

Group: NASA hid Martian city

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group that says there may have been life on Mars suggested yesterday that NASA may have intentionally disabled the Mars Observer so it could take no pictures of artificial structures on that planet.

Richard Hoagland, founder of a group that claims a city once was built on Mars, said at a news conference that there was a possibility that a "rogue group" within NASA intentionally shut off the agency's Mars Observer spacecraft so that it could not make an orbital survey of the city.

Hoagland said that he has been trying for almost 10 years to get

NASA to investigate what he believes is a picture of a face carved on the surface of Mars and that scientists for the agency have dismissed his research and that of colleagues in his organization.

He said that a study conducted 30 years ago suggests that there is a "McCarthyesque fear of fundamentalists and religious fanaticism" in NASA and that as a result the agency is reluctant to admit there is evidence that intelligent life once existed on Mars.

He suggested that the agency may want to suppress any information about extraterrestrial life and that this leads the agency to ridicule and

"trivialize" his organization's research.

"There is an inside group that does not want this pursued. Maybe they literally pulled the plug," Hoagland said.

NASA SPOKESMAN Dwayne Brown denied that NASA was withholding information or that the Mars Observer was intentionally disabled.

"We are not a classified agency and we have always been very open with our information," he said.

Hoagland and his associates based their whole case for life on Mars on two photographs taken of the Martian surface by the Viking space probe in 1976.

The photos show a mountainous structure that with a combination of light and shadow appears to be half of a face.

NASA scientists have dismissed that conclusion, arguing that what appears to be a structure is a mountain that was photographed at the moment that sunlight and shadow created a vague impression of a half-face.

Hoagland and his group, however, have subjected the image to computer enhancement. They insist that its shape and angles are consistent with a structure built by intelligent beings. It is, they suggest, a face that was carved on the face of Mars by creatures who once lived there.

Carrying the research further, Hoagland and his group have reasoned that since the face was carved on the planet, then there must be other constructions nearby. In the same pictures they found angular uplifts which, in their scenario, they now call pyramids.

AND SINCE there are pyramids, then they have concluded that another group of structures nearby must be the center of a city. They call it Cydonia for the region on Mars where it is located.

Furthermore, since all of these Martian structures were built by intelligent life, they reason, then they must have been arranged in a purposeful manner. Based on measurements of angles between these objects, therefore, the group reasons that unknown intelligent beings once lived on Mars and carved a message that can now be read.

But, for some reason, said Hoagland, NASA scientists are "trivializing" this research and "a rogue group" may have now "pulled the plug" on a \$980 million spacecraft that would have proven the theory.

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