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General Wing sightings

Memorandum for Record

SUBJECT: Trip to George AFB on 20-23 May 1954

On 17 May 1954, Lt E. J. Sappelt called Major Vincent Walrath, Wing Intelligence Officer of the 46th Fighter Squadron at George AFB, Calif. Major Walrath stated that due to the recent flurry of sightings he deemed it very advisable to send someone from ATCO to George AFB. Lt Sappelt had orders cut and departed by commercial air on 20 May 1954 arriving at George AFB late on the evening of the 20th.

On 21 May 1954, Lt Sappelt contacted Major Walrath who reviewed sightings on 100-11-14 and 20-21-54. General 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 assisted. He offered to fly that P.M. and take Lt Sappelt along as observer and to assist in setting up an observation team. Both the Ground Control Intercept (Radar) and Fighter Interceptor squadron of 46th 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-84's would be scrambled and radar would attempt a pick-up. A ground station and a ground observer team headed by Major Walrath was equipped with a ground VHF set and would have a telephone to make ground observations from the George AFB line. Weather was alerted in case a Goodolite 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 1130 PST, the T-6 was airborne. Lt Sappelt had a lens with a 135 mm telephoto lens in case photos could be taken. At 1130 PST, 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 1140 PST the object disappeared. The aerial search was broken off and the T-6 landed.

Lt Sappelt contacted Edwards AFB and was informed that at 1130 PST a Redwings balloon from their station burst at 75,000'-80,000' and their station (approximately over George AFB).

It was concluded that the object was this balloon.

On 22 May 1954, the entire day was spent interviewing witnesses 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 Sappelt returned to 2-F AFB on 23 May.

The cooperation received at George AFB was excellent.

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