involve himself with UFO research marked something of a sea change, and heartened some academics who had long expressed interest in the subject, such as atmospheric physicist [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald). Many other scientists who’d earlier been hesitant to speak out on the subject now offered their opinions, whether skeptical, supportive or somewhere in between.

One of the Condon Committee’s first formal duties was a briefing by Hynek and astrophysicist/mathematician [Jacques Vallee](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Jacques_Vallee). Both men stressed the importance of implementing a fast, consistent, [statistical](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Statistics&action=edit&redlink=1) rating system to sort UFO reports and focus attention towards the best documented and most puzzling cases. The Committee also met with Major Hector Quintanilla (then head of [Project Blue Book](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Blue_Book)), and with Col. Robert Hippler of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research.

The Committee secured the help of civilian UFO research group [APRO](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/APRO), though they would play a relatively minor role in the project when compared to [NICAP](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/NICAP)'s involvement. In November of 1966, Keyhoe and Richard Hall (both of NICAP), briefed the panel. They agreed to share NICAP’s considerable research files, and also to implement an Early Warning System to better collect UFO reports. Eventually, Hall and Saunders would form a "close working relationship" after Hall worked for the Committee as a paid consultant for two weeks, compiling some of NICAP’s best-documented, yet most perplexing UFO reports. Clark writes that "As with so much of the project would start, nothing would come of Hall’s efforts." (Clark, 596)

The remainder of 1966 was devoted primarily to assembling a library, and determining how to best collect on-site investigations of UFO reports as quickly as possible. Despite these advances, the Committee was somewhat adrift and directionless for a few months, due in no small part to disagreements among the Committee’s members as to goals and methods. There was no shortage of suggestions, noted Saunders, who also lamented that "fifteen months and $313,000 did not allow the luxury of doing anything we could imagine." (Saunders and Harkins, 77) Hynek notes that "groping for a methodology was an absorbing pastime for the committee." (Hynek, 200)

A particular problem was that by seeking out people with no position on UFOs, the Committee was staffed by persons with no experience regarding (or knowledge of) previous UFO studies. One Committee member suggested filming UFOs using stereo cameras mounted with [refraction gratings](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Defraction_grating&action=edit&redlink=1) in order to study the [spectrum](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Spectrometer&action=edit&redlink=1) of light emitted by UFOs. This had been attempted some fifteen years earlier following a specific suggestion regarding UFOs made by Dr [Joseph Kaplan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Joseph_Kaplan&action=edit&redlink=1) in 1954, but was quickly judged impractical after a number of such cameras were distributed to Air Force bases. (Hynek, 199) Had the Committee known this, they would not have spent any of their limited time exploring unproductive ideas.

When the Air Force asked for a progress report in January, 1967. Committee members scrambled to prepare a presentation. During the meeting with Air Force officials, Committee members noted that they had decided to focus more on the witnesses than on the UFO reports themselves. As Swords writes, "Michael Wertheimer wanted to create UFO-simulation events and then sweep through the area studying the [perceptual](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Perception&action=edit&redlink=1), [memory](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Memory&action=edit&redlink=1), and reporting accuracies of the population. Another psychologist, Stuart Cook, supported that. Colonel Hippler said absolutely not. That's all we need: Inventing fake UFOs to fool people; a public relations catastrophe for the Air Force."

Yet beyond Hippler's disapproval of Werthheimer and Cook's idea, the meeting was unproductive until Low asked specifically what the Air Force expected from the Committee. The Air Force representatives had no ready reply.

A few days later, Col. Hippler wrote to Low. Though he wrote on Air Force letterhead, Hippler stressed that he was writing not in any official capacity, and suggested that ultimately, the UFO project "ought to be able to come to an anti-[ETH](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Extraterrestrial_hypothesis) conclusion", as Clark writes. Hippler went on to write that the Air Force wanted to cease its UFO studies, and that an official study reporting that there was nothing unusual about UFO reports would be the best way to accomplish this goal. (Clark, 597) Low replied to the letter, thanking Hippler for clarifying the Air Force’s expectations. With this sequence of events, Dr. [Michael D. Swords](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Michael_D._Swords) argued some years later, "the fix was in." (Clark, 597)

**Internal Tensions Begin**

In late January, 1967, Keyhoe and Hall gave Saunders a clipping of *The Elmira Star-Gazette*, dated January 26. Condon was quoted as saying that he though the government should not study UFO’s as the subject was nonsense, adding, "but I’m not supposed to reach that conclusion for another year." (Clark, 597) Saunders was stunned. He asked if Condon could have been misquoted, but Keyhoe reported that several NICAP members had been present when Condon delivered his lecture; one of them had resigned from NICAP in protest, arguing that the Condon Committee was nothing more than pretense.

The next day Saunders confronted Condon about the press clipping. Saunders feared that NICAP would end their association with the Committee (thus eliminating a valuable source of case files), and furthermore that the negative publicity following a split from NICAP could harm public perception of the Committee.

In the meantime, Condon had taken no part in the field investigations; he would ultimately investigate at most four or five cases--mostly [contactees](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Contactee)--of several hundred cases which the Committee examined. Furthermore, the Committee’s members found it difficult to speak with Condon: they usually had to speak to coordinator Low with questions or problems, but were often unsatisfied with Low's efforts. On at least one occasion, Condon fell asleep while a consultant was offering a presentation. Consultant [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald) had initially been hopeful for the Committee, but after making a few presentations and feeling as though Condon completely ignored his contributions, McDonald grew increasingly vocal in his criticism. He would soon begin to detail his view of the Committee’s problems in letters to [Frederick Seitz](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Frederick_Seitz&action=edit&redlink=1), president of the [National Academy of Science](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Academy_of_Science&action=edit&redlink=1).

Despite the growing internal tension, the Committee’s members continued to collect, study and analyze UFO reports, including nearly 40 field investigations around the United States. They investigated a few well-known reports, including an early [cattle mutilation](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cattle_mutilation&action=edit&redlink=1) report. There was, however, an increasing suspicion among the Committee’s members that their research would be used to support a forgone conclusion. Most of the Committee’s regular members objected to the manner in which Condon and Low were directing the Committee, and several members were considering writing a dissenting minority report if Condon overruled their conclusions that some UFO reports seemed anomalous and deserving of closer scrutiny. The Committee was disturbed that Condon and Low tried to insulate them from Hynek, Vallee, McDonald and others who thought UFOs deserved study, while simultaneously openly consulting with avowed UFO [debunkers](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Debunk&action=edit&redlink=1). That Condon focused most of his interest towards the lunatic fringe of UFO reports disturbed much of the Committee as well. Another particular irritation was that while NICAP and Blue Book had promised to share new UFO reports as quickly as possible, only NICAP had done so. Even Condon--so often criticized for bias and ambivalence--formally complained to the Air Force about their lack of cooperation.

The Committee's members usually worked solo, and rarely (if ever) met as a group to discuss their progress, to critique one another's work, or to reach a consensus on disagreements. Because of this, individuals embraced a number of approaches, sometimes resulting in conflict or disagreements. Notably, the Committee’s members differed in their opinions regarding the [extraterrestrial hypothesis](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Extraterrestrial_hypothesis). Some (especially Saunders) thought the ETH should be included as one of a range of hypotheses to explain UFOs; others (Notably Low and Wertheimer) rejected any consideration of the ETH. Low wrote a position paper, characterizing the ETH as "nonsense"; Wertheimer adamantly argued that the ETH could neither be proved nor disproved, and he afterwards had little to do with the Committee. (Jacobs, 228) This ETH dispute developed into an ideological and methodological [schism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Schism&action=edit&redlink=1) among the Committee’s members: One group, championed by Low, thought that "the solution to the UFO mystery was to be found in the psychological makeup of witnesses"; the other group, championed by Saunders, "wanted to look at as much as the data as possible." (Jacobs, 230)

In September 1967, another collision with NICAP was narrowly averted. Keyhoe learned that Condon had given a lecture to the [National Bureau of Standards](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Bureau_of_Standards&action=edit&redlink=1), a group Condon had once chaired. In his lecture, Condon had discussed three UFO reports made by obviously unstable [kooks](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Crank_(person)&action=edit&redlink=1), and had intimated that many or most UFO reports came from such persons. An irritated Keyhoe asked Saunders why NICAP’s time and money should be used in collecting and forwarding UFO reports to the Committee when Condon's bias was obvious. Keyhoe threatened to sever NICAP’s association with the Condon Committee. In spite of his own growing doubts, Saunders convinced Keyhoe that Condon could separate his own opinions from his work, and had simply forgotten to state where his personal opinions began. Keyhoe accepted this, but also warned that if the Committee could not demonstrate a more objective manner, NICAP would cease their involvement and publicize their complaints.

After Keyhoe was mollified (at least temporarily), Saunders told Condon of the development. Condon was nonplussed; if NICAP chose to sever their association he had no objection. After some thirty minutes of discussion, Saunders persuaded Condon to write Keyhoe and report that the quotes from the National Bureau of Standards speech were taken out of context.

Shortly after this, both Low and Condon were quoted in the *Rocky Mountain News* as expressing their approval of an article in *Science* arguing against the ETH. Privately and publicly--including during Committee proceedings--Low and Condon were repeatedly arguing that UFO studies were a waste of time. Clark writes that, "By now all that was keeping the staff from open revolt was one hold-out: Roy Craig, who insisted that Condon still had his full confidence." (Clark, 598)

Fearing the worst from NICAP following the *Rocky Mountain News* story, Low flew from Colorado to Washington DC for a meeting with Keyhoe. Keyhoe asked Low if the Committee was "on the level". According to Keyhoe, Low replied, "I see no reason why you have to determine whether the Colorado Project is on the level or not," and furthermore admitted that Condon had a very negative opinion of the Project and of UFO studies in general. Low noted that much of the Committee held opinions very different from Condon's, but Keyhoe countered that as director, Condon could override any dissenting opinions when the final report was written.

Despite these problems, Low urged Keyhoe to continue sending case files and reports to the Committee. When Keyhoe asked why NICAP should continue supporting a project which had effectively reached its findings, Keyhoe reported Low’s reply as, "If you don’t, the project could be accused of reaching a conclusion without all of NICAP’s evidence." (Clark, 599)

**Cracks in the Dam**

Due to several developments in 1966 and 1967, the internal conflicts in the Condon Committee were about to burst into public awareness.

On November 14, 1966, Keyhoe wrote a long letter to Condon (cc’d to Low), detailing his concerns and questions regarding the project. Were Condon and Low’s biases tainting the project? Were the Air Force’s orders directing the project? Had Condon himself read any of the NICAP case studies? Why had Condon himself done so little field research? Condon and Low replied by telling Keyhoe that they were under no obligation to answer his queries. With their non-answer, Keyhoe had nearly reached his breaking point; NICAP was no longer sending UFO case files to the Committee.

**The Trick Memo Exposed**

In July, 1967, Committee Member Roy Craig was scheduled to speak before a [Portland, Oregon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Portland,_Oregon&action=edit&redlink=1) audience regarding the Condon Committee. When Craig asked Low for some documentation regarding the Committee’s origins, Low gave him a stack of papers, unaware that a copy of the Trick Memo was included. After giving the speech, Craig--previously Condon's staunchest ally on the Committee, other than Low--showed the Trick Memo to Committee member Norman Levine, saying, "See if this doesn’t give you a funny feeling in the stomach." (Clark, 600)

Levine showed the memo to Saunders, who was saddened but not surprised; the memo seemed to explain the attitudes Low and Condon had demonstrated from the project’s beginning. Copies of the Trick Memo were circulated to the entire Committee, barring Low and Condon. Public disclosure of the memo was considered, but decided against: there was still hope that the final report might recommend further study of the UFO phenomenon. Eventually, however, Saunders gave a copy of the memo to Keyhoe. In turn, Keyhoe told [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald) of the memo's contents, but, citing confidentiality promises, did not give him a copy of the memo. Eventually, McDonald located a copy of the memo in the project's open files.

The Trick Memo confirmed McDonald’s worst suspicions about the Committee. In response, he wrote a seven page letter to Condon, explaining point by point, his problems, frustration and disappointment with the Committee's shortcomings. Apparently unaware that the Trick Memo was never intended to see the light of day, McDonald quoted a few lines from it (the same "...the trick would be..." portion cited above), then added, "I am rather puzzled by the viewpoints expressed there ... but I gather that they seem straightforward to you, else this part of the record would, presumably, not be available for inspection in the open Project files." (Clark, 601)

When Condon read McDonald’s letter on February 5, 1968, he became furious. Low read the letter, and Armstrong reported that he "exploded," suggesting that whomever was responsible for McDonald’s having the memo should be fired, before calming down and discussing the affair with Condon. (Saunders and Harkins, 188)

The next day, Condon called a meeting of the Committee to uncover the chain of events that had led to McDonald’s receiving the Trick Memo. Saunders characterized Condon's manner as imperious, behaving as though he were "the [Grand Inquisitor](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Inquisitor&action=edit&redlink=1)." (Saunders and Harkins, 190)

Condon asked the Committee to read McDonald’s letter. When they did, the Committee was initially occupied with the substance McDonald’s incisive, pointed critique and all but ignored the few lines quoted from the Trick Memo.

When Condon wanted to know how McDonald had received a copy of a project memo, Saunders admitted that he’d forwarded the Trick Memo to Keyhoe. Condon reportedly called Saunders "disloyal" and said, "For an act like that you deserve to be ruined professionally." (Saunders and Harkins, 189) Saunders responded, he said, by stating he was loyal to the American public, while Condon seemed beholden to the Air Force.

The next day, in brief letters, Saunders and Levine were fired "for cause", and Condon issued a press release reporting that the men had been fired "for incompetence." The Colorado Daily asked Condon to elaborate on the nature of the incompetence, and he declined. Fearing libel charges from Saunders and Levine if the paper ran unqualified accusations of incompetence, the *Colorado Daily* omitted the reason for Saunders and Levine’s termination, thus angering Condon. (Saunders and Harkins, 193) Though the Trick Memo had never formally been declared confidential or personal, and though McDonald had located the memo in the project's open files, Condon repeatedly insisted in subsequent months that McDonald had "stolen" it from Low’s personal files. (Saunders and Harkins, 201)

Condon telephoned the president of the [University of Arizona](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=University_of_Arizona&action=edit&redlink=1) to report that McDonald had stolen the trick memo from the Project’s files, and also wrote a letter to the Air Force to deprecate Levine in an attempt to harm his security clearance. (These were not the only instances in which Condon tried to damage someone’s career after they’d dissatisfied him regarding the UFO Project. Condon had earlier tried to get Committee consultant [Robert M. Wood](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_M._Wood&action=edit&redlink=1) fired from his [McDonnell Douglas](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=McDonnell_Douglas&action=edit&redlink=1) position after Wood had written "a critical but polite letter listing his concerns about project shortcomings"; and Condon would later consider blocking [Carl Sagan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Carl_Sagan)’s entry into the distinguished [Cosmos Club](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cosmos_Club&action=edit&redlink=1) because Sagan--though quite skeptical of UFOs--had been "too soft on UFOs for Condon's taste." (Clark, 603)

On February 24, 1968 administrative assistant Mary Lou Armstrong resigned from the Condon Committee. In her letter she wrote staff morale had reached a deplorable depth, and that "there is an almost universal '[lack of confidence](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lack_of_confidence&action=edit&redlink=1)'" in coordinator Low, arguing that much of the Committee's troubles was Low's fault. "Had *you* (Condon) handled the direction of our activities, there would not have been such a serious conflict." (Hynek, 244)

**Publicity**

On April 30, 1968, Keyhoe held a press conference to announce that NICAP had severed all ties with the Committee. He circulated copies of the Trick Memo, which received wide publicity.

A few weeks later, Low himself left the UFO project. As [Don Ecker](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Don_Ecker&action=edit&redlink=1) writes, "Robert Low left the project officially on May 24, 1968. It was realized that in view of the 'trick memo' if Low had any part of the final report, it would not have any public credibility."[[3]](http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates/2005/jul/m18-039.shtml)

By now, the Condon Committee’s conflicts were being covered in the [mass media](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mass_media&action=edit&redlink=1), including a [John G. Fuller](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=John_G._Fuller&action=edit&redlink=1) article, "Flying Saucer Fiasco" in the May, 1968 issue of *Look*, a general interest magazine quite popular in its day. Including interviews with Saunders and Levine, Fuller detailed the controversy and accusations leveled against the Condon Committee, and described the project as a "$500,000 trick." (Clark, 601) Condon responded by writing to Look, declaring that Fuller’s article contained unspecified "falsehoods and misrepresentations". (Jacobs, 231)

The press had earlier occasionally mention of the Committee’s troubles, but Fuller’s article brought a much higher level of attention, especially from scientific and technical journals, many of which began discussing the Committee in their [editorial](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Editorial&action=edit&redlink=1) and letters pages. [Industrial Research](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Industrial_Research_(journal)&action=edit&redlink=1) reprinted the Trick Memo, while [Scientific Research](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Scientific_Research_(journal)&action=edit&redlink=1) interviewed Saunders and Levine, who reported that that they were considering a [libel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Libel&action=edit&redlink=1) suit against Condon for terminating them for alleged "incompetence"; they furthermore said that Condon had used an "unscientific approach" in directing the Committee. (Jacobs, 231) Condon said that calling his methods "unscientific" was itself libelous, and in turn threatened to sue Saunders and Levine.

When the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=American_Association_for_the_Advancement_of_Science&action=edit&redlink=1) covered the ongoing Committee controversy in an issue of its official journal *Science*, Condon first promised to grant an interview apparently in the hopes of offering his side of the conflict. Shortly thereafter, however, *Science* editor [Daniel S. Greenberg](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Daniel_S._Greenberg&action=edit&redlink=1) reported that Condon announced it would be "inappropriate for Science to touch the matter, withdrew his offer of cooperation, and proceeded to enunciate high-sounding principles in support of his new-found belief that Science should not touch the subject until after the publication if his report." When Greenberg noted that Condon had promised his help, "Condon flatly refused to discuss the matter further." (Jacobs, 233) When *Science* ran the article without Condon's contributions, Condon resigned from the AAAS in protest.

The Fuller article even helped inspire Congressional hearings. Representative [J. Edward Roush](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=J._Edward_Roush&action=edit&redlink=1) spoke on the House floor, arguing that Fuller’s article brought up "grave doubts about as to the scientific profundity and objectivity of the project"; in a [Denver Post](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Denver_Post&action=edit&redlink=1) interview, Roush suggested that the Trick Memo proved that the Air Force had indeed been dictating the Project’s direction and conclusions. (Jacobs, 233)

Even before the Condon Report was released, astronomer [Frank Drake](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Frank_Drake&action=edit&redlink=1) wrote to the [National Academy of Sciences](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Academy_of_Sciences&action=edit&redlink=1), suggesting that the Condon Committee's final report was tainted, and should thus be discredited. The [General Accounting Office](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=General_Accounting_Office&action=edit&redlink=1) announced that they were considering an investigation of the Committee’s finances.

**The Condon Report**

In spite of the ongoing controversy, the Committee’s members largely continued their work. By late 1968, they’d completed their reports and handed them over to Condon, who wrote summaries of each case study and then offered the manuscript to the NAS, then headed by Condon's longtime friend and former student, [Frederick Seitz](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Frederick_Seitz&action=edit&redlink=1). A panel of 11 NAS members claimed they reviewed the report, and then issued a statement that supported the manuscript’s conclusions. In response to the report's findings, [Project Blue Book](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Blue_Book) formally closed down in late 1969.

The Report ran to 1,485 pages in hardcover and 965 pages in the Bantam paperback edition. It divided UFO cases into five categories: old UFO reports (from before the Committee convened), new reports, photographic cases, radar/visual cases, and UFOs reported by astronauts (some UFO cases fell into multiple categories). The entire Condon Report is available online; see External Links section below.

In the second paragraph of his introductory "Conclusions and Recommendations", Condon wrote: "Our general conclusion is that nothing has come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that has added to scientific knowledge. Careful consideration of the record as it is available to us leads us to conclude that further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby." (Condon, 1)

This was the core of Condon's position of UFOs, and these are his words which received wide attention in the mass media. Many reviews of the book and newspaper editorials supported Condon's position that the UFO question was answered and the case was closed. Hynek suggests that Condon's conclusion was "surely the kiss of death to any further investigation in the name of the quest for knowledge." (Hynek, 193)

Astrophysicist [Peter A. Sturrock](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Peter_A._Sturrock) notes that, in general, "critical reviews came from scientists who had actually carried out research in the UFO area, while the laudatory reviews came from scientists who had not carried out such research." (Sturrock, 46) Sturrock also writes that "most of the scientific community paid little attention when the report was published, and none later." (Sturrock, 49)

Furthermore, Sturrock writes that while the Condon report received "almost universal praise from the news media", responses from "scientific journals were mixed." The esteemed journal *Nature*, printed *A Sledgehammer for Nuts*, a largely positive review, while *Icarus* (then edited by [Carl Sagan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Carl_Sagan)) took an unusual and admirable approach, publishing both an approving review by Dr [Hong-Yee Chiu](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Hong-Yee_Chiu&action=edit&redlink=1), and a negative appraisal by Dr [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald).

To no one’s surprise, however, a number of critics--several of whom had already attacked the Committee--argued that the Report was profoundly flawed, or even unscientific. [C.D.B. Bryan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=C.D.B._Bryan&action=edit&redlink=1) writes that the final report "left nearly everyone dissatisfied." (Bryan, 189)

**Positive Responses**

*Science* and *Time* were among the many newspapers, magazines and journals which published approving reviews or editorials related to the Condon Report. Some compared any continued belief in UFOs as an unusual phenomenon to those who insisted the [earth was flat](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Flat_earth&action=edit&redlink=1); others predicted that interest in UFOs would wane and in a few generations be only dimly remembered, like relics of [spiritualism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Spiritualism&action=edit&redlink=1) such as [ectoplasm](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ectoplasm&action=edit&redlink=1) or table-raising.

The March 8, 1969 issue of [*Nature*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nature_(journal)&action=edit&redlink=1) offered a generally positive review for the Condon Report, but seemed to suggest that UFO studies were a wasteful, futile indulgence. Approvingly, the editor’s note that "The salient feature of the report is its almost obsessive attention to detail", but despite this detail, the editors opine that "it is not immediately obvious why the job had to be done at all. Will a single flying saucer buff alter his credo as a result of it? Will the five million Americans who believe they have seen a flying saucer diligently peruse the report to discover for which of many possible reasons they were mistaken? Was it likely that anything of real scientific value could emerge from the report? Or could it be that several members of Congress or the United States Air Force really believe in flying saucers?" In summary, the editors write "The Colorado project is a monumental achievement, but one of perhaps misapplied ingenuity. It would doubtless be inapt to compare it with earlier centuries' attempts to calculate how many [angels](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Angel) could balance on the point of a pin; it is more like taking a [sledgehammer](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sledgehammer&action=edit&redlink=1) to crack a [nut](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nut&action=edit&redlink=1), except that the nuts will be quite immune to its impact."

On January 8, 1969, the [New York Times](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=New_York_Times&action=edit&redlink=1) [headline](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Headline&action=edit&redlink=1) reported, "U.F.O. Finding: No Visits From Afar." The article (by [Walter Sullivan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Walter_Sullivan&action=edit&redlink=1)) glowingly declared that due to the report’s finding, the ETH could finally be dismissed and all UFO reports had prosaic explanations. Sullivan noted that the report had its critics, but characterized them as "U.F.O. enthusiasts", a term which would subsequently reappear (often with the same dismissive tone) in later descriptions of UFO researchers. Sullivan’s review of the Condon Report would see widespread attention. (Clark, 602)

Regarding Walter Sullivan’s influential [New York Times](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=New_York_Times&action=edit&redlink=1) review of the Condon Report, Clark argues that "Sullivan was hardly an objective journalist but a partisan already engaging in [spin control](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Spin_doctor&action=edit&redlink=1). Critics were charging that the report was damaged goods; the conflicts and controversies that had troubled the project were raising credibility problems that could be addressed only if the critics themselves were discredited. Though his *Times* article does not mention it, Sullivan had already written the introduction to the [Bantam](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Bantam_Books&action=edit&redlink=1) paperback edition." (Clark, 602)

Furthermore, Clark characterizes Sullivan’s introduction as "a [revisionist history](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Revisionist_history&action=edit&redlink=1) of the project." (Clark, 602) Condon is portrayed as a tough but fair leader, attacked unjustly by [NICAP](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/NICAP) and "disgruntled UFO believers", meaning Saunders and Levine. Though Keyhoe’s *Flying Saucers Are Real* had been out of print for over a decade, Sullivan suggested that Keyhoe’s involvement with the Condon Committee was simply a [publicity stunt](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Publicity_stunt&action=edit&redlink=1) to boost the book’s sales. If it seemed that Condon had focused on the lunatic fringe, wrote Sullivan, it was only because Condon loved to tell a good yarn, and crackpots made for some of the most entertaining tales.

**Negative Responses**

Despite the largely positive response to the Condon Report’s conclusions, it has seen a number of critics disputing it in one way or another; some of these are noted below.

Several observers have criticized the report as a sloppy work: Jacobs describes the report as "a rather unorganized compilation of independent articles on disparate subjects, a minority of which dealt with UFOs."(Jacobs, 240) Hynek agrees with this characterization, he argues that the report is "a voluminous, rambling, poorly organized report ... considerably less than half of which was addressed to the investigation of UFO reports." (Hynek, 192) Hynek also contended that beyond Condon's introduction, "the rest of the lengthy report defies succinct description. It is a loose compilation of partly related subjects, each by a different author." (Hynek, 193) Swords contends that "To those of us who have opened it (the Condon Report), it has a peculiar structure, almost audibly saying, 'don't try to read me'. [Paranoia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Paranoia&action=edit&redlink=1) aside, this probably is not deliberate. Reading the primary documents of the project indicates very clearly that the organization's chaos and personnel dislocations that afflicted it made the creation of a smooth document impossible."

* In the April 14, 1969 issue of [Scientific Research](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Scientific_Research&action=edit&redlink=1), [Robert L. M. Baker, Jr.](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_L._M._Baker,_Jr.&action=edit&redlink=1) wrote that rather than settling the issue, the Condon Committee’s report "seems to justify scientific investigation along many general and specialized frontiers." [[4]](http://www.project1947.com/shg/articles/sr2.html)
* In the December, 1969 issue of [Physics Today](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Physics_Today&action=edit&redlink=1), Condon Committee consultant [Gerald Rothberg](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gerald_Rothberg&action=edit&redlink=1) wrote that he had thoroughly investigated about 100 UFO cases; three of four of these had left him puzzled. He thought that this "residue of unexplained reports" indicated a "legitimate scientific controversy." (Clark, 604)
* In the November, 1970 issue of [*Astronautics and Aeronautics*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Astronautics_and_Aeronautics&action=edit&redlink=1), The [American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=American_Institute_for_Aeronautics_and_Astronautics&action=edit&redlink=1) published their review of the Condon Report. The AIAA subcommittee appreciated the difficulty of the undertaking, and generally agreed with Condon's suggestion that little of value had been uncovered by scientific UFO studies, but had some criticism for the Condon Report, stating that the AIAA "did not find a basis in the report for his (Condon's) prediction that nothing of scientific value will come of further studies." [[5]](http://www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc310.htm)
* Of the Condon Report’s 56 case studies, 30--whether termed "probable" "possible” or "suspected" hoaxes, misidentifications or the like--are classified as unknown. In a review published in [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Bulletin_of_the_Atomic_Scientists&action=edit&redlink=1), Hynek noted that the percentage of unknowns (nearly 50%) in the Condon report was well above the unknowns in [Project Sign](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Sign), [Project Grudge](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Grudge) and [Project Blue Book](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Project_Blue_Book), the projects which "led to the Condon investigation in the first place." (Clark, 603) Hynek, McDonald and others would argue that some of the solved cases were solved more by strained presumption than detailed dissection of the evidence presented. A few of the unknowns were judged by the Committee’s members to be most perplexing, yet Condon made no mention of these conclusions in his summaries.
* Critics often charge that Condon's summaries are inaccurate or misleading. For example, [Gordon David Thayer](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gordon_David_Thayer&action=edit&redlink=1) was the Committee’s consultant on the 35 [radar](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Radar&action=edit&redlink=1)-visual cases. Thayer concluded that 19 of 35 cases were almost certainly due to "anomalous propagation": so called "radar [ghosts](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Ghost)" that can be generated by fog, clouds, birds, insect swarms or the like, yet are suggestive on the radar screen of a solid object. Though Thayer offered anomalous propagation as an explanation for just over 50% of the cases he studied, Condon suggested that anomalous propagation was responsible for *all* the radar cases.
* The case studies feature scattered statements which seem to suggest that at least some of the Committee regarded a few of the UFO reports as genuinely anomalous, yet in his summaries, Condon makes no mention of these conclusions. Jacobs argues that these enigmatic reports were "buried" among the confirmed cases. (Jacobs, 241) In his analysis of a 1965 [Lakenheath, England](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lakenheath,_England&action=edit&redlink=1) radar-visual case, Gordon Thayer wrote, “The apparently rational, intelligent behavior of the UFO suggests a mechanical device of unknown origin as the most probable explanation of this sighting.” Later discussion of this case notes that "The probability of at least one UFO involved appears to be fairly high", yet Condon completely ignores this conclusion. Another instance is Case Number 46, a series of photographs taken in 1950 in [McMinnville, Oregon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=McMinnville,_Oregon&action=edit&redlink=1). The original photographic negatives were offered for inspection, and in his conclusion, Committee investigator [William K. Hartmann](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=William_K._Hartmann&action=edit&redlink=1) wrote that, "This is one of the few UFO reports in which all factors investigated, geometric, psychological, and physical appear to be consistent with the assertion that an extraordinary flying object, silvery, metallic, disk-shaped, tens of meters in diameter, and evidently artificial, flew within sight of two witnesses."[[6]](http://www.nicap.org/case46.htm) Condon made no mention of this conclusion.
* In the section devoted to UFO reports made by [astronauts](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Astronaut&action=edit&redlink=1), Franklin Roach declared that three accounts related by astronauts [Frank Borman](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Frank_Borman&action=edit&redlink=1) and [James McDivitt](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=James_McDivitt&action=edit&redlink=1) aboard [Gemini 7](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gemini_7&action=edit&redlink=1) were "a challenge to the analyst" and "puzzling". Roach writes that if [NORAD](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=NORAD&action=edit&redlink=1)’s list of space object near Gemini was accurate (as he concluded), than the object Borman and McDivitt reported remained unidentified, and "we shall have to find a rational explanation" for the object, "or alternately, keep it on our list of unknowns." (Condon, 208) Again, Condon does not mention this intriguing report in his summary.
* In 1969, as part of his lecture "Science in Default", physicist [James E. McDonald](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/James_E._McDonald) said, "The Condon Report, released in January, 1968, after about two years of Air Force-supported study is, in my opinion, quite inadequate. The sheer bulk of the Report, and the inclusion of much that can only be viewed as 'scientific padding', cannot conceal from anyone who studies it closely the salient point that it represents an examination of only a tiny fraction of the most puzzling UFO reports of the past two decades, and that its level of scientific argumentation is wholly unsatisfactory. Furthermore, of the roughly 90 cases that it specifically confronts, over 30 are conceded to be unexplained. With so large a fraction of unexplained cases (out of a sample that is by no means limited only to the truly puzzling cases, but includes an objectionably large number of obviously trivial cases), it is far from clear how Dr. Condon felt justified in concluding that the study indicated 'that further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby.'"[[7]](http://dewoody.net/ufo/Science_in_Default.html)
* In a 1969 issue of *The American Journal of Physics*, [Thornton Page](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Thornton_Page&action=edit&redlink=1) reviewed the Condon Report and wrote, "Intelligent laymen can (and do) point out the logical flaw in Condon's conclusion based on a statistically small (and selected) sample, Even in this sample a consistent pattern can be recognized; it is ignored by the 'authorities,' who then compound their 'felony' by recommending that no further observational data be collected."[[8]](http://www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc304.htm) Ironically, Page had been a member of the [Robertson Panel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Robertson_Panel) which suggested UFOs should be [debunked](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Debunk&action=edit&redlink=1) to reduce public interest, though his opinions regarding UFOs changed in his later years.

**Allen Hynek's criticism**

In his 1972 book *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry*, astronomer [J. Allen Hynek](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/J._Allen_Hynek) discussed the Condon Report at length in a chapter titled "Science Is Not Always What Scientists Do." He argues that the report is so flawed as to be nearly worthless as a scientific study. In brief, Hynek argued, "The Condon Report settled nothing." (Hynek, 195) He also suggested that people should essentially read the Condon Report backwards: the case studies first, then Condon's summaries.

Hynek described Condon's introduction as "singularly slanted," but also notes that it "avoided mentioning that there was embedded within the bowels of the report a remaining mystery; that the committee had been unable to furnish adequate explanations for more than a quarter of the cases examined." (Hynek, 192)

Hynek argues that "Unimpeachable evidence shows that Condon did not understand the nature and scope of the problem" he was charged with studying. (Hynek, 207)

Like many other critics, Hynek notes that some of the unsolved cases were judged most puzzling. Particularly bothersome to Hynek was the overriding notion that UFOs were tied inexorably to the idea of extraterrestrial life. By focusing on this one hypothesis, the report "did not try to establish whether UFOs really constituted a problem for the scientist, whether physical or social." (Hynek, 194)

Furthermore, Hynek notes that the report relies on so few UFO reports that overarching trends may have been ignored.

Hynek also argues that the Condon Report was not scientific. They chose to hinge on the ETH, but, Hynek insists, the data are simply lacking to analyze that hypothesis and reach an informed conclusion. By not being able to demonstrate that a hypothesis was falsifiable, they violated one of the fundamental rules of the [scientific method](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Scientific_method&action=edit&redlink=1). The only hypothesis the Committee could have tested, Hynek wrote, was "There exists a phenomenon, described by the content of the UFO reports, which presently is not physically explainable." (Hynek, 201)

**Peter A. Sturrock's Criticism**

Astrophysicist [Peter A. Sturrock](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Peter_A._Sturrock) has offered a number of detailed critiques of the Condon Report.

A review of Sturrock's critique notes that "This report has clouded all attempts at legitimate UFO research since its release. Much of the public, including the scientific community and the press, erroneously assumes that this project represents a serious, in-depth look into the issues. Sturrock assiduously dissects the Condon Report and makes it clear that the study is scientifically flawed. In fact, anyone who actually reads the report carefully will be surprised to find that Edward Condon, who personally wrote the Summary and Conclusions, did not investigate any of the cases. Rather it was his staff that did the legwork. That is why the report is internally inconsistent with the body of the document supporting some UFO cases, while the summary does not."[[9]](http://www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc847.htm)

In his own detailed critiques of the Condon Committee, Sturrock writes that "Another important point of scientific methodology is that, if one is evaluating a [hypothesis](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Hypothesis&action=edit&redlink=1) (such as [ETH](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Extraterrestrial_hypothesis)), it is beneficial to regard this [hypothesis](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Hypothesis&action=edit&redlink=1) as one member of a complete and mutually exclusive set of hypotheses. This point seems to have been recognized by Thayer ... but it was apparently ignored by Condon and other members of the project staff. It is of little use to argue that the evidence does not support one hypothesis, unless one known what the surviving hypotheses are." (Sturrock, 40)

Sturrock also criticizes the Condon Committee for heavy reliance on what he calls "'theory dependent' arguments. This requirement, above all, makes the appraisal of the UFO phenomenon very difficult: if we entertain the hypothesis that the phenomenon may be due to an extremely advance civilization, we must face the possibility that many ideas we accept as simple truths may, in a wider and more sophisticated context, not be as simple, and may not even be truths." (Sturrock, 40)

As a specific example of "theory dependent" analysis in the Condon Report, Sturrock notes a case where an allegedly supersonic UFO did not produce a [sonic boom](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sonic_boom&action=edit&redlink=1). He notes that "we should *not* assume that a more advanced civilization could not find some way at traveling with supersonic speeds without producing a sonic boom." Furthermore, Sturrock notes that J.P. Petit has “has proposed a procedure involving [magnetohydrodynamic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Magnetohydrodynamic&action=edit&redlink=1) processes whereby the shockwave of a supersonic object would be suppressed.” (Sturrock, 40)

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