

## Space Conspiracies

# The Return of the Alien Visitor

BY SCOTT HANDLEMAN

**W**hy did the Bush administration *really* attack Iraq? Oil, military Keynesianism or political distraction—none of these answers is fully satisfactory. At last a new explanation has been proffered courtesy of Dr. Michael Salla, a think-tank researcher who has worked at American University, George Washington U., and Australian National University. According to Salla, the Second Gulf War was determined by “the need to gain unfettered access to Iraq’s extra-terrestrial heritage.” Salla opposed the war and now advocates a UN mandate in the administration of Iraq.

Salla explains that Sumerian civilization was founded by advanced beings called the Anunnaki (Sumerian for “those who came from Heaven to Earth”). The Anunnaki visit was recorded in ancient cuneiform texts, translated by Zecharia Sitchin in 1976. Sitchin’s translation was discounted by mainstream archaeologists but according to Scalla, it intrigued “clandestine organizations” in America and Europe, including the CIA. These groups have since wished to excavate the Sumerian cities and reverse-engineer alien technologies. Hence the U.S. orchestration of the first and second wars on Iraq.

Salla notes the U.S. ambassador’s comment, when Hussein was first massing troops on the Kuwaiti border, that “we have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts... such as your dispute with Kuwait.” Naturally, French, Russian and German intelligence services have wished to prevent the exclusive U.S. exploitation of ET technology—hence their countries’ opposition to the latest war. You can read the full story at [www.exopolitics.org](http://www.exopolitics.org).

Sounds far-fetched, you say? Saddam’s famous statue fell in April. By July 1, the Guardian of London reported that the Pentagon was planning for “a new generation of weapons, including hypersonic drones and bombs dropped from space, that will allow the US to strike its enemies at lightning speed from its own territory.” By 2025, the Pentagon intends

to possess a *reusable* hypersonic vehicle with a 12,000 pound payload, “capable of taking off from a conventional military runway and striking targets 9,000 nautical miles distant in less than two hours”—ten times the speed of sound! Of course it could all just be another scam, like Star Wars, for the military-industrial complex to make money.

Then again, what about the three-month synchronicity between Baghdad’s fall and the Pentagon’s r & d announcement? Could a rusting Anunnakian rocket ship, unearthed by Special Forces near Babylon, now be shipping to Area 51? Many of us scoff at such notions.

For there to have been a visit from space, first, there would have to exist in-

---

***In 1952, a panel commissioned by the CIA concluded that the biggest danger in UFOs was popular belief in them.***

---

telligent and technologically-advanced alien civilizations. The probable number of such civilizations can be estimated by a formula called the Drake equation, which starts from the number of stars in the galaxy (around 200 billion) and multiplies by fractions representing the probability of certain requirements for the occurrence of alien astronomers. The outcome varies wildly depending on your guess as to the value of the intermediate fractions, but Carl Sagan put the number at roughly “1/10 the average lifetime of a technical civilization in years.” The Drake equation is so malleable that it’s not much use for proving anything, but I’m confident that the heavens are teeming with thoughtful

life. Otherwise the cosmos would be too depressing, existentially. For example, Baywatch would turn into the most-watched tv show *of the space-time continuum*. George W. Bush would become the most powerful biological entity *in the history of the universe*.

While the aliens are sure to be out there, the vastness of space may well discourage them from interstellar travel. Sagan said that there are “conceivable ways of doing it without bumping into fundamental physical constraints. And this suggests that it is premature to say that interstellar space flight is out of the question.” Still, he saw a problem in the sheer number of stars worth exploring, coupled with the prohibitive expense of interstellar transport. For example, Bussard’s ramjet, which Sagan deemed theoretically feasible, is a spacecraft several hundred miles wide.

It’s easy to picture the contractors and decorated generals of Zeta Reticuli, slobbering a strange slime as they negotiate a fleet of Bussard Ramjets. Even so, resource constraints and (hopefully) planetwide protest would staunchly limit the number of interstellar craft that an alien society could build. Ten thousand alien civilizations, each launching ten thousand spaceships, could still visit only 0.05% of the stars in the Milky Way.

Sagan admitted the remote possibility of alien visitation, and admitted that he could think of no empirical test to refute the hypothesis that at least some UFOs are extraterrestrials (or angels, or future time travelers). He chalks up the popularity of the space-alien theory of UFOs, in part, to the scientific spirit of the times: “over the last few centuries science has systematically expropriated areas which are the traditional concern of religion.” Aliens fit in comfortably in the universe of science, so the alien visitor has replaced the monster or savior of religion and myth. Also, people believe in E.T. visits because to do so resolves the ambiguity of UFOs, and because it generates novelty and excite-

# Ten thousand alien civilizations, each launching ten thousand spaceships, could still visit only 0.05% of the stars in the Milky Way.

ment. Finally, Sagan identifies military classification as a culprit. Where independent scientific investigation could help to dispel rumor, the military has tended instead “to classify everything in sight,” especially the bizarre and unexplained incidents. David Jacobs’ *UFO Controversy in America* (Indiana U. Press, 1975), the basis for much of what follows, is a detailed investigation into the lies, hypocrisies and about-faces of government UFO policy, confirming Sagan’s judgment about its effects.

Americans have spotted UFOs since the widespread 1896 reports of odd men sailing in motor-driven “airships.” But the modern wave of sightings began a week before the Roswell crash in 1947, when a pilot in Washington state saw nine inexplicable objects that “flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water.” Thus was the flying saucer born into popular consciousness.

By the end of 1947 the Air Force had received numerous UFO reports, alarming some of the brass. Lieutenant General Nathan Twining argued that UFOs might be foreign nuclear devices, and therefore deserved “a priority, security classification and Code Name for a detailed study of this matter.” This was to be Project Sign, created by the Air Force in 1948, renamed as Project Grudge and, later, Project Blue Book.

Following a frightening UFO encounter with a passenger jet, Air Force investigators wrote a top-secret “Estimate of the Situation,” concluding that UFOs were probably of extraterrestrial origin. (General Vandenberg dismissed the report for being insufficiently probative, and it was declassified a few months later.)

In 1949, Project Grudge issued a report on 244 UFOs. Even though investigators could not account for one-fourth of the objects, Grudge decided the UFOs in themselves posed no threat to national security. But they noted the danger and promise of UFO hysteria: “There are indications that the planned release of sufficient unusual aerial objects coupled with the release of related psychological propaganda would cause a form of

mild hysteria. Employment of these methods by or against an enemy would yield similar results. . . . governmental agencies interested in psychological warfare should be informed of the results of this study.”

Grudge staff even thought the public awareness of Air Force investigations was a bad idea. So the Air Force issued a press release at the end of 1949, announcing the termination of Grudge. Meanwhile, the head of Air Force intelligence secretly informed staff that the disbanding order for Grudge was “premature” and that UFOs should continue to be studied through intelligence channels. A secret inquiry into green fireballs was promptly commenced.

In 1952, the CIA commissioned the Robertson panel, a group of scientists, to review results from Project Blue Book. Like the Grudge report three years earlier, the Robertson panel concluded that the danger in UFOs was popular belief in them. Saucer reports fomented a “morbid national psychology in which skillful hostile propaganda could induce hysterical behavior and harmful distrust of duly constituted authority.” But instead of backing declassification, the panel recommended a government propaganda campaign. Secrecy thickened. The Air Force soon prohibited the public release of any information about an unidentified sighting. Unauthorized leakage of UFO reports became an Espionage Act offense, punishable by one to ten years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The new rules lasted until 1969 when the Air Force stopped studying UFOs.

In the meantime, the corporate media did its part for the UFO cover-up. In a 1958 CBS tv appearance, Donald Keyhoe, a prominent UFO personality, departed from the agreed-on script to discuss three real government documents: Twining’s 1947 letter, the “Estimate of the Situation” report, and the Robertson panel report. Before he had finished a single sentence, producers cut the audio, censoring him. Even the Air Force disapproved this move, which predictably “enhanced rather than detracted from Major Keyhoe’s position.” Only in the 1970s, when the government

had turned its paranoia to other imagined menaces, did television and press allow a fair hearing to citizen UFO watchdogs.

American agnosticism on the flying saucer question is thus a partial legacy of government mendacity and media complicity during the Cold War, although the root causes of UFO sightings and alien abductions are deep in the collective unconscious, discussed by Carl Jung in his 1959 book *Flying Saucers*. Jung thought UFOs were not wholly explicable as a psychological phenomenon, and suggested the possibility that they were “real material phenomena of an unknown nature” whose meaning was created by the viewer’s unconscious.

The correspondence of strange sky things with humanity’s sense of pending doom is a “meaningful coincidence,” a “synchronistic phenomen[on]” generative of the UFO myth. Yesterday it was the Cold War and nuclear weapons, today it’s terrorism and perpetual war that afflict us with an unsettled feeling. Who can blame Dr. Salla for seeing a meaningful coincidence in the government’s war on the birthplace of civilization? CP

## SUBSCRIPTION INFO

### Enter/Renew Subscription here:

One year \$40 Two yrs \$70  
 (\$35 email only / \$45 email/print)  
 One year institution/supporters \$100  
 One year student/low income, \$30  
 T-shirts, \$17

Please send back issue(s)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (\$5/issue)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Payment must accompany order, or dial 1-800-840-3683 and renew by credit card. Add \$12.50 for Canadian and \$17.50 for foreign subscriptions. If you want Counter-Punch emailed to you please supply your email address. Make checks payable to: **CounterPunch Business Office**  
 PO Box 228, Petrolia, CA 95558

**(IRAQ DIARY** *continued from page 3*)  
fident.

Before the invasion most Iraqis wanted to see an end to Saddam Hussein because of the calamities he had inflicted on them, including two disastrous wars. Impoverished by sanctions, they wanted a return to some sort of normality. Expectations were high: they did not see why, once Saddam was gone, they should not live as well as Kuwaitis or Bahrainis. Instead, in the ferocious heat of the summer they have limited electricity, an intermittent water supply and a petrol shortage. Looting hasn't stopped.

The lesson of the three-week war was that Saddam had little real support. It should have been possible to isolate the senior echelons of the Baath Party, the security and intelligence services and the tribal factions on whom Saddam relied. The Baath Party had about half a million members, but most joined because they could not get a job as a manager, a teacher or even a driver without being a member. Yet from their heavily defended new headquarters US officials issued an edict on 16 May ordering sweeping de-Baathification. Every former member of the Party felt threatened. A few weeks later, the 400,000-strong Army was disbanded without compensation (this decision was hurriedly reversed a month later as guerrilla attacks increased).

Bush and Blair found it much easier to deal with Iraq when everything that went wrong could be blamed on Saddam. In his weekly press conferences in the National Convention Centre opposite the al-Rashid Hotel, Paul Bremer speaks almost as if Saddam were still in charge. To mounting scepticism and occasional derision from journalists he regularly explains that the lack

of electricity and water is the result of sabotage by members of the old regime. The guerrilla attacks, he says, are the last throw of a small number of 'desperate men' still loyal to Saddam. 'Those who refuse to embrace the new Iraq are clearly panicking.' Everything will come right when Saddam is killed or captured; though, contradicting himself, Bremer has also said that the guerrilla attacks are not centrally organised.

Before the war ended the US had danced nervously around the prospect of a provisional government. Even Stalin felt that an indigenous authority would be a useful veil to mask imperial rule when he invaded Poland in 1944, but in Iraq it was soon obvious that the US did not want to share power. When Abu Hatem, a resistance leader who had been fighting Saddam for 17 years, captured the city of Amara (the only Iraqi Arab city to fall to local insurgents) in southern Iraq on 7 April, the CIA ordered him to leave within the hour.

Another problem is that the only Iraqi opposition parties with any demonstrable support inside the country are both Kurdish: the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, who have ruled their enclaves in northern Iraq for a decade. The others are all, by and large, dependent on foreign backers and are despised by most Iraqis as carpetbaggers. It is not just groups supported by the US, such as the Iraqi National Congress of Ahmed Chalabi or the Iraqi National Accord of Iyad Alawi, that are regarded with suspicion. So, too, is the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, led by Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim, which is trying to present itself as the representative of the Shia Muslims who make up the majority of the Iraqi popu-

lation. When I visited Hakim's office in Najaf one of his guards spoke to me in Farsi before switching to Arabic.

By the end of May, Washington had decided that a provisional administration made up of Kurds and the exiled opposition would not help the occupation. This was certainly right. If the reputation of the opposition among Iraqis was low before the war it was further blackened by the enthusiasm with which they confiscated government buildings and cars. 'They are just looters in suits,' an Iraqi told me in disgust. According to a story in Baghdad (rumours here are always high on supportive detail), one opposition group has managed to seize 67 buildings and 120 vehicles and engaged in a shoot out when the police tried to recover a car.

The alternative for the US—Saddamism without Saddam—is also difficult. The Iraqi state had largely dissolved in April. Other parts of it, like the Army, had been dismantled. Saddam himself had not been captured or killed. And all the while it was becoming obvious that the US and Britain, with casualties mounting, had only limited control of the country. By early July, Bremer and the CPA were showing greater enthusiasm for an Iraqi interim administration—with a broader base than the old exiled opposition—which could reconstitute the police and civil government. The old imperial recipes for controlling an occupied country under the auspices of a client regime are particularly difficult to apply in Iraq: the country is too divided between ethnic, religious, tribal and political groups. But the US, with Britain tagging along behind, has found that direct rule by military force alone is failing. It was so much easier when they could blame everything on Saddam Hussein. CP

## CounterPunch

PO Box 228

Petrolia, CA 95558

BBQ Weather, Wear a CP Shirt!

To Order Call: 1-800-840-3683