

# 'Guardian' (London) falls for dead cosmonaut website

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.space.history/2004-09/0961.html>

---

**From:** Jim Oberg ([jameseoberg\\_at\\_houston.rr.com](mailto:jameseoberg_at_houston.rr.com))

**Date:** 09/09/04

Date: Thu, 09 Sep 2004 17:48:16 GMT

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,,1299695,00.html> Lost in space

At the height of the space race, two Italian brothers set up a listening post in the hills above Turin and began probing the heavens for US and Soviet unmanned satellites. One day in early 1961, weeks before Yuri Gagarin's epic space flight, the Judica-Cordiglia brothers were startled by a sound that differed from the usual bleeps of the unmanned satellites they were used to tracking. According to the website [Lostcosmonauts.com](http://Lostcosmonauts.com), the brothers clearly heard "the beat of a failing heart and the last gasping breaths of a dying cosmonaut". The incredible story of a failed Soviet mission unfolds on the site, and adds to the archive of unknown Soviet space missions.

----- Original Message -----

From: Francis French

To: 'jameseoberg@houston.rr.com'

Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2004 11:21 AM

Subject: FW: Inaccurate science story in the Guardian

Hello Jim,

Below is a message I just sent to the Editor of the UK's "Guardian" newspaper. Perhaps you'd like to join me in sending them a letter / E-mail?

Thanks,

Francis.

Francis French  
Education Programs Coordinator  
Reuben H Fleet Science Center  
PO Box 33303, San Diego, California 92163  
[www.rhfleet.org](http://www.rhfleet.org)  
Tel: (619) 238 1233 ext: 808  
Fax: (619) 685 5771

sci.space.history: 'Guardian' (London) falls for dead cosmonaut website

E-mail: ffrench@rhfleet.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Francis French  
Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2004 9:20 AM  
To: 'editor@guardianunlimited.co.uk'  
Subject: Inaccurate science story in the Guardian

Dear Ms. Bell,

I am a longtime reader of The Guardian, both in print form and, since I have moved to the USA, the online edition, as a reliable source of news. I was therefore appalled to see the following story on your Web Watch page:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,,1299695,00.html>

which I understand is also repeated in your print edition, regarding the "Lost Cosmonauts" website.

The claims of the website owners have long been proven to be utterly ludicrous. While the Soviets did cover up names of cosmonauts who never flew for many years, and downplayed details of failed missions, US tracking stations knew immediately of any true Soviet manned spaceflights. It has also now been almost 15 years since a clear and comprehensive history of all Soviet space activities began emerging from the former USSR, and there has never been any evidence whatsoever in this enormous body of material proof to support any of the claims made on the website. In fact, they have been comprehensively disproven.

If Sean Dodson had done even the most basic amount of journalism – such as doing a google web search on the subject – he would immediately have come across sites like this:

<http://www.svengrahn.pp.se/trackind/Torre/TorreB.html>

Which clearly and comprehensively disprove the claims. There are many other works, such as the work of respected space historian James Oberg, which do the same.

I am disheartened to see that Mr. Dodson not only chose to highlight this website in your normally accurate newspaper, but also described it as "adds to the archive of unknown Soviet space missions." The Guardian has long been a good source of accurate journalism, and Mr. Dodson suggesting such nonsense does your newspaper a discredit.

I hope that you will do the right thing, and publish a retraction. At the least, I hope you pass this message on to Mr. Dodson and request that he does at least a modicum of research on items he highlights in his column before including them. After all, there are plenty of websites stating that humans never landed on the Moon and offering "proof." Does the Guardian plan to promote them also?

'Guardian' (London) falls for dead cosmonaut website

I look forward to a reply from you and / or Mr. Dodson.

Thank you,  
Francis French.

Francis French  
Reuben H Fleet Science Center  
PO Box 33303, San Diego, California 92163  
www.rhfleet.org  
Tel: (619) 238 1233 ext: 808  
Fax: (619) 685 5771  
E-mail: ffrench@rhfleet.org

-----

Jim sent off this email too:

Dear Editor:

When confronted with a heaven-sent (or outer-space-sent) opportunity to unveil some purportedly hidden chapter in space history, I urge your editors to be more prudent in looking around to see if it's not some old lost science fiction book chapter. In the struggle to separate fact from fantasy, please put it a little more effort to be on the right side. An obvious place to start should have been the headquarters of the British Interplanetary Society in London, surely the most prestigious amateur space history organization on Earth (and possibly the galaxy). They might try to persuade you, as I would, that the 'lost cosmonauts myth' is a long-discredited piece of space folklore, based loosely on some sincere but misguided radio listeners, and many misinterpreted clues. It was a legitimate possibility in the bad old days of the Space Race, some historians doubted it even then (me, for example), but post-Soviet access to Russia has fully and finally discredited it.

Jim Oberg  
Houston, Texas  
www.jamesoberg.com