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DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS AND ASTROPHYSICS
202 Woodbury Hall

27 January 1967

JAN 31 REC'D

Lt. Col. Robert Hippler
Headquarters, USAF (AFRSTA)
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Bob:

Permit me to write down informally a few comments on your letter of January 16th to Dr. Condon. My letter, like yours is unofficial and not binding. I'm speaking for myself - not for the project.

There is no denying your point that extraterrestrial visitations fall in the "knowable" category. Such visitations, at the moment, while knowable are unknown. That means simply that there exists no evidence of a visitation. But it is a little like the sound in the forest. The sound may occur, but, if nobody is there to hear it, the fact of its existence goes undiscovered. Does that mean it doesn't exist? The point is that, because there was a period when no one was present in the forest to hear a sound if one did occur, we can not say whether or not a sound did occur during that period.

Maybe we will find that extraterrestrial visitations have occurred, but there's no way to demonstrate that they haven't. This is a logical problem that can't be skirted, and I'm sure, if we were to miss the point, that the National Academy would set us straight.

It is true that at the time of the Manhattan Project physicists knew something was going on. Physicists today are not aware that anything exciting is happening in the way of radical new propulsion systems, anti-gravity devices, extraordinary new life support systems for space vehicles, or things of that sort. The fact that we do not see just over the horizon great breakthroughs in these fields is an argument that heads to a denial that UFOs are either of American or Russian origin, but I don't think it can be used to argue that we are not receiving extraterrestrial visitations. We don't know what technology exists on other planets. I think one can assert, however, that, for a spaceship to get to the earth from a planet outside the solar system, it would be necessary to employ a technology far more advanced than we enjoy. Since we have no knowledge of that technology, speculation on it brings one right into science fiction, and once one has crossed that boundary the sky is the limit. He can argue anything, and the rules of scientific evidence and methodology have been abandoned. So there is no point in stepping across the boundary, except

to engage in idle speculation! Such speculation isn't useful in helping to close in on an answer to the problem of whether there have been extra-terrestrial visitors or not. And probability won't help.

You mention that the fear of panic is not holding anyone's tongue. That's an extremely good point; I had not thought of it. On the second page, you indicate what you believe the Air Force wants of us, and I am very glad to have your opinion. In fact, you have answered quite directly the question that I asked - you may remember that I came back to it a couple of times - at our meeting on Thursday evening, January 12.

Thanks very much for writing. It looks as if Dr. Condon and I may be in Washington during the week of February 20th. Perhaps we can get together.

Sincerely yours,

Bob

Robert J. Low

RJL:mla

cc: E. U. Condon