



This is a formation of F-106 jets, pursue unidentified aircraft seen like those sent up to monitor and over U.S. Air Force base in Maine.

nights, as they did at Loring and Wurtsmith, and hover within 100 feet of the nuclear weapons storage areas—all without being identified or forced down—the Air Force spokesman said: "These bases have no air defense capabilities in peacetime."

The Air Force refusal to provide details or to acknowledge investigating such incidents lies in its evident reluctance to become embroiled again in the UFO controversy. From 1947 to 1969, the Air Force's Project Blue Book investigated some 12,000 UFO reports, concluded that about 90 percent were attributable to things like aircraft, planets, meteors, weather balloons, ball lightning, atmospheric tricks and the like.

Each year UFO study groups, such as that headed by Northwestern University astronomy professor emeritus Dr. J. Allen Hynek, receive thousands of reports of sightings. Most are quickly and easily explained away, but a few are extremely intriguing. In mid-October, an incident in Australia made headlines when a young pilot radioed that his plane was being pursued by a UFO with green lights. After several minutes of conversation with air traffic controllers, the pilot was abruptly interrupted as the UFO closed on him. Despite a massive search, his plane vanished without trace.

An equally bizarre UFO incident, involving the military, occurred Sept. 19, 1976, in Iran. The incredible story of four Imperial Iranian Air Force pilots was summarized in a lengthy

classified report sent to the Pentagon by the U.S. military attache in the Iranian capital.

The report tells how the Iranian air force sent up two F-4 Phantom jets to chase a brilliant object hovering near Mehrabad Airport, Tehran. The jets, which carry a pilot and a "back-seater" radar operator, tried to get close to the object, and one tried to shoot it down with a Sidewinder missile.

Both planes temporarily lost their navigation and communications when they got close to the object but regained them when they broke away from the intercept. The weapons instrumentation panel went out on one plane as it prepared to fire its missile. And the object—according to the two pilots in the second Phantom—launched a smaller object that pursued them for a time.

A fantastic tale—if it actually happened like that—but the truth may never be publicly revealed. The Air Force asserts that it did no follow-up investigation, a statement UFO researchers find hard to believe given the facts: two U.S.-made jets, operated by a close military ally, being easily disabled by some unknown cause along the Soviet border.

While hardly as spectacular as the Iranian incident, Air Force reports filed during the autumn events of 1975 underscore the fact that the Air Force took them very seriously but was unable to do much about them.

At Loring AFB in Maine the myste-

rious craft returned two nights after their Oct. 27 penetration, this time flying without lights. When radar operators tracked it heading again for the weapons storage area, a helicopter was launched to chase it down.

"Ground personnel were able to direct the Air Guard helicopter to within 1000 feet of the unknown aircraft with both helicopters in sight, but visual acquisition was not made," states a 42nd Bombardment Wing report.

"During this period a KC-135 was orbiting at 5000 feet to aid in identification and act as radio relay. All contact was lost. It is our opinion that the unknown helicopter has demonstrated a clear intent in the weapons storage area. A smart and most capable aviator. Local security has been increased. We anticipate further incidents."

Two nights later came a virtual replay of the same incident with the craft, described as a "suspected helicopter" or "unknown aircraft," being spotted three times but eluding a helicopter loaded this time with armed members of the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

Meanwhile, Wurtsmith AFB in Michigan was visited by a similar craft on the nights of Oct. 30 and 31, with the flying machine making passes over the weapons storage area. An airborne tanker was sent up in pursuit, spotted first one, then two of the intruders flying in trail formation, sometimes at high speeds, sometimes hovering. The tanker was never able to catch the objects.

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