

Engineering Division
Memorandum Report No. 10000-001-002
26 April 1966

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These conditions are largely lacking in the case of the data available on unidentified flying objects. It is impossible to say with any assurance what any particular individual in this series of EIR reports was actually observing at any particular time. It is only possible to examine the accumulation of available evidence or the apprehension of all reports of a given class (e.g., all reports from supposedly expert observers) and to consider them in a statistical sense. If certain characteristics appear repeatedly in reports from different people it may be possible to infer causal factors.

It will never be possible, on the other hand, to say with certainty that any given observer could not have seen a space ship or an enemy missile, or some other object. It will only be possible to estimate the probability that he could have seen such things.

The principal hypothesis to be examined in the following discussion is that reports of unidentified flying objects have the characteristics that would be expected if they were cases of failures, on the part of typical normal individuals, to identify sources of familiar phenomena.

Possible Sources of Inaccurate Reports of Flying Objects

There are three broad classes of mistakes in human observations. These are the following: 1. Misinterpreting the nature of real stimuli, 2. Mistaking unreal (imaginary) stimuli for real ones, and 3. Subsequent misclassifications. Each of these are considered briefly below.

(1) Errors in Identifying Real Stimuli. All normal, intelligent people experience certain errors of observation. The moon appears much larger on the horizon than when it is high in the sky. A stick looks bent when one end is in water. Distant objects appear relatively closer in clear, desert atmosphere. A small point source of light, if viewed in a dark room, will appear to move about in

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UNCLASSIFIED
EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC
DOWNGRADING AND
DECLASSIFICATION

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