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*'Metallic balloon, flattened on two sides'*

# UFO sighted near Norton taxiway

By JOHN WHITEHAIR

Sun Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — An unidentified flying object flew close to the observation tower at Norton Air Force Base Sunday night, hovered near a taxiway then lifted off and disappeared over the San Bernardino Mountains, a base spokesman said Monday.

Two airmen on duty in the tower spotted the object about 9 p.m. and several Highland residents called the Sheriff's Office to report they also had spotted it headed toward the mountains.

The tower operators described the object to base information officer Capt. Phillip Ratliff as "sort of a metallic balloon that had been flattened on two sides."

They said it appeared to be about three feet in diameter, was of a metallic color and did not emit any light. It reflected bright

lights in the base maintenance area, the spokesman said.

There were small dots on one of the flat sides, one tower operator said.

The object was first seen about 60 feet west of the tower and 100 feet above the six-story structure.

It appeared to land or hover a few feet above a grassy area near a taxiway, then lifted off and accelerated northeast toward the Mountain Shadows area, the tower operators said.

The two unidentified tower operators said they followed the object for about 10 minutes through their binoculars as it traveled 30 to 40 miles per hour, faster than the wind was blowing at the time.

The Sheriff's Department received about six telephone calls from Highland and Mountain Shadows area residents "who were pretty excited about it," a sheriff's

spokesman said.

Residents there reported it was flying in a straight line about 200 or 300 feet high.

One of the sheriff's helicopters flew into the area about an hour later but neither the pilot nor observer saw it, a sheriff's spokesman said.

"The pilot wanted to go find it and the observer said 'no way'," the spokesman said.

The object did not show up on any electronic guidance systems in the Norton tower, Ratliff said.

A Federal Aviation Administration spokesman at Ontario International Airport said the object was not picked up on any of its radar screens but "that doesn't mean it wasn't there."

Although there were three persons in the tower, the other operator was busy with an airplane flight and did not see it, Ratliff said.