

STATEMENT TO CONGRESS

by
George Knapp

Rep. Burchett and members of the committee,

Thank you for inviting me to share some information that hopefully will be useful to your pursuit of UAP/UFO transparency. The public appreciates your courage in tackling this still-controversial subject, especially in light of the inevitable pushback members of Congress have already faced for daring to ask basic questions and for refusing to accept the stonewalling, veiled threats, and overt ridicule that have characterized the position of our military and intelligence agencies for the past 75 years.

My name is George Knapp. I am the chief investigative reporter for KLAS TV in Las Vegas. KLAS is Nevada's original television station and a CBS affiliate.

As a journalist, my interest in UFO secrecy began in 1987. In the years since then, I have written hundreds of UFO-related news stories and series, probably more stories over a longer period of time than any other mainstream journalist in the country. (For the past 22 years, I have worked with photographer Matt Adams on these news reports.)

From the beginning, it was apparent the subject has a steep learning curve. Initially, I was far more interested in the government's response to UFO questions than I was in the larger questions about intelligence life other than humans. The statements issued by various military spokespersons and government agencies were directly at odds with what those same military officials and intelligence agencies confided to each other behind the scenes. Since 1969, the position of our military has been that UFOs pose no threat to national security and are not worthy of further study. This dismissive attitude is directly at odds with what was revealed in documents, reports, and internal memos. High ranking military officers considered the UFO mystery to be "serious business." The paper trail revealed via FOIA requests documents how military leaders knew that UFOs were "real, not fictitious", that they were metallic craft, capable of incredible maneuvers far beyond any known technology on Earth, and that there were a disturbing number of incidents wherein UFOs seemed to demonstrate an intense interest in our military assets, in particular nuclear weapons. If this is not a matter of national security, what is? Yet the public was assured, again and again, there is really nothing to the UFO subject.

In 1989, I started hearing seemingly-outlandish tidbits regarding crashed saucers, strange materials, and reverse engineering programs being carried out in secrecy in the Nevada desert by intelligence operatives and defense contractors. The first person I told about this—outside of our newsroom - was U.S. Senator Harry Reid, then in his first term in the Senate. Reid said he was interested in hearing more, and that began a private, two-way conversation that continued for the next three decades. I kept Sen. Reid in the loop about UFO developments I was pursuing as a journalist, and he helped me obtain information that I might otherwise be unable to access on my own. That private conversation with Reid proved to be pivotal in the long run, and is directly related to the current explosion of public interest in the UFO/UAP controversy, including the inquiries now underway in both houses of Congress.

The other person I met in 1989 related to the UFO mystery was a billionaire businessman named Robert Bigelow, who owned vast real estate and hotel properties in multiple states. Bigelow began funding private UFO investigations as well the work of UFO organizations UFO. To date, he has spent more of his own money on UFO investigations than any person in the history of the world—tens of millions of dollars. In 1996, Bigelow created his own research organization, the National Institute for Discovery Science, with a science advisory board made up of PhD-level academics, two of the former astronauts who had walked on the moon, and several scientists who had worked for or consulted with the U.S. military and intelligence agencies. While working on the inside, they had learned bits and pieces about classified UFO investigations and special access programs. The NIDS advisory board members put their careers and reputations at risk in order to pursue truth and transparency.

After NIDS began its own investigations and projects, I informed Senator Reid about the organization and arranged an introduction. Reid attended one of the first board meetings of NIDS and was impressed by the professionalism he witnessed and the pedigrees of the world class Science Advisory Board. The connection that was made between Reid and Bigelow proved to be fortuitous in many ways and is directly related to the inquiry you have launched 27 years later.

One of the topics that was of interest to Reid, Bigelow, and NIDS was Russia's ongoing interest in UFOs. In 1993, there was a brief window of opportunity in the former USSR. The period known as Glasnost offered the possibility that western journalists and researchers might be able to learn about subjects that were previously off limits during the worst days of the Cold War. With the assistance of former US Congressman Jim Bilbray, I met a Russian physicist and national security advisor who was in the U.S. in order to speak about arms control issues and nuclear detente at our national laboratories and nuclear weapons facilities. I asked Dr. Nikolai Kapranov if he might be willing to find high ranking persons in the former USSR who may have been in a position to know about any secret UFO programs or investigations in Russia and whether any of those persons would agree to meet with me. He did just that. It took 8 months to arrange an itinerary and to obtain a formal invitation to visit Moscow. In the spring of that year, I traveled with two colleagues to Moscow, met and interviewed more than a dozen military officials, intelligence operatives, and scientists who had knowledge of UFO incidents and studies in the former USSR during the Cold War. As we learned, Russian leaders commissioned an unprecedented UFO investigation. The order went out to all units in the vast Russian military empire that any UFO incident or report must be fully investigated, witnesses interviewed, evidence collected and then all of those materials were forwarded to an office inside the Ministry of Defense.

The study lasted a full ten years and was likely the largest UFO investigation ever undertaken. Thousands of case files were accumulated. Nearly all of the witnesses who were interviewed were military personnel. Many of the incidents described to me by the program's director Col. Boris Sokolov were alarming. Sokolov said there had been 45 incidents in which Russian warplanes engaged with UFOs, chased them, even shot at them. In most incidents, the UFOs shot away at unbelievable speeds, but in three incidents, the Russian warplanes were dived and crashed. Two of the pilots were killed. After those incidents, the MOD issued a nationwide order that UFOs should be left alone because, in the words of a top Air Defense official, "they may have incredible capacities for retaliation." Col. Sokolov also shared information about an alarming incident at a Russian ICBM base in Ukraine. UFOs appeared over the base, performed astonishing maneuvers in front of stunned eyewitnesses and then somehow took control of the launch system. The missiles aimed at the US were suddenly fired up. Launch control codes were somehow entered, and the base was unable to stop what could have initiated World War 3. Then, just as suddenly, the UFOs disappeared, and the launch-control system shut down.

Upon my return from Moscow, I shared much of this information with NIDS, with Senator Reid, and with a senior staff members for the Senate Intelligence Committee. The Russian MOD had confirmed to me that they were studying UFO cases in the hope that they might understand and eventually duplicate the technology that had allowed the UFO pilots to so thoroughly dominate Russian airspace and weapons systems. The information made lasting impression on Senator Reid and others and became a key factor in a secretive program that was launched a few years later.

As the committee knows, the current wave of public and congressional interest in the UFO/ UAP mystery was kickstarted in December 2017 when a front page story in the New York Times revealed the existence of an unknown, unacknowledged UFO study dubbed AATIP. The Times story claimed that Sen. Reid and two colleagues in the Senate (Daniel Inouye and Ted Stevens) had secured \$22 million in black budget funds to investigate UFOs. AATIP was launched from OUSDI, the office of the undersecretary for defense intelligence and was managed by a career counterintelligence officer named Lue Elizondo. Elizondo's statements to the Times, including supporting testimony from Navy aviator David Fravor about the so-called Tic Tac incident in 2004, were the core of the newspapers' blockbuster story. That news piece led to a new wave of media interest in UFOs, prompted private inquiries to Sen. Reid from his former colleagues in Congress, and was largely responsible for the creation by Congress of the UAP Task Force, which later morphed into AARO, the current UFO program approved by Congress.

The NY Times report was accurate on many levels. AATIP as real. Lue Elizondo was the man in charge of it. And it was an investigation of UFO encounters involving US military personnel. But some parts of the story were dead wrong. The \$22 million secured by Reid did not fund AATIP. Rather, it went into an entirely different effort managed by the Defense Intelligence Agency. The original program was dubbed AAWSAP, the Advanced Weapons System Application program. The man who initiated and managed the program for DIA was a veteran intelligence analyst and rocket expert named Dr. James Lacatski. The contract for AAWSAP was awarded to a subsidiary of Bigelow Aerospace, owned by Robert Bigelow. And the focus of the study was much broader than the military-only encounters investigated by AATIP.

Years after the Times story, the public and members of Congress still have not learned much about AAWSAP. It was likely the largest UFO study ever conducted with the use of government funds. It began in Sept. 2008 and quickly ramped up. At one point, it employed 50 full time investigators, far more than Project Blue Book or the UAP Task Force, or AARO. The team compiled what might be the largest and most sophisticated UFO data warehouse ever created, with more than 200,000 cases catalogued. The data base included reports from civilian organizations and foreign governments, as well as new investigations conducted by boots-on-the ground teams dispatched by AAWSAP's manager in Las Vegas, Dr. Colm Kelleher. It was an astonishing effort that also produced more than 100 highly detailed research papers, many of them more than 100 pages long. The very first case investigated by AAWSAP was the Tic Tac incident from 2004. An initial report was compiled by DIA personnel then shared with AAWSAP. A much larger 140-page report, packed with detailed analysis of the Tic Tac and its capabilities, was written by AASWAP scientists and engineers. Neither Congress nor the public has ever seen the Tic Tac report or any of the other 100-plus research papers.

One of the things that led to the demise of AAWSAP was the pursuit of certain exotic materials rumored to exist within special access programs. One condition of the Bigelow contract with DIA was that Bigelow's Aerospace plant in Las Vegas must be engineered so that it could accept, store, and study certain exotic materials. AAWSAP managers believe these materials were collected from sites where unknown aircraft had crashed. When Dr. Lacatski began

pressing the issue, seeking access to the exotic materials, he was met with harsh rebukes. The door, in essence, was slammed in his face. And powerful interests began to apply pressure to end AAWSAP. It lasted a mere 27 months before the plug was pulled, instead of a five year operation as planned by DIA.

AAWSAP investigated a wider range of phenomena than mystery craft seen in the sky. Some of the encounters reported by intelligence operatives were downright weird. AAWSAP personnel suspected that the sighting of weird creatures and bizarre phenomena in the proximity of UFO activity might be some sort of unintentional side effect of a technology that is seemingly beyond anything we currently possess. The overall directive guiding the study was that they follow the evidence, no matter where it lead, in order to gain an understanding of the big picture and not to limit the investigation to lights in the sky or fleeting glimpses on radar or other sensors. Had AAWSAP: been allowed to continue, our country might have some answers by now.

It is my honor to bring this information forward to Congress and to clarify some of the misinformation that has been widely circulated. After AAWSAP ended, AATIP was created from its ashes. Lue Elizondo was able to keep the investigation going for a few years until his frustration with a lack of interest on the part of DOD higher ups became too much to bear. His exposure of the existence of AATIP was a major factor in the eventual creation of the UAP Task Force and later, of AARO. The world still has very limited understanding of the important work done for DIA in AAWSAP. The public has seen very little of the excellent work done by the Bigelow team. Hopefully Congress can start asking questions about these and other investigations undertaken into these perplexing issues. We have a right to know.

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