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General May 1952

Memorandum for Record

SUBJECT: Trip to George AFB on 20-23 May 1952

On 17 May 1952, Lt E. J. Ruppelt called Major Vincent Wolrath, Wing Intelligence Officer of the 46th Fighter Bomber Wing at George AFB, Calif. Major Wolrath stated that due to the recent flurry of sightings he deemed it very advisable to send someone from ATIC to George AFB. Lt Ruppelt had orders cut and departed by commercial air on 20 May 1952 arriving at George AFB late on the evening of the 20th.

On 21 May 1952, Lt Ruppelt contacted Major Wolrath who reviewed sightings on 11-12-13-14 and 20 May. Several of these sightings from a T-6, seemed to be repetitive and plans were made to attempt to observe the object on the afternoon of 21 May.

Lt Melzer, who had piloted the T-6, during previous observations was contacted. He offered to fly that P.M. and take Lt Ruppelt along as observer and to assist in setting up an observation team. Both the Ground Control Intercept (Radar) and Fighter Interceptor squadron of ADC were contacted and briefed on the sightings and plans to observe from a T-6. They agreed to stand by all afternoon on "D" channel of VHF in case the object was sighted. If it was, F-86's would be scrambled and radar would attempt a pick-up. A ground station and a ground observer team headed by Major Wolrath was equipped with a ground VHF set and would have a telescope to make ground observations from the George AFB line. Weather was alerted in case a theodolite was needed. All VHF sets were set up for "D" channel on a special frequency to keep the interception of messages to a minimum.

At 1330 PDST, the T-6 was airborne. Lt Ruppelt had a Lieca with a 135 mm telephoto lens in case photos could be taken. At 1430 PDST, the ground observation team called the T-6 and stated they were observing the object through a telescope and it appeared to be a balloon. Also it was identical to several of the previous reports as previous observers were on the ground watching. The aerial search was continued with no success and at 1440 PDST the object disappeared. The aerial search was broken off and the T-6 landed.

Lt Ruppelt contacted Edwards AFB and was informed that at 1438 PDST a Rawinsonde balloon from their station burst at 75,000'-80,000' SSE of their station (approximately over George AFB).

It was concluded that the object was this balloon.

On 22 May 1952, the entire day was spent interviewing sources of other sightings. It will be noted that although some of the reports were attributed to balloons, others could not be and are still being investigated.

Lt Ruppelt returned to W-P AFB on 23 May.

The cooperation received at George AFB was excellent.

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