

CNN LARRY KING LIVE

Britain releases 15 years of UFO documents

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LARRY KING: Plus, what's really out there?

The British government releases official UFO files. "Newsweek" reports NASA is searching for aliens.

If E.T.s do exist, how do we make contact?

It's all next on LARRY KING LIVE.

KING:

The British government has released more of their previously confidential UFO files.

What's that? We will find out what's in those files next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Have you seen this week's "Newsweek?" NASA is looking for aliens. The British government has released more of their previously confidential UFO files. Are we closer than ever to confirming extra-terrestrial life?

Joining us with all the latest news about space is Dr. Seth Shostak. He's a skeptic, a senior astronomer for the SETI Institute, Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, and author of "Confessions of an Alien Hunter, A Scientists' Search For Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence." In San Francisco, James Fox, film maker, UFO researcher. Before we get through this, we'll be out program. His new documentary, "I Know What I Saw," premieres October 5th on the History Channel. In London, our man, Nick Pope, used to run the British government's UFO project.

All our guests are staying put. We have to take a quick break. We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(NEWS BREAK)

KING: We'll start with Dr. Shostak. The organization is SETI, right?

DR. SETH SHOSTAK, SKEPTIC: That's correct.

KING: OK. The new NASA mission, Kepler, is going to apparently maybe find these things. Big story in "Newsweek." What do you make of it?

SHOSTAK: It's one of the more important things that has happened in astronomy for decades, Larry, because it is going to answer one question: how many cousins of Earth are there out there? How many planets are out there in the universe that are something like the Earth.

KING: Do you think they might be inhabitable?

SHOSTAK: You don't know if they're inhabitable. All you know is they are the right size, the right place. They could be inhabitable.

KING: James, do you salute this?

JAMES FOX, FILM MAKER, "I KNOW WHAT I SAW": You know, I do. Sometimes when you look for something, it could be right under your nose.

KING: Meaning?

FOX: I'm not saying that UFOs are of extra-terrestrial origin. But they're certainly, through the process of elimination -- doesn't appear to be -- excuse me, a trustful explanation a lot of times.

KING: Nick Pope, what's the British government saying about this? Does it say that there are -- there are extra-terrestrials?

NICK POPE, UFO RESEARCHER: No. The position of the British government is that it remains open-minded about the possibilities. It looked at the UFO phenomenon for several decades. We found no absolute proof positive of any extra-terrestrial visitation. But we have found consistently over the years some extremely interesting sightings that we couldn't explain in conventional terms. That's why I support any scientific effort to study this.

KING: Why isn't the United States more open about this, like Britain is, at least saying it might be there?

SHOSTAK: A lot of stuff has been released by the Freedom of Information Act. It is also the case that, you know, you have to consider, well, why is it that all the evidence is stacked up by the U.S. government? This is the same government that runs FEMA. They are doing a heck of a job with UFOs. They have been lying administrations since Roswell. Have they covered it all up? I can hardly believe that the government has that much to say about it.

KING: James, you did the documentary "I Know What I Saw." It premieres October 5th. What do you believe, James?

FOX: I believe that there are structured craft of unknown origin whizzing around in our air space, whose flight characteristics are so beyond anything we've had. This is well documented for the last 60 years. I wanted to say that we managed to obtain an interview that was done in 1979 by Dr. J. Allen Hynek, who investigated UFOs for 22 years for the US Air Force. His job was to give a prosaic explanation when there clearly wasn't some times.

He recanted what he had done for the Air Force, and went on the record before he died, stating that we were most likely being visited, and that, you know, the flight performances of these things were just so far beyond anything that we have. I'm not saying that they're ET. But I'm saying we can no longer deny -- I think once this film comes out, people will really see that the debate will shift from do they exist to who's actually piloting these things.

KING: Nick, you were part of the effort to track UFO sightings. Let's say they're there. What are they doing there? Why do they keep circling? What are they finding? What is it all about?

POPE: I have no idea. I mean, to a certain extent, I mean, one could speculate aimlessly about all of this. We looked at it at the Ministry of Defense purely as a defense of national security issue. And to a lesser extent -- but we do have cases where these things come dangerously close to aircraft -- as a flight safety issue. But I'm not sure we at the ministry really thought that it was going to be profitable to speculate too much, because our unit was a very small one.

There were a lot of people who said, well, you shouldn't be wasting taxpayers' money on this sort of stuff anyway. So we tended to downplay this subject, even ourselves sometimes. But we said, look, if there's something in our air space, we know -- we need to know what it is. And particularly if its flight characteristics suggest some sort of technology, whether that technology is Soviet or whatever -- obviously we're interested in things like aerodynamics and propulsion systems.

KING: James Fox, your new documentary, James, "I Know What I Saw," assembles accounts from various UFO witnesses from around the world. Nick Pope is one of them. Let's take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It glided over my house. And there was absolutely no noise.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We saw what I thought to be kind of a boomerang shape.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I don't know if passengers can see this aircraft.

FIFE SYMINGTON, FORMER GOVERNOR OF ARIZONA: I'm Fife Symington. In 1977, during my second term as governor of Arizona, I saw something that defied logic and challenged my reality.

JIMMY CARTER, FORMER PRESIDENT: I saw one, but I don't know if it just disappeared.

COL. GORDON COOPER, ASTRONAUT: I saw it fly right over and put down over three little gear and landed out on the dry lake bed.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: When we come back I'll ask Dr. Shostak what theories he might support to explain all this. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: I'm often asked what I think about this. I don't often give my opinions on this program, but I'm certainly open to this. I'm not going to discount it. Anything's possible. And I think the public wants there to be something there. I don't think the government is afraid we would panic. I don't buy that theory. What theory do you support?

SHOSTAK: I think there's plenty of life in space. One of the things we've learned in the last dozen years, there's probably a trillion planets just in our galaxy. Not all of them are going to be bad. Some of them are going to be good. So I think there's plenty of life out there.

But if you're going to claim there's life here, then where's the evidence we can stack up in the Smithsonian? I don't see it? Where's the evidence that convinces the scientists?

KING: Yes, why, James -- why would they hide it?

FOX: Well, I addressed that issue in the film. I think one of the reasons is apparently we don't necessarily have control of our air space. And no governing body want to admit that. These things apparently fly rings around our fastest jets, and have been doing so in the modern UFO period for over last six decades.

KING: Nick, if they're controlling our air space, to what avail? We seem to fly and land OK.

POP: Well, I certainly wouldn't go so far as to say they control our air space. That said, there have been, as James said, plenty of encounters over the years where both commercial airline pilots and military pilots -- and I've spoken to many of them -- have actually seen these things up close and personal, and where there's corroborating evidence in terms of radar. But I guess what I'd like to see -- it always strikes me, as somebody with 21 years of experience in government, that actually the UFO community and the SETI community are arguably looking for the same thing, but in different places and with different methodologies. I guess I would like them to reach out on each other a little bit.

FOX: Nick, would you do me a favor, please?

KING: Hold on, Jim.

SHOSTAK: Actually, I'm open on that. I almost consider myself a part-time UFO investigator. Larry, every day I get e-mails, phone calls and -- well, telephone calls and e-mails from people who are having difficulty with aliens in their personal life, who have seen things. I can't think of a single example where I thought, this is a hoax. They've seen something. It's worth investigating. The evidence is just not there to convince people.

KING: James, what were you going to say?

FOX: I'd say to Seth, basically, is that the very person whose job it was to debunk UFOs for the US Air Force for 22 years, Dr. Hynek, did a 180 and basically came out in 1979 and earlier, saying these things clearly did not appear to be of terrestrial origin, just because of the nature of their flight characteristics.

(CROSS TALK)

FOX: I hear you, Seth. I'm not saying that I'm a complete believer myself. But there's a physical phenomenon taking place here, with very unambiguous UFO accounts, radar recordings and photographs, and multi-eyewitness accounts. There has to be some sort of explanation. If it's not us, who is it? It's either someone's been in possession of this technology for over 60 years. And if they have, then they're in possession of revolutionary technology. And if not, then we're being visited.

KING: Nick, do you want to believe?

POPE: Well, like Seth, I'm convinced there must be life out there. And I think it would be one of the most stupendous discoveries of all time. So, yes, I think it would be a very boring and lonely universe if we were the only life. After all, it's one of those great fundamental questions, isn't it, are we alone or not?

KING: So we've been boring him all this time, because we don't know, right, Seth? It's a boring world.

SHOSTAK: But it may change within 10 or 20 years.

KING: Can I --

SHOSTAK: I think we'll have an answer to the question --

KING: James, quickly. POPE: A quick question. Seth, I just want you -- how can you explain what people are seeing, airline pilots, radar operators, military guys? These are unambiguous cases. In some cases they've actually touched these things. What are they, Seth, in your opinion? Have you looked into it? Have you talked to witnesses?

SHOSTAK: Well, I have.

KING: Quickly.

SHOSTAK: But the fact that they're unexplained doesn't mean they're alien visitors. They are simply unexplained. There are a lot of unexplained murderers in Los Angeles, but it doesn't mean that these murders were committed by --

KING: Thank you all very much. We'll hopefully some day have an answer. As we wrap up, Don Hewitt, the CBS News man who invented "60 Minutes," produced it for 36 years, died today of pancreatic cancer. He was 86. What an innovator. What a show man. One heck of a storyteller, as anyone who saw his dozen or so appearances on this program knows.

Our thoughts go out to Don Hewitt's his wife and his children, and to the entire CBS News family. They lost a great one today. Time now for Anderson Cooper and "AC 360."
Anderson?