

PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD

1. DATE 24 Jan 64		2. LOCATION Idaho-Mexico (West Coast US)		12. CONCLUSIONS ☐ Was Balloon ☐ Probably Balloon ☐ Possibly Balloon ☐ Was Aircraft ☐ Probably Aircraft ☐ Possibly Aircraft ☐ Was Astronomical ☐ Probably Astronomical ☐ Possibly Astronomical	
3. DATE-TIME GROUP Local <u>twilight</u> CMT _____		4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION ☒ Ground-Visual ☐ Ground-Radar ☐ Air-Visual ☐ Air-Intercept Radar		☒ Other <u>missile</u> ☐ Insufficient Data for Evaluation ☐ Unknown	
5. PHOTOS ☐ Yes ☒ No		6. SOURCE military			
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION n/a		8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS n/a		9. COURSE n/a	
10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING 100 telephone calls from news media and civil authorities.				11. COMMENTS Launch at twilight created predictable meteorological phenomena. Gave impression of explosion and forms varied colored patterns in the sky.	

NNNN

Missile

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
STAFF MESSAGE BRANCH
UNCLASSIFIED MESSAGE

24 JAN

INCOMING

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ACTION: OSD-15

INFO : SAF-OS-3
SMB C248

-19-

ZCZCHQC993ZCQJB149

RR RUEAHQ

DE RUCSBR 228 15/1806Z

ZNR

R 151645Z

FM SAC

TO RUEAHQ/SECDEF

INFO RUEAHQ/OSAF WASH DC

RUWHNF/BSO NORTON AFB CALIF

RUEAGL/AFSC

RUWHSS/1SAD VANDENBERG AFB CALIF

BT

UNCLAS DXIP-1 15228. FOR OASD(PA). INFO:

SAF-OIPC, BSE, SCE AND DXI. A MINUTEMAN LAUNCH FROM

VANDENBERG AFB ON 24 JAN 1964 WAS SEEN FROM IDAHO TO MEXICO

AND RESULTED IN OVER 100 TELEPHONE QUERIES FROM NEWS MEDIA

AND CIVIL AUTHORITIES. THE LAUNCH

OCCURED AT TWILIGHT AND CREATED AND PREDICTABLE METEOROLOGICAL

PHENOMENA. THE SAME PHENOMENA OCCURS DURING A PRE-DAWN

LAUNCH. TO PRECLUDE UNDUE PUBLIC SPECULATION AND CONCERN,

RECOMMEND THAT RELEASE 6 TO ANNEX I OF DOD PUBLIC AFFAIRS PLAN

59-A-22 BE ADDED AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE. A (TYPE MISSILE) WAS

OFFICE
SAFS
SAFUS
Dep RR
SAFMA
Dep MA
Dep PM
Dep TC
Dep SM
SAFFM
SAFRD
SAFMP
MP O
R ROTC
SAFAA
SAFGC
SAFOI
SAFIE
SAFLL
DSMG

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LAUNCHED TODAY BY THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE FROM VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, CALIF THE MISSILE, THE (NUMBER) OF ITS KIND LAUNCHED FROM THIS AEROSPACE CENTER, WAS A ROUTINE TRAINING LAUNCH BY A STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND MISSILE COMBAT CREW OF AN OPERATIONAL MISSILE. PARA. THE MISSILE LIFTED OFF FROM ITS (SILO, LAUNCH FACILITY) DURING THE (DAWN, DUSK) HOURS. AS IT ROSE FROM THE EARTH'S SHADOW INTO THE SUNLIGHT, IT GAVE THE EFFECT OF AN EXPLOSION, FORMING VARIED COLORED PATTERNS IN THE SKIES. PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATED THAT (THE MISSILE IS ON COURSE ((IT IMPACTED IN THE PACIFIC MISSILE RANGE). PARA. CREW MEMBERS ASSIGNED TO THE (BLNK) MISSILE EQUADRON, (BLANK) AFB, (BLANK), WERE: UNQUOTE. FILLER MATERIAL IN RESPONSE TO QUERY ONLY: QUOTE. VIEWERS OF MISSILE LAUNCHES, IN CERTAIN AREAS MILES DISTANT FROM LAUNCH SITE, SEE WHAT IS APPARENTLY A VIOLENT EXPLOSION. PARA. THIS APPARENT EXPLOSION IS VISIBLE DUE TO THE NATURAL PHENOMENA CAUSED BY THE GRADUAL LESSENING OF DENSITY FROM THE EARTH TO THE OUTER FRINGES OF THE ATMOSPHERE, AND THE PERIOD OF THE DAY WHEN IT OCCURS. PARA. THE DENSITY AFFECTS THE EXHAUST GASES IN THAT THE TRAIL IS HELD IN NARROW CONFINES NEAR THE EARTH, BROADENING

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AS THE MISSILE LIFTS HIGHER INTO SPACE. PARA. THE PERIOD OF THE DAY IN WHICH THE LAUNCH MAY APPEAR AS AN EXPLOSION IS USUALLY THE TWILIGHT HOURS BEFORE DAWN OR AFTER SUNSET. AT THOSE TIMES, THE EARTH'S SHADOW COMBINED WITH THE DENSITY VARIATION CAUSES REFLECTED RAYS OF SUNLIGHT TO BE VISIBLE IN DIFFERENT COLORS. THEN THE EARTH'S SHADOW EXTENDS TO THE EDGE OF SPACE AND THE EXPANSION OF EXHAUST GASES IS MOST EFFECTIVE. PARA. THE EXHAUST TRAIL IS VISIBLE IN EVERY SPACE VEHICLE WHERE COMBUSTION IS INCOMPLETE. THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMANDS. TITAN II ICBM IS THE ONLY EXCEPTION, SINCE IT HAS ALMOST COMPLETE COMBUSTION. UNQUOTE. THE ADDITION OF THIS RELEASE OPTION AND THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR USE IN ANSWER TO QUERY SHOULD GREATLY LESSEN FUTURE PROBLEMS DURING EVENING AND PRE-DAWN LAUNCHES.

BT