

STATUS OF RESEARCH

The majority of reports of aerial phenomena have come from civilians. About 8 percent came from well qualified pilots, while approximately 62 percent are reported by military personnel. Reports have been received also from highly qualified scientists. Although primary significance is attached to reports from qualified observers, there is no intention to disregard untrained observers.

Radar Sightings

The Air Force has received many reports of unusual objects in radar scope. It is felt that well established that some of these objects are ground objects reflected from a layer of warm air above the earth (a temperature inversion).

Temperature inversion reflections can give a return on a radar scope that is as sharp as that received from an aircraft. Speed changes of these returns are reportedly from zero to supersonic speeds. The "objects" also appear to move in all directions.

Such radar sightings have resulted in hundreds of fruitless intercept efforts.

One scientific theory holds that light can be similarly reflected from a layer of warm air above the earth and, if proven to be correct, this could account for some visual sightings.

Bearing out the theory of temperature inversion reflections is an incident which occurred in January 1951 near Delaware, Delaware. The Air Force aircraft attempted to intercept an unidentified "object" and actually established a radar "lock" on the object. Their altitude at the time was 1,000 feet. The unidentified object, according to their notes, appeared to be at an elevation of 100 to 25 degrees. Three passes were made in an attempt to "close" on the object. In each instance the pilots reported that their radar led them first upward and then down toward a specific point on the ground.

Unaided clouds are believed to be the cause of some unidentified radar returns. Thunderstorm activity is identified by radar, and plans to use for the purpose of deciding thunderstorms. In addition, radar has picked up many objects first reported as "unidentified phenomena" which were later identified as aircraft, birds, balloons, ice formations in the air, or other known aerial objects or manifestations.

Policy Regarding Attempted Interceptions

No orders have been issued by the Air Defense Command to its fighter units to fire on unidentified aerial phenomena. The Air Defense Command is alerted with our defense of the United States, and its mission is to attack anything airborne which is shown or appears to be hostile. This should not be interpreted to mean that our pilots will fire automatically on anything that flies.

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