RALPH E. FLANDERS
VERMONT

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

April 16, 1953

Mr. Leon Davidson
6-4 S. Irving St.
Arlington 4, Virginia

Dear Mr. Davidson:

In reply to your letter of April 12th, I will say that the Air Force has furnished me with the enclosed form letter which they use to reply to persons writing in about the flying saucer incidents. I have not been able to confirm that the Air Force has promised a detailed public report and apparently they regard this as the public information which they are now in a position to release. I hope you will find in it something of interest.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph E. Flanders

encl.

RALPH E. FLANDERS
VERMONT

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

April 21, 1953

A8

Mr. Leon Davidson
806 S. Irving Street
Arlington 4, Virginia

Dear Mr. Davidson:

In reply to your letter of April 18, will say that I have been privileged to witness some demonstrations of missile which might somewhat resemble a flying ball. Of course, I am not at liberty to give any details. I would find it, however, a little difficult to line them up with the reports of such objects that have been received.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph E. Flanders

12

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

FORM LETTER PROVIDED BY THE
AIR FORCE IN APRIL, 1953, AS
FORWARDED BY SENATOR FLANDERS.

The following information concerning Air Force investigations of unusual aerial phenomena is submitted in answer to your request.

In the Fall of 1947 the United States Air Force took official notice of reports of so-called "flying saucers" because the reports from the public indicated that the problem might be related to the Air Force responsibility for the air defense of the United States.

On December 30, 1947 the Air Force directed its Air Material Command, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, to set up a project to collect and evaluate all available facts concerning "flying saucer" sightings.

To perform this task the Air Material Command obtained the services of civilian and military astronomers, psychologists, electronic specialists, meteorologists, aeronautical engineers, and physicists.

On December 27, 1949, after 375 reported sightings had been investigated, the Air Force, with the concurrence of the Army and the Navy, announced the findings of the "flying saucer" project.

The evidence at that time indicated that the majority of the reports of unidentified flying objects could be accounted for as misinterpretations of various conventional objects, a mild form of hysteria, meteorological phenomena, light aberrations, or hoaxes.

There remained, however, a number of unexplained sightings, and the Air Force has continued its investigations insofar as it is an Air Force responsibility to identify and analyze aerial phenomena that could possibly be a menace to the United States.

Subsequent to December 1949, these investigations have been conducted as a normal intelligence function, rather than a special project, by the Air Technical Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio.

To date, the Air Force has undertaken to investigate and analyze about 1500 reports dealing with these phenomena. As before, most of the reports were identified and disposed of as friendly aircraft erroneously reported, known electronic and meteorological phenomena, light aberrations, hoaxes, and other known natural occurrences or man-made objects.

The unexplained reports, however, which are in the order of 20 percent of the total, cannot be definitely associated with these familiar things.

Difficulty in Evaluating Reports

The difficulty in disposing of these unexplained reports is based largely upon the insufficiency of accurate basic data such as size, shape, composition and flight characteristics (speed, acceleration, altitude, exact maneuver pattern, etc.) of the objects.

Although some instruments which are useful in obtaining more accurate data of this type have been available, the reports based on sightings with these instruments have been very infrequent and comprise an extremely small percentage of the total. Moreover, even these reports have not included much of the information required.

Because of the inadequacy of this basic data, the Air Force has in the past devoted its efforts primarily to determining whether these unexplained sightings indicated the existence of a menace to the United States. Initially it was believed that some pattern might evolve from the study of a large volume of reports. To date, no pattern has materialized to reveal anything whatsoever which can be interpreted as indicative of purpose or consistency or which can be construed as a menace to the United States. Nonetheless, since these unexplained sightings persist, the Air Force will continue its investigations, giving the problem adequate but not frantic attention.

It is now felt, however, that reports from people whose training and experience in observing aerial objects qualify them to obtain essential data are the only ones likely to produce material suitable for systematic analysis. The Air Force is planning to provide additional tools to help these observers obtain the basic data it needs.

Reports of similar phenomena go back to Biblical times. There have been flurries of them in various centuries. The current series of sightings began generally in 1946.

There are many reasons why the volume of these reports has increased materially during the past few years. Aerial activity originated by man has increased, and people today have a greater curiosity about this activity than before. Also, our present efficient communication facilities and news media provide an incentive for reporting unusual observations, for publicizing them and for recounting them. However, the ability to measure these phenomena does not seem to have advanced in step with opportunities for observing them. The Air Force believes that most of these phenomena will gradually be understood as more is known about occurrences in the upper atmosphere.

A9