

On Pilots



and UFOs

WILLY SMITH
With foreword by Dr Richard F. Haines

ON PILOTS AND UFOs

By Willy Smith



**UNICAT PROJECT
1997**

ON PILOTS AND UFOS

**A COLLECTION OF INTERESTING
CASES FROM THE BLUE BOOK FILES
AND
THE SPANISH AIR FORCE RECORDS**



Copyright © 1997
Willy Smith
All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer wishing to quote brief excerpts for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper or broadcast.

For information address **THE UNICAT PROJECT**, 8011 SW 189th Street, Miami, FL, 33157, USA.

Library of Congress Card Number:
Applied for
ISBN:
Applied for

First printing March 1997
Printed in USA

In Memoriam
Dr. J. Allen Hynek
(1910-1986)



Photograph taken at Hessdalen, Norway
on January 26, 1985

FOREWORD

Civilization is a complex thing, perhaps even a precarious thing, when viewed over a long period of time. It seems to balance upon gigantic forces of nature which ebb and flow over eons. Whole peoples are blotted out from memory by cataclysmic events of one kind or another. Yet somehow civilization goes on. It discovers part of its strength to survive in the human spirit, part in the amount and kinds of reliable knowledge it generates, and part in the effort made to apply this knowledge for the good of all. The spirit of man permits communication with the unseen mysteries of Creation while the knowledge he gains helps him form a lasting and stable foundation for taking action now for the sake of the future. But how is knowledge generated?

The question is fundamental to the successful pursuit of every endeavor in life. Is knowledge merely a simple accumulation of facts? Is it the result of active research? Is knowledge really only familiarity with something that is gained through one's experience? Or perhaps knowledge is the result of more subtle, invisible forces which move ahead of us through time which makes it possible for us to understand that some truth, event, or fact really is important?

The acquisition of knowledge, the history of most of man's great achievements, usually comes down to the development of sound methods for attaining that knowledge. And it is this subject of methodology that should be of interest to everyone who is interested in the serious study of *anomalous aerial phenomena* (AAP). For instance, when one

reads of people suddenly seeing strange sights: wingless, engineless metallic discs which hover silently above the ground before they dash away into the sky —rhomboidal-shaped objects with multicolored lights which flash in synchrony while extending beams of light that curve at their ends—gray "metallic" craft which siphon water out of desert tanks and also deposit stones in precise mass-related concentric circles, one is reading about alleged facts, not knowledge. But when one reads about a scientific group's confirmed results in some field of research one is reading about knowledge, and usually useful knowledge at that.

Knowledge gained through research often yields a new understanding of previous disparate, even contradictory facts. Researchers follow proven engineering and scientific methods to confirm more basic truths, usually building upon the accumulated knowledge of others who have gone before them. Knowledge, then, is something like a brick foundation wall; each researcher merely adds something to what was there before — taking the structure of what we call civilization up perhaps one or two more courses. But it is the mortar of the scientific methodology that binds these bricks together into a solid and reliable mass.

There are those who believe that without a stable, repetitive phenomenon to study it is not possible for researchers to understand unknown phenomena like AAP. But of course, this is not necessarily the case. Some, for example, point to unidentified AAP and say that, since they are not predictable in time or space and often assume dynamic forms, they are not reasonable nor even valid topics for scientific study or at least are not amenable to the scientific method. To this I say that if this were true then in

many areas chemistry, physics, physiology, biophysics, and many other so-called "hard" sciences would not have progressed as far as they have. Indeed, the transience, unpredictability, and even invisibility of something are not sufficient reasons to ignore it. Nevertheless, AAP are still largely ignored by mainline science!

It is precisely misunderstood phenomena like AAP that call out loudly for the involvement of engineers, scientists, professionals, and technologists in many different fields of study. They, most of all, should be innately curious about little understood phenomena. They are more likely to possess the knowledge, techniques, and equipment needed to discover what lies behind the great mystery of our age. Nevertheless, scientists and engineers will not succeed unless they have faith that it is possible to do so.

It is from man's spirit that faith arises and it is his faith that leads him to believe that a problem can be solved, to accept larger challenges, and to see the vague outlines of what is still invisible to others.

And so the serious scientist, engineer, theoretician, or technologist can generate new and possibly valuable knowledge about AAP if he or she wants to. It isn't a matter of *can* be done, methodologically speaking. It is a matter of *will* one try? Sadly, very few professionals have accepted this task to date. Happily, Dr. Willy Smith has. He has taken seemingly disparate facts about AAP reported by pilots in the cockpit and on the ground (a group of observers I too have been interested in for many years), ground radar personnel, and other witnesses gathered from around the world, and has systematically extracted

valuable new insights from them. He has clearly demonstrated how this is done. He examines the available historical facts, challenges old assumptions, forms a working hypothesis, and then relates the facts to confirm or disprove his hypothesis, and then repeats this process. In one case (No. 10) he proposes a totally new explanation employing the proper qualifiers and cautions. He has shown us what can result from dedicated - focused research on the subject of AAP. He has provided another illustration of how man's tenacious spirit coupled with his use of historical research data can lead to new knowledge about the unknown.

Having said this, I need to comment about pilot sighting reports of AAP from my own experience in the cockpit, on the ground, and in the vision research laboratory. On the plus side of the balance: pilots are highly trained in their flight-related duties; most pilots possess a good understanding of visible atmospheric phenomena so that they will not report something that could be readily explained in another way; most pilots are true professionals with a long-term career at stake -- which also discourages them from making unfounded or ludicrous reports; pilots are highly motivated individuals who want to do exemplary jobs; pilots control airplanes that have sensitive electro-magnetic sensing and radiating equipment on board which may detect some characteristics of the AAP; and all pilots have to be in top physical health including their vision and hearing. On the minus side of the balance I am the first to acknowledge that pilots are still human beings subject to the same kinds of visual and motion-produced illusions as are experienced by people on the ground. Indeed, at times pilots can be fooled by

ambiguous visual sights. Indeed, I recall one clear night flight in which I lost the vitally important distinction between stars and ground lights! There was no horizon — disorientation set in quickly. Yet this doesn't happen very often! Airlines would not hire pilots if they were overly susceptible to odd artifacts in the visual and motion environment. Military air forces would not be able to carry out the precise missions they do if their pilots were found to consistently misinterpret anomalous visual phenomena. In the great majority of the cases, pilot reports of AAP are extremely valuable. And so, like Dr. Smith, I have focused on literally thousands of very high-quality reports made by pilots from around the world. Like Dr. Smith, I too have discovered a lot of poor or nonexistent research performed by our armed forces, as if they believed no one would ever go back and reexamine their files. Happily, truth has a way of winning out as long as there are people who will make the effort. I for one am glad that Willy Smith has made the effort.

Now to bring closure to this foreword. If *correct motives* — combined with a certain faith in the existence of what has not yet been proven for sure — and *adequate education* lead to an accurate application of the scientific method, and the application of these rigorous methods eventually leads to improved acquisition of knowledge about our world and universe, and this knowledge provides us with a part of the strength needed for civilization to survive, then this process constitutes an ongoing, ever-repeating challenge to each age. Indeed, each generation faces the same important challenge to build up or tear down civilization! Each individual either adds a brick or two to the "wall" of knowledge or takes a brick

away. So AAP investigators and skeptics alike, "believers" and "debunkers" alike, each contributes to or takes away from the edifice of civilization by their actions. When we view our personal actions in this light perhaps more people will become contributors to the truth, rather than detractors.

Richard F. Haines
Research Scientist, ret.

LIST OF MAPS

Fort Monmouth, NJ	12
Yakima, WA	16-17
Lake Superior	54
Pennsylvania	89
Valencia, Spain	98

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Dr. R. F. Haines	v
List of Maps	x
Table of contents	xi
Introduction	1
1. Ft. Monmouth, NJ, Sept. 10, 1951	3
2. Yakima, WA, March 2, 1952	13
3. Shreveport, LA, April 16, 1952	25
4. Greenville, SC, May 13, 1952	31
5. Anchorage, AK, Feb. 16, 1953	43
6. Kinross, MI, November 11, 1953	49
7. Seven Islands, Lab., June 29, 1954	63
8. Tonopah, NV, November 22, 1957	71
9. Over PA (Killian's), Feb. 24, 1959	85
10. Valencia, Spain, Sept. 26, 1973	97
Postscript:	121
Appendix: The UNICAT Project	126
Index	131
About the author	137

INTRODUCTION

The Blue Book files are undoubtedly one of the best reference sources available to the student of the UFO phenomenon. Their mere bulk, 94 rolls of microfilm each containing 1000 pages or more, represents a challenge to the reader, but those having the patience and the energy to plow through the material will be amply rewarded.

I have been perusing the microfilm files for several years, and have found that the files contain reports of excellent incidents for which the evidence has been distorted or suppressed, as well as many good cases attributed to trivial mundane causes, whose relevance has gone unnoticed. In many instances, the cases have never been discussed in the literature.

The quality of the investigations vary, as those doing the field work were usually in the lower rank of the military hierarchy. But in general they were very conscientious about putting in writing all the relevant facts that resulted from their efforts, and those reports give us today a clear picture of what transpired. Those subaltern officers often saw fit to append their personal impressions as part of the report, which in view of their lack of scientific training was totally inappropriate. Forty or so years later, when wondering about the puzzling aspects of a case, one regrets the inability of those intelligence officers to ask the right questions.

The files also show how the initial reports were sent to ATIC (Air Technical Intelligence Center) where the process of disinformation was initiated. Documents were ordered to be removed, and they are no longer in the files, but fortunately in many cases the letters from high above providing the instructions are still there; for other cases,

2 / UNICAT Project

complete dossiers are missing, and all we find now is a cryptic FILE MISSING.

In spite of all this, the Air Force did a good job collecting the information, and whatever has survived the "sanitation" process now gives us good clues not only about better incidents, but also about how the particular inclinations of the successive heads of the Blue Book Project were determinant in the selection of the cases as well as in their classification. Some candid letters signed by those officers and their correspondence with well-know debunkers like Dr. Menzel are really remarkable.

This is the flavor which I have tried to capture in this collection of incidents. Admittedly, they are all ancient history, but in truth modern sightings somehow lack the reality shown by the Blue Book cases, and we must remember that what we have today are not "*la crème de la crème*". Perhaps the prevalence of hoaxes and frauds --many times sponsored by well known ufologists-- which today rivet the attention of TV audiences, has made me very skeptical of the genuineness of present-day cases.

Dr. Willy Smith
UNICAT Project

1

FORT MONMOUTH, NJ **SEPTEMBER 10, 1951**

The Fort Monmouth case is distinguished by two features that separate it from other similar episodes: 1) due to a fortuitous chain of circumstances and the ingenuity of a journalist who managed to reach one of the witnesses, the world knew about it almost at once, and 2) the Air Force was so flabbergasted that it spent its resources not on investigating the case but on finding out how the leak had occurred and punishing the culprit.

This was one of the sightings presented by Dr. James McDonald at the Congressional hearings of 1968 (McDonald, 1968), where he showed that the "balloon" explanation favored by the Air Force was untenable. Curiously, Dr. Donald Menzel, the great debunker of the day, chose to ignore the case totally, and it is not even mentioned in his books.

THE INCIDENT

On the morning of September 10, 1951, two Air Force officers had an unusual experience while flying a Lockheed T-33 trainer jet on a routine flight from Dover, DE to Mitchell AFB, NY. The observers were First Lt. Wilbert S. Rogers and Major Edward Ballard, described in the Blue Book files (BBP: #8, #89) as experienced fighter pilots. The T-33 was cruising at 20,000 ft at a speed of 450 MPH; Lt. Rogers was the pilot.

4 / UNICAT Project

At 11:35 AM while over Point Pleasant, NJ (see map and REF. #7), Lt. Rogers noticed a fast-moving object at 11 o'clock. The object was over Sandy Hook, NJ, at an altitude between 5000 and 8000 ft, that is, much below the level of the plane, and was descending when first detected. It flew southwest over Red Bank, NJ, and started a gradual port turn of 120 degrees, which at the end of the two-minute observation took it above the coast, where it finally faded over the ocean.

A descending turn to the left was immediately started by the pilot, decreasing the aircraft altitude to 17,000 ft and increasing its speed to 550 MPH. As he was occupied with the radio, Major Ballard did not observe the object until 45 seconds into the sighting, and at that point he placed it over Freehold, NJ.

The T-33 continued its turn to port, but was unable to stay with the object, as it moved rapidly to sea. The plane was always above and behind the object, and on a roughly parallel course at the end of the chase. The plane completed a 360 degree turn and resumed its original course, landing at Mitchell AFB, NY at 11:47 AM. It is worth noting that throughout the incident the object was on the port side of the aircraft.

THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION

In the CONCLUSIONS section of the Blue Book Record Card for this case (BBP: #8), the "*was balloon*" option is marked, and in the COMMENTS section it reads: "*Balloon released from Evans Signal Laboratory at 1112 EDST*". As was shown by Dr. McDonald, the official balloon explanation is untenable (McDonald, 1968), and close inspection of the Blue Book microfilm files not only confirms that opinion, but also reveals new pieces of information.

In fact, two balloons had been launched in the area at about the time of the incident. It took a lot of

effort by ATIC (Air Technical Intelligence Center) to pin down the exact location and time of the launching, and the files contain a memo by Lt. E. J. Ruppelt to the Chief Signal Officer, Dept. of the Army, Washington DC, dated Oct. 25, 1951 requesting the information. A reply finally came on Nov. 1, 1951 stating that two balloons had been launched at 11:12 AM from Evans Signal Laboratory, at latitude 40°10' North and longitude 74°04' West. This location is in the vicinity of Balmer, NJ.

As indicated by Dr. McDonald, at 11:35 AM the balloons would have attained an altitude of 17-18,000 ft, and according to the upper winds for that day, would have been over the coast at the position I have marked on the map, roughly at 11 o'clock with respect to the plane, as was reported by the pilot. Had the object been one of the balloons which had failed to climb, the plane would have been over it in seconds, and so close that identification would have been immediate. This alternative is also denied by the files, which indicate that both balloons climbed to a bursting altitude of 104,000 ft.

In addition, balloons do not descend and level off, as the object reportedly did, nor do they move at speeds of 900 MPH. In a gallant attempt to debunk the sighting, the files contain an unsigned 17-page speculative paper, which suggests that the track of the plane was not precisely known by the pilots, and that in fact the plane was circling an almost stationary balloon. This ignores that there were two balloons, that the observers were far above the object and could determine its position against the background and that the observation took place in broad daylight; and it neglects the fact that the pilots were quite certain of what they had seen and provided a description totally different from a balloon. In fact, the AF files (BBP: #8) contain 4 documents describing the events, and they are

6 / UNICAT Project

totally consistent. A statement dated September 17, 1951, signed by Lt. Rogers reads, *inter alia*:

The size of the object was approximately that of a fighter plane, 30 to 50 feet in diameter. The object was silver or metallic in color, had no markings, emitted no exhaust or trail. Most of the time during which I had the object in sight, it appeared to be circular in shape, however, at one time I saw it edgewise where it gave a flat appearance. The design of the object could be said to be identical to a discus as used in track events. I could not say whether or not the object was spinning. Throughout the time of my observation, the object was to my left and considerably below our altitude.

In his statement Major Ballard adds:

The object was in a bank to the left turning to approximately 120 degrees. I saw the object was round and silver in color. Lt. Rogers continued a port turn and I lost sight of the object as it disappeared out to sea.

The sighting has a low information content and is not really that unusual, as many pilots have reported unidentified objects approaching their aircraft. What makes this case different is the circumstance under which the case became public, as well as the determined efforts by the AF to append the label "*balloon*" to the case.

A large number of pages in the Blue Book files refer to the investigation aimed at discovering how the information was acquired by the press. It seems that the pilots were overheard by the driver of the van transporting them after they landed at Mitchell AFB, and the news was promptly circulated on the base. An enterprising reporter, Dick Aurelio, from the Long Island paper **NEWSDAY**, heard the rumors at a dinner near the base and proceeded to call the Public Information Officer, Major John Barnard Barron, to verify the information. After some sparring, Aurelio managed to get to the base and talked with Lt. Rogers. He even photographed him in front of the operations map. To the consternation of the Air Force, the story appeared in the September 11th issue of **NEWSDAY**, and was released nationwide over the wires of the Associated Press and United Press shortly after. Here are some highlights of that interview which took place the very afternoon of the incident, as it appeared in the Boston Globe:

"I don't know if it was a flying saucer, but it sure was something I've never seen before. We couldn't have caught it in an F-86" (at the time, the United States' fastest jet). Rogers estimated it traveled the 30-mile course in two minutes, or at a speed of 900 miles an hour.

When the reporter pointed out that the United States Air Force has officially said that flying saucers reported previously had been nothing more than weather balloons, Rogers replied: "This couldn't have been a balloon because it was descending and no balloon goes that fast. We got as close as 8000 ft from

8 / UNICAT Project

the object which kept a constant speed and didn't appear to be running away."

Once the AF found out that the leak originated with Major Barron, an investigation was ordered by Lt. Colonel N. R. Rosengarten, Air Technical Intelligence; and Special Agent Paul L. McCoy, 2nd OSI District, was dispatched to Mitchell AFB to interview Barron. The files contain a copy of the interrogation, as well as a "*mea culpa*" statement dated 1 October 1951, signed on the spot by Barron, which ends like this (emphasis added):

The following representation was given to all press inquiries, to the best of my recollection: Two pilots from Dover Air Force Base have reported that they saw a strange moving object in the sky over Sandy Hook, New Jersey. It was moving at an extremely rapid rate which was estimated in excess of 900 miles per hour. They had the object in their field of vision for approximately two minutes. They reported that it moved with an arc-like motion. They are not able to say exactly what they saw, at the same time they are quite sure that they saw something. **AT NO TIME DID I SUGGEST THAT THE PILOTS SAW A FLYING SAUCER. I AM FULLY AWARE OF THE AIR FORCE ATTITUDE TOWARD FLYING SAUCERS AND WOULD, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, SUGGEST TO THE PRESS THAT AN AIR FORCE PILOT SAW AN OBJECT FULLY IDENTIFIED AS A FLYING SAUCER.**

Exit Major Barron. I wonder if he ended his career as a supply officer in Thule, Greenland.

THE CRITICS

For the curious reader the case offers another interesting characteristic, which is the lack of interest it has generated among debunkers. The dean of them all, Dr. Donald Menzel of Harvard University, simply ignores it in his best-known book (Menzel, 1963), perhaps because if his association (read Majestic-12) with higher government levels is true, he knew that the incident was as reported.

The modern-day debunkers know better than to discuss unassailable cases, because they start from the postulate first proclaimed by Michel Monnerie in France that *les Ovni's n'existent pas* and are quite aware that failure to explain satisfactorily a single case will destroy their basic posture.

Nevertheless, I checked the recent book of one such debunker and of course, the Ft. Monmouth case is not listed in the index. Yet, a more in-depth search discovered that the case appears in the text (Peebles, 1994: 53), an interesting inconsistency. But after reading what the author had to say, I was no longer surprised: although he claims a classic as his source (Ruppelt, 1956), he confuses the facts, ignores the visual incident, and in short, gives the impression that either he was not interested in the true story --or perhaps more likely-- he didn't understand what he was reading. In short, Mr. Peebles, who is an aerospace historian, was out of his depth.

CONCLUSIONS

The correct evaluation of the Fort Monmouth incident should be UNEXPLAINED. The *balloon* explanation provided by the Air Force for this sighting is untenable, and a lot of money and effort

10 / UNICAT Project

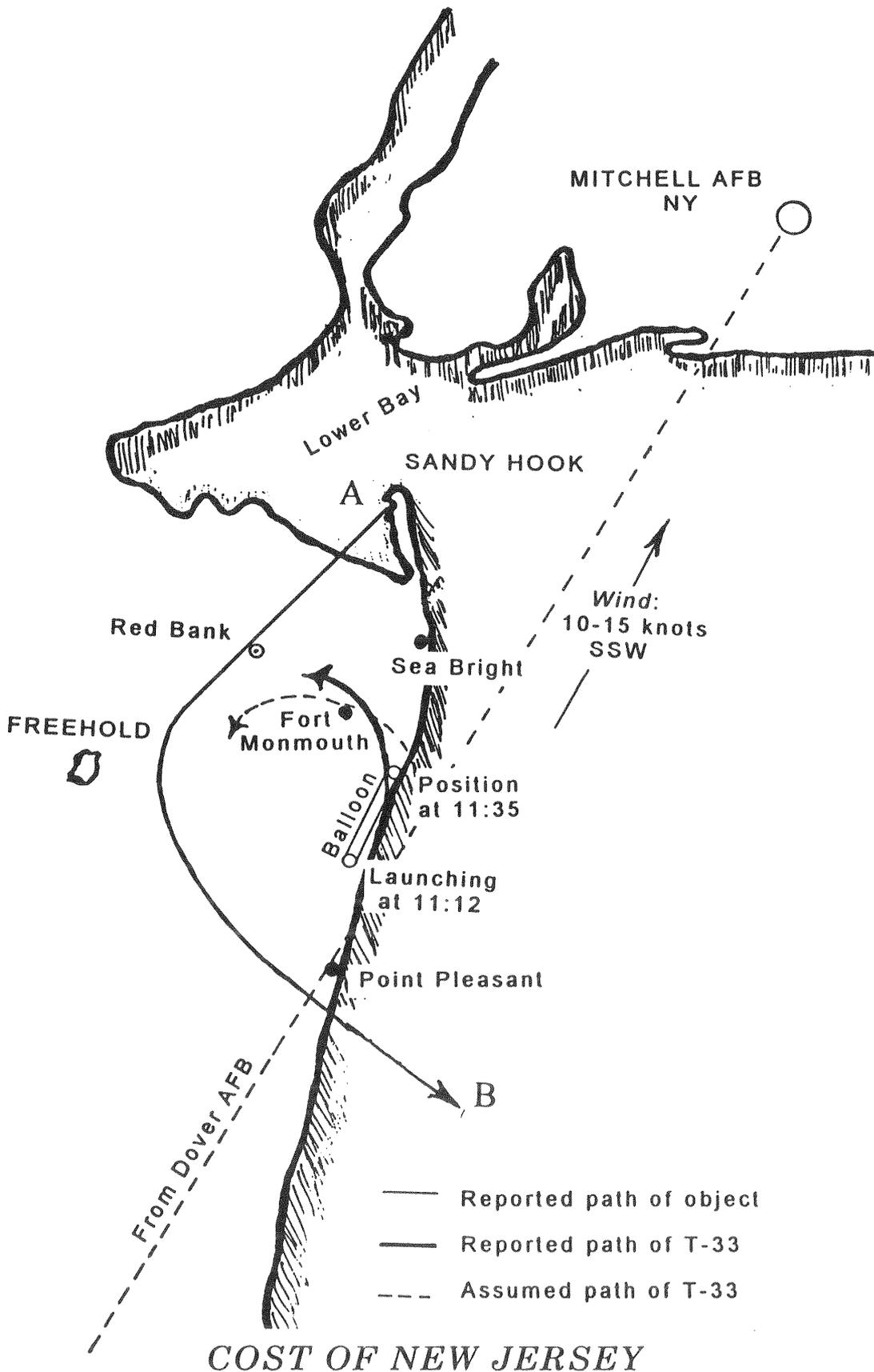
was spent in locating the culprit who leaked the information. The case is interesting because it resulted in Ruppelt being appointed to lead Project GRUDGE (Gross, 1983: 61).

The moral of the story is that the world learned about this case only because a driver had big ears. Otherwise, the incident would not have rated more than a few lines in the official files. As for Dick Aurelio, wherever he is, he must know now that the scoop of a lifetime passed him by.

REFERENCES

1. Blue Book Proj. Microfilm Files, Rolls 8 & 89.
2. Gross, Loren E.; **UFO's: A HISTORY, 1951, 1983**, p. 61 ff.
3. McDonald, James E; in **HEARINGS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND ASTRONAUTICS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 29 July 1968**, p. 66.
4. Menzel, Donald H. et al; **THE WORLD OF FLYING SAUCERS**, Doubleday, 1963
5. Peebles, Curtis; **WATCH THE SKIES!**, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.
6. Ruppelt, Edward J.; **THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS**, ACE paperback, 1956
7. The attached map is a copy of the overlay included in **PROJECT GRUDGE**, Report No. 1, 30 Nov. 1951, p. 28, with the exact initial and final locations of the balloons added.

12 / UNICAT Project



2

YAKIMA, WA MARCH 22, 1952

THE INCIDENT

Just after sunset on March 22, 1952, the radar at McChord AFB picked up an unknown target near Yakima, WA. According to the log the track was picked up at 0205Z and faded at 0213Z; the altitude of the target was given as approximately 35,000 ft. An F-94 fighter was scrambled at 0233Z arriving in the area at about 0243Z. Two visual contacts were obtained at 0256Z and 0316Z; as estimated by the pilot, each view lasted 45 seconds. Both times the intercepting aircraft was turned toward the object in an attempt to have the radar observer pick it up. However, as he was under the hood he did not observe the target visually and also failed to pick it up on his scope.

The data for the two visual sightings are summarized in the following table:

Sighting	Plane altitude ft.	Plane heading magnetic	Time PST	Time ZULU
First	22500	30 deg.	18:56	0256
Second	25000	180 deg.	19:16	0316

TABLE 1

During both sightings the object appeared about 10 degrees above a level line of sight. The air speed

14 / UNICAT Project

of the aircraft (TAS) is given as 360 knots. The chase was terminated at about 0322Z.

OUTSTANDING FEATURES

The report of this case was found accidentally while perusing the Blue Book microfilm files (BBP:#9) and has some interesting characteristics which make it outstanding among the hundreds of irrelevant cases which clutter the official records.

1) It is a radar visual (RV) incident, and an odd one at that: the radar involved was the ground radar, and the visual observation was made by the pilot of the F-94 fighter Wilfred N. Joyal, Captain, USAF).

2) It appears as only one line in the May 1952 STATUS REPORT of the former Project GRUDGE (BBP: Rpt.# 7) but, interestingly enough, is the only one of 18 cases listed there that is classified as SECRET. The Blue Book files also contain a letter dated 2 May 1952 and signed by Ralph T. Wilson, Captain, USAF, Asst. Adj. Gen., authorizing the change of classification from **SECRET** to **UNCLASSIFIED** upon removal of AF Form 112. Thus, the pilot deposition is not in the files, and we can only wonder what crucial information was contained there.

3) The body of the report contains enough information, obviously based on documents not now in the files. Moreover, the file also includes a very detailed and revealing map to be discussed below.

4) This is practically an unknown case, not mentioned in Ruppelt (Ruppelt, 1956), or for that matter, anywhere in the literature.

DISCUSSION

A) THE MAP

The map, as it appears in the official files, is reproduced as well as possible in FIG 1, and

constitutes a challenge to the analyst since we don't have the original source of information used to draw it.

Even at a glance it is obvious that the map is grossly incorrect. For instance, the track of the fighter aircraft is labeled with the times at which the plane was there, and one notes that end points of long segments have times only one minute apart, a clear impossibility. Since the map is the best source we have, the first step is to assess its scale.

First, we notice that the scale is indicated as 1:1,000,000, i.e., one millimeter on the map is — equal to 1 Km., or 1 mm = 0.54 nm (nautical miles) (see Reference 5). However, as we have only a copy, it might have been distorted by the reproduction process, so we verify the scale using information contained in the map itself.

The reported winds aloft at the time were at 315 degrees with a speed of 80 knots, and the track of an object being carried with the wind is shown in the drawing with the times 0205Z (first radar contact) and 0300Z (alleged time of second visual sighting) at the ends. The distance, as measured directly from the map (FIG.1), is 135 mm, while an object drifting in an 80 knot wind would have traveled in 55 minutes a distance given by:

$$\begin{aligned}d &= 80 \text{ (nm/hr)} \times 55 \text{ (min)} \times 1 \text{ (hr/60 min)} \\ &= 73.3 \text{ nm}\end{aligned}$$

Then, the map scale is:

$$s = \frac{135}{73.3} = 1.84 \text{ mm/nm}$$

or: $1 \text{ mm} = 0.543 \text{ nm}$

consistent with the listed scale. Thus, this value will be used for the reconstructed map in FIG. 2..

16 / UNICAT Project

UNCLASSIFIED

AE FORM 112—PART II
APPROVED 1 JUNE 1948

AIR INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

FROM (Agency)

REPORT NO.

PAGE

REPORTED WINDS ALOFT - 0300

28-30,000' - 315° - 80 KNOTS
18,000' - 315° - 80-100 KNOTS (JET STREAM)
10,000' - 315° - 40 KNOTS

DK +

TRACK OF UNKNOWN OBJECT
SPEED (COMPUTED) 78 KNOTS

+ EK

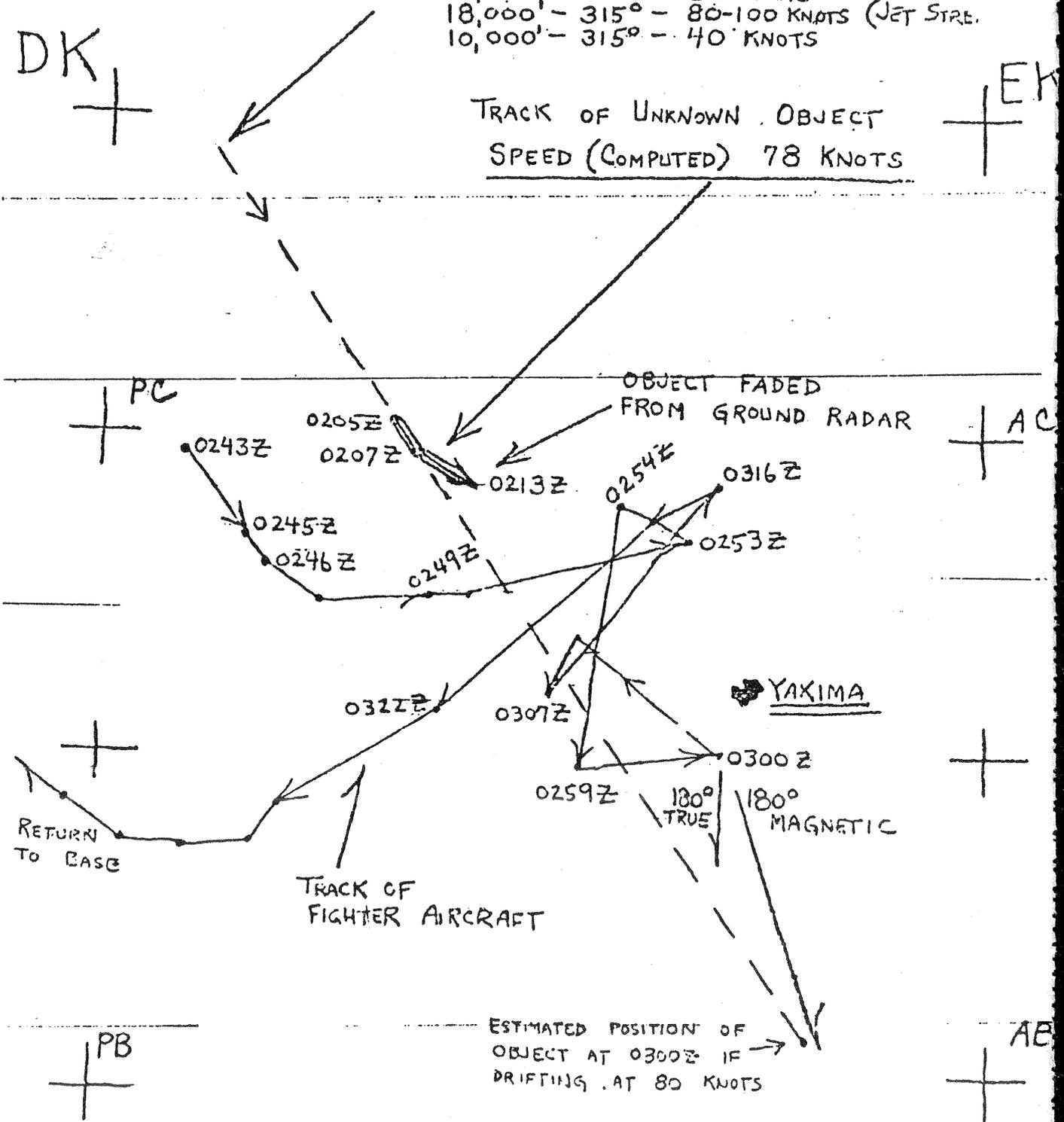


FIG. 1

WAC CHART 269

SCALE 1:1,000,000

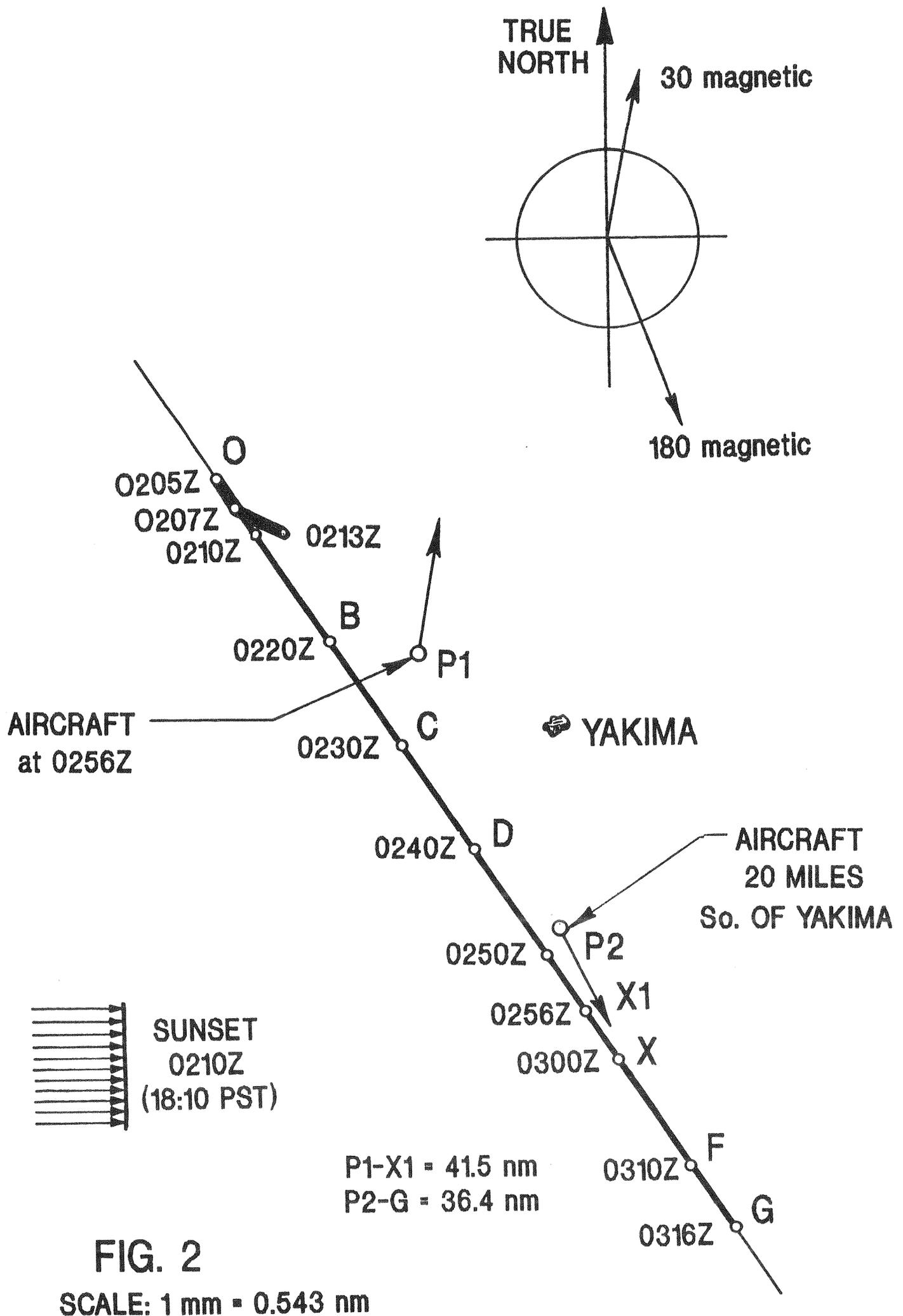


FIG. 2

SCALE: 1 mm = 0.543 nm

18 / UNICAT Project

Since the original map is grossly inaccurate, the first problem is to determine what information is reliable enough so that the revised map will in fact be correlated to the first. The following three points were used: the location of Yakima, and the ends of the track of the unknown (points O and X) which we already used to verify the scale.

When the track of the unknown is drawn, its heading is not exactly a true 315 deg. like the reported wind aloft, but rather an extension of the 2-minute radar track obtained between 0205Z and 0207Z. After 0207Z the track turns a bit, and the object faded from ground radar at 0213Z.

Next, we mark along the track equal segments corresponding to 10 minute intervals and label those points (B, C, D,...) with the times at which an object drifting with the wind would have been there.

The point P1 indicates the best estimate of the position of the fighter at the first visual contact, as taken directly from FIG. 1. We have also marked the reported heading (30 deg. magnetic). Finally, the position of the aircraft at the second sighting is stated as "*20 miles south of Yakima*" and on that basis we have marked it as point P2. It is obvious that the position of the fighter at 0300Z, as shown in FIG. 1, is totally incorrect: not precisely south of Yakima, and only at a distance of 5.4 nautical miles.

The true and magnetic headings applying to this case are shown in the upper right corner of FIG. 2. The 20 deg. difference between true and magnetic is given in the Blue Book Report.

B) THE RADAR DETECTION

The only information about the radar tracking is that provided by the map, and this aspect of the incident is explained on the case card as "*possible*

balloon", in spite of the fact that no weather balloon had been released from McChord AFB. The short tracking must have indicated a solid target in order to justify the decision to scramble a fighter jet.

C) THE VISUAL SIGHTING

The pilot described the object as resembling a large ball of fire, red in color, which would build up in intensity and then fade out in about 45 seconds. The pilot estimated the times of the sightings as shown in Table 1 above, *"but did not make a record of the time and is not certain of times given"*, although he was apparently sure of the magnetic headings.

The first sighting is then almost an impossibility because if we accept the complicated air track for the fighter as shown in FIG. 1, at 0256Z the plane was moving almost on the opposite heading and it is very unlikely that the pilot could have noticed an object exactly behind his head. As pointed out by one of my associates, a possible explanation for this anomaly is that perhaps the pilot meant he was flying 30 deg. west of south, in which case the observed object was in front of him and SW of the line OX (the assumed track of a hypothetical balloon). Then, it was not the balloon, because at 0256Z it was at location X1, at a distance of 41.5 nm, and as explained below, could not be seen.

The second sighting occurred at 0316Z when the plane was *"20 miles south of Yakima"* on a heading of 180 deg. magnetic. The Preparing Officer who wrote the Blue Book report tells us that the only time the intercepting aircraft was south of Yakima was at 0300Z, but he does not elaborate on how he arrived at that conclusion. He then promptly marks a position on the map that, as noted before, is only 5.4 nm from Yakima (see FIG. 1), but very conveniently the 180 deg. bearing intercepts the track of the drifting object almost at the right

20 / UNICAT Project

place (point X). I don't see any reasons to accept this assumption, because if we use the data provided by the pilot that he was 20 nm south of Yakima, it is logical to accept also that the time was 0316Z as stated. Another and perhaps more compelling reason to reject the 0300Z time is that in that case the sightings were separated by only 4 minutes, instead of the 20 reported by the pilot, and it is hard to believe that a veteran pilot could be that wrong estimating times. Of course, all of this could be resolved if we had the removed documents, but perhaps this is why we don't have them.

On the corrected map (FIG. 2), the point P2 marking the location of the aircraft during the second visual sighting at 0316Z is located 20 miles south of Yakima. At that time, the hypothetical balloon would have been at point G, at a distance of 36.4 nm from the aircraft. The importance of this number will be discussed below.

D) THE BALLOON HYPOTHESIS

The Blue Book explanation of the visual sighting as "*possible balloon*" seems rather flimsy, not only because no balloon could be placed at the scene, but because it is clear that the data were forced by the Preparing Officer to satisfy the hypothesis. In the absence of the pilot's detailed interrogation we must consider the information provided by the map as grossly distorted, and give more weight to the numbers presented in the body of the report, as shown in TABLE 1.

The problem can be approached from a different viewpoint by asking the question: if there was a balloon as predicated, could the pilot have seen what he described?

The reported red color --not uncommon for weather balloons-- could have been light reflected from the sun setting at azimuth 270 degrees (sunset was at

0210Z, and the twilight terminated at 0358Z), but then the reflection would have been continuous rather than fluctuating as reported, since a balloon is an isotropic reflector. It can be argued that this hypothetical balloon carried a swinging instrument package to account for the pulsations, but somehow this does not match the precise words of the pilot: *"a large ball of fire which would build up then fade away"*.

At the time of the radar ground contact, the altitude of the target was stated to be 35,000 ft and to be conservative, let's assume this was at the radar fading point (0213Z). Now, the ascent rate for a balloon is between 900 and 1000 ft/min., so by the time of the first visual contact (at 0256Z) the balloon height would have increased at least 38,700 ft to a total of 73,700 ft. The aircraft was at 22,500 ft itself and since we know that the angle of observation was 10 degrees above the line of sight, it is possible to calculate the horizontal distance by using the very simple formula:

$$d = \frac{h}{\tan 10} = \frac{73,700 - 22,500}{0.1763} = 47.7 \text{ nm}$$

The straight line distance between the plane and the target is a little longer as given by:

$$a = \frac{h}{\cos 10} = \frac{51200}{0.985} = 48.5 \text{ nm}$$

The calculation can be easily repeated for the second sighting, when the aircraft reportedly was at 25,000 ft, considering the two possible times: 0316Z as stated by the pilot, and 0300Z as assumed by the Blue Book analyst. We obtain:

$$\begin{array}{ll} T = 0300Z & h = 52,300 \text{ ft} \\ d = 48.8 \text{ nm} & a = 49.5 \text{ nm} \end{array}$$

22 / UNICAT Project

$$\begin{array}{ll} T = 0316Z & h = 66,700 \text{ ft} \\ d = 62.2 \text{ nm} & a = 63.2 \text{ nm} \end{array}$$

True, this is an order of magnitude calculation, but has the advantage that it does not depend on the uncertainties of the map, but is based only on numbers that can be accepted with more confidence, such as the reported altitude of the plane and the calculated height of the hypothetical balloon. And perhaps it will help us to resolve the time ambiguity for the second sighting.

Next, we use the above information to estimate the angular size of a balloon as seen from the aircraft. I am uncertain about the balloon's diameter, but I will assume a conservative value (25 ft) and an inflated value (no pun intended) of 50 ft. The calculations are summarized in the following table:

ZULU time	Horizontal distance to P2, nm	Linear distance nm	Balloon assumed diam., ft	Angular size mradians
0300	48.8	49.5	25	0.083
0300	48.8	49.5	50	0.166
0316	62.2	63.2	25	0.065
0316	62.2	63.2	50	0.13
---	---	16.4	25	0.25
---	---	32.8	50	0.25

TABLE 2

The resolution of the human eye is 0.25 milliradians, and as shown in the last row, a 50 ft diameter object will not be resolved if at a distance larger than 32.8 nm. It follows from the table that since the angular size of our hypothetical balloon is in all cases smaller than the eye resolution, the pilot could not have perceived it as "*a large ball of fire*". All he could possibly have seen was a pinpoint source, and that only if the intensity of the light was strong enough.

CONCLUSIONS

The Blue Book evaluation of this case is that while the radar aspect was unidentified, the visual sighting was a "*possible balloon*". The above discussion has shown that the balloon solution is very unlikely. Not only could no balloon be placed in the area, but even if one was there it would have been invisible to the pilot. It is an interesting coincidence that almost invariably the explanation selected by the Air Force is the less likely.

The classification "*unidentified*" thus stands. At this late date there is not much more that the analyst can do, except regret the sloppy investigative methods of the AF. In spite of its low information content, the incident has considerable interest, as it occurred in the vicinity of the Yakima Indian Reservation where so many sightings were reported during the Seventies (Long, 1990).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My special thanks and recognition to Phillip Robertson for his contribution to the study of this incident, which made this paper possible (see Ref. 6).

REFERENCES

1. **BLUE BOOK PROJECT** Microfilm Files, Roll 9; Report IR-4904-1-52 signed by Thomas B. Hannessy, Captain, USAF, Wing Intelligence Officer.
2. Long, G.; **EXAMINING THE EARTH-LIGHT THEORY: The Yakima UFO, Microcosmo**, 1990.
3. **PROJECT BLUE BOOK REPORT No. 7** (Formerly Project Grudge, Project No. 10073, 31 May 1952).
4. Ruppelt, Edward J.; **THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS**, 1956.
5. The exact conversion is:

1 nautical mile = 1 nm = 1.85325 Km
= 1.1515 statute miles.
6. Robertson, Phillip; *Private Communications*, 1992

3

SHREVEPORT, LA

APRIL 16, 1952

We discuss in this section two cases which took place during Ruppelt's tenure as head of the Blue Book Project. The cases are quite similar in content and characteristics, yet they were evaluated very differently, and that is their outstanding distinction: why?

THE INCIDENT

As the main witness of this incident was standing on his lawn on the night of April 16, 1952, talking with one of his neighbors, they suddenly noticed a bright circular object almost directly overhead. It was brilliant white in color and ten times the size of the brightest stars. It was moving at a fast clip on a straight and level course when suddenly, in a 6-second interval, it executed a 180 degree turn and continued its unwavering course on the reciprocal heading, moving away at tremendous velocity until lost to sight. A change in shape, from "*flat circular*" to "*thinning lens*" was observed during the turn, as well as color changes from white to pink and red. Height and size could not be estimated, but remained the same during the entire episode.

The whole sighting lasted 70 seconds, and in that time the unknown object covered a distance of 25 miles. There was no sound, no exhaust and no trail, except for a small reddish tail briefly noticed

26 / UNICAT Project

shortly after the motion reversal, and described as if "*glowing fragments had been detached*".

The main observer was insistent, and brought the incident to the attention of the AF. As a result, an AIR INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT was prepared by Major Jesse H. Tessier and is now an integral part of the Blue Book files (IR-1-52). This is the only document we find about this case, and it repeats the statements of the main witness (BBP: #9).

It is clear that Major Tessier had problems handling this case, if we consider what he wrote on the first page of his report. His evaluation of the case was A-2, meaning that the source was completely reliable (A) and that the information was probably true (2). The correct coding should have been A-1, since there was a second witness confirming the sighting. Moreover, Maj. Tessier wrote A-2 not only in the "evaluation" box, but also in the box reserved for the information agency, as well as in the box showing his name as the preparing officer, where it had no business to be.

ANALYSIS

Each entry in the Blue Book files is preceded by a CASE CARD, and we don't know who wrote them. But in this instance the card reads "*possibly balloon*" in the conclusions column (Item 12), while in the brief summary of the sighting (Item 10) it reads verbatim: "*doubtful if this was balloon*". So, which one is correct?

Now then, the Blue Book files contain hundreds, if not thousands, of sightings attributed to balloons which excited witnesses confused with crafts possibly of extraterrestrial origin; and one wonders why Maj. Tessier beat around the bush and did not call the observers to task as was done in so many other cases.

A careful reading of the sanitized files reveals the reason: the main witness was not a civilian nobody, but an Air Force captain, a senior pilot with more than 3000 hours and eight years experience in heavy and medium bombardment and transport-type aircraft, a SAC Aircraft Commander of the 301st Bomb Wing, with previous experience as a Special Agent for the Counter-Intelligence Corps, and at the time of the incident assigned to duty as Squadron Intelligence Officer (Gross 1982). In short, not the kind of individual to be easily dismissed as a crackpot as the AF would have liked to do.

The name of this captain has been deleted from the files, where all one can reconstruct is *Capt. E. M--s*. But even if his name is not there, his credentials are recorded for all to see. No wonder Maj. Tessier was very cautious about what he put in writing.

The report also tells us some facts about the neighbor. A former WWII paratrooper sergeant, he was employed at the time of the incident by an unnamed outfit in Shreveport. Thus he was quite different from the uneducated housewives so often found in the AF reports. And Maj. Tessier specifically tells us that this second witness was not interviewed. Of course! Had this been done, the evaluation of the incident would have been A-1 (where "1" means "confirmed by other sources"), an unthinkable alternative.

The final point to discuss is how the balloon idea was generated. Immediately following the incident Capt. E. M---s himself contacted the meteorological observers both at Barksdale AFB and C.A.A. As the Blue Book report reads,

"none of the personnel contacted admitted knowledge of metrological (sic) phenomena or usage of

28 / UNICAT Project

equipment that might account for the incident."

However, a weather balloon was in fact launched from Barksdale AFB at 22:00, i.e., 28 minutes before the sighting; but although it carried radio equipment, it had no light. This, as well as the maneuvers detailed by the witnesses, rules out the balloon explanation, but did not deter Maj. Tessier from mentioning it. This incident was not investigated at all by the AF. The role of Maj. Tessier was to transcribe the deposition of Capt. E. M---s, and bury the incident in the files. Yet, this is a case, in the words of Dr. Hynek, of very credible observers narrating incredible events, and it should have been listed as "*unidentified*", quite impossible to do here, as the Air Force could not contemplate one of its top officers endorsing even remotely the reality of the UFO phenomenon.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Shreveport case is that it reveals the lack of methodology and consistency in the Air Force analysis. For only four days before (520412), an almost identical incident had taken place in North Bay, Ontario, and is dutifully recorded almost in the same place in the Project Blue Book microfilm.

As in the Shreveport case, we have two reliable noncommissioned officers driving within the Canadian Air Force Station at North Bay. The witnesses describe exactly the same sequence of events: a bright amber disc flying straight and level across the field, suddenly reversing its direction, and rapidly disappearing from view.

The incident was investigated by the RCAF, and although a third witness is named, his deposition does not appear in the records. The information content is the same for both cases, though manifestly the quality of the main witness in the Shreveport case far exceeds that in North Bay.

This is shown by the presence of more quantitative data for the Louisiana case. Yet, while the North Bay case is labeled "*unidentified*" in the Blue Book files, the Shreveport one is listed as "*possibly balloon*".

EPILOGUE

Since the two cases are only four calendar days apart, they must have crossed somebody's desk practically at the same time. This somebody (Ruppelt?), if he was worth his salt, could not have failed to note the striking similarities and the inconsistent evaluations, but he chose to say nothing. Neither could we find any reference to the cases in Ruppelt's book (Ruppelt, 1956). Is this a syndrome of gross incompetence, or a revealing indication that the Air Force's purpose was not what it seemed to be? Let the reader answer the question, which has some bearing on whether the powers that be are withholding from the public vital information on the UFO phenomenon.

REFERENCES

1. BLUE BOOK PROJECT FILES MICRO-FILM, Roll 9.
2. Gross, Loren E.: UFOs, A HISTORY, 1952, 1, p. 48. Part of Maj. Tessier's report is transcribed here.
3. Ruppelt, E. J.; THE REPORT ON UN-IDENTIFIED FLYING SAUCERS, Ace paperback, 1956.

4

GREENVILLE, SC

MAY 13, 1952

The bird explanation of UFOs, as advanced by the Air Force, has some peculiarities that attract the attention of the analyst. For starters, it is a cumbersome hypothesis as it mandates, since all of those incidents occurred at night, that the birds be flying rather low and in the proximity of lights strong enough to cause a reflection from their feathers. Yet, during its "*bird period*" from August 1951 to August 1952, the Blue Book files list no fewer than 10 sightings, a density difficult to understand as this explanation hardly appears at other times.

Secondly, fifty per cent of the listed incidents were in the state of Texas, a remarkable coincidence. In addition, when analyzing the incidents in detail, it becomes clear that while some of them undoubtedly were birds: Flint, MI, 520420 (BBP: #9), Fargo, ND, 520425 (Loren, 1952,1: 58), others certainly were anything but birds: Lubbock, TX, 510825 (Randle, 1981: 215), Tremonton, UT, 520702 (Hynek, 1977: 235) yet in spite of the considerable existing evidence (photos and movie film) they are considered controversial to this date by the skeptics.

A legitimate question is whether other cases listed as birds by the Air Force are really so. To press the point, we have selected a rather obscure incident, witnessed by very well-qualified civilian observers,

32 / UNICAT Project

under well defined and detailed circumstances amenable to the analysis.

THE INCIDENT

The night of May 13, 1952 was clear and quite ideal for astronomical observation. A group of amateur astronomers on the campus of Furman University, at Greenville, South Carolina (BBP: #10) set up their instruments in an appropriate location, with neither ground lights near nor haze, a dark area essential for good astronomical observing. The group was formed by four individuals, typically not well characterized by Blue Book, where we find the narratives provided by 3 of them. All we know is that one was a "responsible adult citizen", another a "local lawyer", and a third a senior high school student, but at any rate they were all particularly well-qualified to observe and assess lights moving in the sky.

At 22:33 EST, when almost ready to quit, one of them (James Richardson) called the attention of the others to four objects flying in a diamond formation. The depositions in the Blue Book files are very consistent in describing the objects, which were flying about 10 to 15 degrees off directly overhead at an unknown altitude on a heading of about 300 degrees. They were going on a straight course, oscillating slightly. The distance separating the objects was about five times the width of each. The objects were "self-illuminated", of oval shape, brownish orange and dully glowing in appearance. Their size was estimated as that of a half dollar at arm's length, quarter turned; and they were in sight for a length of time estimated by the individual witnesses as from 3 to 10 seconds, disappearing from view behind some trees approximately 30 ft high and 150-200 ft distant from the observation point. There was no noise, "no trail or sparks or any other illumination other than the glow of the objects themselves".

This sighting, admittedly, has a low information content; and its main merit is the quality of the witnesses, who were not only reputable members of the community but amateur astronomers as well, trained in the observation of the skies and less prone to misinterpret what they were seeing.

Nonetheless, the report refers to some concrete items important to the analysis, which are:

- i) Four silent objects were observed flying in a diamond formation.**
- ii) In the absence of local sources of light, the objects were luminous, or in the words of the witnesses, "self-illuminated", "possibly translucent".**
- iii) They presented an angular size described in equal terms by three of the observers, and as determined below to be 0.0323 radians.**
- iv) The time of observation was between 3 and 10 seconds, with a well defined field of observation, allowing an accurate estimate of their angular velocity.**

Any credible explanation must take into account all of the above.

DISCUSSION

Although the investigating officer evaluated the case initially as "*unknown*", an anonymous hand wrote "WHY?" next to it in the official records, and the incident is now listed as "*possible geese*". This is not surprising in view of many similar episodes for which the stimulus was indeed a flock of birds. Biased by this knowledge, whoever did the

34 / UNICAT Project

determination was indeed misguided by some statements of the witnesses, such as:

"Motion was similar to heavy winged birds in flight"

"I would say the objects were similar to the 'Lubbock Lights' as reported in LIFE magazine"

"Each the shape of a goose without neck or tail"

which are simply analogies aimed at better describing what the observers had seen. Nowhere in the depositions can one find the statement quoted by the investigating officer (1st Lt. Arthur Palmer of Air Force Intelligence) *"one observer was inclined to believe these were geese"*, which the later reviewer modified to read *"two"*. As pointed out by Loren Gross, in all fairness to Lt. Palmer, he pursued the problem beyond the acceptance of the bird hypothesis, not only remarking that there were no nearby ground lights, but also writing that:

It is not known how much light a bird will reflect, but it seems logical that a relatively bright ground source of light would be needed.

to which he added,

Objects appeared to wobble in flight and being oval-shaped appeared to be flying sideways.

which is exactly what one would expect if the unknowns were disks.

The insurmountable difficulty for the bird hypothesis is that we know that birds are not self-illuminated as reported, and in addition, there were no ground lights, powerful or otherwise, in the surrounding area. In one witness's words:

We found the atmosphere to be unusually clear....it was the first time in several weeks that we had been able to separate the rings from the planet (Saturn). Conditions were such that it appears physically impossible for the objects to have been illuminated from ground lights or other sources.

As the report tells us the angular size of the objects, we can make some order of magnitude estimates of distances and sizes. The basic formula to use here is:

$$\beta = a/d, \quad [1]$$

where: β = subtended angle,
and: a = linear dimension at distance d

From Fowler's **FIELD INVESTIGATION MANUAL**, p. 48, the angular size corresponding to a half dollar at arm's length (26 inches) is $2^{\circ}37'$ which corrected for a quarter turn, and reduced to radians yields:

$$\beta = 0.03229 \text{ radians}$$

Now, a reasonable size for a migrating bird, say a goose or a duck, is 2 ft. and using the same formula [1] again we find the distance to be 62 ft. At this distance, on a clear and quiet night, the flapping of the wings of a heavy bird would have been quite noticeable and easy to recognize.

From the report we learned that the objects, first noticed overhead, disappeared behind some 30 ft trees located at a distance of 150-200 ft from the observers. Taking the more conservative value of 200 ft, the angle subtended by the trees was $8^{\circ}32'$ ($\approx 8.5^{\circ}$), and the total angle traveled by the objects

36 / UNICAT Project

while in view was 81.5 degrees (= 1.42244 rad). This took an amount of time estimated between 3 and 10 seconds, and again, assuming a value of 5 seconds, the average angular speed is:

$$d\beta/dt = 81.5/5 = 0.2845 \text{ rads/sec}$$

While directly overhead, the distance was 62 ft, and thus the linear velocity is:

$$v = 62 \times 0.2845 = 17.638 \text{ ft/sec} = 12 \text{ MPH}$$

The average flying speed of Canada geese has been very precisely measured to be 30 MPH (Jensen, 1994: 62). Higher velocities have been observed (45 MPH), but lower values like the one calculated will result in the bird stalling. The bird hypothesis has become untenable.

To see if another interpretation of the data is possible, consider the statement of one of the witnesses:

Altitude I would say was below 1,000 ft. if they were about the size of geese,

and develop it to its logical conclusion. Assuming as before that the actual dimension of geese is of the order of 2 ft, at a distance of 1,000 ft their angular size would be:

$$\alpha = 2/1000 = 0.002 \text{ radians}$$

quite different from the value obtained using the half dollar estimate. To get a feeling for this number, one should keep in mind that it is equal to the angle subtended by two pennies on edge at a distance of 4 ft.

The angular velocity is still the same as determined before (0.2845 rad/sec), but if we

assume a distance of 1,000 ft the speed of the objects would be:

$$v = d \times d\beta/dt \quad [2]$$
$$v = 1000 \text{ (ft)} \times 0.2845 \text{ (rad/sec)} = 284.5 \text{ ft/sec,}$$

or: $v \approx 200 \text{ MPH}$

Finally, for a subtended angle $\alpha = 0.0323$ radians, the actual size of an object at a distance of 1000 ft is:

$$a = d \times \alpha = 1000 \times 0.0323 = 32.3 \text{ ft}$$

$$a = 32.3 \text{ ft}$$

Notice carefully what has been done. When we assumed we had birds (with $a = 2$ ft) and that the angular size of a half dollar was a correct estimate, we arrived at an impossible situation. But later, when we conjectured that the distance information (1,000 ft) was also correct, we obtained results consistent with a 32 ft craft moving at a speed of about 200 MPH.

In retrospect, the analogy with geese flying at 1,000 ft is more natural and less contrived than using the apparent size of a coin at arm's length, which takes for granted that the witness is familiar with somewhat abstract mathematical concepts.

CONCLUSIONS

In short, the bird hypothesis postulates that we are dealing with self-illuminated birds, flying silently below the minimum speed necessary to provide the required lift. Since such birds do not exist, it follows that the objects observed by the amateur astronomers were not birds. Of course, from the revised calculations the objects could have been conventional planes, except for the fact that planes are not self-luminous, oval and noiseless, thus failing to agree with the experimental data (i) and

38 / UNICAT Project

(ii). At this point, it has become evident that the initial evaluation of "UNKNOWN" made by Lt. Palmer was correct.

APPENDIX

A CRITIC'S VIEWPOINT

The skeptics' usual technique is to refute what a UFO proponent has stated after considerable research and effort to shore up a case, the assumption being that if the supporting arguments are destroyed, then the case falls with them. Curiously, the debunkers never provide independent information showing why the case should be considered as false. Naturally, this process is intellectually more economical, and as a debating tactic has the advantage that it throws the discussion onto a tangential course, away from the real issue. Typically, this is often complemented by failing to even mention a crucial basic fact that makes untenable the conventional explanation favored by the debunker. Dr. Donald Menzel was a master of this disinformation technique, and a beautiful example of his work appears in this book in the discussion of the Kinross incident.

A modern-day debunker, Robert R. Young, an amateur astronomer and a teacher at the State Museum of Pennsylvania Planetarium at Harrisburg, took exception to my analysis of this case (Young, 1995). To start with, he refers to the four items mentioned above as "*conditions that must be met to accept the USAF explanation of geese*".

Not so. Those are not conditions, but experimental evidence appearing in the narrative of the incident which any acceptable solution will have to take into account; and since self-illuminated birds have not been discovered yet, the second one effectively eliminates birds from consideration. The precise statement of the witnesses that there were no lights doesn't seem to deter the critic, as he proceeds to tell us the following (emphasis added):

1) Along the Susquehanna River in front of my house are flocks of geese. I can assure Dr. Smith that, unless they are taking off or very near, the flapping of wings is not "quite noticeable and easy to recognize", as he assumes. In fact, I have seen ghostly flights of geese illuminated by ground lights overhead and one of the eerie things about them is their utter silence. An occasional honk is easily masked by ground traffic. Just because it was clear at the witness's campus spot does not mean it was "quiet"

2) A "brownish orange" and "possibly translucent" "dull glow", like high-altitude clouds at night, certainly suggests reflection from circa 1952 incandescent lights to me. Just because it was dark enough to observe Saturn in a telescope (something which can be done even on a bright, moonlit night or in twilight -- the important thing is that nearby lights don't directly illuminate the observer) does not mean that there would not have been

40 / UNICAT Project

incident light more than a hundred feet off the ground.

Item 1) is purely anecdotal, but if 62 ft can be considered "very near", the witnesses indeed would have heard the flapping of wings, which *they did not*. Even if Harrisburg is not a megalopolis, one would expect the ground lights along the river to reflect from inconsiderate birds cavorting over the area at odd hours of the night. As for 2), Prof. Young is correct in stating that the color matches the reflection of incandescent lights of that period, but he omits the fact that *there were no lights*, public or otherwise. Neither does he point out that no information is available concerning the amount of light that bird feathers --wet or dry-- must reflect to make them visible from the ground. It seems Prof. Young didn't read the original article with sufficient attention.

Objection No. 3 (not transcribed) is more to the point, but rather than addressing the issue ('could they have been birds?') argues for larger birds, namely *Branta canadensis*, having a wingspan of 5 1/2 ft (Rue, 19??: 32). Let's accept that those geese, having ingested a large amount of phosphorus from the Susquehanna River, were luminescent, and see how the size of the wingspan will affect the analysis.

We emphasize first the two numbers that are **data**: i.e., are obtained from the depositions of the witnesses and from the geometry of the site: (a) the angular size of the objects, and (b) the angular speed of the unknowns. The actual values are:

angular size: $\beta = 0.03229$ radians
angular speed: $d\beta/dt = 0.2845$ rad/sec

and apparently have been accepted by Prof. Young, as he uses them in his critique. We then construct a table for different wingspans:

wingspan "a" ft	linear distanc e ft	linear speed ft/sec	linear speed mph	angular size at 1000 ft (rad)
2	62	17.64	12	0.002
3	93	26.44	18	0.003
4	124	35.22	24	0.004
5	155	44.10	30	0.005
5 ½	170	48.36	33	0.0055
6	186	52.92	36	0.006

The calculations were performed using formulas [1] and [2] in the text; the last column is the angular size for an object of linear dimension "a" at a distance of 1000 ft.

It follows that only birds with a wingspan larger than 5 ft will satisfy the data by having a speed larger than 30 mph, as needed to produce the lift. But then, such birds would be higher, at 170 ft and would reflect much less (roughly about one-eighth) of the nonexistent light in the area.

The long and the short of this critique is that as a skeptic in good standing, Prof. Young knew that since UFOs are a "myth", the objects had to be birds, luminous or not, and hence framed his work to that belief, ignoring the basic data. Even so he was unable to produce a satisfactory "bird" explanation. But I might be wrong, and instead of substantiating the reality of the UFO phenomenon, the incident may establish the existence of self-luminous birds, a previously unknown subspecies of *Branta canadensis* having a wingspan of at least 5 ½ ft.

The conclusions reached above still stand.

REFERENCES

1. Blue Book Project Microfilm Files, Roll 9.
2. Blue Book Project Microfilm Files, Roll 10. A good summary can be found in Ref. 3, p. 79.
3. Fowler, R. E., editor; **FIELD INVESTIGATION MANUAL**, available from MUFON, 103 Oldtowne Rd. Seguin, TX, 78155.
4. Gross, Loren E.; **UFO's: A HISTORY, January-May 1952**, p. 58. Original source: Blue Book Files, Roll 9.
5. Hynek, J. Allen; **THE HYNEK UFO REPORT**, 1977; see also Keyhoe, Donald E.; **THE FLYING SAUCER CONSPIRACY**, 1955, p. 304.
6. Jensen, Karen; "*Birds of a feather*", in **AIR & SPACE**, July 1994, p. 62.
7. Randle, Kevin D., in **THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UFO's**, R. D. Story, Ed., 1981, p. 215. See also Ruppelt, Edward J., **UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS**, Ace Paperback, 1956, p. 130.
8. Rue, Leonard Lee; **PICTORIAL GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA**, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., p. 32.
9. Young, Robert E.; Private Communication dated Aug. 8, 1995.

5

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
FEBRUARY 16, 1953

The May, 1954 issue of TRUE Magazine carries a lengthy article by Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, in which the former head of the Blue Book Project discusses the accomplishments and official position of the Air Force at that time (Ruppelt, 1954). While the bulk of the paper discusses incidents for which a mundane solution had been found, it also contains summaries of *"some of the cases that the project was unable to crack"*. Of the seven sightings presented by Capt. Ruppelt, the last one has particular interest and will be analyzed here.

THE INCIDENT

On February 16, 1953, a C-47 piloted by Major J. H. Lemon and carrying Capt. E. S. Cramer as instructor-pilot was east of Fire Island and south of Anchorage over the mouth of Turnagain Arm. The local time was approximately 23:50 and weather conditions were CAVU (ceiling and visibility unlimited). The plane was at 2000 ft and heading NE at 120-150 knots.

Capt. Cramer was the first to notice a round red light at 10 o'clock, moving on a course roughly parallel to that of the aircraft with a 300 knot estimated speed. Had it been the running lights of an aircraft, the color should have been green corresponding to the right side of a plane. The

44 / UNICAT Project

light was at this point definitely below the horizon at an altitude of 1000 ft, at a distance of about 5 miles, moving on a straight path and climbing to 2000 ft. It increased in brilliance, until it was 2 or 3 times its initial size. Then it seemed to stop and hovered for 5 minutes.

The tower at Elmendorf AFB (next to Anchorage) indicated that there were no other craft in the area, and made a radar check with negative results. As no jet aircraft was available, the tower authorized the C-47 to attempt an intercept. This was done on a 345 heading, at 150 knots; but as the C-47 took up the chase, the light appeared to accelerate, decreased in size, changing to a bright red color, and disappeared in 45 seconds on a 270-290 course.

Although the C-47 circled the area north of Elmendorf AFB for several minutes, the light did not reappear. The incident lasted 15 minutes, during which time the observers did not lose sight of the light.

DISCUSSION

Altogether, the case has a low information content and seems rather uninteresting: just another low-altitude night light, whose only claim to fame is that it apparently dodged the approaching C-47. What, then, makes this case different? Two things deserve discussion.

The first is the changing posture of Capt. Ruppelt. Why did he include this incident in his article for **TRUE**? Perhaps because at the time he wrote (probably in early 1954), the case had not yet been officially debunked. From the information in the Blue Book files (BBP: #17), which contains detailed depositions of the two pilots, it is obvious that the light had not been explained. In a report dated 20 Feb. 1953 and signed by Robert M. Gallant, 2nd Lt., Combat Intelligence Officer, the incident is

rated B-6, and we are told that the two pilots were "*very reliable*". The report was approved by John S. Masterson, Major USAF, Director of Intelligence; and if taken at face value, one can rule out as possible explanations: aircraft (none in the area, no radar returns), weather balloons (none launched), and astronomical bodies (below horizon). In short, the case at this point was "*unidentified*", and Capt. Ruppelt was correct to include it in the TRUE article.

Capt. Ruppelt also reported a similar incident which occurred the following night (17 Feb. 1953) at Elmendorf AFB, and was witnessed by five members of the 39th Air Police Squadron, who were not aware of the previous night's events. This second incident also appears in the Blue Book files.

The February 17th incident is weaker than the first one, and has interest only as an apparent confirmation of it. The light, described in similar terms as on the previous night, may or may not have been the same. Once again, the light did not do much, except quickly move vertically up when the jet attempting an intercept came closer. Any astronomical explanation for that night is untenable as the overcast was solid. The Blue Book rating for this case is poor (F-6), but it was initially listed as "*unexplained*". A detailed description of this incident can be found in Gross (Gross, 1983).

And we have arrived at the most interesting anomaly. The initial edition of Capt. Ruppelt's book (Ruppelt, 1956) was published in 1956, but the manuscript was probably completed before July 1955, the date appearing in the Foreword. Thus, the article in TRUE predates the book, but in the intervening time something happened, because the two cases we are discussing do not appear in the book (or at least, I couldn't locate them). Moreover, since Capt. Ruppelt left the Air Force in May, 1954 (Hynek, 1977: 25), his article for TRUE had an

46 / UNICAT Project

official blessing. Then, why were those two trivial but unexplained cases not included in Ruppelt's famous book?

CONCLUSIONS

As far as I know, the incidents under consideration have never been discussed anywhere in the literature, and what brought them to my attention was the apparent discordance in Ruppelt's writings. Then, of course, the thing to do was to search the Blue Book files (BBP:#17). What is found there is the second point deserving attention.

In the official files, each case is preceded by a card that summarizes the incident, in which the most important entry is the final conclusion. Such evaluations are also listed in the general index, and may or may not be in agreement with the body of the report. Those cards carry a logo at the bottom indicating their printing date, which for the cases under discussion happens to be Sept. 1963. Therefore the incidents --which occurred in 1953-- were re-evaluated on or after the date printed on the card, i.e., during the rule of Major Quintanilla. Those were the years of retrenching, when the main aim was to reduce the number of unknowns by hook or crook.

And what do we find now? Well, the 16 February 1953 case has been changed to "*Astro (VEGA)*", and we are told that:

"An attempt to pick up object by radio (sic) was made with negative results. Probable refraction (sic) of star Vega."

The fact that the deposition of the pilots specifically rules out astronomical explanations because the light was below the horizon, as pointed

out by Ruppelt, did not deter the unknown writer from leaving his mark on the files. As for the specific selection of Vega, it was almost forced, as it was the only first magnitude star in the approximate area of the sky. Unfortunately, whoever wrote this nonsense was not very knowledgeable about astronomical matters, as Vega is pale sapphire in color, and not the bright red reported by the pilots.

On the summary card for the 17 February 1953 incident the conclusion reads: "*Balloon. Sighting resembles balloon launch observation*". The key word here is "resembles", because nothing in the file hints at a balloon, and in fact, the sudden vertical departure rules it out. And the body of the report still indicates that "*the light remains unidentified*".

It is remarkable that the revised explanations for both incidents are the only ones that are virtually impossible. Is there a message? Worth noting is that clippings of Ruppelt's article in **TRUE** appear pasted at the appropriate places in the official files.

The result of all this is that two apparently trivial cases of night lights have become significant, as they verify the techniques used during the Sixties by the Blue Book Project to reduce the number of unknowns at any cost. They reveal how simply the change of status was done, by just writing a new summary card. And who was to know that a substitution had been made? The content of each report, on which the evaluation is presumably based, remains the same, with no additions or changes, as any reader can see for himself. For the particular incidents discussed here, the proof of the manipulation is absolute, as Ruppelt's article in **TRUE** documents the initial --and correct-- evaluation based on the available data. One can speculate that the cases were omitted in Ruppelt's

48 / UNICAT Project

book to avoid a more permanent dissemination of embarrassing information.

These incidents demonstrate once again that the purpose of Blue Book was not to find a solution to the UFO problem, but to mitigate the potential damage by debunking the cases and ridiculing the witnesses. In the case of Air Force personnel, this presented a challenge, demanding the finding of an explanation no matter how farfetched, short of accusing the pilots of incompetence or worse. Not that this was not done as a last resort, as in the Tonopah, Nevada case on November 23, 1957, which is discussed in chapter 8.

REFERENCES

1. Blue Book Project Microfilm files, Roll 17. Report #10AD-3-53 by R. M. Gallant, 2nd Lt USAF.
2. Gross, Loren E.; **UFOs, A HISTORY, 1953 (1)**, 1983, p. 87.
3. Hynek, J. A.; **THE HYNEK UFO REPORT**, 1977, p. 25.
4. Ruppelt, Capt. Edward J., USAF; *"What our Air Force found about Flying Saucers"*, in TRUE Magazine, May 1954, p. 19.
5. Ruppelt, Edward J.; **THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS**, ACE Books, 1956 (original edition, 17 chapters).

KINROSS REVISITED

NOVEMBER 23, 1953

**"If a man lies about an apparently
inconsequential thing, then that
thing is not inconsequential".
*Sherlock Holmes***

Although the so-called Kinross case has a low information content, it has attracted the attention of many authors, among others the late Dr. Donald Menzel --once upon a time a well-known debunker-- who used it as a platform to attack the credulity of some "civilian saucer groups". On the other hand, some reputable ufologists, as for example, Richard Hall and Major Donald Keyhoe, wrote in a serious vein and provided us with a more balanced narrative.

In the view of the Air Force, the case was not considered a UFO incident, and it is only listed in the Blue Book files as an unrelated accident. Yet, no satisfactory explanation has ever been advanced, and the case is still mentioned by the new generation of debunkers as a typical example of how ufologists, in their desire to establish the existence of the UFO phenomenon, magnified an insignificant episode into an encounter with a craft of unknown provenance.

There are two reasons to discuss again this incident: (i) new information, dormant in the

50 / UNICAT Project

official files and brought to light thanks to the efforts of J. L. Aldrich, has definitely established that the information provided by Keyhoe was very much correct, while the version provided by Dr. Menzel is full of lies and distorted facts; and (ii) the uncanny similarities that in hindsight one finds between the Kinross case (531123) and a more recent (781021) and much better known incident -- the Valentich case-- that occurred on the other side of the world.

THE INCIDENT

On the evening of November 23, 1953, the radar at Kinross AFB in Michigan detected a target which did not correspond to any known flight in the area. An F-89C jet was scrambled to intercept and was guided by the controller, 2nd Lt. Douglas A. Stuart. Here is what the official records say (433rd, 1976):

On November 23, 1953, an F-89C of Detachment #1, 433rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Kinross AFB, Michigan, took an active air defense mission. GCI had control of the fighter and was directing it from 25,000 ft down to 7,000 ft. The fighter and bogey blips merged on the GCI radar scope. There was no further transmission from the fighter, the bogey (sic: typing error, base was meant) was not aware of any aircraft in the area. and GCI saw no blips break off from the target. Both pilot (FirstLt. Felix E. Moncla) and radar observer (Second Lt. Robert R. Wilson) are missing and are now officially listed as dead.

where the words in italics have been added for clarity. A few more details appear under OPERATIONS:

.....the blips merged on the scope. Radar and radio was lost with the F-89 at this time and the aircraft was never sighted again. The search for the missing aircraft was under the direction of the Canadian Air Force; and the United States Coast Guard, Air Force, and Canadian Air Force participated in the search. No trace was found of the plane and the crew of two.

Since the main detractor of this case is Dr. Menzel, it is appropriate to start the analysis with his published interpretation.

DR. MENZEL'S VERSION

With his usual flair Dr. Menzel disposes of this incident in exactly 400 words of text (Menzel, 1963) which are reproduced in full at the end of this chapter. As he did many times in his career, he ignores and distorts the facts to conform with his aprioristic ideas of the nonexistence of the UFO phenomenon. It never ceases to amaze me that a scientist of his stature, whose contributions to astronomy are undisputed, could write such balderdash, ignoring the basic tenets of serious scientific writing. It would take too much space to debunk the claims of the debunker, specially when, of course, no references are listed, but the distortions of fact can't be disregarded. Among others, the perspicacious reader will notice that:

(a) While Donald Menzel states that the Air Force plane *crashed into Lake Michigan*, all sources agree the last known location of the F-89

52 / UNICAT Project

was 70 miles east of Keeweenaw Point (State of Michigan) and 160 miles NW of Soo Locks, where the unknown target was first spotted. This places it in the middle of Lake Superior.

(b) Menzel claims the intercept was accomplished and the plane identified as a Canadian C-47. True, a flight plan had been filed that night for a C-47 from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Sudbury, Ontario (Hall, 1964). There are numerous reasons to assume the intercept never took place:

(i) Since a flight plan had been filed, the presence of the C-47 was known and an intercept was not justified.

(ii) The C-47 was traveling over Canadian territory, and that alone would seem to make such an intercept unlikely (see Royal Canadian Air Force official letter in Hall, 1964).

(iii) Although the pilot asked for and was granted permission to descend to 7000 ft (Gross, 1990), he never reported any further information.

(iv) The C-47 was obviously moving west to east, while the unknown was initially reported as moving east to west, as evidenced by the details of the intercept as appeared in the accident report records of the U.S. Air Force (Hall, 1980: 197).

(v) Finally, the Royal Canadian Air Force was unable to locate any records of such an intercept (Hall, 1964: 115).

(c) the phantom blip. Since Dr. Menzel's purpose was to attribute the incident to a defective radar and/or incompetent operators, a phantom blip mirroring the motions of the jet was necessary, and it was created. Thus, he says,

"As the ground radar at Kinross had tracked the returning jet, the scope had picked up a phantom echo in the neighborhood of the jet..."

As we have seen above, the reality is that the blips representing the jet and the unknown merged and disappeared on the radar scope during the final stage of the intercept. I can't really condone Dr. Menzel's cavalier disregard for the facts to suit his hidden agenda, whether he was or was not a member of the MAJESTIC-12 group. The levity in the remarks used to close his piece is unbecoming for the scientist he was supposed to be.

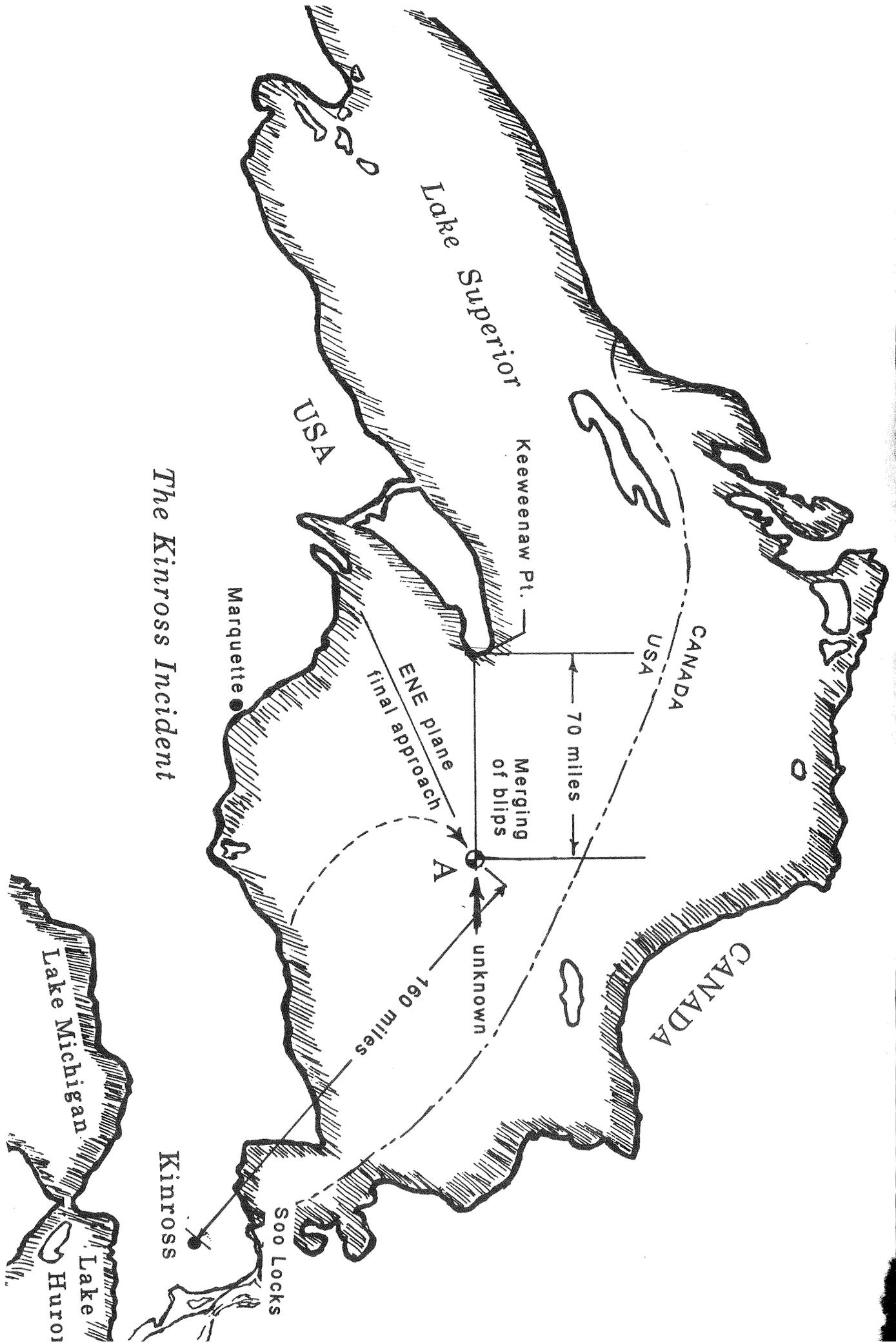
It is interesting to note that galley proofs of the pertinent pages of Dr. Menzel's book --reproduced here in Appendix B-- are part of the official Blue Book files (PBB: #20). Since the book was published in early 1963, the insertion of the proofs verifies that a revision of the files took place in late 1962, very likely during the tenure of Major Robert Friend as Blue Book director, which extended from October, 1958 to January, 1963 (Hynek, 1977).

Before letting Dr. Menzel rest in peace, I must mention his failure to disclose that the F-89 jet was an all-weather Scorpion interceptor and very unlikely to crash for unknown reasons on a night when conditions were not extreme: the air was stable and precipitation was coming from scattered cloud layers at 5,000 and 8,000 ft (Gross, 1960).

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

By placing together the bits of information found in the literature available to us, we can obtain a coherent version of what happened. Unfortunately, some details are simply not there, such as the time frame and the overall duration of the incident, but from the narratives it follows that all events listed below occurred during a winter night.

(1) weather. From the official accident file, as quoted by Gross (Gross, 1990) and Hall (Hall, 1980), there were scattered cloud layers at 5,000 and 8,000 ft, and some snow flurries in the general area. The air was stable and there was little or no turbulence.



The Kinross Incident

On Pilots and UFOs / 55

(2) An identified target was detected on the GCI radar scopes flying over the Soo Locks area (Keyhoe, 1955: 14), moving east to west (Gross, 1990).

(3) An F-89C all-weather jet interceptor was scrambled from Kinross AFB and directed toward the unknown by radar, and vectored first WNW and then due west, as noted in the Air Force accident report (Hall, 1980 and Gross, 1990), while climbing to 25,000 ft (433rd, 1976).

(4) The pilot requested a **change of altitude** (Gross, 1990) and was directed down to 7,000 ft by GCI (433rd, 1976). The F-89C turned ENE and "*dived on the unknown*" (Gross, 1990).

(5) The controller --2nd Lt. Douglas A. Stuart (433rd, 1976)-- had positioned the fighter for the final stage of intercept when the blips merged and disappeared from the scope. Quoting from the same document:

"radar and radio (contact) was lost with the F-89 at this time and the aircraft was never sighted again....no trace was (ever) found of the plane and (the) crew of two."

(6) All sources agree that the last reported position of the plane was 70 miles east of Keeweenaw Point and about 150 miles NW of Kinross AFB, which places the crash site in the middle of Lake Superior and within USA territory.

An interesting anecdote is quoted by Jerry Clark (Clark, 1992). When some time in 1959 civilian ufologist Tom Comella confronted the then head of Project Blue Book, Capt. George T. Gregory, by asking him about the Kinross incident, the Air Force officer looked shocked, left the room for a short period and returned to state: "*Well, we just*

56 / UNICAT Project

cannot talk about those cases." This behavior, if true, tends to confirm the suspicion that the Air Force probably had something to hide about the Kinross event.

DISCUSSION

The documentation found in the files of the 433rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron leaves no doubt concerning the reality of the incident and the simultaneous disappearance of both blips from the radar screen. Probably we will never know exactly what happened, but it is evident that the Air Force felt compelled to discredit the case and did not hesitate to issue absurd explanations and contradictory statements.

In a first statement released to the Associated Press by Truax AFB, and quoted by Keyhoe (Keyhoe, 1955), it was admitted that the plane had been followed by radar until it merged with an object 70 miles off Keeweenaw Point, at a distance of more than 150 miles from the original position of the unknown over the Soo Locks. Had the unknown been a C-47 cruising at a speed of 165 mph, it would have been overtaken by the jet, moving at more than 500 mph, in a relatively short period of time. Thus, what the jet was chasing was not a C-47, and as narrated by Keyhoe (Keyhoe, 1955: 18-19), the Air Force had great difficulty explaining its official statement.

We then have the matter of the conflicting answers given by the AF in an effort to rationalize why no traces of the alleged accident were ever found (UFO Inv., 1961). In the first version, while attempting to identify a low-flying airliner, the pilot banked underneath it and caused the crash by striking the water with his wing. But of course, such an accident would have left considerable debris and would reflect total incompetence by Lt. Moncla. Thus, the second version was substituted: the F-89 exploded for unknown reasons at high

altitude, the debris being scattered over such an extensive area that nothing was ever found. But the fighter was not more than 8,000 ft. high and as we know from recent airplane disasters --such as TWA flight 800 in July 1996-- plenty of floating debris is always recovered.

The deception extended to the relatives of the pilots. When Lt. Moncla's widow was first visited by Air Force officers to convey messages of sympathy, she was told that the pilot had flown too low while identifying the supposed Canadian airliner and crashed into the lake. But in one of those mix-ups that curse officialdom, a second officer was sent to offer condolences, and was asked by Mrs. Moncla why the body had not been recovered. The reply was that the jet had exploded at high altitude, destroying the plane and its occupants (Keyhoe, 1973: 202).

There is no point in extending the discussion any further. A jet, scrambled to identify an intruder, after a lengthy chase finally approached the unknown, at which point the radar blips merged and disappeared from the screen. We will never know what the pilot saw in the few seconds preceding the end; and when Dr. Menzel suggests tongue in cheek that the plane was taken aboard a spacecraft because an English instructor was needed, perhaps he was not being sarcastic, but as the good scientist he used to be, he felt ashamed of his conduct and decided to leave a hidden hint for posterity.

As indicated above, there is a similar case (Haines, 1987) in which a plane disappeared without a trace after a close encounter with an unknown object. It took place over Bass Strait, Australia on October 21, 1978, and during the incident the pilot, Frederick Valentich, maintained continuous radio contact with Moorabbin airport. Also in this case no traces of the plane or the body of the pilot were ever found, and by now the incident has been

58 / UNICAT Project

forgotten by both ufologists and the public. Years after, persistent ufologists such as Paul Norman located eyewitnesses on the ground who had noticed the proximity of the plane and the anomalous green light mentioned by Valentich during the event.

It is hard to believe that Lt. Moncla did not have the time or the presence of mind to radio what he had found after achieving visual contact. True, the weather was not perfect, but he must have seen something, at least on his radar screen, and said something on the open radio channel. Yet, the official files are silent about it. Realistically an Air Force which had no qualms about misinforming the relatives of the pilots would hardly have hesitated to suppress whatever Lt. Moncla could have radioed.

CONCLUSION

The proper classification of the Kinross incident should be:

UNIDENTIFIED.

APPENDIX

A) NORTHROP F-89C SCORPION

The jet involved in this incident was a Northrop F-89C Scorpion, of which a total of 164 were produced. This plane was first flown on October 25, 1951, and remained in the active USAF inventory until 1954. At sea level its maximum speed was 650 mph, and 562 mph at 40,000 ft; it had a maximum range of 905 miles, and its initial rate of climb was 12,300 ft/min.

During 1952 six Scorpions, mostly F-89C, disintegrated in mid-air, and as a result the whole fleet was grounded. The failures were attributed to wing aero-elasticity, necessitating some major wing structural redesign, and all Scorpions were rotated through a modification program. I have included this little-known piece of information to prevent the debunkers from asserting that the Kinross incident was one more failure of a defective aircraft. The crashes occurred in 1952, and the Scorpions in service at the end of 1953, when the Kinross incident occurred, had been already refitted or would not have been flying. Besides, there is the small detail that debunkers --like Dr. Menzel-- typically ignore: the chase was initiated by the presence of an intruder, and terminated when its blip and that of the jet merged as witnessed by the radar operators. If the jet exploded at that precise moment, the unknown was simultaneously destroyed. Since there was no other plane in the vicinity, one could infer that it was a victory for the USAF over the UFOs. Interesting thought, as it would explain all the disinformation officially generated to cover up the incident, even if it adds nothing to our knowledge of the UFO phenomenon.

B) THE KINROSS CASE

*Text extracted from Menzel et al.,
THE WORLD OF FLYING SAUCERS,
pp. 154-5*

Some such mechanism probably explains the radar returns reported in the Kinross case, which some saucer publications cite as a proved instance in which a flying saucer attacked a plane. On the night of November 23, 1953, an Air Force jet was scrambled from Kinross Air Force base, Michigan, to intercept an unidentified plane observed on radar. The jet successfully accomplished its mission and identified the unknown as a Dakota, a Canadian C-47. On its return to the base, however, the Air Force jet crashed into Lake Michigan and, as often happens when a plane crashes into deep water and the exact place of the crash is not known, no wreckage was ever found. As the ground radar at Kinross had tracked the returning jet, the scope had picked up a phantom echo in the neighborhood of the jet; the two blips had seemed to merge just as both went off the scope.

Since the crash was not reported as a UFO incident and did not involve any question of unidentified flying objects, ATIC was not asked to investigate the problem. The office of the Deputy Inspector General for Safety carried out a thorough inquiry and concluded that the crash had been an aircraft accident, probably caused by the pilot's suffering an attack of vertigo. As for the two blips shown by radar, the night had been a stormy one and atmospheric conditions had been conducive to abnormal returns. The phantom echo had almost certainly been a secondary reflection produced by the jet itself, and thus merged with the return from the jet and vanished with it when the plane hit the water.

On Pilots and UFOs / 61

Solely on the basis of this radar phantom, some civilian saucer groups have tried to transform the Kinross crash into a UFO mystery with Air Force investigators as the villains, and have suggested that the ghost blip represents an alien spacecraft that happened to be cruising over Lake Michigan that night and attacked the jet for one of two reasons: 1) The saucer might have tried to avoid close contact with the jet by employing a "reversed G-field beam" (see Chapter IX); colliding with this beam as with a stone wall, the jet crashed. 2) The saucer might have used the G-field to scoop the plane out of the air and take it aboard the spacecraft; the captured pilot might have been needed to teach the English language to his alien captors.

REFERENCES

1. Clark, J. and Truzzi, M.; **UFO ENCOUNTERS**, Publications International, 1992, p. 36.
2. Gross, Loren E.; **UFOs: A History; 1953: Aug.-Dec.**; 1990, p. 53-4.
3. Hall, Richard; **THE UFO EVIDENCE**, NICAP, 1964, p.114-15.
4. Hall, Richard, in **THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UFOs**, Ronald D. Story, Editor, 1980, p. 197.
5. Haines, R. F.; **MELBOURNE EPISODE: Case Study of a Missing Pilot**, LDA Press, 1987.
6. Hynek, J. A.; **THE HYNEK UFO REPORT**, Dell, 1977, p. 25.
7. Keyhoe, Major Donald E.; **THE FLYING SAUCER CONSPIRACY**, Henry Holt and Co., NY, 1955, p. 13 ff.
8. Keyhoe, Major Donald E.; **ALIENS FROM SPACE**, Doubleday, 1973.
9. Menzel, D. H. and Boyd, L. G.; **THE WORLD OF FLYING SAUCERS**, Doubleday, 1963, p. 154.
10. **PROJECT BLUE BOOK**, Microfilm Files, Roll #20.
- 11 **The UFO Investigator**, Vol. 1, No. 12, April-May 1961, p. 3.
12. **433rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron**, Kinross AFB, Microfilm Records, declassified 1976.

7

SEVEN ISLANDS, LABRADOR **JUNE 29, 1954**

"Oh what a tangled web we weave,
when first we practice to deceive."
Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Among the problems encountered by the analyst when reinvestigating old sightings are the contradictions, apparent or real, that the perusal of the available literature reveals. This is particularly true for this incident, one of the Radar and Optical cases discussed by Gordon D. Thayer in the Condon Report and characterized by a multiplicity of errors unacceptable in an individual with a B.S. in physics (Condon, 1969: 941). The case was evaluated by Blue Book as ASTRO (Mars).

THE SIGHTING

The crew and passengers of a BOAC Boeing Stratocruiser en route from the United States to England reported a sighting while flying near Sept Isles in the province of Quebec. One large central object surrounded by six globular smaller ones paced the aircraft for about 18 minutes and finally disappeared in the distance when an F-94 Sabre fighter approached.

The main source of information is the aircraft crew, mainly Capt. Howard himself, and we have two versions of his statement. The first is provided by Thayer, who qualifies it as a *summary of the*

64 / UNICAT Project

pilot's first-hand account of his experience (emphasis added):

I was in command of a BOAC Boeing Stratocruiser en route from New York to London via Goose Bay Labrador (refueling stop). Soon after crossing overhead Seven Islands at 19,000 feet, True Airspeed 230 Kts, both my copilot and I became aware of something moving along off our port beam at a lower altitude at a distance of maybe five miles in and out of a broken layer of a Strato Cumulus cloud. As we watched, these objects climbed above the cloud and we could now clearly see one large and six small. As we flew on toward Goose Bay the large object began to change shape and the smaller to move relative to the large... We informed Goose Bay that we had something odd in sight and they made arrangements to vector a fighter (F94?) on to us. Later I changed radio frequency to contact this fighter; the pilot told me he had me in sight on radar closing me head-on at 20 miles. At that the small objects seemed to enter the larger, and then the big one shrank. I gave a description of this to the fighter and a bearing of the objects from me. I then had to change back to Goose frequency for descent clearance. I don't know if the fighter saw anything, as he hadn't landed when I

left Goose for London. (Condon, 1969: 139)

In spite of the question mark, the jet was a Sabre F-94 radar-equipped two-seat fighter.

The second version was also written by Capt. Howard, but some twenty-seven years after the facts (Howard, 1982), and in spite of the elapsed time it agrees quite well with the older narrative. This makes me believe that Capt. Howard had some document prepared at the time that he used to refresh his memory. At any rate, this is the version on which the work of present-day commentator Timothy Good is based (Good, 1987: 184), and it amplifies some details (emphasis added):

They were moving at about the same speed as we were (230 knots approx.) on a parallel course, maybe 3 or 4 miles to the northwest of us (we were heading NE). They were below the cloud at this time, at a guess at 8,000 ft. Soon after crossing the coast into Labrador, the cloud layer was left behind and the objects were now clearly in view, seeming to have climbed more nearly to our altitude. At this time the sun was low to the northwest, sky clear, visibility unlimited.

The crew (Carnell, 1954) and I had ample time to study and sketch these "things" as they flew with us for some 20 minutes in all. The passengers, I found out later, had also seen them and were staring out of the windows on the port side.

66 / UNICAT Project

There was one large object and six small globular things. The small ones were strung out in a line, sometimes 3 ahead and 3 behind the large one, sometimes 2 ahead and 4 behind, and so on, but always at the same level. The large object was continually, slowly, changing shape, in a way a swarm of bees might alter its appearance. They appeared to be opaque and hard-edged, gray in color, no lights or flames visible.

For two reasons we favor the first version for the discussion: i) because being the earlier it is very likely to be more accurate, and ii) because Thayer, whose work we intend to show to be incorrect, based his analysis on it.

One of the discrepancies for this case is the actual date. While the majority of the authorities, including the narrative by Capt. James Howard (Howard, 1981), indicate June 29, 1954, others list the date as June 30, 1954. The most prominent of those is the Condon Report itself, in which the case is dated 30 June 1954, 21:05-21:27 local time (LST).

We have tracked down the source of that error to the case summary card in the Blue Book microfilm files (BBP: #21). This card was rewritten long after the events, and carries the date June 30, 1954, or July 1, 1954 at 01:09Z (GMT).

Careful reading of the official documents confirms the case card is incorrect, and that the actual date and time of the incident was June 29, 1954, at 21:05 local time, or what is the same, **June 30, 1954 at 01:05 GMT**. The error appears only on the case card, and one wonders how Thayer could

have failed to notice it. The explanation is simple. Both Thayer and his predecessors in Blue Book were determined to attribute the sighting to a mirage of the planet Mars, which, according to the official files, had been spotted and identified by a ship in the area. The conditions for a mirage, the files add, had been good. Now, the files reveal the name (*USS Edisto*) and position (55°55'N, 58°10'W) of the ship, as well as the exact time of the observation (30 June, 01:15Z). Using this information, it is easy to determine that Mars indeed was in sight, except that it was rising at azimuth 144. The unknown was to the NW, almost in the opposite direction (about azimuth 317).

One hardly would expect physicist G. D. Thayer to make such a blunt error. It is obvious that he didn't bother to verify the "*Mars hypothesis*", but simply lifted it from the BB files. Had he attempted to calculate Mars' position, he would have discovered the mistake.

THE MIRAGE ASSUMPTION

Apparently neither did Mr. Thayer bother to verify if a mirage was possible at all, as he speculates (Condon, 1969: 139) that certain facts in the case are strongly suggestive of an optical mirage, although admitting in the same paragraph that very little meteorological data were available. In a way, he is correct, because the ship was quite distant, and even if the conditions were suitable for mirages at its location at sea, Thayer knew nothing about the conditions overland at the plane location (51°33'N, 63°10'W). But he still attempts to explain the sighting as a superior mirage, i.e., a reflection of the dark terrain below seen against the silvery sky to the left of the setting sun. The problem with this hypothesis is that mirages can be viewed only within an angle of 1 degree above or below the observer's horizon, which in this case (plane at 19,000 ft) was at a distance of 146 nautical miles (see Reference #9). To satisfy the

68 / UNICAT Project

angle condition, elevations of about 5000 ft in the viewing area are required, which simply do not exist.

Moreover, a mirage is essentially a transient optical phenomenon, requiring a static situation to take place. This requirement is not met with a moving plane over any reasonable length of time, and the length of the event rules out the mirage possibility.

Finally, the narrative of Capt. Howard clearly states that the objects climbed above the cloud. That eliminates totally the possibility of a mirage. But Thayer still insists that the objects disappeared when the aircraft started to descend, as a mirage would do. Unfortunately, as I have emphasized in Capt. Howard's statement, the objects disappeared before he had even asked Goose for descent clearance.

I believe that Thayer knew that he was just following the official line, and got very frustrated when he could not verify the Martian hypothesis using the incorrect date. He then attempted to squeeze out of the difficult situation by writing the following words, which constitute his claim to immortality (Condon, 1969: 140):

"This unusual sighting should therefore be assigned to the category of some almost certainly natural phenomenon, which is so rare that it apparently has never been reported before or since."

But even here Thayer was wrong. Had he been more familiar with the Blue Book files, he would have discovered a quite similar incident that occurred on October 25, 1963 near Mitchell, MO (BBP: #49). This sighting, called to my attention by researcher Phillip Robertson, was described in

detail by Vallee (Vallee, 1966) and evaluated by the Air Force as **AIRCRAFT**.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of Thayer's efforts, the Seven Islands sighting was not assigned a number in the Condon Report, and is listed in the index as "*unexplained*" (Condon, 1969: 961). I agree with this evaluation.

REFERENCES

1. BLUE BOOK PROJECT FILES MICROFILM, Roll 21
2. BLUE BOOK PROJECT FILES MICROFILM, case #8613, Roll 49
3. Carnell, John; *BOAC'S Flying Jellyfish*, in **FATE** Magazine, November 1954, p. 16ff, identifies the crew as: First Officer Lee Boyd, Navigator George Glen and Air Hostess Daphne Webster.
4. Condon, Edward U.; **SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF UNIDENTIFIEDFLYING OBJECTS**, 1969.
5. Cramp, Leonard; *Mystery Over Labrador*, in **FSR** Vol. 1, #1, Spring 1955, p. 6.
6. Good, Timothy; **ABOVE TOP SECRET**, 1987, p. 184
7. Howard, Capt. James; *The BOAC Labrador sighting of 1954*, in **FSR** Vol. 27, #6, published June 1982, p. 2

70 / UNICAT Project

8. Vallée, Jacques and Janine; **CHALLENGE TO SCIENCE**, Regnery, 1966, p. 180.
9. The distance to the horizon was calculated using the formula:

$$r = 1.0643 \sqrt{h} \quad \text{nautical miles}$$

where all conversion factors are included and "h" is in feet.

* * * * *

8

TONOPAH, NEVADA
NOVEMBER 23, 1957

Magna est veritas et praevallet
Esdras, 4.41

In principle, this is not a case deserving inclusion in the UNICAT Project data base of high-quality UFO incidents, because although it involves a close encounter with four landed objects, it has only one witness and lacks supporting evidence, and the official investigation was only perfunctory. What makes the sighting unusual is how it was handled by Blue Book, and thus it typifies the extreme means used by the Air Force in its efforts to eliminate those incidents at odds with the official line, even to the extent of sacrificing one of its officers if necessary. It is also a neat example of how the label "*psychological*" was used.

The occurrence took place on November 23, 1957, at a time when Capt. George T. Gregory was the head of the Blue Book Project (Hynek, 1977: 25). During his tenure Capt. Gregory distinguished himself by his anti-UFO posture, which is evident in his communications as well as in the handwritten notes he added in the margins of the official files. The case was listed by Vallée in his MAGONIA catalogue (Vallée, 1969), and Dr. Hynek considered it interesting enough to be included in his book (Hynek, 1977: 182). Our main source is, however, the Project Blue Book Files (BBP: #31).

THE INCIDENT

1st Lt. Joseph F. Long was a member of the 97th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, with headquarters near Wilmington, Delaware. An officer with a distinguished service sheet, he was selected to take an advanced course at Survival School at Stead AFB in Nevada, and while returning from that assignment, he had his sighting. As per the official records, Lt. Long started driving from that base on November 22, 1953 at 9:30 in the evening.

The only place named in the files is Reno, Nevada, and apparently the witness traveled all night, taking only 2 hours rest. The record is not clear about this point, as the distance from Reno to the place of the incident is about 200 miles, and can be easily covered in 4 hours. If Lt. Long started at midnight, the trip was not demanding or tiring.

At any rate, this is Lt. Long's narrative. At 6:30 AM, when it was already daylight but before the sun emerged from behind the mountains, his car started to fail and finally stopped, and he could not restart it. As the Lieutenant descended from his vehicle, he became aware of a steady high-pitched whining noise and then noticed four objects on the ground at a distance of 300 to 400 yards to the right of the highway. The objects were totally unusual, and he decided to approach them for a better look. He walked several minutes until he was about 50 ft from one of them, and this is how he described them (Hynek, 1977: 182)(BBP: #31):

The objects were identical and about fifty feet in diameter. They were disc-shaped, emitting their own source of light causing them to glow brightly. They were equipped with a transparent dome in the center of the top which was obviously not of the same material as the rest of the

craft. The entire body of the objects emitted the light. They did not appear to be dark on the underside. They were equipped with three landing gears each that appeared hemispherical in shape and about two feet in diameter and of some dark material. The source (i.e., Lt. Long) estimated the height of the objects from the ground level to the top of the dome to be about ten to fifteen feet. The objects were equipped with a ring around the outside which was darker than the rest of the craft and was apparently rotating.

As Lt. Long reached a point about 50 ft from the nearest object, suddenly the noise intensified in pitch and the objects lifted off the ground, moving slowly away until they disappeared behind some hills toward the north. The total duration of the incident was about 20 minutes, of which 10 to 15 were used while the witness approached the object by walking on the desert. After the objects disappeared, the witness examined the landing area:

There was no evidence that any heat had been present or that the ground had been disturbed in any other way than several very small impressions in the sand where the landing gear had obviously rested. Impressions were very shallow and bowl-shaped, triangular in pattern. SOURCE estimated the distance between the

74 / UNICAT Project

impressions to be about eight to ten feet.

Lt. Long returned to his car, a 1956 Chevrolet, which started without difficulty; and he drove to the nearest Air Force base in Indian Springs, Nevada, where he reported his experience to the base Security Officer.

THE INTELLIGENCE REPORT

The first official report is dated December 27, 1957, more than a month after the facts, and is lengthy and detailed (BBP: #31, a). It is an important document, as all the directives to follow were based, one way or another, on this initial interrogation. The file copy also shows revealing marginal handwritten notes added by Capt. George T. Gregory. Whenever possible, we have transcribed the script in *italics*.

1st Lt. Long was 24 years old at the time, and had considerable education, which included 4 years of college, where he studied speech and related subjects for subsequent work at TV stations or the like (*Note, Important Clue! Possible motive. GTG.*) He was also well qualified, with attendance at all-weather instrument school, and flight training in the F-84 and T-33. His reliability was never in question, and in fact the report reads:

SOURCE appeared intelligent, and he was friendly and cooperative. Initially he appeared somewhat nervous, but it is believed that this was due to his uncertainty as to how his information would be received.....During the latter part of the interview, while working on SOURCE's narrative description of the incident, his commanding officer

and his adjutant were present in the room. Both spoke favorably of SOURCE's ability as a fighter pilot and of his character. His C.O. passed remarks to the effect that he, for one, believed SOURCE.

Curiously enough, the names of the C.O. and his adjutant are not mentioned. The next section of the report is the description of the sighting, partially transcribed above, followed by the comments of the preparing officer (Capt. Benjamin C. Kenyon), who, after stating that the weather was excellent, summarizes that after rejecting all conventional explanations, the witness concluded that the objects were "*not of this Earth*". Two paragraphs deserve to be repeated here mainly because of the notes added by Blue Book's head:

5 The investigator was able to ascertain that SOURCE was not unfamiliar with science fiction literature of a "higher" type. SOURCE did not deny knowledge of such authors as Leinster, Bradbury, Heinlein, Sturgeon, Azimov, etc. (Science fiction and "saucer" writers. GTG)

6 SOURCE's motives for possibly manufacturing such a story remain mere conjecture to this investigator. (Conjecture!?!? See 5 above as well as "education" for clue to motives. GTG)

Finally, the Intelligence Information Report closes with remarks by the Approving Officer (Colonel John W. Meador), whose opinion is that the reliability of the SOURCE cannot readily be questioned, and that he (Meador) is forwarding this sighting as **UNKNOWN**

A RELUCTANT PSYCHOLOGIST

The interesting part of this sighting begins when that 12-page report reached the hands of Capt. Gregory, who clearly perceived the consequences that such a case could have for the Air Force, as the witness was not an insignificant civilian, but an Air Force officer well considered by his superiors.

The files contain an undated draft of a memo having a paragraph directly addressing this concern:

5. The matter will require discreet handling. The fact an Air Force pilot insisting and officially testifying that he walked up to, and observed "four flying saucers" at close-hand, following immediately on the heels of a nation-wide TV presentation to the effect that after a decade of searching, the Air Force has yet to prove the existence of one, would, if unwittingly released to the press or public, undoubtedly result in immediate and violent repercussions to the embarrassment of the Air Force. It is for this reason that all avenues and aspects be explored, before such drastic measures as a lie-detector test be given consideration.

A similar paragraph, obviously based on the above text, appears in the Summary of the Incident prepared for General Watts and is quoted by Hynek (Hynek, 1977: 184).

The need for a review and analysis from the psychological point of view was agreed upon, and the choice fell on *Dr. Paul M. Fitts*, a member of the Department of Psychology at Ohio State University. From reading the files it is evident that Dr. Fitts had collaborated with the Air Force in the past, having performed 212 psychological analyses of UFO sightings, as well as having prepared a special report on the subject for the Air Force.

But Dr. Fitts was not now so ready to collaborate, perhaps because, having previously worked with the Air Force, he knew it would place him in a delicate situation, and he skillfully avoided getting involved for many weeks (from a first phone contact in February, 1958 to his report dated April 3, 1958), as documented by five pages of messages in the Blue Book files. But finally Capt. Gregory sent him the file (essentially the 12-page report discussed above) by special messenger, and Dr. Fitts reluctantly wrote a report which starts with a disclaimer: "*On the basis of the evidence of the folder I can only offer conjectures regarding the nature of this incident*". Nevertheless, he presents three conjectures, as guidance for the collection of additional evidence.

a)hoax. Even an AF officer can perpetrate a hoax. Recommendation: investigate 1st Lt. Long's personal background.

b)road hypnosis. Brought on by excessive fatigue and loss of sleep. Recommendation: complete hour-by-hour analysis of 1st Lt Long's activities during the previous 72 hours.

c) lack of observation of specific details. This conforms to the pattern of many previous "flying saucers" reports, where the observers simply did not see clearly what was actually there, in which case one can't speculate as to

78 / UNICAT Project

what was actually seen. Recommendation: check for possible helicopter or other activities in the area.

As already pointed out by Dr. Hynek, what the psychologist did was to dismiss the case, appending the label "road hypnosis" on very little evidence, if any. Of course, Dr. Fitts knew what was expected of him and produced it. Never mind that no inquiries were made about the medical records of the witness, or his possible history of mental stability. Not to mention that Dr. Fitts never had a face-to-face interview with Lt. Long, because, as we read in the files:

A vis-a-vis psychological examination of the source, concurrent with his report was not considered advisable.

So much for the report that Dr. Fitts took six weeks to prepare! I suspect that the psychologist did not read the documents sent to him with his most concentrated attention, for if he had, he would have known, for instance, that Lt. Long really provided quite a bit of detail. He would have discovered that, although the total duration of the incident was about 20 minutes, the witness walked for several minutes before reaching the landing site, more than enough to dissipate any effects of road hypnosis. Therefore, his time in the proximity of the objects was very limited, and if he did not *observe structural details, such as antenna, trade name of the tires, etc.*, as apparently Dr. Fitts expected him to do, it was simply because they were not there to report. If anything, this observation weakens the possibility of a hoax, for in such a case the witness would have presented minute details.

Dr. Fitts favors the third conjecture and closes his report by saying what he thought he was expected to say:

In summary, I strongly feel that this is just another case of mistaken identity or confusion in perception under unusual circumstances. This opinion, I must confess, is based primarily on comparison of this with thousands of previous reports.

But he was wrong, as the Air Force chose road hypnosis as a more credible possibility.

FINAL DISPOSITION

This is the title of the last document that closes the case in the files (BBP: #31, b) and summarizes the information to be presented to General Watson for his decision; it is mentioned here for completeness, as some passages are very revealing.

For instance, the comments made by Capt. Gregory about 1st Lt. Long are not very flattering, as Gregory obviously favors the hoax hypothesis, even if he doesn't dare to voice it:

Mouthed same thread-worn statements used by majority of pseudo-scientists and "flying saucer" authors, i.e. not of this earth - propulsion by electro-magnetic forces - believe they were space ships

With reference to Dr. Fitts' report, he states that the most likely conjecture was road hypnosis, which is incorrect. Capt. Gregory adds some reflections about why a polygraph examination would be undesirable:

A polygraph (lie detector) test be given to Lt Long. Consequences: test

80 / UNICAT Project

would definitely establish if subject was lying or was disposed toward exaggeration or hoaxes. If he actually believed he saw three strange objects (because of fatigue, road hypnosis, etc.,) the case would remain inconclusive, with the observer's story being strengthened, with the probability of anger and resentment toward the Air Force on the part of the subject.

One notices that we talk now of *three* instead of *four* objects, an error that repeats in this final document. Is this an indication of how fed up Capt. Gregory was with Lt. Long? Be that as it may, the Air Force decided that the best course of action for all involved was to accept the road hypnosis conjecture advanced by Dr. Fitts, and that is what they did: the CONCLUSION on the incident record card now reads **PSYCHOLOGICAL**. As in many other incidents, the Air Force's explanation of the sighting is the less probable.

And of course, the files are silent concerning the fate of Lt. Long, or if he was ever interrogated again. The world will never know what happened to that promising young pilot or where he ended up.

Since the Air Force never carried out the recommendations of Dr. Fitts, the files do not contain enough information for a truly scientific determination. The possibility of a **hoax**, perhaps inspired by the then current Levelland incidents of Nov. 2-3, 1957 (McDonald, 1968), cannot be set aside, but it is clear that the case never moved into the public domain and that Lt. Long did not profit from his adventure.

APPENDIX

SIMILAR INCIDENTS

There are other instances in the literature in which witnesses unexpectedly came across one or more anomalous objects resting on the ground, which promptly lifted off when approached. While some of those cases are universally recognized, others are practically unknown to English-speaking audiences. We have selected from the UNICAT data base some examples that match well the circumstances of the Tonopah incident, i.e., a single witness facing landed UFOs.

(a) 660119, Tully, Australia.

A farmer --George Pedley-- driving his tractor in the morning saw a disc-shaped object lifting off from a swampy area and departing at high speed. Further inspection revealed an area on the surface of the lagoon completely devoid of the reeds that normally cover the water, and what later was to be identified as a UFO "nest". The incident is rather complicated, involving governmental veiled intervention and interference with the mails, which in fact validates its significance. New "nests" were found at later dates, and the credit for the best discussion must be given to Stan Seers, who not only points out the official interest in the incident but discovers the existence of an independent witness (Seers, 1983: 85). A shorter review was written by W. C. Chalker, an Australian ufologist (Chalker, 1980).

(b) 740901, Saskatchewan, Canada

A farmer --Edwin Fuhr-- was harvesting his rape crop during the morning hours, when he noticed a landed anomalous object. He descended from his swather and approached on foot to a distance of 15 ft, and then, observing through the 4-5 ft high rape that the craft was rotating, he prudently decided to

82 / UNICAT Project

retreat. He sat down in the swather, and having a better view, he detected four other similar domed objects, the color of brushed stainless steel and all spinning. He observed them for 15-20 minutes, and then the objects went straight up in seconds and stopped at a height of 200 ft, where they ceased rotating and formed into a perfect line. After hovering two more minutes, they suddenly ascended, disappearing into the low cloud cover (Hynek & Vallée, 1975).

(c) 750101, Burgos, Spain.

Four conscripts of the Spanish Army, returning from a short Christmas furlough and due back at their quarters in the early hours of January 1st, claimed to have sighted some anomalous lights positioned on the ground. The soldiers descended from their car, but became afraid and promptly resumed their trip.

The information about this case is abundant, as at the time it was intensively investigated by many Spanish ufologists (Benítez, 1977; Ballester, 1978). The official files released by the Air Force to Lic. Ballester Olmos (Doc. Oficiales, 1993) were received by the UNICAT Project in April 1993, and are rather sketchy; but they contain the depositions of the four witnesses which are rather similar.

At first reading, the case is rather compelling, but it does not resist an in-depth analysis. As it happens, the soldiers believed that they were due back at 7:00 AM, and that they were going to be very late and have demerits added to their service sheets. It is quite possible that from this conjecture they concocted the story, but upon arrival at their destination they discovered that because it was the first day of the year, hence a holiday, the due hour was 8:00 AM. This possibility is substantiated by the paucity of details, particularly during the initial stage when the UFO

was seen descending only by the driver as the three others were allegedly sleeping.

None of the above incidents could have influenced Lt. Long as his experience took place years before. The reverse is not true, and it is quite possible that the conscripts involved in the Burgos incident could have known about the Saskatchewan case, which had been widely publicized a few months before. In fact, the witness that most influenced the others, the waiter, was a fan of the UFO phenomenon (Doc. Oficiales, 1993).

REFERENCES

1. Ballester Olmos, Vicente-Juan; **OVNIS: EL FENOMENO ATERRIZAJE**, Plaza y Janés, 1978, p. 136 ff.
2. Benítez, J. J.; **OVNIS: Documentos Oficiales del Gobierno Español**, Plaza y Janés, 1977, p. 193
3. **BLUE BOOK PROJECT** Microfilm, Roll #31:
(a) *Report AISS-UFOB-779-57*; Investigator T/Sgt Ralph H. Gottschaik; Preparing Officer Capt. Benjamin C. Kenyon, Jr.; Approved by Colonel John W. Meador.
(b) *Final Disposition UFO Incident, Tonopah, Nevada*; Capt. George T. Gregory, Air Science Division, May 1958.
4. Chalker, W. C., "*Tully (Australia) Saucer Nests*", in **THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UFOS**, Ronald D Story, ed., 1980, p. 370.
5. **Documentos Oficiales: Información Instruída con motivo de la presunta obseva-**

84 / UNICAT Project

ciónde un OVNI por varios soldados del Ejército de Tierra en las proximidades de Burgos. Desclasificado: Junio de 1993.

6. Hynek, J. A.; **THE HYNEK UFO REPORT**, 1977, p. 182.
7. Hynek, J. Allen, & Vallee, Jacques; **THE EDGE OF REALITY**, Regnery, 1975, p. 265.
8. McDonald, James E., **1968 Congressional Hearings**, p. 77
9. Seers, Stan; **UFOs, THE CASE FOR SCIENTIFIC MYOPIA**, Vantage Press, 1983, p. 68 ff.
10. Vallée, Jacques; **PASSPORT TO MAGONIA**, Regnery, 1969, p. 267.

9

OVER PENNSYLVANIA

Capt. Killian's case

FEBRUARY 24, 1959

**Comment is free, but facts are sacred.
C. P. Scott (1846-1932)**

As shown by the list of references, this case not only received official attention but was also extensively discussed by both serious ufologists (Hall, 1964; Keyhoe, 1973; Good, 1987) and the uncompromising debunkers (Menzel, 1963).

SUMMARY OF INCIDENT

On the night of February 24, 1959, a scheduled American Airlines flight from Newark to Detroit encountered three lights over Pennsylvania. The pilot was Capt. Peter W. Killian, and the first officer was James Dee. The initial detection took place at 8:20 PM when the aircraft, a DC-6B, was 13 miles west of Williamsport, and the lights remained at about 9 o'clock for 40 minutes, providing an opportunity for many of the 35 passengers to observe them. They were also reported by the crews of at least two other planes flying much farther to the south, as well as by the tower operators in Pittsburgh, PA.

The information content of this sighting is low, as all we have is three non-point lights changing relative position and separation, with intensity fluctuating from bright to fade-out and color variable from yellow-orange to brilliant blue-white.

86 / UNICAT Project

The main interest of this case is that it is very well documented, thus allowing the analyst to draw conclusions at odds with the published official position.

The case made headlines and threw the Air Force into a frenzy, with an escalation of explanations which included the suggestion that those who report flying saucers --including Capt. Killian and his passengers-- usually had one too many. The refueling mission explanation, containing some attractive features, was finally adopted; it was accepted by the press and the case passed into oblivion. However, a scientific and more detailed re-examination of the BB files shows that the Air Force was more eager to produce an explanation, any explanation, than in finding out what really happened.

THE UNDISPUTED DATA

The lights reported by Capt. Killian on February 24, 1959 were explained by Blue Book as having a very simple cause: a refueling mission. But we know after years of studying the files that the Air Force had a knack for picking out from all the tentative explanations the one that was practically impossible. This leads me to the following question: postulating that a mission was on that night, do the data provided by Capt. Killian and the other pilots support that hypothesis?

Before discussing the pros and cons for the reality of the refueling mission, we start with two pieces of information which so far have not been disputed, even by biased investigators like the late Dr. Menzel (Menzel, 1963).

The first one is the statement by Capt. Killian that *"the altitude of the objects was 30 degrees above my horizon"* (Ref. 1). The second is the information that KC-97 missions are flown at 17,000 ft. It is then easy to make an order of

magnitude calculation to determine the distance "a" from the plane to the lights reported by Capt. Killian, without any precise knowledge of the exact position of the aircraft or the lights. We can assume with a small error that "a" is the hypotenuse of a right triangle in which the distance from the lights to the ground is $h = 17,000$ ft, while A is the angle between the line of sight and the tangent to the horizon.

We then construct the following table:

Angle A degrees	sin A	$a = h/\sin A$ (in nm)	Separation to be resolved (in ft)
30	0.500	5.6	8.5
20	0.342	8.2	12.5
15	0.259	10.8	16.4
10	0.174	16.1	24.5
5	0.087	32.1	48.8

The value $A = 15$ degrees was included because it is mentioned sometimes in the literature, as for example in Hall (Hall, 1964), where one can find some rough attempt at a similar analysis. The other values are added for comparison only, to show how little an error in angular elevation affects the results.

THE REFUELING MISSION EXPLANATION

The third column of the above table expresses the distance in nautical miles from Capt. Killian's plane to the lights, which for none of the cases exceeds 35 nm. In other words, whatever the source was, it was not too far, certainly not the almost 120 statute miles (104 nm) that would be necessary for the refueling mission to be seen from Capt. Killian's plane at 8:45 PM when in the vicinity of Bradford, PA (Hall, 1964: 116) and at about the same time (8:40 PM) be reported by the tower

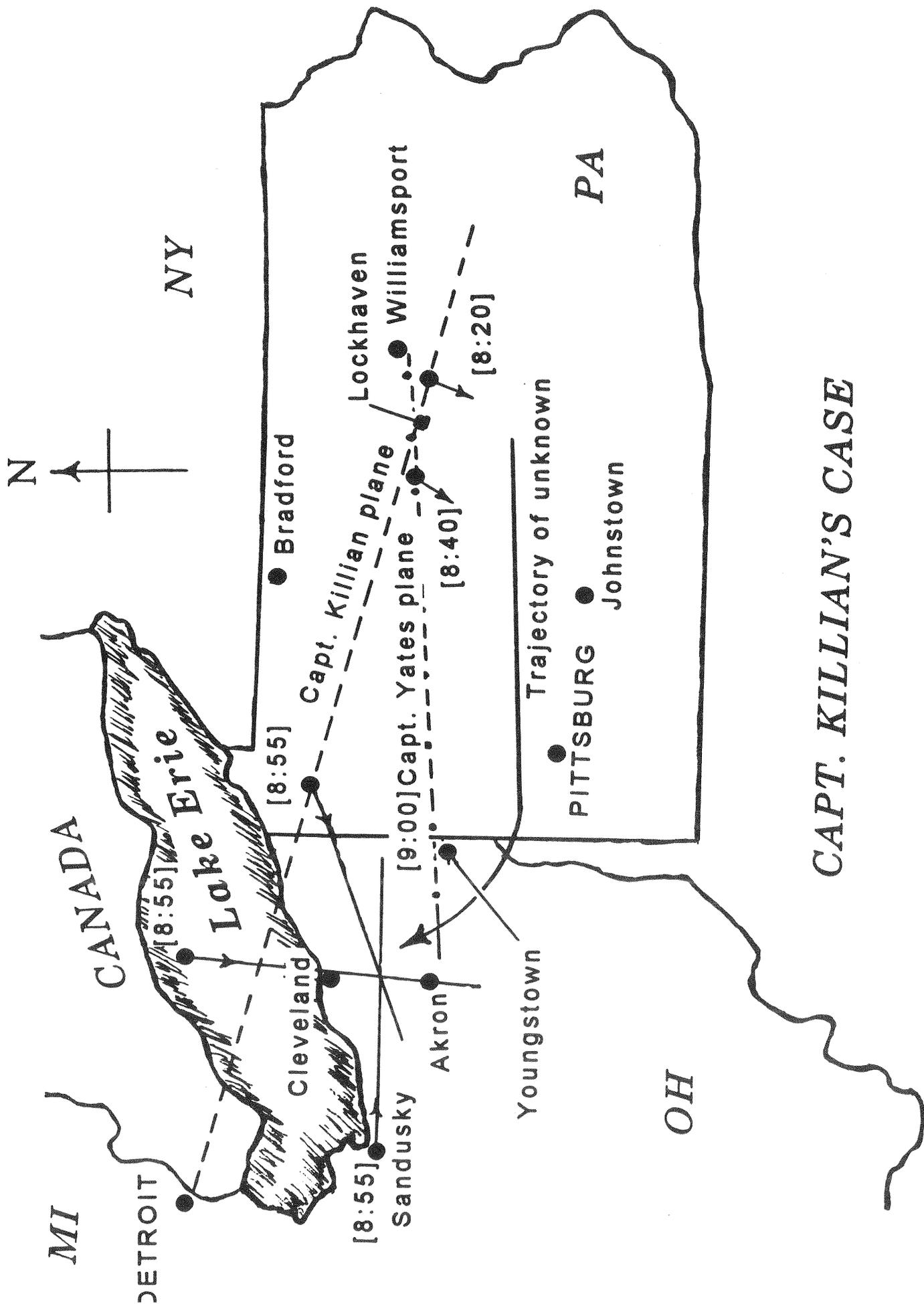
88 / UNICAT Project

operators as over Pittsburgh (Ref. 4). There is no doubt that a refueling mission was flown that night, but it was not what Capt. Killian saw, if the AF assertion that they are flown at 17,000 ft is correct (Ref. 2).

Another approach is to consider the resolution of the human eye (Haines, 1980), defined as the angular separation that must exist between two objects for them to be perceived as distinct. It has a value of $\alpha = 0.25$ milliradians, and the linear separation d is obtained using the formula: $d = \alpha a$, where a is the distance between the objects and the eye.

The values in the last column of the table are obtained using that formula. But the fact is that the wingspan of a B-47 is 116 ft, while for the KC-97 tanker it is 141 ft, so in all cases the lights of the planes would have been resolved and the aircraft positively identified. This was not the case, as all that was described by Capt. Killian and the other witnesses on Flight 139 was three lights in loose formation. Of course, if the planes were far enough away, the lights of each would have appeared blended into one, but the numbers in the table indicate that the distance required is of the order of more than 30 nautical miles, which does not satisfy the data. It could be argued that Capt. Killian committed a gross error in estimating at 30 degrees the elevation of the lights above the plane, but even if the elevation was only 10 degrees, the distance was about 16 nm and the lights would have been resolved.

Moreover, we are told of three lights, not four, although there were four aircraft. The inescapable conclusion is that the refueling mission, if any, was either much higher and/or much farther away than stated. This is not possible either, as for the refueling both of 17,000 ft is in agreement with the design parameters of the aircraft involved.



CAPT. KILLIAN'S CASE

90 / UNICAT Project

The same limitations on the distances are equally valid for the other aircraft reporting lights that night. For example, Capt. Yates' plane was too far south to see the lights of an alleged refueling mission presumably occurring near Bradford. Yet, he reported that at 9:00 PM something heading northwest crossed his flying path near Youngstown, OH (Hall, 1964: 116). In addition, observers on the ground near Akron, OH reported lights moving east to west at 9:15 PM (Hall, 1964: 116). From the official files we know that a refueling operation was over Pittsburgh at 8:40 PM (Ref. 4), and a look at the map indicates that the three observations fit quite well; thus, what Capt. Yates saw and reported was very likely that specific refueling mission.

Another negative aspect for identifying as aircraft the lights seen by Capt. Killian and his passengers is that the colors reported do not match what one would expect from the position lights of planes. Also, the lights were too powerful to be associated with jets. What made the explanation attractive, that is, until a more rigorous analysis is performed, is the relative motion of the lights, although Capt. Killian characterized it as too erratic to be jets.

Before he was silenced --and there is no question about that either (Ref. 12, p. 15)-- Capt. Killian provided quite a bit of information, expanding on his original statements. In one of them (Ref. 12, page 3) he says: *"At first, I estimated that the objects were not over a mile from us. This was just an impression: I believe now that they were not that close"*. They weren't that close, but they were not that far away either, if we can trust the AF data about refueling missions!

In this same interview Capt. Killian adds a numerical bit: *"they appeared to be like the apparent size of the moon."* Well, as everybody knows the size of the full moon is 32' of arc, or 9.3

milliradians; let's compare this with another statement made by Capt. Killian to Major Werkmeister many weeks after the fact (Ref. 3): the lights were each "*the size of a quarter at arm's length.*" The diameter of a quarter is 7/8 of an inch, and the arm's length is ambiguous, but taking it to mean 30 inches, the quarter subtends an angle of 29 mrad., i.e., about three times the diameter of the moon, which I don't find credible. If we use those two values and calculate the diameter of one object at the distance of 5.6 nm corresponding to the reported elevation of 30 degrees, we obtain:

Angular size	Diameter of object
full moon (9.3 mrad)	316 ft
quarter (29 mrad)	987 ft

These diameters seem a bit too large, for had they been planes, with a constellation of lights to boot, at a distance of 5.6 nm the identification would have been immediate. Perhaps Capt. Killian was bad at estimating angular sizes, or perhaps he was trying to express that the lights were not point sources, but what is clear is that he did not observe a refueling mission near or far.

The most damaging argument against the refueling mission hypothesis is the manner in which the AF changed its explications for the incident. In the first release (Feb. 28) the lights were the Belt of Orion, simply because Capt. Killian had used it as a model of what he saw. A day later (March 1), some nasty remarks were made to the press about inebriation and UFO sightings (Chapman, 1959). And the third story was the refueling mission, released March 16, although the files show that the AF knew about it since March 2 at least (Ref. 4).

Somehow the AF felt threatened by Capt. Killian's persistence that he had seen what he saw. After a

92 / UNICAT Project

point his statements to the press stopped, but his wife was not silenced, and she revealed that pressure has been exerted on American Airlines and that the company had ordered Capt. Killian to cease and desist, which he did.

OTHER TESTIMONIES

The Blue Book files are silent about the testimony by other commercial pilots, and the information provided by other sources (Hall, 1964) is not detailed enough for evaluation; besides, our purpose is to analyze the incident based only on the official information.

The official files contain, nonetheless, a report that has some bearing on this matter. On the evening of February 2, 1959, about three weeks prior to the Killian incident, a distinguished professor at the University of Michigan and his wife were driving on the Ohio Turnpike near Sandusky, OH when they noted an anomalous light in the sky. The sighting was reported to the FBI in Detroit, which transmitted the information to the Air Force in Washington, DC, and then to Selfridge AFB in Michigan, which in turn passed it on to ATIC in Dayton, OH, on February 25, 1959. Evidently, on that precise date ATIC was not very receptive to any information supporting even remotely the Killian incident (Ref. 6).

Curiously enough, the files contain only a retyped copy of the original FBI report (Ref. 7), where we learn that the witnesses described what they saw as a "yellow light", which had an upper part much like the top of a sphere, while the lower part was rather level or flat. Other tantalizing details are provided, such as the presence of the silhouette of a conventional aircraft departing in the opposite direction.

This report is relevant for at least three reasons: i) the location is in the area of the Feb. 24 sightings,

ii) because the witnesses are unimpeachable; this I know firsthand, as I was acquainted with the professor many years ago when I was a student at the University of Michigan; and iii) and perhaps the more important, the expedience with which the AF dismissed the incident without remorse (Ref. 6).

A CRITIC'S OPINION

If Dr. Menzel couldn't leave this incident alone, the least that he should have done was to get the facts straight. His discussion of the Killian case starts (Menzel, 1963: 52):

"...when the plane was near Bradford, Pennsylvania, the pilot, Captain Killian, noticed some puzzling lights above and to the left of the plane. They seemed to be three..."

But as shown on the map, Bradford is to the north of the position of the plane and hence the lights would have been visible to the right and not to the left of the aircraft. He then proceeds to depict Killian as a publicity seeker, who was mostly concerned with his public appearances. Menzel asserts that a night refueling operation was carried out at the time and place reported, which was not over Bradford but near Pittsburgh (Ref. 4); and he talks of tankers, plural, and three B-47s, information at odds with the data which refer to only 3 lights. The good doctor accepts Capt. Killian's observation that the lights were 30 degrees above the horizon, and adds: *"this agreed with the position of the tankers, which were operating at an altitude of 17,000 ft"* but he fails to perform the order of magnitude calculation done here. Or maybe he did it and realizing that Killian could not have seen the refueling planes, decided to keep silent on the matter and move the location to Bradford.

CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion has shown that the incident described by Capt. Killian was almost certainly not a refueling mission, although it is easy to understand the irresistible appeal that such a solution had for the Air Force analysts, in their ignorance of the possible methods for testing its viability. It is also a beautiful example of the underhanded techniques used by the Air Force to discredit reliable witnesses.

The official explanation is therefore untenable, and the proper classification for this incident should have been "UNEXPLAINED".

REFERENCES AND NOTES

(A) BLUE BOOK FILES documents (Roll 35)

- (1) Memo prepared by Capt. Peter W. Killian dated February 24, 1959 with reference to Flight 139 and transmitted to the Air Force by AMERICAN AIRLINES.

This Memo has been reproduced many times, but often with the last two paragraphs omitted (Hall, 1964: 117) or with two paragraphs added emphasizing the refueling explanation (example: enclosure in Ref. 5). The original document ends with the words "*Distance away is unknown*" and is not signed. The important item is: "*The altitude of the objects was 30 deg. above my horizon*".

- (2) Letter addressed to Mr. Fred A. Kirsch dated 19 March 1959 and signed by Lawrence J. Tacker, Major USAF, Public Information Division.

Provides details about refueling missions, indicating *inter alia* that KC-97's fly at an altitude of 17,000 ft at 230 knots TAS.

(3) Memo to ATIC dated 14 Aug. 1959 and signed by R. F. Werkmeister, Major USAF, Administrative Officer.

This document reproduces (1) above, and adds a telephone conversation with Capt. Killian, where mention is made of the size of the lights (each individual light was the size of a quarter at arm's length, or 29 mrad). It is also the first direct contact between the Air Force and Capt. Peter Killian, about six months after the incident.

(4) Undated memo addressed to ATIC Commander, Dayton, Ohio, signed by William D. Hostutler, Capt. USAF, Administrative Officer.

This document is in reply to a telephone call received at 08:20 on March 2, 1959 and confirms that at 20:40 hr. 24 February (0140Z, 25 Feb.) three B-47's from the 772nd ACW Sq. were on a refueling mission near Pittsburgh, PA as reported by the tower operators.

(5) Letter to Ms. Frances Ryan dated 24 June 1959 and signed by Lawrence J. Tacker, Major USAF, Public Information Division.

(6) Memorandum to ATIC Commander, Dayton, Ohio, dated 25 Feb. 1959 and signed by P. E. Chancy, Major USAF, Administrative Officer.

(7) Memorandum to SAC by S. A. Coghlan dated February 4, 1959.

Coghlan apparently was an FBI agent in Detroit. The document now in the BB files is not the original, but an unsigned retyped copy.

96 / UNICAT Project

(B) Other unofficial references

- (8) Chapman, Ralph; "*'Flying Saucers' Sightings Still Get Air Force Study*", in the March 1, 1959 issue of the *New York Herald Tribune*.

- (8A) Haines, Richard F.; **OBSERVING UFOs**, Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1980, pp.107-115.

- (9).Hall, Richard H., Editor; **THE UFO EVIDENCE**, NICAP, Washington, 1964, p. 116 and p. 42.

- (10) Keyhoe, Donald E.; **ALIENS FROM SPACE**, Doubleday, 1973, p. 197.

- (11).Good, Timothy; **ABOVE TOP SECRET**, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1987, p. 277.

- (12).Menzel, Donald H. and Boyd, Lyle G.; **THE WORLD OF FLYING SAUCERS**, Doubleday and Co., 1963, pp. 52-56.

An interesting fact in view of the alleged clandestine connection between Dr. Menzel and the Air Force is that the final galley proofs of the pages of his book dealing with the Killian case are part of the official Blue Book records.

- (13).**REPORT ON UFOs observed Feb. 24, 1959**
by AMERICAN-UNITED airline pilots.
Compiled by Unidentified Flying Objects
Research Committee, Akron, OH, undated.

This report is reproduced in toto in the Blue Book files.

10

VALENCIA, SPAIN **SEPTEMBER 26, 1973**

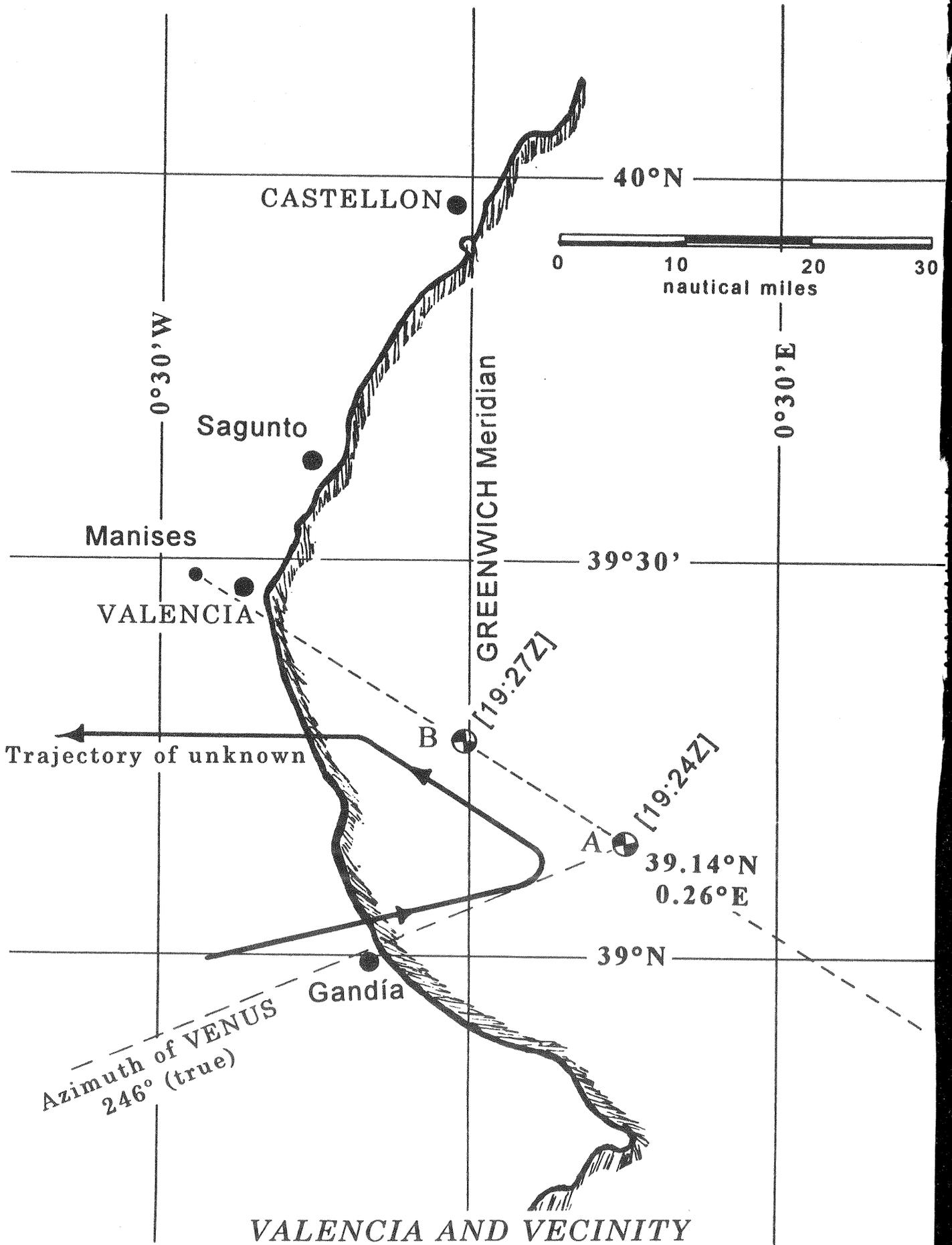
Qui plume a, guerre a.
Voltaire

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This case is not extracted from the Blue Book Project files, but describes an incident that occurred near Valencia, Spain, much more recently than the other sightings discussed in this book. It has been included for two reasons: i) it is practically unknown outside Spain, and ii) it is an excellent example of how the Spanish Air Force handles the UFO phenomenon, in ways curiously similar to those sanctioned by the US Air Force, already discussed in previous chapters.

Similarly to what was done in the United States by Project Blue Book, the Spanish Air Force appoints an investigating officer to make an inquiry and prepare a report which is sent up to the Ministry of Defense through channels, where it is properly filed and evaluated.

About 1976 the Air Force decided to make public some of the incidents in their files and gave documents pertaining to several cases --including the sighting we are discussing-- to a well-known journalist, with the understanding that the material would be made accessible to the general public in book form (Benítez, 1977). Apparently



this did not work as the Air Force expected, because the author presented the cases in a positive vein and became very popular as a pro-UFO writer.

The Spanish Air Force tried again, and on April 14, 1992 decided to declassify its UFO files (CdU, 1992) and started to release the case records, on a one-at-a-time basis, to a then respected researcher, who already had published several books on ufology. This author confidentially passed the individual files to his associates and collaborators for evaluation, and it was in that fashion I became involved in the project. Unfortunately, most of the other participants were detractors of the UFO phenomenon, debunkers who over the years influenced the principal researcher more and more, until the point was reached at which all the Spanish cases were assessed negatively and trivial causes attributed to them based not on scientific argument but on gut feelings. For example, in the Valencia case the principal investigator based his evaluation on *moral convictions*.

THE INCIDENT

The case involves two Air Force officers, and it is one of the better, if not the best, incidents reported in Spain in modern times. On the night of September 26, 1973, a *Mirage* of the Spanish Air Force was on radial 127° approaching Manises (the airport of Valencia) when the two pilots suddenly noticed a strong anomalous light to the left of the plane. The officers were Capt. Marco Antonio García Gea and Capt. Antonio Gea Durán, both distinguished professionals. Capt. García Gea perished in November 1977 in a crash near Lezuza, Alicante, but Capt. Gea Durán had a successful career, reaching the rank of colonel as Chief of the Air Force Base at Matacán, Salamanca, clearly not the type of individual incapable of distinguishing Venus from an unidentified intruder near their aircraft.

100 / UNICAT Project

Since all the information initially available is what appears in the Air Force files, it is appropriate to start the analysis by having a look at the Spanish Air Force releases.

THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Listing of files

As provided by Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos in early 1993, the dossier on this case has only the equivalent of six letter-size pages, containing the following materials:

(i) Cover letter from the Commander of the Air Force Base at Torrejón to the Air Ministry in Madrid to accompany the report of the incident.

(ii) Cover of the report prepared by the investigating officer (Juez Informador), Commander Manuel Olmos Pérez (assumed name), which provides the following details: *Third Air Region, Manises Air Force Base, Wing No. 11.*

(iii) Body of the report (3 pages) dated November 7, 1973. The signature and name of the investigating officer have been deleted, but an interesting handwritten note survived the sanitation process: *"In my opinion there is nothing special in this information, star or planet (Venus, see position at that time). Signed: M"*.

(iv) A statement from one of the witnesses, signed and dated September 27, 1973, i.e., the day after the incident.

Summary of content

Items (i) and (ii) are irrelevant, but the other two documents are of crucial importance, as they constitute the only firsthand evidence on this sighting. The body of the report is identical with the materials released much earlier to a distinguished journalist (Benítez, 1977: 147), with

the exception of the handwritten note, which could have been added at any time. Since in the case of the Blue Book Project we have found that many remarks were added years after the fact by the successive directors, mostly in misguided efforts to decrease the number of unexplained cases. I wonder if the Spanish Air Force was following the same pattern, and it would be worthwhile to inquire if the negative note appears in the copy released to Benítez in 1977.

The remaining document is perhaps the most significant, not only because it contains the names of the witnesses, but because it was prepared immediately after the incident. It contains much less information than the later report generated by the officer investigating the case, but no contradictions are apparent. It seems, however, that this document was not included in the 1977 package released to Benítez.

Knowing how difficult it is to translate technical documents containing specialized language, I had second thoughts about including this report here, but since it contains all the crucial information to elucidate the truth about this case, after some trepidation I decided to incorporate the text in full (Gea Durán, 1973), which reads:

Wing No. 11 112 Air Force Squadron

**Report prepared by Capt. Antonio Gea Durán
on the incident occurring during a night
flight on 26.9.73.**

.....
*The following events took place during a
TRN-2 mission in a Mirage III DE having
Capt. Marco A. García Gea as instructor pilot:*

*At 19:24 Z we were flying at 20,000 ft and at
a distance of 40 NM on the radial TACAN of
approach at 127° to Valencia, when Capt.
García Gea brought to my attention the
presence on our left of a strange and strong*

102 / UNICAT Project

light apparently at the same altitude, and also apparently moving toward us. We both coincided in our appreciation of the circumstances, and to distance from it in altitude, we decided to initiate the descent, even if we had not yet reached the required distance of 35 NM. But we observed that the light descended as we did without approaching us, maintaining the lateral separation and the same heading as ours. We estimated the distance of separation to be about 4 NM (nautical miles).

We immediately established contact with Valencia Ground Control and related what we were seeing. Their radar (operator) stated that they had a ghost-like blip which suddenly moved toward the coast, which we observed from an altitude of about 7000 ft. The light was moving toward the west at high speed, changing its color to reddish, until it disappeared from our view, very close to the ground and in the west.

Manises, September 27, 1973

Signed: Capt. Antonio Gea Durán

THE BASIC DATA

Study of the dossier indicates that the witnesses were not separately interrogated, but in their depositions they both agree to the following facts:

(1) The report refers to a "*luminous object*", but it is evident that the perception was only of light, without structural details. More specifically, the pilots stated that due to the brightness they could not perceive a shape. As will be discussed later, the statement is important when the investigating officer attempts to attribute the sighting to the presence of a Comet aircraft in the vicinity.

(2) The pilots state that the unknown changed altitude, descending with the plane from 20,000 ft to 7,000 ft when they attempted to increase the vertical separation, but maintaining a lateral separation of 4 NM.

(3) Initially on a heading of 80°, while descending the light took a course of 307° parallel to the plane. In the final stage of the incident, at 7,000 ft, the light --initially white-- became reddish and moved toward the west at great speed, disappearing near the ground in the west.

(4) The change in heading described in (3) was observed as a ghost-blip on the radar screen at the Manises Air Force Base.

(5) The pilots said that they did not perceive any noises, not unusual considering the relative isolation of the cabin.

(6) The plane was a MIRAGE III DE (see Note 1) and was flying at 300 knots at a height of 20,000 ft. The incident started at 19:24Z when the plane was at a distance of 40 NM from the airport, on the radial of 127° approaching Valencia. With this information, it is possible to place the plane at point A on the map.

(7) Finally, with reference to the meteorological conditions prevalent at the time, the witnesses stated that it was a clear night, with good visibility, and the stars were readily discernible.

Any credible explanation of the incident must take into account all of the above items. This is an important case, not only because of the quality of the witnesses, but also because of the amount of information provided by the official documents, which have been available for many years. Yet, debunkers and a former ufologist have fiercely defended the Venusian hypothesis as the correct explanation, often using arguments that are not logical or scientific.

The official report does not address the actual duration of the incident.

THE PLANET VENUS

The astronomical data for Venus on September 26, 1973, at 19.24Z, latitude 39°09'N and longitude 0°16' E are:

Right ascension	14 hrs 51 min
Declination	17 deg 54 min
Rise for date/location	9 hr 29 min GMT
Set for date/location	19 hr 27 min GMT
Azimuth in degrees	246.149
Altitude in degrees	0.559881
Angular size in arc sec.:	= 16.53109 (= .275 arc min)
Phase (fraction illuminated)	0.691964
Brightness magnitude	-3.81803
Elongation in degrees (East)	42.08456

Undoubtedly Venus was on the correct azimuth to appear on the left of the plane at about 10 o'clock, very close to the horizon (36 arc min) and bright enough to be visible. Under the circumstances, it is clear that many would be tempted to ascribe Venus as the primary and only stimulus of the incident. Let's return to the official dossier and see if such a hypothesis is tenable, or if on the contrary, the presence of the planet was totally fortuitous.

The first question that comes to mind is why the pilots didn't notice Venus earlier, when it was higher above the horizon. Curiously enough, none of the critics have asked this question.

One of the two conclusions favored by the investigating officer reads (emphasis added):

"...the phenomenon that the captains observed could have been caused by the bright 'star' reported by other pilots around those dates."

Indeed, Venus must have been equally visible on previous days and was probably reported by other pilots for what it was: a bright astronomical object. The investigator only underlines his inability to distinguish between a star and a planet.

But on the night in question, Venus was only a small point near the horizon, with an angular size of 0.275 minutes of arc (while the whole moon has an angular size of 32 min), and not at its maximum brightness either. Having lived close to Valencia for a year, I can add that very often the visibility near the horizon is affected by haze or the presence of low altitude clouds, a common occurrence at places near the sea.

Finally, we know it was a clear starry night, and no matter how bright Venus was, its invariant position on the background of fixed stars would have allowed the pilots an immediate identification, even if they were not very experienced.

CHANGES IN HEADING

The official documents also have other statements negating the Venusian hypothesis, as for instance, the change of headings listed in (3) above. In the case of civilian witnesses on the ground, it is not uncommon for a bright star or planet to be confused with a UFO, when trees, buildings or clouds block the view and the change in perspective due to the motion of the observer creates optical illusions of parallel motions or distance variations. But a conceivable confusion with Venus is impossible for an observer in the air, as on the background of the fixed stars the position of Venus is invariant, regardless of arguments of parallax effects alleged by the skeptics (Borraz, 1993). Moreover, the probability that trained military pilots could make such an error is farfetched. In short, an object changing headings as stated in the official documents is certainly not Venus.

CHANGES IN COLOR

The witnesses also reported changes in color, which a Spanish debunker attempts to explain as an effect of atmospheric scattering, stating that when an astronomical object gets close to the horizon its color normally changes toward the red (Armentia, 1993). This gentleman, who is also the director of the Pamplona Planetarium, neglects to mention that such changes are slow, as for the setting sun, while in our case the whole event occurred in an interval of 3 or 4 minutes. However, recalling that Pamplona is the city where the bulls run loose on the streets during San Fermín festivities, perhaps the explanation for this extraordinary statement is that Armentia's sense of time has been affected by the event that typifies his town. In any case, his attempts to relate atmospheric dispersion with the color changes described in the original report lack scientific basis.

THE PROBLEM OF THE DISTANCE

The documents contained in the official files unequivocally state that the pilots estimated the distance to the unknown to be of the order of 4 NM. This distance was acceptable to the investigating officer, since he mentions it when considering the possibility of the presence of an airliner in the area.

It is too bad that we don't know how the witnesses arrived at that number, but the information is a fatal blow to the Venusian hypothesis, as the critics are well aware. To circumvent the difficulty, they have written things like this (Armentia, 1993):

"The estimate of distance reported is absolutely gratuitous....Plainly and simply, the witnesses made an 'educated guess' (in English in the

original) possibly based on similarities to the luminous stimulus of an aircraft."

But this is nonsense. As an example, assume the aircraft was a Boeing 737 with a wingspan of 93 ft. At a distance of 4 NM this plane has an angular size of about 13 (arc) minutes, while the planet Venus, as we have seen, on that particular night subtended an angle of only 16.5 arc seconds, or 0.275 minutes! Thus, if the pilots estimated the distance on the basis of previous experience with aircraft, they were certainly not looking at Venus.

Is a distance of 4 NM reasonable under the circumstances? The initial altitude of the plane was 20,000 ft and at that height the distance to the horizon can be calculated to be 150 NM, while after descending to 7,000 it becomes 89 NM. In both instances the pilots had a plain view of the shore line, very likely dotted with city lights (Gandía, Cullera), which helped them to assess distances. Thus, 4 NM is an acceptable value.

THE RADAR OBSERVATION

Once again we find that the pilots are very specific when describing the radar confirmation of the anomaly (emphasis added):

"... the radar (operator) told us that he was observing a ghost-like blip that suddenly moved toward the shore line, as we perceived from an approximate altitude of 7,000 ft; the light moved away toward the west at high speed, changing its color to red. until it disappeared from our view, very near to the ground and in the west."

108 / UNICAT Project

This statement is interesting, when one considers that the visual field from the plane included the shore line. It is inconceivable that two pilots could confuse a relatively close and sizeable object with a planet almost setting on the horizon. And all of this at the same time that the radar registered the same maneuvers.

The presence of phantom echoes on radar screens was once upon a time a fact of life, but not in 1973 when this incident occurred, although it still could have happened then, a reality accepted by radar operators and usually ignored. The skeptic adduces that the spurious image was there but was noted only as the pilots contacted the ground control (Borraz, 1993); and that the radar operator, once informed of the developing situation, was more prone to concentrate his attention on the ghost blip. Although this interpretation implies an accusation of incompetence by the radar operator, it seems to me that the skeptic, in his anxiousness, missed the point: the exact simultaneity of the visual observation with the observation on the radar screen. It doesn't take a statistics genius to see that the probability of such a match is very small, but even this has not deterred the skeptic, who has written pages to show otherwise. But if the probability of the occurrence is very small -- and it is reasonable to assume so-- the fact remains that the two events (visual observation, radar detection) must be linked by a physical reality, namely, the presence of an unidentified flying object in the area.

More than twenty years have passed since this incident, and during that period we have developed a technology capable of producing planes that are invisible to radar. It doesn't take a big leap of faith to contemplate the possibility that at the time of this incident such technology could already have existed, and produced experimental aircraft undetectable to radar most of the time, but

occasionally generating phantom echoes. And what better testing field than the coast of Spain?

THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

While reading the files released by the Spanish Air Force concerning this case, one can't help noticing how openly biased the report is. I am unable to determine if the bias came directly from the beliefs of the investigating officer, a commander in the Air Force, from his lack of competence for the job, or more likely, because he was forced to follow directives imposed on him. Even if he did not have the resources for an outside investigation, he clearly had the opportunity to ask the witnesses pertinent questions that would eliminate the Venusian hypothesis, questions that a serious investigator could not have missed. One notes the following points:

(a) The pilots were NOT interrogated separately, the accepted procedure not only to discover contradictions, but also the way to test their recollection of the facts.

(b) The simultaneous visual-radar detection is de-emphasized. This was not the case in the report signed by Capt. Antonio Gea Durán, and perhaps this is the reason why this document is not mentioned in the first public release of the case (Benítez, 1977).

(c) No specific questions were asked about how the distance of 4 NM was obtained by the pilots, but the number is blindly accepted by the investigator and used in an attempt to associate the incident with a commercial aircraft in the area.

(d) The elevation of the light above the horizon is not mentioned, and we don't even know if the witnesses were questioned on that point. The skeptics are satisfied with the statement "*at the same altitude*", which they translate to mean the

110 / UNICAT Project

horizon, where Venus was. But an investigator worth his salt would have asked the question, as a dozen or more degrees would have decisively eliminated the planet from consideration.

(e) If Venus was suspected as the stimulus of the sighting, the mandatory question would have been: *did you see any other bright object in that part of the sky?* However, the question was only put forward years later by Ballester in his infamous questionnaire to Colonel Gea Durán.

(f) The first conclusion of the investigating officer is that the stimulus could have been *"the bright star (sic) reported by other pilots around those days"*, but the files do not contain specific depositions indicating dates and times of those other incidents.

(g) The second conclusion of the investigator refers to the presence of a COMET aircraft

"flying at 24,000 ft over the sea near Gandta, and estimated Sagunto at 19:19Z, which perhaps turned on his landing lights to warn the military planes of its position".

This is a cryptic paragraph, as it talks of a plurality of military planes, and of warning them of commercial traffic, as if the Air Force had no other means of knowing of the presence of other planes in the area. Or perhaps this is a slip of the tongue, and the *"military planes"* were American ones as discussed below?

At any rate, the possibility that the COMET was the cause could have been easily eliminated by inquiring about the actual time of its arrival at Sagunto since, as we know, the beginning of the incident was 19:24Z. This was not done, and we never will know why not. In addition, to assume

that the pilots could not identify other aircraft at a distance of 4 NM is offensive to the witnesses, as it assumes a total lack of competence and professionalism. We are told that the pilots were informed of the conclusions, but the report is silent about their reactions.

(h) The investigating officer did not obtain a confirmation from the Manises Ground Control, which in fact would have ruled Venus out. But he didn't obtain a denial either.

In short, the investigation report not only attempts to minimize the incident, but its repeated motif is the avoidance of any direct question that could have eliminated Venus as a possibility. This is a remarkable characteristic, and one wonders why.

THE F. D. ROOSEVELT CARRIER

The official documents for the case contain a short but interesting note concerning the presence of the American aircraft carrier F. D. Roosevelt in the area:

Also, as per teletype from His Excellency the Chief of the Air High Command, Ref. 3-9144-T, the Manises Air Force Base, among others, is alerted to the possibility that aircraft from the carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt could be diverted between 0900Z and 2030Z on September 26.

Notice how precisely the date and time are given. This alert seems routine, as the US Navy maintains a considerable presence in the Mediterranean. But things are not exactly as they appear, because the named ship is very special. In fact, the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, CVA-42, decommissioned in October, 1977 and sold for scrap in March, 1978, has the distinction of having been

112 / UNICAT Project

involved in a large number of UFO incidents, perhaps 8 to 10, in places quite separate in time and location. Two or three instances could be ascribed to coincidence, but another explanation becomes necessary when the incidents are repeated (see Note 2).

The best known of the events took place on or about September 20, 1952, during the maneuvers known as "*Operation Mainbrace*" (Vallée, 1965: 101), when several photographs were taken by Wallace Litwin. The UNICAT Project has a large file on this carrier, and as far as I know, this is the only U.S. Navy ship repeatedly associated with ufological incidents. It was also the first U.S. carrier designed to carry thermonuclear weapons and the only carrier at the time allowed to transport the H-bomb.

The indication seems to be then that the presence of the F. D. Roosevelt was not accidental, and that, on the contrary, the carrier had a specific mission.

THE CRITICS

Although this is an interesting case, it is practically unknown outside Spain, where it has been the object of considerable controversy. The main detractor of the incident is Valencian writer *Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos* who, not having proper scientific credentials, requested the help of two well-known debunkers: i) *Manuel Borraz Aymerich*, an engineer and ii) *Javier E. Armentia*, an astrophysicist who is the director of the Pamplona Planetarium, and whose criticisms have been already mentioned in the text.

As for Ballester Olmos, for reasons known only to him, apparently he is unable to accept the impossibility of the Venusian interpretation; and in a new attempt to shore it up, he prepared a special questionnaire for Colonel Gea Durán, the only surviving witness of the sighting. The

questionnaire was very carefully worded, as its purpose was to obtain statements from the Colonel favoring the Venusian hypothesis, and a copy of the same map that appears here was attached, although with minor modifications. The questionnaire is rather lengthy and it will serve no point to translate it *in toto* as the first question already sets the tone and reveals the intentions of the author:

Q) While observing the light, did you see on the horizon any other bright point?

A) It was a clear night, with good visibility. (The light) was not comparable with the light of the stars (bluish, bright and distant) nor like a ground focus of light (yellow-whitish, distant). During the whole observation the impression was like the lights of a nearby aircraft with the landing lights on.

Ballester's idea was good: if an anomalous object was near Venus' position, both would have been observed at the same time, and the proper answer should be yes. But this is not quite correct, because as shown on the map, the unknown would have been prominent in the foreground and Venus, at the horizon, could not have competed in brightness with it. But it is noteworthy how skillfully the Colonel avoided the trap without changing his narrative. In fact, at the end of the document, the Colonel categorically states:

Not having had in my life any other experience with the UFO phenomenon, I affirm and ratify what I expressed at the time.

114 / UNICAT Project

The other answers to the questionnaire add only a couple of details: (i) that the object was perceived at between 10 and 11 'clock with respect to the plane; and (ii) that from position B on the map the object departed very rapidly (in tens of seconds) toward the land, disappearing in the same direction.

Again, even if the arguments offered in the text were not sufficient, the replies in the questionnaire only verify --and this time from the perspective of the witnesses-- that whatever the object was, it could not have been Venus.

Ballester's obsession with the Venusian explanation never ceases to amaze me, as in the past I considered him a serious researcher ready to accept a fact contrary to his personal opinions. No longer, as in the cover letter circulated with the copy of the questionnaire, he concludes (emphasis added):

(The replies in the questionnaire) confirm that the primary observation was caused by Venus. I have the moral certitude that such is the case, and hence I declare the investigation of the case closed.

Moral certitude has nothing to do with science, and the statement clearly indicates that Ballester Olmos, former ufologist turned debunker, never bothered to read and understand the arguments that demonstrate the impossibility of what he maintains. It is too bad, because a true scientist must at all times humbly keep an open mind and allow the new facts to speak to him, even if the knowledge jeopardizes his pet theories.

CONCLUSIONS

In the ultimate analysis, three and only three alternatives exist to explain the incident

(I) The pilots *were deluded* and the stimulus was the planet Venus, as claimed by Ballester *et al.*

(II) The pilots *deluded us*. It was a fabrication by the witnesses, who needed some excuse to cover a real or imaginary transgression, such as starting the descent without clearance.

(III) It was a real but unidentified object.

In spite of the determined efforts of the debunkers, the Venusian hypothesis (I) has been proven to be untenable. Not only the details do not fit, but the distance of 4 NM remains a challenge, unless one is prepared to admit that the pilots were grossly incompetent, or lying. This is what the critics have in fact implied by dismissing the problem of the distance as irrelevant.

Which brings us to the second option, (II). Again, it implies that, for whatever reasons, the witnesses lied, which in view of the professional accomplishments of the surviving pilot is hardly believable. True, the records state that the descent was initiated before reaching the prescribed distance of 35 NM, but this hardly seems enough reason to create a fable that would haunt the pilots for life.

We are then left with option (III): the pilots had an encounter with something foreign to their experience, something brightly illuminated that they could not readily identify and that they could not shake.

The controversy started at this point. For some believers, it was definitely a UFO, one more among many of the unexplained encounters which clutter the official files of the air forces of the world. But the debunkers, specially those whose battle cry is "*les OVNI n'existent pas*", knew better. And since it is almost always possible to find a bright star or a friendly planet in a convenient position, they targeted Venus as the culprit. Never mind

116 / UNICAT Project

that it was only a dot on the horizon, very likely invisible in the haze. And who cares if the object was only 4 NM from the plane? The only thing that they had to do, and did, was to muddle the data a little bit, and presto, Venus would do.

It seems to me that neither the believers nor the debunkers read the official documents with enough care. Had they done so, they could not have failed to notice the following:

A) A brightly illuminated object was detected at a distance of 4 NM, a value accepted by the air force commander who investigated the case, and reiterated by the witness in Ballester's questionnaire.

B) The intensity of the light prevented seeing structural details and the object was compared to aircraft landing lights.

C) It performed definite maneuvers, partially verified by radar. When a trajectory is plotted on the map, it is quite compatible with a nearby moving unknown, but not with a fixed planet on the horizon.

D) At the end point of the observation the ground control radar had a ghost blip that rapidly moved away.

E) An American carrier with a record of UFO encounters in the past and unusual transporting capabilities was in the area, and a warning of the presence of its planes was issued for the specific day and time.

SPECULATIVE EXPLANATION

Based on the above data, we dare to advance a novel explanation. Although it is in agreement with the data listed above, and seems to explain the behavior of interested parties, we must consider it

as only speculative as we don't have yet indisputable documented evidence.

What the pilots saw was a test of an American experimental advanced plane with powerful landing lights on, not only to warn other traffic in the vicinity of its presence but also to prevent a clear view by possible snooping witnesses.

The date of the incident (1973) is not incompatible with the projected development of stealth technology, and although the ghost image noticed at the end of the encounter could be attributed to the poor quality of the Spanish radar equipment, more likely it could have resulted from a failure of the setup in the American plane.

We can theorize that what happened was the following: the American plane, either by design or by accident, approached the MIRAGE, paralleled its heading, and broke the engagement off after obtaining visual confirmation. It then used its superior speed to move away very rapidly. The bright landing lights prevented the Spanish pilots from describing details of the craft.

DISCUSSION

The indifference of the official investigator, as well as his reluctance to leave a paper trail exonerating Venus, is then understandable. For if proof was offered that it was NOT Venus, it had to be something else, and that would place everybody in a difficult position: the debunkers, because it could have been a UFO; the Air Force, because they would have to admit that with their knowledge and consent a test was conducted over Spanish territory by Americans.

Ballester's apparent obsession with ascribing the sighting to Venus is also explained, as he is only attempting to please the Air Force which has provided him with materials for his books

118 / UNICAT Project

(Ballester, 1995). His choice of debunkers as friends and collaborators also makes sense, as indeed it is the best way to guarantee that all the cases in the Spanish Air Force files --or at least those made public-- will find a suitable conventional explanation.

Also it is very likely that the only surviving witness of the Manises sighting, Colonel Antonio Gea Durán, was informed of the truth at the proper time, and his specific incriminating answers to Ballester's questionnaire were carefully evaluated by the powers that be.

There was no craft from a distant world involved in this sighting, nor is it possible to pin it down on Venus, the planet of love. At this point, to close not only the case but the book, something that Dr. Hynek used to say comes to my mind as an appropriate ending:

**HEW TO THE LINE OF RIGHT AND LET
THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY.**

REFERENCES

1. Armentia, Javier E.; *Comentarios (breves) al ADENDUM al caso 730926 por el Dr. Willy Smith*, 1993. Private communication.
2. Ballester Olmos, V. J.; **EXPEDIENTES INSÓLITOS**, Ediciones *Temas de Hoy*, Madrid, 1995, 286 pp.
3. Benítez, J. J.; **DOCUMENTOS OFICIALES DEL GOBIERNO ESPAÑOL**, Plaza y Janés, 1977, p. 147.
4. Borraz, Manuel; Private Communication dated August 1993.
5. **Cuadernos de Ufología**, 2a. época, No. 13, 1992, p. 4.
6. Report by Capt. Antonio Gea Durán, dated at Manises on September 27, 1973. Complete translation in the text.
7. **Incident Report** dated at Manises AFB on November 7, 1973. Información instruída por el Comandante del Arma de Aviación (S.V.) Don Manuel Olmos Pérez (assumed name) en relación con la aparición de un extraño objeto luminoso observado por los Capitanes del Arma de Aviación Don Marco A. García Gea y Don Antonio Gea Durán cuando realizaban un vuelo nocturno el día 26 de Septiembre de 1973.
8. Vallée, Jacques; **ANATOMY OF A PHENOMENON**, Regnery, 1965, paperback, p. 101.

NOTE 1. THE MIRAGE AIRPLANE.

The aircraft involved in this incident was a MIRAGE III DE, where the designation indicates that it is a two-seater training airplane having the following specifications:

Service ceiling	55,775 ft at MACH 1.8
Cruise speed	MACH 0.9 at 36,000 ft
Speed in level flight	750 knots
Penetration speed	183 knots
Landing speed	157 knots

NOTE 2. AIRCRAFT CARRIER FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

In addition to the incident during "Operation Mainbrace" mentioned in the text, the incidents include *inter alia* a multiple-witness sighting at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 26, 1956; a sighting in September, 1958 in the Bermuda Triangle area near Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, as well as a previous incident in the Mediterranean in 1953.

POSTSCRIPT

To conclude this work, it is appropriate to present here outlines of the incidents discussed and to draw some general conclusions.

CASE NO. 1

Two pilots on a routine mission saw an unidentified object in broad daylight at a relatively short distance. The analysis of the information shows that the explanation selected by the Air Force, namely "**balloon**", is untenable. The amazing characteristic is that the official emphasis was on finding how the case had been leaked to the press, rather than on establishing the stimulus of the sighting, which remains **unknown**.

CASE NO. 2

Following the radar detection of an unknown, a jet fighter with a crew of two was scrambled and obtained two distinct, although brief, visual contacts with the target. The time was just after sunset, with enough light remaining for direct observation. The official evaluation was "**possible balloon**" but the analysis shows this to be an unacceptable solution, and the cause remains **unknown**.

CASE NO. 3

Two similar incidents separated in time by only four days but happening in different countries

122 / UNICAT Project

are described. All the witnesses were Air Force personnel who were on the ground, but while for the Shreveport case the observer was a very experienced pilot, for the Canadian sighting at North Bay the witnesses were two noncommissioned officers, equally certain that they had seen an unknown. Perhaps due to the different qualifications of the witnesses, the official evaluations were quite divergent: "**unidentified**" and "**possible balloon**".

CASE NO. 4

A group of amateur astronomers engaged in observations at a suitable dark site on a university campus noticed four moving non-astronomical objects. Initially evaluated as "**unknown**" by the investigating Air Force officer, the case is now listed as "**birds**" in the Blue Book files.

CASE NO. 5

This encounter by two pilots with an unknown on a clear night was characterized by Capt. Ruppelt as *one of the cases that the project was unable to crack*. Yet, it appears listed as "**Astro (Vega)**" in the official files.

CASE NO. 6

The Blue Book files do not consider this a UFO incident, but rather a regular aviation accident. However, in light of recently found information, it is evident that we have once again a case in which the scrambling of a jet to intercept an unknown resulted in the disappearance of an aircraft and its two pilots. The sighting remains **unexplained**.

CASE NO. 7

A British commercial aircraft en route to London, while flying over Labrador, was

accompanied for about 20 minutes by three unidentified objects, which were clearly observed not only by the crew but by some passengers as well. The case is discussed by the Condon Report and listed there as "unexplained". On the other hand, the Air Force evaluated it as ASTRO (Mars), though the planet was in the opposite direction.

CASE NO. 8

This little-known incident occurred as a 1st Lieutenant of good reputation was driving across the desert just before sunrise. Instead of launching an in-depth investigation, the Air Force was more interested in defusing a potentially damaging case involving one of its own officers. Whether the episode was genuine or the product of the witness's imagination is not clear from the available information.

CASE NO. 9

This rather involved case was witnessed by the crews of several commercial airliners. The most remarkable development is the Air Force's attack on the reputation of the civilian pilot who had dared to pass the information to the press. The explanation finally selected and appearing now in the files, "Aircraft (Refuel. Opr)", is a physical impossibility as concerns Capt. Killian's plane

CASE NO. 10

Separated in time by 22 years and by a geographical distance of several thousand miles, this incident has an uncanny similarity with case No. 1. Two Spanish military pilots returning to base just after sunset had an encounter with an unidentified object which approached as close as 4 nautical miles. As in the American case, the incident was investigated by the corresponding Spanish Air Force officer, and the tentative evaluation attributes the event to the planet

124 / UNICAT Project

Venus. Surprisingly, more than twenty years later, when the case was submitted to civilian investigators, the Venus explanation was vigorously supported --mostly with tendentious arguments-- even though the analysis shows it to be an unacceptable solution. As in the American case, the cause of the incident remains **unknown**, although some speculative options have been offered.

In an overall view, the incidents selected range from well-known to obscure cases, and their putative explanations also vary from an almost certain hoax to incidents that remain totally unexplained in spite of the efforts of debunkers and skeptics.

Typically, the Air Force demonstrated an uncanny knack to select from a panoply of possibilities the explanation less likely to be true. No uniform evaluation criteria are perceived, as often enough radically different solutions are listed for totally similar incidents. The cases are well investigated, but the evaluation recorded on the case card does not always agree with the information detailed in the files, and was easily changed years after the fact by simply preparing a new card. This confirms that the main interest of the Air Force was to find an explanation, any explanation, appropriate or not, and often contrary to the evidence but in line with the official position. Interestingly enough, the Spanish Air Force seems to have the same viewpoint, and that is precisely one of the reasons why case No. 10. was included.

Two conclusions can be tentatively considered:

(1) In his book **THE UFO EXPERIENCE** Dr. J. Allen Hynek wrote the following definition of the problem that concerns us:

We can define the (term) UFO simply as the reported perception of an object or light seen in the sky or upon the land the appearance, trajectory, and general dynamics and luminescent behavior of which do not suggest a logical, conventional explanation and which is not only mystifying to the original percipients but remains unidentified after close scrutiny of all available evidence by persons who are technically capable of making a common sense identification, if one is possible.

The existence of the UFO phenomenon has been once again firmly established. The futility of the debunkers' efforts to prove the nonexistence of the UFO phenomenon on a case-by-case basis, without offering a rational hypothesis, becomes quite evident, and indicates their lack of a legitimate scientific approach.

(2) On the other hand, nothing in the collected evidence even hints at the provenance of the observed anomalies, and to talk about "*aliens*" and "*extraterrestrials*" is gratuitous and premature.

Dr. Willy Smith
© UNICAT Project
January, 1997

APPENDIX

THE UNICAT PROJECT

BASIC CONCEPTS

The UNICAT Project was started in 1984 by Dr. J. Allen Hynek and the author with the specific purpose of proving in a manner acceptable to the scientific establishment that the UFO phenomenon is not only real, but deserving of serious consideration.

Starting with a precise definition of the UFO phenomenon (as stated by Dr. Hynek in **THE UFO EXPERIENCE** and elsewhere), we proceeded to systematically collect a representative sample of the items to be studied, i.e., high-quality UFO cases. The information was then entered in a database specifically designed for this application, with full access to any of the 250+ fields included in its format; thus, this is not a mere catalog or listing of cases with coded sequential entries, like UFOCAT and many others existing in the past.

Criteria for the selection of the cases to be included in the data base had to be established, not only to eliminate IFOs as much as possible, but to insure a properly representative sample. Those criteria are rather stringent and too complex to be detailed here, but require among other things multiple witnesses, additional supporting evidence (such as physical traces), and the existence of a written report on which to base the analysis. It must be emphasized that the conditions are *necessary but not sufficient*, and do not guarantee that the cases satisfying them will be automatically

added to the database. Cases that do not meet the criteria are stored in a second database named **MAYBECAT**.

The second step was to identify those repeatable characteristics appearing in the UFO reports (the parameters) and design the database on their terms -- not an easy proposition, as we do not really know a priori which properties are significant and which are not.

When a case is considered for inclusion in **UNICAT**, all the information available --which may include an investigation report and one or more references in the literature-- is examined, and the parameters appropriate to the sighting are identified. In fact, what we do is to reduce the sighting to bits of information represented by the parameters, which after being entered into the computer are amenable to electronic retrieval and manipulation. This also makes **UNICAT** different from any previous attempts to computerize UFO incidents, as each field is directly accessible and corrections can be effected instantly if necessary when and if new information becomes available. We express this feature by stating that **UNICAT** is a *dynamic data base*.

EVALUATION

After a specific sighting has been accepted for **UNICAT**, a very important step is to establish its scientific value, a difficulty which frequently has been ignored in the past, when more often than not all the cases appearing in a catalog were treated on an equal footing in developing statistical conclusions.

As Dr. Hynek used to say, our study of the UFO phenomenon is based only on UFO reports, and thus it is edifying to recall how those reports are generated. The witness has the UFO experience, which impresses him as strange enough to

128 / UNICAT Project

communicate it to others. Eventually, the witness and the investigator get together, and the latter obtains information from the former, which is conveyed by the report. If the investigator is worth his salt, he also would consider other external elements, like the state of the weather, or the possibility of conventional explanations.

As conceived and implemented in UNICAT, the evaluation process is based on at least six elements. The first element to be considered is the witness, as he was prior to the incident: education, occupation, age, among other things that could have a bearing on his telling the truth, as for example, what he has to gain or lose by lying. He is then graded A, B or C, on what some people would consider to be a simplistic scale. Perhaps so, but in the great majority of the cases, to attempt a finer division is illusory as the information simply is not there.

The second item addresses the investigator/investigation, an aspect that has been grossly neglected in the past and is seriously deficient in the routine field investigations performed by untrained persons. Some attempts have been made to use the time spent by the investigator with the witness as a gauge of the quality of the investigation, clearly an incorrect approach as it neglects many important factors, such as the experience and competence of the investigator and the time elapsed since the incident. At any rate, in the UNICAT scheme of things, this is graded also A, B or C.

Now, the report will have accumulated a certain amount of information, which can be divided into two types: the *basic identifying information*, like date, place, number of witnesses, UFO type, duration, references, etc., without which we wouldn't even have a case. And then, the *bits of specific information* as determined by the number

of parameters that the analysis has shown apply to the case.

While the evaluation of observer and investigator is to some extent subjective, the amount of information is objective as it is determined by the number of parameters identified for the case. Based on that number, a third letter is assigned, as before, A, B or C.

After the case has been entered into the data base, we proceed to assess two more aspects. The first is **STRANGENESS**, which can be determined by the presence (or absence) of certain parameters. The thing to do, then, is to establish a scale of strangeness (ranging from 1 to 9) based on the parameters, and the computer will assign a strangeness value S to each case.

This is a tricky point and gives me an uneasy feeling when I see the word "*strangeness*" carelessly used in articles published in the ufological literature. I have worked on this for quite a while, attempting to improve the criteria used to determine strangeness, but I consider that we still have a way to go.

The final aspect refers to how much we can believe that things have occurred as described by the witnesses. This has been referred to in the literature as "*credibility*", but I am reluctant to use such a term, which has connotations as to the truthfulness of the witness. Other factors are equally important, some of them independent of the witness himself, such as weather, light conditions and relative distance to the UFO, which contribute to increasing the verisimilitude of the incident. And of course, also significant are surrounding circumstances, like physical traces, or even police intervention, which in some countries is of crucial importance in view of the possible consequences for the witness.

130 / UNICAT Project

For those and other reasons, I have assigned the name **WEIGHT** to the parameter (again ranging from 1 to 9) assessing the confidence we can place in an incident. Contrary to the situation with **STRANGENESS**, I feel that the concept of **WEIGHT** has been properly developed and implemented. Parenthetically, the assessment of UFO cases using **S** and **W** was pioneered by Dr. Hynek in his book **THE UFO EVIDENCE**.

The determination of **S** and **W** is of consequence for the selection process, as it may determine the wisdom of keeping or rejecting a case considered marginal from other viewpoints. This is another dynamic characteristic of **UNICAT**.

PRESENT STATUS

At present the **UNICAT** data base has about 825 cases, and each entry may contain up to about 6000 bytes of information which can be retrieved and correlated in an extremely large number of ways. As for **MAYBECAT**, it has also grown and now has nearly 1900 entries, of which about 8% are marked **PEN** (pending), in the hope of obtaining enough additional information to upgrade them to **UNICAT**.

We are convinced that nowhere in the world is there a source of information about the UFO phenomenon like the **UNICAT** data base. It is my belief that the answer to the problem of the true nature of UFOs is already embedded there, and that all we need to do is to come forward with the appropriate queries.

INDEX

A

Air Force

- 39th Air Police Sq. • 45
- 433rd Fighter-Interceptor Sq. • 50
- 97th Fighter-Interceptor Sq. • 72

Aircraft

- B-47 • 88
- Boeing 737 • 107
- Boeing Stratocruiser • 63
- C-47 • 43, 52
- DC-6B • 85
- F-89C • 55, 59
- F-94 • 13, 63
- KC-97 tanker • 86
- Lockheed T-33 • 3
- Mirage III DE • 101, 120
- Aurelio, Dick • 7

B

- Ballard, Edward • 3
- Barron, John Barnard • 7
- Bermuda Triangle • 120
- bird period • 31
- Blue Book files • 1
- Blue Book Project • 43
- BOAC • 64
- Boston Globe • 7
- Branta canadensis* • 40

C

- Capt. Killian's case • 86
- Capt. Yates • 90
- Chapman, Ralph • 91
- Condon Report • 66
- Cramer, Capt. E. S. • 43

132 / UNICAT Project

D

Dates

- April 16, 1952 • 25
- Feb. 16, 1953 • 43
- Feb. 17, 1953 • 45
- Feb. 24, 1959 • 85
- June 29, 1954 • 63
- March 22, 1952 • 13
- May 13, 1952 • 32
- Nov. 23, 1953 • 50
- Nov. 23, 1957 • 71
- Oct. 10, 1978 • 50
- Oct. 21, 1978 • 57
- Sept. 10, 1951 • 3
- debunkers • 115

F

- F. D. Roosevelt carrier • 111
- Fitts, Dr. Paul M. • 77
- Flight 139, AA • 88
- Friend, Capt. Robert • 53
- Fuhr, Edwin • 81
- Furman University • 32

G

- Gandía, Spain • 107
- García Gea, Capt. M. A. • 99
- Gea Durán, Capt. A. • 99, 112
- Gregory, Capt. G. T. • 55, 71

H

- Harrisburg, Planetarium • 38
- Holmes, Sherlock • 49
- Howard, Capt. James • 65

I

Investigators

- Aldrich, J. L. • 50
- Armentia, Javier E. • 106
- Ballester, V.J. • 82, 100, 112
- Benítez, J. J. • 97, 100
- Borraz, Manuel • 108

Chalker, W. C. • 81
Clark, Jerome • 55
Fowler, R. E. • 35
Good, Timothy • 65
Gross, Loren E. • 10, 27, 45, 52
Haines, R. F. • 57, 88
Hall, R. H. • 52
Hynek, J. Allen • 28, 31, 71, 72, 118, 124
Keyhoe, Donald E. • 49, 56
Long, Greg • 23
McDonald, James • 3, 80
Menzel, Donald H. • 2, 9, 49, 51, 86, 93
Norman, Paul • 58
Randle, Kevin D. • 31
Robertson, Phillip • 23
Ruppelt, E. J. • 5, 29, 43, 47
Seers, Stan • 81
Vallée, Jacques • 71, 112

J

Joyal, Capt. Wilfred N. • 14

K

Killian, Capt. Peter W. • 85

L

Lemon, Major J. H. • 43
Long, 1st Lt. J. F. • 72

M

MAGONIA • 71
MAJESTIC-12 • 53
Manises AFB • 100
McCoy, Paul L. • 8
Meador, Col. John W. • 75
Moncla, 1st Lt. Felix E. • 50
Monnerie, Michel • 9
M---s, Capt. E. • 27

N

NEWSDAY • 7

134 / UNICAT Project

O

Operation Mainbrace • 112

P

Palmer, 1st Lt. Arthur • 34

Pamplona Planetarium • 106

Pedley, George • 81

Peebles, Curtis • 9

Places

Akron, OH • 90

Anchorage, AK • 44

Balmer, NJ • 5

Barksdale AFB • 27

Bradford, PA • 87

Dover, DE • 3

Elmendorf AFB, AK • 44

Fargo, ND (520425) • 31

Fire Island, Alaska • 43

Flint, MI (520420) • 31

Freehold, NJ • 4

Greenville, SC • 32

Keeweenaw Point, MI • 55

Kinross (Lake Superior) • 49

Lake Superior • 52

Lubbock, TX (510825) • 31

McChord AFB • 19

Mitchell AFB, NY. • 3

Monmouth, NJ • 3

North Bay, Canada. • 28

Pittsburgh, PA • 88

Point Pleasant, NJ • 4

Red Bank, NJ • 4

Reno, NV • 72

Sandusky, OH • 92

Sandy Hook, NJ • 4

Selfridge AFB. MI • 92

Seven Islands, QUE • 63

Shreveport, LA • 25

Soo Locks area • 55

Stead AFB, NV • 72

Sudbury, Ontario • 52

Tonopah, NV • 71

Tremonton, UT (520702) • 31

Truax AFB, WI • 56

Tully, Australia • 81

Valencia, Spain • 97
Williamsport, PA • 85
Winnipeg, Manitoba • 52
Yakima, WA. • 13
Youngstown, OH • 90
Project GRUDGE • 14

Q

Quintanilla, Major H. • 46

R

refueling mission • 86
Richardson, James • 32
road hypnosis • 77
Rogers, Wilbert S. • 3
Rosengarten, N. R. • 8
Royal Canadian AF • 52

S

Saturn • 39
Scott, C. P. • 85
Scott, Sir Walter • 63
Spanish Air Force • 100
STRANGENESS • 129
Stuart, Douglas A. • 55
Susquehanna River • 39

T

Tessier, Major Jesse H. • 26
Thayer, G. D. • 67
TRUE Magazine • 43
TWA flight 800 • 57

U

UFO EVIDENCE. • 130
UNICAT Project • 126

V

Valentich, Frederick • 57
VEGA, Astro • 46

136 / UNICAT Project

Venus • 104

Venusian hypothesis • 103

W

WEIGHT • 130

Wilson, 2nd Lt. Robert R. • 50

Wilson, Capt. Ralph T. • 14

Y

Young, Robert R. • 38

* * * * *

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Willy Smith received his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. After working one year at the Atomic Energy Commission Facility in Puerto Rico, he devoted the rest of his professional career to education, and taught physics at the University of Michigan and at Lycoming College in the United States, and at the University of Valencia in Spain.

He finally decided, in 1980, to abandon all his other activities and devote himself full-time to the study of the UFO phenomena. At the end of 1983 he initiated, together with Dr. J. Allen Hynek, the UNICAT Project, initially conceived as a data base of high-quality UFO cases. In time, the project expanded into a full-fledged research activity and presently has numerous collaborators and associates all over the world.

Through his international contacts, and his work with the UNICAT data base, he has acquired an intimate knowledge of present-day ufology in the United States and abroad. He has traveled extensively in Latin America, lecturing in many countries, particularly Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Ecuador. In November, 1990, he visited Australia and Tasmania, and in October, 1991 he lectured in Santander, Spain. He has more than eighty papers published in journals and magazines in the United States, England, France, Spain, Germany, Australia and Argentina. After the death of Dr. Hynek he assumed full responsibility for the UNICAT Project, which is essentially an independent research organization.

(14101)

Additional copies of this work can be obtained at regular bookstores and from specialized distributors, or directly from the author by sending a check for \$17.00 (S&H included) to:

Dr. Willy Smith
8011 SW 189th. Street
Miami, FL, 33157,
USA

The Blue Book Project of the US Air Force collected information about UFOs from 1947 to 1969. During those years a total of about 13,000 incidents were reported and evaluated by Project Blue Book. The official position was, and still is, that the UFO phenomenon does not exist. In spite of efforts to reduce the number of unknowns, the files contain a large number of cases which remain unexplained. The Project Blue Book evaluations of these cases are in many cases contrived and often unrelated to the data contained in the dossiers.

Most of the cases analyzed in this book refer to interactions of pilots and unidentified flying objects and all but one are taken from the Blue Book Project microfilm files. Some of the incidents have never been published, and the collection provides a good sample of how the UFO phenomenon was handled by the United States Air Force.

The official files of the Spanish Air Force are the source for the additional incident, which illustrates that the USAF is not alone in its futile attempts to dismiss the UFO phenomenon as irrelevant.

About the author: Dr. Smith earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, and after many years dedicated to teaching physics at universities in the United States and Europe, he now devotes most of his time to the study of the UFO phenomenon, whose reality he considers indisputable.

\$12.95