

The "Flying Saucer" Model

The importance of the problem dictated a second approach, should the statistical results prove inconclusive. It was decided that an attempt would be made to describe the physical appearance, flight characteristics, and other attributes (that is, construct a model) of a class or classes of "flying saucers".

Preparatory to this attempt, a re-evaluation of the UNKNOWNNS was necessary. This re-evaluation was accomplished by a panel composed only of persons previously associated with the work. Using all the UNKNOWNNS reports available at ATIC, the panel made a careful study of the reports for the UNKNOWN SIGHTINGS in angle-of-sun-elevation Groups 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 - those groups for which the sun was either above the horizon or less than 10° in elevation below the horizon.

This study had two purposes. The first was to determine, with additional information such as the angle of elevation of the sun, how many of the UNKNOWNNS might be ascribed to known phenomena. The second was to obtain those UNKNOWNNS which were described in sufficient detail that they might be used to construct a model or models of "flying saucers".

It was decided to put any of the UNKNOWNNS which might be known phenomena into a "possible KNOWN" category to denote the slightly lower confidence level which could be ascribed to these new evaluations. The

UNKNOWNNS with sufficiently detailed description would be called "good UNKNOWNNS", while the remainder would simply be called UNKNOWNNS. One hundred sixty-four folders of a total of 186 OBJECT SIGHTINGS in Groups 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 were examined. There were 18 possible aircraft, 20 possible balloons, 7 good UNKNOWNNS, 100 UNKNOWNNS, and 19 others which were identified as being possible KNOWNNS of various types. It is interesting to note that two of these were established as mock suns on the basis of the angle of sun elevation and the sun bearing angle, together with the direction of the object from the observer. In addition, the UNKNOWNNS in angle-of-sun-elevation Groups 4 and 5 (nighttime sightings) were scanned with no attempt at identification, but to find any possible "good UNKNOWNNS". There were five sightings that could be put into this category.

Of the UNKNOWNNS, there were approximately 20 sightings that were observed in such a way that they should have been recognized easily if they had been familiar objects, that is, there was little possibility that their shapes, as seen, could have been distorted sufficiently by one cause or another to render them unrecognizable. There were a very few that would have been identified as guided missiles or rockets, but that were not so identified because of the geographical location in which they were seen.

All of the remaining UNKNOWNNS were classified as such solely because they were reported to have performed maneuvers that could not be ascribed to any known objects. In these cases, the shape might have been unrecognizable also, but it was felt that this was because of distortion and distance, or because of darkness.

This is a very important point. To put it differently, if these UNKNOWNNS, which represent all but about 40 of the UNKNOWN SIGHTINGS, were reported to have performed maneuvers which could be ascribed to known phenomena, they would probably have been identified as KNOWNNS. With the exception of some radar sightings, all of these maneuvers were observed visually. The possibilities for inaccuracies are great because of the inability of an observer to estimate visually size, distance, and speed.

Reports of sightings by radar usually were of high-speed objects, some at extremely high altitudes. Some were identified as UNKNOWNNS because there was no object to be seen visually at the point indicated by the radar set. It cannot be said with any assurance what these radar sightings mean, but the most logical explanation is that they are ground targets reflected by an atmospheric temperature inversion layer. The validity of this statement cannot be established. It is felt that radar sightings in this study are of no significance whatsoever unless a visual sighting of the object also is made.

Taken in conjunction with the Chi Square Tests discussed earlier, the results of the re-evaluation of reports identified as UNKNOWN SIGHTINGS would seem to indicate that the majority of them could easily