

To date, the Air Force has substantially investigated and analyzed about 100 reports dealing with these phenomena. As before, most of the reports were identified and disposed of as friendly aircraft erroneously reported, known aircraft and meteorological phenomena, light aberrations, mirages, and other known natural occurrences or man-made objects.

The unexplained reports, however, which are in the order of 10 percent of the total, cannot be definitely associated with these familiar things.

Particulars of Unexplained Reports

The difficulty in disposing of these unexplained reports is based largely upon the insufficiency of available basic data such as time, shape, composition, and flight characteristics (speed, acceleration, altitude, exact maneuver patterns, etc.) of the objects.

Although some instruments which are used in obtaining more accurate data of this type have been available, the reports based on sightings with these instruments have been very infrequent and comprise an extremely small percentage of the total. However, even these reports have not included much of the information required.

Because of the inadequacy of this basic data, the Air Force has in the past devoted its efforts primarily to determining whether these unexplained sightings indicated the existence of a threat to the United States. Initially it was believed that some pattern might evolve from the study of a large volume of reports. To date, no pattern has materialized in regard to sighting characteristics which can be interpreted as indicative of purpose or tendency for which one is justified as a menace to the United States. Nonetheless, since these unexplained sightings persist, the Air Force will continue the investigation, giving the problem adequate but not frantic attention.

It is now felt, however, that reports from people whose training and experience in observing optical objects qualify them to obtain essential data are the only ones likely to produce material suitable for systematic analysis. The Air Force is planning to provide additional tools to help these observers obtain the basic data it needs.

Reports of similar phenomena as far back as Biblical times. There have been flurries of them in various centuries. The current spate of sightings began generally in 1944.

There are many reasons why the volume of these sightings has increased materially during the past few years. Increased activity originated by men has increased, and people today have a greater curiosity about unidentified things. Also, our present efficient communication facilities and news media provide an incentive for reporting unusual observations, for publicizing them and for recording them. However, the ability to measure these phenomena does not seem to have advanced in step with opportunities for observing them. The Air Force believes that some of these phenomena will gradually be understood as more is known about occurrences in the upper atmosphere.