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## A Redstone over Virginia

In July 1954 the pattern of sightings in the Shenandoah Valley reappeared but, fortunately, without the same tragic outcome. After each Skyhook launch, a flood of WFO sightings came in in ATIC from towns that lay under the path of the balloon. The Skyhook project sometimes was able to relocate a "hot" balloon following newspaper reports of being seen.

In the summer of 1948 the existence of giant balloons was no longer classified information. When on June 13 an unidentified flying object appeared over central western Virginia and followed a course that closely resembled that of the MAJOR UFO, Air Force investigators assigned the pattern and began looking for a balloon as the probable explanation. The reports were as follows (x, p. 147):

3:40 P.M., Unionville, Virginia. Very shiny object sighted at high altitude.

4:00 P.M., Goodmanville, Virginia. Round, shiny object sighted in the southeast.

4:05 P.M., south of Endowment, Virginia. A silver sphere sighted at eleven o'clock high.

4:43 P.M., south of Goodmanville, Virginia. Jet pilot sighted and tried to intercept a small, shiny sphere.

5:43 P.M., south of Goodmanville. An Air Force jet pilot sighted and tried to intercept a shiny sphere, at 35,000 feet the object was still above him.

7:25 P.M., Blackstone, Virginia. A round, shiny object with a golden glow sighted, heading north.

7:55 P.M., radio station at Blackstone. Shiny object sighted.

8:00 P.M., Blackstone. Jet from Langley Air Force Base tried to intercept object.

8:00 P.M., object disappeared.

Investigators first of all checked with officials at Langley Air Force Base, which acted as a spotting station for all Skyhook balloons, but there were none in the East that day. Next they checked the possibility that the UFO had been a weather balloon, but nearby weather stations replied that none of their balloons could have been responsible for the sightings. After calling other stations within a 50-mile radius of Goodmanville with negative results, investigators called the weather station at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A radiosonde (a small balloon attached to an instrument for taking readings in the upper atmosphere) had been released that afternoon, but had been lost about sixty miles southeast of the station when it apparently sprung a slow leak and leveled off at 35,000 feet. The weather man at Pittsburgh offered to plot its probable course determined by the prevailing winds, and soon telephoned Dayton to report that the UFO was probably there balloon.

Southeast of Pittsburgh about 35,000 feet there was a strong current of air that fell into a troughs westerly stream flowing parallel to the Atlantic coast just east of the Appalachian Mountains. The balloon would have floated along in this current like a log floating down a river, and should have arrived in the neighborhood of Goodmanville and Blackstone in the late afternoon or early evening. The UFO had been sighted near Goodmanville between 4:43 and 5:43 P.M., and near Blackstone between 7:25 and 8:00 P.M. The substance was thus clearly identified as the hot balloons.