

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

What is an Unidentified Flying Object (UFO)? Well, according to United States Air Force Regulation 80-17 (dated 19 September 1966), a UFO is "Any aerial Phenomenon or object which is unknown or appears to be out of the ordinary to the observer." This is a very broad definition which applies equally well to one individual seeing his first noctilucous cloud at twilight as it does to another individual seeing his first helicopter. However, at present most people consider the term UFO to mean an object which behaves in a strange or erratic manner while moving through Earth's atmosphere. That strange phenomenon has evoked strong emotions and great curiosity among a large segment of our world's population. The average person is interested because he loves a mystery, the professional military man is involved because of the possible threat to national security, and some scientists are interested because of the basic curiosity that led them into becoming researchers.

The literature on UFO's is so vast, and the stories so many and varied, that we can only present a sketchy outline of the subject in this chapter. That outline includes description classifications, operational domains (temporal and spatial), some theories as to the nature of the UFO phenomenon, human reactions, attempts to attack the problem scientifically, and some tentative conclusions. If you wish to read further in this area, the references provide an excellent starting point.

33.1 DESCRIPTORS

One of the greatest problems you encounter when attempting to catalog UFO sightings, is selection of a system for cataloging. No effective system has yet been devised, although a number of different systems have been proposed. The net result is that almost all UFO data are either treated in the form of individual cases, or in the forms of inadequate classification systems. However, these systems do tend to have some common factors, and a collection of these factors is as follows:

- a. Size
- b. Shape (disc, ellipse, football, etc.)
- c. Luminosity
- d. Color
- e. Number of UFO's

Behavior

- a. Location (altitude, direction, etc.)
- b. Patterns of paths (straight line, climbing, zig-zagging, etc.)