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The names of the persons involved in the sightings are withheld in respect of their privacy. They are free, however, to say what they please. Reports which divulge the capabilities of our aircraft, radar, and electronic equipment are classified for obvious reasons. All other information with respect to sightings is a matter of public record.

Another misconception centers about photographs of "flying saucers". The Air Force does not possess photographs which prove the existence of "flying saucers". Because still photographs can be so easily faked, either by using a mock-up or model against a legitimate background, or by retouching the negative, they are practically worthless as evidence. Innumerable objects, from ashtrays to wash basins, have been photographed while sailing through the air. Many such photos have been published without revealing the true identity of the objects.

More attention is given to moving pictures of unidentified flying objects since they are more difficult to fake. However, only a very few movie-type films have been received by the Air Force and they reveal only pinpoints of light moving across the sky. The Air Force has been unable to identify the source of these lights. The images are too small to analyze properly. Since ownership of these films remains with the persons taking them the Air Force is not in a position to give them out. The owners may do with them as they please.

Although hoaxes comprise but a small percentage of total reports, some of them prove to be the most sensational and the most publicized. However, to insure that the Air Force will not embarrass individuals or groups who are sincere in their beliefs or who may be victims of such hoaxes, the facts brought out in the investigations of these false reports are generally not made public. Unfortunately, this policy has often given the erroneous impression that the Air Force is deliberately denying or withholding information which, if revealed, would prove the existence of "saucers".

The Air Force has stated in the past, and reaffirms at the present time, that unexplained aerial phenomena are not a secret weapon, missile, or aircraft, developed by the United States. None of the three military departments nor any other agency in the Government is conducting experiments, classified or otherwise, with flying objects which could be a basis for the reported phenomena.

By the same token, no authentic physical evidence has been received establishing the existence of space ships from other planets.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
Office of Public Information
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U. S. Air Force Summary of Events and Information Concerning the Unidentified Flying Object Program

The Air Force feels a very definite obligation to identify and analyze things that happen in the air that may have in them menace to the United States and, because of that feeling of obligation and pursuit of that interest, the Air Force established an activity known as the Unidentified Flying Object Program.

This program was established in 1947 when unidentified flying objects were being reported in various parts of the United States. The reports of sightings reached a peak of 1,700 in 1952 and dropped to a total of 429 in 1953. During the first nine months of 1954 only 254 sightings were reported.

From a survey of the volume of sightings received by the Air Force, it has been determined that over 80 percent are explainable as being known objects. Generally, sighted objects fall into the category of: balloons, aircraft, astronomical bodies, atmospheric reflections, and birds. All reports of unidentified flying objects result from either radar or visual sightings.

Explanations pertaining to sightings reported from military and civilian radar facilities are as follows:

1. Temperature inversion reflections can give a return on a radar scope that is as sharp as that received from an aircraft. Speeds of these returns reportedly range from zero to fantastic rates. The "objects" also appear to move in all directions. Such sightings have resulted in many fruitless intercept efforts.

To possibly bear out the theory of temperature inversion reflection is an incident which occurred in January 1951 near Oakridge, Tennessee. Two Air Force aircraft attempted to intercept an unidentified "object" and actually established a radar "lock" on the object. Their altitude at the time was 7,000 feet. The unidentified object, according to their radar, appeared to be at an elevation of 10 to 25 degrees from this altitude. Three passes were made in an attempt to close on the object. In each instance the pilots reported that their radar led them first upward and then down toward a specific point on the ground. (One scientific theory holds that light can be similarly reflected from a layer of warm air above the earth. If this proves to be correct, many visual night sightings could be accounted for.)

2. Ionized clouds have caused some unidentified radar returns. Thunderstorms are identifiable by radar and radar returns have also been received from ice formations in the air, balloons, ground reflections, frequency interference between other radar stations, and wind-born objects. Obviously, such returns are very difficult to identify, specially when they occur during darkness.

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