

Incident No. 55 -- 1 August 1947, Soviet, near Bethel, Alaska.

A pilot and his copilot observed a black object of the design and approximate dimensions of a B-24, heading, flying at 300-350 ft altitude. The object crossed their path at right angles, and they picked up to 1200 ft to avoid a collision, then crossed it at 300, less than eight ft in four seconds. They estimated the speed of the object to be three times their own, or 900 mph. Assuming the estimate of speed to be correct, elementary calculation shows the distance object traveled as 31 miles in four seconds while the observer's airplane moved eleven miles in the same period. Therefore, the object was more than twenty miles distant when last seen. To be capable of being seen at this distance under the conditions given, the object would have to be about 50 feet in its smallest or end-on dimension. If this were true, and the object was proportionate with a B-24, that is, the length would be about 300 ft. Assuming the estimate of speed to be incorrect, but that it might be correct, the problem is to find its proper, being at a reasonable width is 60 ft. In this event the object would have been seen when ten miles away when last sighted, therefore, it would have traveled about eighteen miles in four seconds, making a speed of less than 300 mph.

Air Qualities. It is believed that the pilots were suddenly startled by a commotion at Bethel airport creating their path, and that as they gave chase to the aircraft which was "tailhoisted against a brilliant evening sky" they were partially blinded, and were therefore unable to discern shape or design.

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