

Here Come The Men In Black, Are They Really The Galaxy Defenders?

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So you've seen an Unidentified Flying Object. And you take interest because what was it? Aliens? A drone? A spy? A government training exercise? Deciding to look for answers, you report it. Not much happens, maybe you get a response, maybe you don't. And everything seems fine, but you're still curious. So you look into it yourself, and maybe you look for others who might have seen something similar. And one day, some men you've never seen before, approach you. Government agents, they tell you, and maybe even show you a business card with a symbol you've never seen and the word "security" on it. They're tall, almost abnormally so, dressed in black suits with stark white shirts, sunglasses and hats that cover many of their features and add to their ominous presence. They ask you what you've seen. And when you tell them, they can not only add eerily specific details to your story, but tell you details of your own life. And then they tell you that if you share your sighting of that UFO with anyone or anything, bad things will happen. To you, your family, your life. They will ruin you, or worse. And then they leave, with no trace and no evidence of their existence outside of what you just experienced. And if you try to tell your friends, they call you crazy. So all you have left to do is wonder: Who were they? Those mysterious Men in Black.

Stories of the Men in Black date back decades. Strange men in black suits, claiming to be government agents who show up to scenes of encounters with UFOs or possible extraterrestrial existence. The Men in Black have become a major component of UFO conspiracy theories over time and dozens, if not hundreds of people have claimed to have encountered them on different occasions. But who are the men in black really? Are they even real? Or just another scary story?

When most people think of the Men in Black, they probably think of the 1997 film franchise starring Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones which follows 2 government agents who

defend our galaxy from extraterrestrial beings. The legends of the Men in black have inspired many pop culture moments in the media. Not only did the stories inspire the series of comics *The Men in Black* by Lowell Cunningham –that later inspired the aforementioned film franchise– but the mysterious figures inspired characters in other films such as *The Alien Encounters*, *The Brother from Another Planet*. Even songs such as *Men In Black* by Running Wild, *E.T.I.* and *Take Me Away* by Blue Oyster Cult feature lines about the mysterious Men in black. Up to and including the concept album by the Stranglers: *The Gospel according to the Meninblack*. The Men in Black have become a somewhat popular part of science fiction as a whole. But their origins are much less lighthearted than their media portrayals.

So who –or what– exactly are the Men in Black? Well, the Men in Black are described as agents who show up at the scenes of UFO or extraterrestrial encounters to silence witnesses and keep them from revealing secrets of the unknown. Recognized for their large stature, black suits, hats and sunglasses as well as their odd behavior, vintage cars, slang, and otherworldly features, the Men in Black supposedly target two types of individuals; those who experience UFO sightings, and those who research UFOs too closely. Various accounts have been given about encounters with the Men in Black, where an individual will report a UFO sighting only to be found and threatened with most often unspecified “bad things” unless they stop researching the encounter. However, there is very little concrete evidence of their actual existence. While some accounts are very well documented, there is little corroborating evidence to support them. There have only been two instances where the Men in Black’s presence has been supposedly caught on camera. One was in the case of Jack Robinson, who, along with his wife, was being harassed by what he described as a man in a black suit. By chance, after meeting with Robinson, a close friend Timothy Green-Beckley managed to get a photograph of a man in a black suit that had

been watching the Robinsons. And the other was in the case of Shane Sovar who reported seeing a triangular shaped UFO. Two weeks after reporting his sighting to the Aerial Phenomenon Investigations team, two men in black suits showed up at Sovar's place of work asking for him. The security camera managed to catch footage of them entering the building. But other than these two rare instances, all reports of the Men in Black are first person accounts. Some of which have been debunked, many others dismissed. Even still, many UFO conspiracy theorists wholeheartedly believe in their existence and even have speculations as to what they are in truth. And, with their belief comes another question. One that could add much more weight to the question of their general existence: Are the Men in Black even human?

Many conspiracy theorists speculate as to the speciation of the Men in Black. Some claim they are government agents, as is most popularized in the media. Humans that are sworn to secrecy and leave no trace in the outside world. But others claim they are androids, which could account for their use of outdated slang and odd behaviors, as well as the occasionally described uncoordinated nature to their movements. Others believe them to be aliens in disguise, which could account for their ability to recount specific details of encounters when they target witnesses. The alien theory could also explain the reasoning behind wanting to keep witnesses from sharing their encounters and or research. However, aside from their unsettling appearances, there are very little indications that would point to these "men" as anything but human. Afterall, in all recounts of these interactions, there is no mention of a language barrier, all of the witnesses are able to understand what they are being told and threatened with. More so, the presence of the Men in Black goes mainly unnoticed by the general public aside from their uncoordinated movements and all around strange behavior.

But where did the legend of the Men in Black come from in the first place? Why is it so popular? Why would people think they weren't human? How could they be government agents if they weren't human? And why are people so scared of them?

Legends of the Men in Black date as far back as biblical times, stemming primarily from the legend of the *Man* in Black who was said to be the Devil. The Men were later described as either the Devil himself or his “representatives” even reaching so far as within the catholic church who claimed their own encounters with them. However, these stories tend to differ from the typical description of how we know them today. The first recorded account of the Men in Black as we know them comes from Harold Dahl in June of 1947, following what is known as the *Maury Island Incident*. Dahl claimed to see “six donut shaped objects” flying over the puget sound in Washington, debris from which fell from the crafts and nearly injured one of his crewmates. Dahl reported the sighting to his boss Fred Crisman and the next day, was visited by a man in black who described the UFO encounter in eerily specific detail and threatened Dahl with the previously mentioned unspecified “bad things” if he continued to talk about or look into UFOs. And while the *Maury Island Incident* has since been debunked –with even Dahl confirming it was a hoax– his account of the man spurred more people to speak of their own encounters with the Men in Black. People such as Albert K. Bender who was supposedly visited twice by three Men in Black and told to stop his work. Robert Richardson, Dr. Herbert Hopkins, and Dan Akroyd who were all told to do the same. Even Peter Bennewitz whose encounter was recently debunked with the release of a new documentary entitled *Mirage Men*. The purpose of which was to debunk UFO theories while pulling back the curtain on government involvement in UFO culture. His famous story of the Men in Black who supposedly sought out and fed Bennewitz information about aliens, were revealed to be Air Force Special Investigations

officers Richard Doty and his colleagues. Bennewitz had accidentally been listening in on Air Force communications which he thought were from an alien spacecraft; however, when he reported his findings to the local air force base, they sent Doty to keep him from doing so. Doty and his colleagues fed Bennewitz lies and half truths, furthering his mania which would take over his life until his family put him in a psychiatric hospital. Doty and his colleagues embodied the legends of the Men in Black in order to discredit Bennewitz and keep the government's secrets.

But are the Men in Black real? After all my digging, there is still no concrete answer as to whether or not the Men In Black are real. Personally, I feel myself siding with the nonbelievers; however, there are certain pieces of evidence that keep me open to the possibility of their existence. It is understandable that after being threatened by unknown, scary looking men who know a lot about you that most people wouldn't say anything about an encounter they would have with the Men in Black. On the other hand, the constant description of just being threatened with "bad things" sits wrong with me. If a person is at a point where they decide to talk about their encounter, not only with an UFO, but also with the Men in Black, why would they keep the exact threat a secret? It feels like talking about the experience in general would already put them in danger, why wouldn't the threat be specified as well? Especially because, if the Men in Black were real, wouldn't reporting the threat they made confirm their existence if they carried out said threat? What are they, exactly? I have no idea. I haven't yet found any one explanation that would make total sense to me. With the amount of people that have reported experiences, and the similarities across recounts, I hesitate to dismiss them fully. I can't deny that their existence makes sense in the world we live in today, but sadly, the lack of varied evidence leads me to the conclusion that the Men in Black are nothing but more scary stories people tell in the dark.

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