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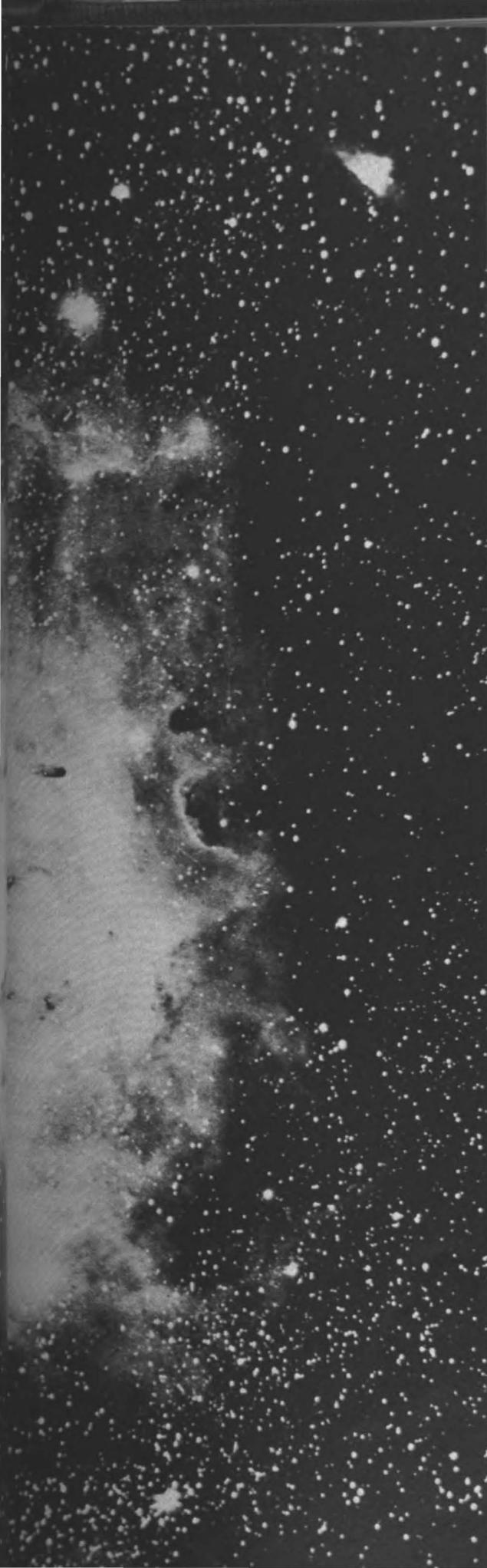
SEE PAGE 4

# WHAT DOES THE AIR FORCE REALLY KNOW ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS?

Here are the facts, backed by authentic statements from qualified people. You, however, must be the final judge of whether UFOs are fact or fiction.

by Maj. GEORGE W. OGLES  
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(Editor's Note: *The United States Air Force has never denied the possibility that some form of life may exist on other planets. Nor has it denied that there may exist a capability for interplanetary travel. The Air Force has only said that after 19 years of investigation and almost 11,108 reported sightings, it does not have a single photograph, film, graph or sample of any vehicle of unknown origin. Nor has it ever had.*

*These facts should be understood by every member of the Air Force. For this reason, THE AIRMAN asked Maj. George W. Ogles, presently assigned to the Community Relations Division, Office of Information, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, to prepare an article that simply "tells the truth about unidentified flying objects and what the US Air Force knows about them." He has done this admirably, and THE AIRMAN will present his article in two installments. This is the first).*

WHEN the number of unidentified flying object sightings reported to the United States Air Force during 1966 were finally tallied, the total came to 1,060, an increase of 173 over the 1965 total of 887.

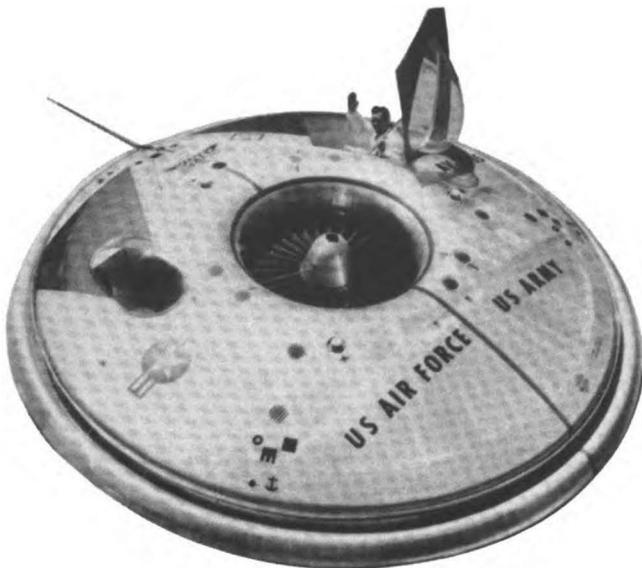
The figures were not surprising, because the trend has been rising steadily over the last four years. There were 399 reported sightings in 1963, and 562 in 1964. And indications are that there is little likelihood the number of flying saucer sightings will diminish. Flying saucer cartoons and jokes abound throughout the nation. Television has introduced several new flying saucer series. Scores of old and new movies are being shown about visitors from space. Newspapers, magazines and books contain reams of copy on the intriguing subject of flying saucers.

Small wonder that people ask, "What does the Air Force really know about flying saucers?" "Are they fact or fiction?" Small wonder, too, that the US Air Force has been taking it on the chin for several years, because it refuses to be stampeded into making statements that cannot be based on fact. For as a popular television star says, "All we want are the facts, sir. Just the facts."

Are flying saucers fact or fiction? What *does* the Air Force know about them? Read on, and then form your own judgments. Perhaps a good place to begin is with a letter Mr. B. F. Wood of Hollister, Mo., sent to Air Force headquarters about seven years ago.

"It happened right in front of our car just north of Amarillo, Tex., September 20, 1960," described Mr. Wood. "Jostling about in the 6 a.m. fog was what I thought to be a space ship from another planet. A pink-lighted dome had multicolored lights which danced around the outer edge of a disc. I could feel my blood pressure rise and was unable to make a decision as to what procedure or precaution to take as I did not know how many occupants I had to contend with.

"Then it happened," continued Mr. Wood. "I discovered the fog on this road was lifting and I could make out the terrible error I had made. The space ship was a jeep with an enclosure, towing a 10- or 12-



Disc-shaped AVROCAR, a research vehicle, was designed to explore potential of several new approaches to vertical takeoff and landing craft.

foot hay rake, the operator evidently taking up his task for the day. My headlights shining on this whole affair, bouncing up and down, half off and on the pavement, really stirred my imagination as it never has been aroused before.

"I can now realize how other sightings can be mysteries if the people involved do not get the answer right from the horse's mouth as I did," confided Mr. Wood.

Three years ago Mr. Stewart McManaway of Thaxton, Va., wrote the Air Force that he had seen a flying saucer near his home. He described a "bright object, round and luminous, which zoomed southward in a matter of seconds."

Last November the Air Force received another letter from Mr. McManaway in which he stated, "Seven hundred yards northwest of my home are hundreds of large thistles, a prickly weed whose blooms contain hundreds of fuzzy, silky hair-like things which float in the slightest breeze.

"On a clear bright day last October," continued Mr. McManaway, "I observed scores of these petals floating in the breeze, rising hundreds of feet in the air, getting caught in cross winds and updrafts zooming across the horizon in seconds.

"At this time," Mr. McManaway openly confessed, "I sincerely believe that three years ago what appeared to be a UFO flying at an angle, thousands of miles per hour, was really a cluster of silky petals caught in a cross wind which made it zoom across the horizon in seconds, resembling a UFO."

The terms "unidentified flying object (UFO)" and "flying saucer" are misleading expressions coined to usher in the "saucer" era in the late forties.

"UFO" implies that the unknown object is flying and is composed of solid material. Frequently neither is true.

The more sensational term "flying saucer" often is used when the object's shape does not remotely resemble a saucer.

The more serious "saucer believers" make a distinction between "UFO" and "flying saucer"; however, the general public uses the terms interchangeably.

The United States Air Force, which since 1947 has been responsible for investigating unidentified flying objects, says that a UFO is "any aerial phenomenon which the observer is unable to identify."

Thousands—possibly millions—of rational responsible persons are uncomfortable about UFOs. They know that most reported UFOs are usually natural phenomena observed under unusual circumstances; however, there is that statistical probability that there are other intelligent beings in the universe and some of them may have visited or might visit Earth.

UFOs have been reported by scientists, engineers, amateur astronomers, law enforcement officers, civil defense employees, educators, clergymen, newsmen, civilian and military pilots, professional and businessmen, officials and just plain citizens.

There is no question that they saw something—but what did they see?

It may surprise a lot of people to learn that the Air Force has never denied the possibility that some form of life may exist on other planets. However, based on research of 11,000 reported UFO sightings during the past two decades, the Air Force remains convinced that "no evidence has been received nor discovered which proves the existence and intraspace mobility of extraterrestrial life." (Of 11,108 sightings reported since 1947, only 676 are presently listed as "Unidentified").

A sighting is listed as "Unidentified" by the Air Force when "a report apparently contains all pertinent data necessary to suggest a valid hypothesis concerning the cause or explanation of the report but the description of the object or its motion cannot be correlated with any known object or phenomena."

Explaining that "virtually all of the sightings were derived from subjective human observations and interpretations," Air Force officials state that, "the most common were reports of astronomical sightings, satellites, mirages, airplanes, and spurious radar blips."

Appearing before a hearing on UFOs conducted by the House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services in April 1966, The Hon. Harold Brown, Secretary of the Air Force, said: "We know of no phenomena or vehicle, intelligently guided, which have come from extraterrestrial sources. I exclude meteors which do come from extraterrestrial sources."

However, a large percentage of UFO observers—including many well-educated persons—cannot accept a scientific explanation for what they witnessed.

Similarly, the subject of "flying saucers" and any efforts to "debunk" them evokes a strong psychological reaction in many persons who, admittedly, have never witnessed unusual aerial phenomena.

No intelligent, rational person questions that we see strange aerial objects which we cannot readily identify—man has been seeing strange things in the sky and recording his observations for hundreds of years.

Jacques Vallee, author of *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, indicates that manuscripts and newspapers record many unexplained sightings prior to the 20th century. He discerns peaks of UFO activity in the 1882-1887 period and in 1906 and 1909. UFOs have been sighted in more than 50 countries.

Prior to 1947 (when the term "flying saucers" was coined), atmospheric phenomena were described as "fiery suns," "lighted pinwheels," "flying discs," "flaming shields," "moving lights," "will-o'-the-wisps," "Friar's Lanthorns," etc. The term "unidentified flying object" didn't originate until the Air Force started investigating the strange reports in 1948.

During and immediately after World War II, persons in many countries, especially in Europe, reported seeing "unusual aerial phenomena." However, it was a daytime sighting June 24, 1947, by businessman Kenneth Arnold that was to fire the interest and imagination of the American public.

Flying in his private plane near Mt. Ranier, Wash., Arnold reported seeing "a chainlike formation of disc-shaped objects which skipped along like a saucer skipping over the surface of a body of water." His description was shortened to "flying saucers" and given national publicity. Newspapers and radios fanned the flames of imagination by suggesting that the objects might be visitors from outer space. Nationwide interest was sustained by numerous reports of additional sightings, most resembling saucers, pie pans, or discs of various shapes and sizes.

Late in 1947, the newly established Department of the Air Force, as part of its responsibility for air defense, became the official government agency for investigating unidentified aerial objects and for determining if they posed any latent threat to national security.

"Project Sign" was created in February 1948 to "collect, collate, evaluate, and distribute information concerning UFO sightings." Eleven months later, following analysis of 243 of the best documented UFO reports, Project Sign indicated that "no definite evidence was available to confirm or disprove the actual existence of unidentified flying objects as new or unknown types of aircraft."

The project name was changed to "Grudge" in late 1948 and 244 new reports analyzed. The conclusion: "The phenomena presented no threat to the security of the United States and the vast majority of sightings were misrepresentations of conventional objects."

During the early 1950s the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) studied UFOs to determine if the objects were originating from sources overseas. All CIA materials concerning UFOs which did not concern the organization and CIA methods were subsequently declassified and made available to scientists, scholars, and others interested in the study of UFOs.

In March 1952, the Air Force project name became "Project Blue Book" and remains the official title today. Its objectives: first, to determine whether UFOs pose a threat to the security of the United States; and

second, to determine whether UFOs exhibit any unique scientific information or advanced technology which could contribute to scientific or technical research. In the course of accomplishing these objectives, Project Blue Book strives to identify and explain UFO sightings reported to the Air Force.

The program is conducted by the Aerial Phenomena Branch (Air Force Systems Command), at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. Information concerning the program, including individual sightings, is provided by the Office of Information, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force in the Pentagon (SAF-OI).

Various private organizations which collect information and publish UFO and "flying saucer" news have sprung up over the years. Many of these organizations allege that the Air Force is misleading the public and withholding information about UFOs. Some claim UFOs are really secret, highly sophisticated aircraft made by the US or possibly some other nation on Earth. If this were true, the obvious question is, "Why are we wasting so much time and money on such comparatively crude rocket-powered vehicles to reach and explore our solar system?"

The Air Force emphasizes that reports of UFO sightings and the Air Force findings are not censored. "We do have an obligation, however," stresses the Air Force, "to protect the name of the observer of the UFO sighting and the methods used to analyze the data concerning such a sighting."

"Also, for security reasons," says the spokesman, "we cannot release information that would give the location of a classified installation or reveal the defense capabilities of certain aircraft, detection equipment, or other devices. When the sensitive information is deleted, the remaining information—that which deals exclusively with the UFO—is unclassified."

Air Force Regulation 80-17, *Unidentified Flying Objects*, states that "Air Force members not officially connected with UFO investigations covered by this regulation will refrain from any action or comment on UFO reports which may mislead or cause the public to con-

Photo of 1957 Comet, Mrkos, taken by Curtiss A. Griffin, helps explain why such phenomena are often mistaken for "UFOs" or "flying saucers."



strue these opinions as official Air Force findings." "UFO reports submitted by military personnel are systematically analyzed by qualified researchers for one simple reason," say Air Force officials: "to insure that the public is not misled (intentionally or unintentionally) by a variety of reports and interpretations from individuals."

The air base commander closest to the scene of a reported UFO-sighting is responsible for investigating the occurrence, interviewing witnesses, and completing a required form. The form is sent to Wright-Patterson AFB where it is reviewed by Project Blue Book personnel and other Air Force specialty groups, when appropriate.

If a second investigation is considered necessary, either Air Force or consultant personnel visit the scene of the incident, and submit an additional report.

Since 1955, Project Blue Book has investigated only those sightings which are reported either directly to the Air Force, or via some law enforcement agency. Normally, only sightings within the jurisdiction of the United States are investigated.

UFO reports submitted to the Air Force, and the Air Force analyses, are retained at the Aerial Phenomena Branch at Wright-Patterson AFB. The Air Force has announced that Project Blue Book files are open to examination by bona fide newsmen and scientists. Many have taken advantage of this offer.

UFOs have been reported in all conceivable shapes, sizes and colors. They resemble cigars, propellers, hats, pie pans, saucers, and balls. Sizes vary from tiny objects estimated in inches to massive space ships reported to be 250 feet or more in diameter. The predominant colors are red, green, blue, and white; however, the entire color spectrum has been reported at one time or another. UFO sounds range from eerie silence to high-pitched, penetrating tones. Propulsion may be evidenced by flaming exhausts, or there may be no exhausts whatsoever. UFOs hover, zig-zag, move in any direction at variable speeds (one observer reported a UFO moving at 25,000 mph). Structure of reported UFOs fluctuate from solid to "invisible." Although UFOs are observed throughout the year, the largest number of sightings occur at night during the spring and summer when people spend more time out of doors.

Dr. Carl Sagan, noted astronomer with Harvard University and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory at Cambridge, Mass., describes in the *Encyclopedia Americana* various objects reported as UFOs:

"Confirmed identifications of UFOs have been made with the following: unconventional aircraft; aircraft under uncommon weather conditions; aircraft with unusual, external light patterns; meteorological and other high-altitude balloons; artificial earth satellites; flocks of birds; reflections of searchlights or headlights off clouds; reflection of sunlight from shiny surfaces; luminescent organisms, including one case of a firefly lodged between two adjacent panes of glass in an airplane cockpit window; optical mirages and looming, lenticular cloud formations; ball lightning; sundogs;

meteors, including the rare green fireballs; planets, especially Venus; bright stars; and the aurora borealis."

(A fireball is a brilliant meteor entering the earth's atmosphere at a slower rate of speed than the normal meteor. Fireballs have been known to light up areas for distances of 20 to 40 miles).

The night of April 18, 1962, a fireball which was observed over a four-state area, exploded near Eurica, Utah. The object was bright enough to activate the photo-electric cells controlling the street lights in Eurica and turn the lights off.

There are cases in Air Force files of UFOs being reported which later were identified as airborne residue which escaped through faulty plant filters; long plumes caused by silver oxide used in cloud seeding operations; and airborne soap detergent bubbles caused by train-cleaning operations.

The planet Venus frequently is reported as a UFO when it is low on the horizon. When viewed through the polluted air nearer the earth's surface, the planet appears to perform erratic maneuvers and change color.

Weather balloons are a chief contributor to UFO reports. Several thousand balloons are released each day from military and civilian airports, weather stations, and research activities. There are several types of balloons—weather balloons, rawinsondes, radiosondes, and the large research balloons which have diameters up to three hundred feet. At night, balloons carry running lights which cause an unusual appearance when observed. Reflection of the sun on balloons at dawn and sunset sometimes produces strange effects. This usually occurs when the balloon, because of its altitude, is exposed to the sun.

Large balloons can move at speeds of over one hundred miles per hour when moving in high altitude jet streams. These balloons sometimes appear to be flattened on top. At other times, they appear to be saucer-shaped and to have lights mounted inside the bag itself due to the sun's rays reflecting through the material of the balloon. The Balloon Control Center at Holloman AFB, N. Mex., maintains a plot on all military upper air research balloons. Various other organizations, such as the National Center for Atmospheric Research, in Colorado, also track research balloons.

Aircraft account for a major source of UFO reports, particularly during adverse weather conditions. When observed at high altitudes at some distance, aircraft can have appearances ranging from disc to rocket shapes due to the reflection of the sun on their bright surfaces. Vapor or condensation trails from jet aircraft will sometimes appear to glow fiery red or orange when reflecting sunlight. Afterburners from jet aircraft are often reported as UFOs since they can be seen from great distances when the aircraft cannot be seen.

During 1965, 210 of the 887 UFOs reported were identified as aircraft. UFO observers are advised that if they feel the urge to shoot at a "flying saucer," use a camera instead of a gun. That UFO may be piloted by some Earthman.

Satellites are another major source of UFO reports. An increase in satellites reported as UFOs has come about because of two factors. The first is the increase of interest on the part of the public; the second is the increasing number of satellites in the skies. Positive knowledge of the location of satellites enables rapid identification of satellite sightings. Keeping track of man-made objects in orbit about the earth is the responsibility of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) Space Detection and Tracking System. This sophisticated electronic system gathers complex space traffic data instantly from tracking stations all over the world. NORAD recently reported that there are more than 1,100 man-made objects in space.

Other space surveillance activities include the use of "ballistic camera tracking" and large telescopic cameras. *Echo* schedules are prepared by the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center at Greenbelt, Md., and schedules of the south-north equator crossings are prepared by the Smithsonian Astro-physical Observatory at Cambridge, Mass.

Some satellites are visible to the naked eye and frequently are mistakenly reported as UFOs. These satellites easily can be identified by the various tracking agencies. During 1965 the Air Force, with the assistance of the tracking agencies, positively identified 152 sightings as *Echo I*, *Echo II*, *Pegasus I*, *Pegasus II*, or *Pegasus III*.

To naked-eye observers, the motion of a bright artificial satellite may consist of tiny zig-zags rather than a smooth curve across the sky. This familiar illusion has been ascribed to the fact that we do not move our eyes continuously, but in little jerks. Actually, the zig-zag motions are due primarily to the physiology of seeing without reference points. This is not a frequent occurrence because the field of stars usually provides the necessary reference. Scintillation can cause apparent radial motions (zooming in and out along a fixed line of sight) but rarely ever angular motions.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) reports that the astronauts sighted unidentified objects during their *Gemini* flights. However, in all instances the objects were later identified as satellites or parts of satellites launched into orbit from earth.

Although professional astronomers do not constantly watch every square mile of the sky, there is a good possibility that the observatories and the tracking stations throughout the world will detect the presence of "interstellar space vehicles" long before "flying saucers" reach the earth's atmosphere. One Air Force officer said, "We honestly don't believe that the scientists will keep such an event to themselves and not reveal it to the general public."

Phillip J. Klass, senior editor of *Aviation Week & Space Technology* and an electronics expert, is a proponent of one theory which explains some "flying saucers." Mr. Klass thinks that many of the eerie, maneuvering lights people see at night really are formations of ionized air containing electrified particles which have

detached from power lines as a type of "ball lightning." The globs of "ball lightning" flutter and whirl erratically and give the appearance of performing flight maneuvers at high speeds.

While "saucer believers" and "saucer sympathizers" circulate a variety of statements and probing questions to support their belief, the "saucer doubters" also retort with a number of unanswered questions, such as:

Why do not UFOs, which reportedly move at supersonic speeds, produce sonic booms? An earth aircraft, or any solid object, *always* creates an audible "boom" when it exceeds the speed of sound. Bullets produce a sonic boom! Missiles cause a "boom" once they surpass the speed of sound! However, not one of the thousands of reports received by the Air Force mentions any sonic boom associated with the reported UFO sighting.

How can UFOs defy Earth's gravity and perform erratic aerial maneuvers and square turns at supersonic speeds? The pilots of *our* aircraft and space vehicles haven't been able to ignore laws of gravity and motion!

Why has there been no "extraterrestrial hardware" associated with any of the alleged "flying saucer" landings and sightings? To date, all material alleged to be associated with a "flying saucer" has proved to be space debris from United States or Russian satellites or missiles, meteoric substances, or materials common to earth which were already at the site or were placed there as part of a deliberate hoax.

How can "flying saucers" avoid detection by the astronomical observatories and radar networks throughout the United States? For several years vast expanses of the sky over the United States have been under surveillance by observatories on clear nights. To date, the observatories have not detected any "unusual" movements in space which would corroborate the thousands of "flying saucer" sightings reported to the Air Force during the past 20 years.

Radar infrequently detects "unknown targets" which vanish from the scope as mysteriously as they appear. Many "saucer believers" refer to these radar detections as proof that the earth is being observed by intelligent space beings. However, these blips do not represent new phenomena to military and civilian radar operators. Reports by radar controllers checked against US Weather Bureau records indicate that these "unidentified targets" usually are due to precipitation echoes from rain clouds or occur during a temperature inversion (when an upper layer of air is warmer than one layer beneath it).

A member of Project Blue Book, the Air Force project which investigates UFO reports, told the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee in April 1966 that, "About 1.5 percent of the UFO sightings reported since 1947 were detected by radar. None of the unexplained cases on Air Force files were sighted by radar," he stated.

(Next Month: Have Flying Saucers Destroyed Military Aircraft?)