

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX II

Mitchel AFB, New York - 21 January 1952

I. DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

At approximately 0950 EST on 21 January 1952, a U.S. Navy pilot flying a TBM aircraft sighted an unidentified object southeast of Mitchel AFB. The TBM was on a heading at approximately 45°. When first noticed, the object was low at an angle of about 45° from the aircraft. The location of the aircraft was about three runways lengths from the end of, and lined up with, Runway #30 (300°). The object appeared to be halfway between the aircraft and the end of the runway. The pilot's first impression was that the object was a parachute and he thinks he noticed wedge or pie-shaped segregations on the top, however, he realized that the object was going cross-wind and that it could not be a drifting parachute. He judged the angular size to be the same as the angle subtended by a house on the ground and by watching the object cover the equivalent of a city block. He judged the speed to be 300 knots. He judged the altitude to be 200-300 feet. It appeared to be on a course of about 225°.

The pilot started a left turn (see overlay) in an attempt to identify the object. He states that he kept the airspeed of the TBM at about 160 knots and kept a nearly constant altitude of 6000 ft. all during the turn. He estimated that he was pulling from two to three G's in the turn. At one point near position #3 of the aircraft (see overlay) he had to increase his angle of bank to nearly 90° to keep the object from disappearing under the wing of the aircraft.

The pilot's version of the attempted interception is shown on the inclosed overlay. He stated that the paths shown are not exact due to the fact that he was concentrating on the object and not his position, although he occasionally looked at the airfield to get reference points.

The object stayed below the TBM during most of the time it was in sight. When the aircraft was somewhere near position 4, the object appeared to start a rapid climb, accelerating to an estimated 500 knots, and when it was at an angle of about 10° above the pilot's horizontal line of vision, it disappeared. When the object disappeared, the TBM was near position #5. The object did not diminish in apparent size except possibly near the end of the chase, it just disappeared. The pilot was very positive in his statement that when he was north of Mitchel AFB he could see the object. The course on which the object disappeared was established by lining up the aircraft with the apparent path of object and reading the compass.

The object appeared to be dome-shaped, or similar to the vertical cross-section of a parachute canopy. The top was light colored, "like nylon", and the under-surface was dark. It had a length to depth ratio of about 1:3.

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

While the object was in level flight it appeared to oscillate with a slow period.

The total time elapsed was estimated to be about two and one half minutes.

II. STATUS OF INVESTIGATION

A field trip was made to Mitchel AFB to reinterview the pilot and other personnel having knowledge of facts pertaining to the sighting. The pilot's description of the incident was the same as was stated in his original report. His added details have been incorporated into Section I of this Appendix.

At 0950 EST on 21 January 1952, the weather section of Mitchel AFB launched a Rawinsonde balloon from the position shown on the overlay. These balloons are about six feet in diameter at time of launch and expand on ascending. The expansion up to 6,000 ft. can be neglected, however, as it is small. The balloons are a light gray color and have white streaks of talcum powder which is used in packing the balloons. The balloon carried a tin-foil radar 18 inch square reflector six inches below the balloon. The path of the balloon is shown on the inclosed overlay.

These balloons are tracked by radar. It was hoped that the radar operators might have recalled seeing an aircraft return circling their balloon return. They stated, however, that due to the heavy air traffic in the area, it was not uncommon to pick up aircraft returns and they did not pay any attention to them.

The tower operators on duty at the time of the sighting were interviewed. They had not seen the TBM or the balloon. The tower log showed that the first contact with the TBM was at 0955 EST at which time pilot reported sighting an object east of the field. At 1008 the pilot again called the tower to describe the incident in detail. The pilot's description was a condensed version of that given in Part I of this Appendix except he stated that the object "appeared to be a parachute canopy with a dark colored object underneath". The 0955 contact was made soon after the object was sighted, establishing the time.

III. DISCUSSION OF INCIDENT

An accurate time of the initial sighting is needed to establish the position of the balloon at this time. It is assumed that the tower clock is more accurate than the clock in the TBM, thus the time of the initial sighting was probably closer to 0954, allowing for time to contact the tower than the 0950 which was estimated by the pilot.

At 0954 the balloon would have been at about 4,000 ft. and in the position marked 4,000 ft. on the overlay. The pilot stated that the object appeared low, at an angle of 45° from vertical, and appeared to cover the

UNCLASSIFIED