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Giant Spaceships

The first red-letter day in this dramatic record was July 18, 1967. Until evening, it was an ordinary day at the Soviet Astronomical Station near Kazan. As the twilight deepened, two of the staff astronomers began making routine observations.

Suddenly a huge flying object appeared, moving swiftly across the sky. As it passed above the observatory its orange glow made it easily visible in the dusk. It was an amazing sight—an enormous crescent-shaped craft at least eight times larger than any known airplane. The horns of the crescent were pointed backward, emitting jetlike exhausts.

Flying at incredible speed, the gigantic spaceship was out of sight within seconds. The two astronomers were shaken by the experience. At first they made no report, afraid no one would believe them. But confirmation of the giant spaceships' existence soon came from other astronomers.

On August 8, another huge flying crescent raced over the Soviet Astrophysical Station at Kislovodsk, which is operated by the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The sighting was logged by astronomer Anatoli Sazanov, one of a dozen staff members who saw the monstrous ship. On September 4, October 18 and several other days in 1967, identical spacecraft were sighted over southern Russia and tracked by astronomers.

During February of '68 some of these reports were confirmed at Moscow in an officially sanctioned statement. The

most startling disclosures were calculations by the Kazan Observatory astronomers, made after several sightings of the huge spacecraft:

The diameter of the flying crescents was between 500 and 600 meters (between 1,640 and 1,840 feet). Their speed was approximately five meters (3.1 miles) per second, or 11,160 miles per hour.

This officially approved release was made public by Dr. Fritz Zigel, a ranking scientist in the new UFO Investigation Commission, which was part of the All-Union Cosmonautics Committee. Dr. Zigel was also a key figure at the Moscow Aviation Institute.

Some of the Soviet evidence was omitted in Zigel's statement, but this did nothing to reduce U. S. Air Force concern. In a previous public release, the scientist had strongly indicated that UFOs came from a more advanced world. He had also hit at witness ridicule and debunking of evidence—in the United States as well as in Russia. Urging that the secrecy be ended, he had called for a worldwide exchange of UFO information and a joint effort by all scientists to determine the facts.

In his new post, as a close adviser to General Stolyerov, Dr. Zigel could be a real threat to USAF secrecy. If he managed to release convincing Soviet evidence of UFO reality it would be serious enough. But if this included proof that giant spaceships were operating near our planet it was almost certain to set off a wave of fear. The Colorado Project would crumble, and far worse, the AF cover-up would immediately be exposed, increasing the chance of panic.

Just two years before, the AF had faced the same danger, when a giant-spaceship report leaked out.

On the night of February 15, 1965, a Flying Tiger airliner chartered by the Defense Department was cruising over the Pacific, transporting an Army and Air Force group to Japan. The flight was about an hour from Tokyo when the cockpit radar picked up three large fast-moving objects.

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At first, the operator and the pilots thought the set had malfunctioned—they had never seen such huge blips on a radarscope. Then a reddish glow appeared in the sky, above and to the left. Staring upward, the captain saw three enormous oval-shaped objects. Descending at high speed, in close formation, they seemed to be heading straight at the plane.

The captain hastily started to turn, then stopped. The three giant UFOs, veering to one side, had abruptly reduced speed. Now they were leveling out at the plane's altitude, still in close formation.

The radar showed they were five miles away, but even at that distance they looked gigantic. For several minutes, the Flying Tiger crew tensely watched the three glowing craft. Though they made no attempt to come closer their formidable size made them seem menacing.

As the giant ships continued to pace the airliner the captain sent a crewman back into the cabin. In a few moments he returned with an AF officer. The Flying Tiger captain had hoped that an emergency message might bring jets from Okinawa, in case of trouble. But the AF man, after an amazed inspection of the huge UFOs, warned him not to try it. Even if the jets arrived in time, they probably would be helpless—and they might cause an attack.

For several minutes more the giant spaceships kept on pacing the plane, while the strain built up in the cockpit. Then the formation abruptly angled upward. Accelerating to 1,200 knots, the ships disappeared in a few seconds.

When the plane landed, AF Intelligence sent a coded report to the Pentagon. It had a powerful impact. The AF officer who had viewed the huge ships had estimated their size, using the five-mile distance as the basis. If he were correct the three spacecraft must have been nearly 2,000 feet in length—possibly even more. Fortunately for the AF, they had descended over the ocean. If they had come down over a large city, nothing could have stopped a panic.

At first the AF thought the story was safely hidden. But a

month later, a signed report was sent to me at NICAP by an AF captain in Japan. After analyzing the case we detailed it in the *UFO Investigator*, NICAP's report to members, but at the suggestion of a psychologist adviser we reduced the size estimate to 700 feet. By the time it was published the '65 sightings outbreak had become almost daily news, and the Flying Tiger encounter was not widely known.

But shortly after this AF Intelligence had another scare, when front-page stories reported the Antarctic sighting of an enormous flying disc. When the Secretary of the Argentine Navy confirmed that motion pictures of the huge flying object had been taken, some AF Headquarters officers feared the censorship was doomed. If pictures of the spacecraft were released to the world press, the results could be disastrous. Perhaps high Argentine officials realized this. Perhaps they were persuaded to withhold the evidence. Whatever the answer, the films were never released, and in the excitement of the '65 flap most of the public forgot them.

For the AF this was a greater relief than most people knew. Since 1953, it had known that giant spaceships were operating near our planet. At least nine times, huge alien spacecraft had been seen or tracked in orbit, or as they descended nearer the Earth for brief periods. Each time it had been an ordeal for the AF censors, as they struggled to conceal the reports or explain them away when attempts at secrecy failed.

During 1953, the AF began experiments with new long-range radar equipment. While making the initial tests, AF operators were astonished to pick up a gigantic object orbiting near the equator. Its speed was almost 18,000 miles an hour. Repeated checks showed that the tracking was correct. Some huge unknown object was circling the Earth, six hundred miles out.

Shortly after this a second enormous object approached the Earth. Tracked by AF radar experts, it also went into orbit, about 400 miles away.

Alarmed Defense Department heads hurriedly set up an

emergency satellite-detection project at White Sands, New Mexico. The scientist in charge of this secret search was Dr. Clyde Tombaugh, discoverer of the planet Pluto, the only noted astronomer who had admitted sighting a UFO. The "sky sweep" was a combined armed forces project, under Army Ordnance Research.

In February 1954, plans for a satellite search were described in an article for the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. Quoting Dr. Tombaugh, it said that special telescopic equipment would be used. The article had been written before the project began, and there was no hint of giant spaceships. The operation was called a search for natural objects. But the press quickly sensed a hidden story. At White Sands, Army Ordnance officials were deluged with questions. Were there actually unknown satellites? . . . Where had they come from? . . . How many were there? . . . Had this ever happened before?

At first, the censors started to cover up, but Dr. Tombaugh persuaded them this was unwise. On March 3, an official explanation, approved at the Pentagon, was released at White Sands.

The armed forces, Army Ordnance stated, were searching for tiny moons or "moonlets," natural objects which had come in from space and were now orbiting the Earth. They had not been tracked or discovered sooner, a spokesman said, because they were following orbits near the equator and the scarcity of observatories there made them harder to locate. Also, special automatic-tracking cameras moving at the satellites' speed would be required, because such fast-moving objects gave off very little light and ordinary telescopic cameras would not reveal them. The armed forces' intention, the spokesman explained, was to locate suitable "moonlets" which could be used as space bases and for launching missiles for the country's defense. •

There was no hint that the unknown satellites might be intelligently controlled craft. The official statement implied

that they were objects like asteroids and nothing serious was involved.

It was a preposterous explanation. For several asteroids to come in from space and, without any control, to assume the precise courses necessary to go into such orbits, would be impossible.

For the first few days there was fear at the Pentagon that this debunking claim might be publicly rejected. At AF Headquarters there was an added worry. If the "moonlet" cover-up failed, the true spaceship answer might emerge as the only alternative. If it did, this could revive a disturbing article on possible alien migration to our world.

The AF had good reason to fear any such spotlight. For the article had been written by a high AF Intelligence officer—Col. W. C. Odell. Why it had ever been written was a puzzle. Even more mystifying, it had been cleared by AF Security and Review—at a time when the great sighting wave of 1952 was still fresh in many minds.

Entitled "Planet Earth—Host to Extraterrestrial Life," the article began with these words:

Granted that superintelligents in another solar system are looking for a suitable planet for a second home, why would Earth be singled out?

Colonel Odell had avoided melodramatics, but his quiet suggestions had a powerful impact. According to his theory, alien beings from a dying planet were considering and surveying our world as a new home—a planet similar enough to their own so that they could survive here and perpetuate their race. Colonel Odell did nothing to indicate a violent occupation of Earth. But if his evaluation was right, then planet Earth might become—peacefully or not—a "host to extraterrestrial life."

When this surprising article was shown to me at the Pentagon I was amazed that it had been cleared for publication. At the request of AF UFO spokesman Albert M. Chop, I

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had a New York editor friend read the manuscript. But the AF stipulations disturbed him. Odell was not to be identified as an AF officer. Also the clearance by AF Security and Review was not to be mentioned. What bothered the editor most was this official clearance when the AF was still debunking UFOs in public statements. He finally decided not to risk being involved in some power play at the Pentagon, although the article would undoubtedly get national attention.

In the next few weeks Colonel Odell's manuscript was shown to a few selected members of the Washington press corps. Apparently the AF restrictions worried them too; so far as I know, it was never published, at least not by any national news service or magazine.

But headquarters censors, who had been bypassed by Security and Review, knew Colonel Odell's migration article had not been forgotten. If the growing evidence of giant spaceships became public, the Intelligence colonel's conclusion would probably be tied in, adding to the risk of hysteria.

On through '54, new reports kept the AF on edge. On May 5, two huge objects maneuvered at a high altitude over Washington, tracked by radar at National Airport. The next day Navy radar tracked an enormous machine circling 90,000 feet above the capital. On June 12, another giant ship—or the same one—made a night appearance, hovering at 79,000 feet between Washington and Baltimore. Air Defense immediately scrambled jet fighters, to be ready if the alien spacecraft came down in firing range. For an hour, the gigantic craft held its high altitude, while the AF jets circled helplessly beneath it. Then it climbed swiftly out of sight. Two nights later the same spaceship, or a similar one, returned to the Washington area. This time it remained for two hours, maneuvering between the capital and Baltimore. Again, Air Defense jets were hurriedly scrambled, as the coast went under a full alert. But the alien machine gave no sign of hostility—nor any indication of its purpose.

For almost a month, the story was suppressed. When it leaked to the newspapers, Air Defense admitted the alert but claimed the interceptor pilots had seen nothing. Later, an AF pilot I knew told me the truth about those tense two hours.

"It was like a nightmare, seeing that giant ship. What we'd have done if it came down near us I don't know. Just the idea of trying to attack it gave me cold chills. I talked with two other pilots when we landed—they were just as scared as I was."

During October of '54 a new puzzle was linked with the giant spaceships. In a press statement, NASA said it had picked up strange signals from an unknown orbiting object. Soon after this, a French astronomer publicly revealed that he also had heard signals from an unknown source orbiting the Earth. According to the reports no message could be recognized.

To the AF, the giant-spacecraft reports were specially alarming because of potential panic. While the usual UFO reports had sometimes caused uneasiness, they were far less ominous. But the huge spaceships could be carrying a large number of alien beings. Though there was no proof of this, the public might believe the giant machines could be part of an invasion plan.

To most analysts, in the AF and at NICAP, the odds seemed against hostility. During the long UFO surveillance, most encounters had been devoid of harm. And the giant spaceships had shown no hostility during their infrequent visits. If an attack were intended, why the seven-year wait since the first mass sightings in 1947? The chance of hostility could not be ignored, but in seven years we should have had some indication. Although this was based on human logic, there was reason to believe that the aliens had some far different purpose.

Unfortunately, the cover-up had increased the danger of public alarm, with the growing suspicion that something frightful was behind the secrecy.

ord have proved that large spacecraft frequently launch smaller units and retrieve them with swift precision.

In 1952, the crew of an AF bomber tracked a formation of UFOs at 5,240 miles an hour, during a practice flight over the Gulf of Mexico. Another formation swung in behind the bomber, slowed to pace the aircraft, then raced up toward a large craft which had suddenly appeared on the bomber's radar. Within seconds, the smaller UFOs merged, on the radar, with the giant ship. Evidently this was a prearranged rendezvous, for retrieving the smaller-sized units. As soon as they were taken aboard, the huge carrier ship accelerated to a speed of over 9,000 miles per hour and went off the scope.

The Gulf of Mexico report was released to me early in '53, before the CIA take-over and the increased cover-up. The AF report, given to me with a signed official clearance, admitted there was no conventional explanation. Later, radar engineers calculated the size of the carrier ship, as indicated by its large blip on the bomber's radarscope. The giant craft, they estimated, was at least 1,200 feet long. This is only one of many confirmed reports of huge carrier or mother ships, observed visually or tracked during the aliens' surveillance of our world.

But even with all the detailed UFO evidence, the aliens' purpose has not been discovered.

To some researchers, the most reasonable answer is the aliens' need to migrate to another planet. The inhabitants of Earth will face this urgent problem in some far-off time, as scientists have pointed out. In that far-distant future the Earth may lose its oxygen; it may become frigid as the sun's heat diminishes, or it may become unbearably hot from expansion of the sun. Man may attempt to survive by building underground cities with controlled atmospheres and temperatures. Or he may try to escape to another planet, one not too unlike the Earth.

As already discussed, mass migration is no longer consid-

ered a science fiction dream. Some serious planners believe that overpopulation will make it inevitable. As predicted by Andrew Haley, a former high official of the American Rocket Society, the time may come when gigantic spaceships will transport humans to Mars or some other planet where colonies for Earthlings can be constructed.

If we can achieve this, an advanced space race should be able to carry out migration, if existence on their home planet were threatened. It could be a complex and difficult operation, even for a technically advanced race. Years might be required for a complete survey, to make sure they could live without great difficulty on the selected planet. If the planet were already inhabited, the problem of landing without force, adjusting to a different race, might be almost insurmountable. But if no more suitable planet could be found, the aliens might decide they had no other choice.

There is no proof that migration is the answer. If it should be right, what is the most probable source for the aliens and their giant spacecraft? Here, too, the answer is unknown. Some scientists believe they would have to come from outside our solar system. Others believe they may originate from one of our sun's planets—or that the aliens have established a base on one of these planets.

Back in '48, the Project Sign scientists carefully discussed this question. Their opinions were kept secret until April 27, 1949, when AF Headquarters gave this summary to the press:

Since flying saucers first hit the headlines almost two years ago, there has been wide speculation that the aerial phenomena might actually be some form of penetration from another planet.

Actually, astronomers are largely in agreement that only one member of the solar system besides Earth is capable of supporting life. That is Mars. Even Mars, however, appears to be relatively desolate and inhospitable, so that a Martian

In 1955, the censors were hit hard by syndicated columnist Stewart Alsop. Through highly placed sources in government agencies, including the National Security Council, Alsop had learned the true reason for the emergency satellite-detection operations. By this time a project at Mount Wilson had been added to the first one at White Sands. In his nationwide column, Alsop revealed the intensive search for *artificial* satellites. His exposure of the "moonlets" explanation angered top officials at the Pentagon and the National Security Council. In a later column, Alsop reported that NSC Secretary Cutler was so furious that his close friends at NSC were afraid to be seen with him.

To avoid any more serious leaks, censorship on the "sky sweep" was tightened, along with attempts to suppress giant-spacecraft reports. But in 1960 one important case was confirmed despite the censors.

On August 25, a mystery satellite was seen and tracked for several days. It was photographed by the Grumman Aircraft Corporation, and all efforts to debunk the photos were futile.

On May 18, 1961, another mysterious orbiting object was discovered. The announcement came, surprisingly, from the Smithsonian Observatory at Cambridge, Massachusetts, which works closely with the AF in operating a worldwide network of tracking stations.

"The satellite was first spotted at Jupiter, Florida," the Smithsonian told the press. Labeling it "an unsuspected, unpredicted bright satellite," officials said it could be seen with the naked eye under the right conditions. "Satellite tracking stations around the world have been asked to help track it," the spokesman said.

The Smithsonian also alerted its network of high-powered telescopic cameras to spot and photograph the unknown orbiting object.

Later in the sixties the Space Science Board announced a program to speed up a search for extraterrestrial life. In line with this, NASA began preparations for launching an

unmanned spacecraft equipped with robot observation and evaluation devices, for an eleven-year tour of our solar system. During this time it is expected to observe and photograph Venus, Mars, Jupiter and the other solar planets, relaying a great mass of information to special stations on Earth. Robot equipment will constantly check all phases of the operation, making necessary adjustments and replacing faulty parts. The most important purpose of this automatic survey spacecraft will be to record any discoveries of inhabited areas and relay photographs to Earth, including if possible photos of the alien beings living on such a planet.

Even before this, some UFO researchers suspected that the giant ships were space-exploration craft, and the eleven-year tour program caused a new study of this possibility.

With a technically advanced race, such huge survey ships would undoubtedly carry superior equipment for photography, mapping, monitoring and recording television and radio transmissions, and probably other devices unfamiliar to us. Almost certainly they would be linked with super-computers for swift evaluations of all the recorded information and photographs.

Even if most of these operations were automatic, such enormous spaceships would hardly be launched on important missions without a crew to monitor the survey equipment and handle emergencies that might arise. The crew might include experienced aliens with the power to make important final decisions, after constantly relaying their discoveries to their home planet. Or they might first have to recommend decisions and actions to the beings controlling their world. This could mean a long delay before the spaceship crew could proceed.

To carry out a long, detailed survey, such as the observation of our world, the huge ships would logically carry flying discs or other types of UFOs for low-altitude observations. The medium-sized machines could have crews, smaller ones could be remote-controlled. Many documented cases on, rec-