

Is Someone Out There?

by George Friedman - July 17, 2023

Democrat Sen. Chuck Schumer and Republican Sen. Mike Rounds are filing legislation demanding that the federal government reveal the files on what it knows about unidentified anomalous phenomena. The government has refused to declassify much of the information while admitting that such files exist.

What is in these files is significant in two ways. First and obviously, the presence of alien warships – if they are there and if they are warships – represents a potential threat to all of Earth. This is not a trivial matter. Second and obviously transcendentally important, I am writing a book on the geopolitics of space. The core actors are human nations, whose roots are on Earth and who are likely to use space as a new battleground. If the dog men of Andromeda have us in their sights, I must rewrite the book and move up the deadline for submission. However farfetched the threat of an invasion from space may seem, the continual insistence by the Pentagon and the CIA that they have discovered nothing of concern fuels fear. If there is nothing to fear out there, then why not release the files?

There are plausible and good reasons for withholding this information. Suspicions about what were then called UFOs began around the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War. By the mid-1950s, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons. Both also had land systems for detecting missile launches, and it was essential that these capabilities remain secret. The other side could not know the other's methods and effectiveness. If these same technologies detected UFOs, then revealing that information could compromise national defense.

The problem with this argument is that surveillance of near-Earth space has been underway since the 1950s. Revealing findings from before the deployment of the current generation of sensors would not compromise anything important. The government's resistance to releasing even highly redacted reports is odd. One theory is that the government thinks we, the public, would panic if we knew the truth. Perhaps we would, but better now than when the invasion begins.

Another among many possible reasons for secrecy is that a covert war is already being waged with the Andromedons. They may have taken control of the candidates for president. It would explain much. But if we are facing an enemy that projects major force many light-years from home, then we are hosed anyway, and the signal to party should be given.

I do not find the possibility of advanced life in the universe absurd. The universe is vast, and if humans on Earth have come to be, the existence of other life seems likely. But the very vastness of the universe also means that a chance or deliberate encounter between two peoples is unlikely. Unlikely, but far from impossible.

If there is nothing to hide, then don't go out of your way making sure that people are fixated. The government knows this yet undertakes a strategy designed to increase attention rather than deflect. They adopt a strategy designed to get senators, including important ones, to force disclosure. Keeping the files secret increases the sense of danger, at least for some, and in modern America distrust of the government is rampant. If the government denies that it has found anything, then acting as if it is hiding something undermines that claim and magnifies the fear.

This is a geopolitical question. Anything that weakens trust in government weakens the ability of the United States to act on other matters. But far more important, there is no reason that the process that created us should not have created others. We may be the only people in the universe, which would make the universe more incomprehensible. If there are others, our sense of geopolitics shifts and the human mind must absorb this. If the government is hiding dangers so vast that revealing them would create panic, it is merely postponing the panic. But if there is nothing to fear, know that the government's actions can generate it. And since the government has failed to keep the existence of space surveillance secret going back decades, it should not compound that failure by increasing potential concern.

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