

meteorological phenomena like small tornadoes, were collected into a category called OTHER. A separate category for the uncommon natural phenomena associated with light reflections or refractions, such as mirages, sun dogs, inversion-layer images, and distortions caused by airborne ice, was established with the title of LIGHT PHENOMENON. Categories for INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS, and UNKNOWN were provided for the sightings that could not be fitted into the preceding identifications. An explanation of their use follows:

INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION - This identification category was assigned to a report when, upon final consideration, there was some essential item of information missing, or there was enough doubt about what data were available to disallow identification as a common object or some natural phenomenon. It is emphasized that this category of identification was not used as a convenient way to dispose of what might be called "poor unknowns", but as a category for reports that, perhaps, could have been one of several known objects or natural phenomena. No reports identified as INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION contain authenticated facts or impressions concerning the sighting that would prevent its being identified as a known object or phenomenon;

PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS - This identification category was assigned to a report when, although it was well established that the observer had seen something, it was also obvious that the description of the sighting had been overdrawn. Religious fanaticism, a desire for publicity, or an over-active imagination were the most common mental aberrations causing this type of report;

UNKNOWN - This designation in the identification code was assigned to those reports of sightings wherein the description of the object and its maneuvers could not be fitted to the pattern of any known object or phenomenon.

For the purposes of this study, two groups of identifications were recognized, the KNOWN (including all identification categories except the UNKNOWNs) and the UNKNOWNs.

All possible identifications provided in the code system, except INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION and UNKNOWN, could be assigned according to two degrees of certainty, designated "Certain" and "Doubtful".

A "Certain" identification indicated a minimum amount of doubt regarding the validity of the evaluation. By "rule-of-thumb" reasoning, the probability of the identification being correct was better than 95 per cent. A "Doubtful" identification indicated that the choice was less positive, but that there was a better than even chance of being correct.

It is emphasized again that, as was true for other phases of evaluation, preliminary and final identification was entrusted only to scientists and engineers who, in addition to their broad scientific background, had received instruction, where necessary, in specialized subjects. The panel of consultants provided background information for this instruction. Many of the cases representing unusual features or maneuvers were submitted to and discussed with various members of the panel of consultants prior to the final identification.

Consistency in the application of the knowledge necessary for making identifications was maintained by frequent collaboration among the personnel involved, and systematic spot checks of the work. In addition to the general fund of knowledge required to identify satisfactorily a reported unidentified aerial object, an attempt was made to correlate specific data such as flight plans of aircraft, records of balloon releases, weather conditions, and an astronomical almanac with the reported sighting.

The procedure followed in making final identifications deserves explanation because of the importance assumed by the identification as a basis for statistical treatment. As was mentioned, a conference of four qualified persons, two from ATIC and two from the panel of consultants, decided upon the final identification for each sighting report. This work was done at ATIC, periodically, as reports became ready.

During an identification conference, each sighting report was first studied, from the original data, by one person. If that person arrived at a decision, it was checked against the preliminary identification; if the two identifications were the same, the report was appropriately marked and considered finished. If the two identifications did not agree, the report was considered later by everyone participating in the conference until a group decision could be made.

If an evaluator was unable to categorize the report as one of the common objects or as a natural phenomenon, and his opinion was that the sighting should be recorded as UNKNOWN, a group decision was also required on that report before it was considered finished. A group decision was necessary on all reports finally recorded as UNKNOWN, regardless of what the preliminary identification had been. In cases where a group decision was not made within a reasonable time, the report was put aside and later submitted to certain members of the panel of consultants for their opinions. If, after this, disagreement continued to exist, the report of the sighting was identified as UNKNOWN.