

ANDERSON COOPER 360 DEGREES

Democratic Presidential Race Heats Up; Are We Alone?; Mother of Kanye West Dies

Aired November 12, 2007 - 22:00 ET



COOPER: Up next tonight on 360: They say they saw UFOs, true believers gathering in Washington, D.C. And, if you think this is a convention of oddballs, well, you better think again. So, are they telling the truth? What did they really see? We will let you decide next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

COOPER: Well, in the latest Democratic debate, presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich said he had seen one. So has Jimmy Carter. So did a pilot who traveled from Iran to Washington so he could speak out today about his encounter with a UFO.

Now, unidentified flying object means just that, unidentified. It says nothing about what or from where. But, for years now, polling has shown that a majority of Americans believe the government, our government, simply isn't telling all it knows about those lights in the sky, whatever they are.

Well, tonight, CNN's Gary Tuchman investigates.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

GARY TUCHMAN, CNN NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): If you flew on Air France from Nice to London on January 28, 1994, your captain says he saw a UFO 1,000 feet long just outside your window.

JEAN-CHARLES DUBOC, RETIRED AIR FRANCE CAPTAIN: It seemed to be a huge

flying disk.

TUCHMAN: The now retired pilot is one of 14 men, mainly former government and military officials, from seven different countries talking about their UFO experiences.

DUBOC: It disappeared in about 10 to 20 seconds.

TUCHMAN: This conference took place in Washington, and the cast of characters was almost strangely, well, conventional. One of the believers, former Governor of Arizona Fife Symington.

FIFE SYMINGTON, FORMER ARIZONA GOVERNOR: I saw something that defied logic and challenged my reality.

TUCHMAN: During a visit to Phoenix, Symington described to me what he saw.

SYMINGTON: If you -- if you had been here 10 years ago, and standing up out here and looking up there at the lights and the view, you would have been astounded. You would have been amazed.

TUCHMAN: The so-called Phoenix lights were seen by many people in 1997. Skeptics say they were military aircraft or flares, but not the former governor.

SYMINGTON: It was probably some sort of an alien spacecraft.

TUCHMAN: Lots of agreement on this panel -- this retired Iranian air force pilot said he saw a UFO while flying.

GENERAL PARVIZ JAFARI, FORMER IRANIAN AIR FORCE PILOT: It looked similar to a star, but bigger and brighter.

TUCHMAN: General Parviz Jafari says he tried to fire a missile, but much of his plane became inoperative.

JAFARI: All the instrument was fluctuating. The radio had garbled. Even, I couldn't have communication with my pilot in my back seat, who was operating the radar.

TUCHMAN (on camera): So, your -- so, none of your equipment worked. Your missiles didn't work. Do you think it's because this was an alien from another world?

JAFARI: Oh, yes. Yes.

TUCHMAN: You're sure of that?

JAFARI: Yes, I'm sure.

TUCHMAN (voice-over): This retired U.S. Air Force sergeant stationed in England said he walked up to a UFO that landed in a forest.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It maneuvered through the trees and shot off at an unbelievable rate

of speed.

TUCHMAN: A man running for president just said he saw a UFO.

REP. DENNIS KUCINICH (D-OH), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I did. And the rest of the account -- it was an unidentified flying object.

TUCHMAN: And so did a man who was president.

JIMMY CARTER, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I and about 25 others saw something in the air that changed colors and was round.

TUCHMAN: Although Jimmy Carter says he doesn't think it was another planet, most of these people differ on that point and want the FAA to investigate all these claims.

But the FAA says that's not its job. "We manage the aircraft that we're talking to. UFOs are called UFO's because they're unidentified and we're not talking to them."

And it's because no one's talking that everybody here is trying harder to make them believe.

Gary Tuchman, CNN, Washington.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: Well, we're going to talk about the man who organized the conference, coming up next. He also made a film about 50 years of what he calls official contradictions and denials.

We'll also hear from a noted astronomer and UFO skeptic -- skeptic. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK) COOPER: We don't take sides on 360. We like to present you with the facts and information from different angles and let you make up your own minds about things.

That's particularly true with mysteries. And for most Americans, there's no mystery greater than UFO's.

James Fox helped organize today's UFO-related event in Washington. He directed the film "Out of the Blue." He joins me now, along with astronomer, former Air Force pilot and skeptic James McGaha.

Thank you for being with us, both of you.

Let me start off with you, James Fox. You helped to organize the panel. Why? What are you hoping to accomplish?

JAMES FOX, DIRECTOR, "OUT OF THE BLUE": I want to establish the fact that the phenomenon is real and it's taking place worldwide. And the reason why we got a panel of 14 high-ranking military and government officials from seven countries, who these guys officially investigated these cases for their governments and militaries.

So it's not private investigators. These are official military and government people.

COOPER: But James Fox, to those who say, "Look, there's no actual evidence. I mean, there's no recovered spacecraft. There's no actual evidence," what do you say?

FOX: I would say, well, we have photographic, radar confirmation, visual confirmation, land trace cases. There are imprints in the ground where these things reportedly landed. You know, and these government and military officials are telling us these things are real. I think we should listen.

COOPER: James McGaha I know you're skeptical. Why?

JAMES MCGAHA, ASTRONOMER: Well, UFO's are basically a modern space-age mythology. It's a conspiracy wrapped in superstition and myth and magic.

People see lights in the sky, and somehow they equate those lights in the sky to spacecraft from another world. It's really wish fulfillment. It's almost a fairy tale among many people to believe that somehow either doom or salvation is coming from the sky. This is a very old concept in human thinking.

But I should say, when we talk about pilots, there's this incredible misidentification idea about pilots being trained observers. Pilots are not trained observers; they're trained to fly airplanes. They are some of the worst people at identifying objects in the sky that aren't other airplanes. They're trained to react quickly in an airplane, which very often makes them to react to wrong stimuli.

COOPER: James Fox, what about that?

FOX: Let me say something. With regard -- although I do respect your opinion on this, you keep misleading the public when you say that these are ambiguous distant lights off at a distance. These are not.

These are unambiguous, up close and personal cases where, in one case in Bentwater in 1980, they actually touched the UFO on the ground. And this was witnessed by 80 people on the ground.

MCGAHA: I am quite skeptical that anyone touched anything at Bentwater's. It wasn't Bentwater's. It was actually Port Ridge (ph).

FOX: With all due respect, sir, I don't think you were there.

COOPER: James McGaha, why shouldn't there be more investigation? Why shouldn't -- what this panel is calling for, essentially, is some sort of government investigation of it. Why shouldn't there be further investigation?

FOX: Well, there have been investigations...

MCGAHA: Well, what...

FOX: Hang on a second. Let me just state this clearly. One of the things that...

MCGAHA: What are we going to...

FOX: You keep interrupting me sir, please. One of the things I want to mention very quickly is that the official position from the Air Force is that they terminated Project Blue Book in 1969, and there have been no official investigations since then.

However, we found evidence that suggests the contrary on a number of cases. In Tehran, the general said the Americans were making discreet inquiries about the case -- excuse me, there as well as Bentwater's, England. The colonel said that the OSI came in and investigated that.

COOPER: So you believe there is government investigation going on? You just want it more public?

FOX: They're making discreet inquiries, unofficially, yes.

COOPER: James McGaha, final thoughts?

MCGAHA: Yes. Yes, they are making discreet inquiries about strange things that happen, not about UFOs or alien spacecraft. That's not going on at all.

FOX: They are responsible for the security and the deployment of nuclear weapons. If you think they're out there hallucinating, why do they all get promoted?

MCGAHA: Well...

COOPER: We're going to have to leave it there.

MCGAHA: I could actually tell you what happened that night. It's -- it's very prosaic crossing; lights in the sky and that's all.

FOX: It's not lights in the sky, sir, thank you.

COOPER: No doubt a debate we're not going to settle tonight, but we do appreciate you guys talking about it. James Fox, James McGaha, thank you.

FOX: Thanks for having us on.

COOPER: There are no skeptics over this next story.