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CONCLUSION

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.

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(July Synopsis: For many years, reputable individuals have reported sighting "flying saucers." Such sightings have increased dramatically since 1947.

Air Force Project Blue Book has investigated thousands of such sightings. The "saucer"—a UFO or Unidentified Flying Object to the Air Force—has usually been found to be an aircraft, balloon, satellite, meteor or other explainable occurrence. About two percent of all reported sightings remain unexplained.

The Air Force has never denied the possibility of life on other planets. What it does say is that "no evidence has been received nor discovered which proves the existence and intraspace mobility of extraterrestrial life."

Saucer "believers" cite unexplained sightings as evidence of the existence of extraterrestrial visitors. Saucer "doubters" ask why we do not hear sonic booms from these hypersonic craft, why no saucer debris has ever been found and how saucers defy laws of gravity and aerodynamics.

The concluding part of our article discusses some widely publicized "sightings.")

SOME "flying saucer" advocates charge that flying saucers have destroyed military planes when the pilots became too inquisitive. One such alleged "crash" occurred in 1948.

Capt. Thomas Mantell led a flight of five P-51s to investigate an unidentified object high over Godman Field, Ky., on January 17, 1948. At 15,000 feet, four of the P-51s turned back because they were not equipped for flights requiring oxygen. The other four pilots attempted to radio Captain Mantell but were unsuccessful.

Captain Mantell's aircraft continued upward and he undoubtedly lost consciousness. Because of the increasing altitude, the P-51 lost power, winged over, and began an uncontrolled, downward spiral which ripped the plane apart. The canopy lock was still in place after the crash, indicating that Captain Mantell probably never regained consciousness. The excitement caused by the UFO presumably was responsible for this experienced pilot attempting a high altitude flight without the necessary oxygen equipment.

As for the unidentified object—Venus, one of the brightest objects in the sky, was at the elevation and azimuth of the UFO as was a large balloon used for high altitude experimental flights.

During the same month of Mantell's flight, the Navy was conducting a classified program in the Midwest using large balloons—known as "sky hooks" because they fly at altitudes above 60,000 feet. One of the 100-foot balloons released from Clinton County Airport, Ohio, was in the position of the object of Captain Mantell's attempted intercept.

Also, on that same date, Venus was not only in a directional position which coincided with that of the unidentified object, it was also bright enough to be seen in daylight hours.

The Air Force's conclusion is that Venus was probably the original cause of the sighting since the object remained in the area for some time and was relatively stationary. The object pursued by Captain Mantell, and described by other witnesses as "pear-shaped and metallic," is considered to have been the balloon.

Civilian saucer groups also claim that an Air Force aircraft crash in Lake Michigan in 1953 was caused by a flying saucer.

One stormy, electrified night in November 1953, radar scanning the Great Lakes area detected an unidentified plane headed from Canada toward the United States, Kinross AFB, Mich., scrambled an F-89 to intercept the "bogie." Interception was made and the F-89 crew of two identified the "unknown" as a Canadian C-47 *Kodiak*. No further radio communication was received from the crew of the Air Force jet as they turned for home. Ground radar, tracking the flight, detected a phantom blip or echo following the jet. The two blips seemed to merge as both disappeared from the screen.

The Air Force investigation concluded that the F-89 crashed into Lake Michigan and that the crash probably was caused by the pilot experiencing a state of vertigo (dizziness and loss of orientation). Unfortunately, since the exact point of impact could not be determined, the wreckage was never recovered. The phantom—or ghost echo—was considered to have been a secondary reflection produced by the jet in the electrified atmosphere.

There have been several instances of Air Force pilots and crew members observing and chasing objects which, at the time, could not be identified.

A B-29 crew observed a number of strange objects with no aerodynamic features over the Gulf of Mexico on December 6, 1952. A steady blue-white light was reported by the crew during the split-second visual sighting. The flight engineer estimated that the objects were flying at approximately 5,000 miles per hour. No changes in heading, speed, or altitude were noted. Ra-



Time exposure of the night sky on a clear evening may reveal eerie white trails. This is Echo 1 as seen from Okinawa in October 1962. —Photo by A1C Joe F. Cox

dar sightings were made intermittently during a period of 10 minutes. No other aircraft were observed in the area of the sighting. This case has been placed in the "Unidentified" category by the Air Force even though the Air Force reports there is a possible explanation for the radar targets.

Aircrews of an F-84 and a T-33 sighted a UFO on December 15, 1952, near Goose AB, Labrador. The object was reported to have no definite shape or size. It appeared first as bright red then alternated between red and white while fading away. The two planes and crews chased the object for 25 minutes before it faded when about 30 to 40 miles from the base. No jet or rocket exhausts were observed, no sound was heard, and the manner of propulsion could not be determined. Two C-54 aircraft in the general area during the chase did not report any unusual sightings to the tower operator. This case has also been placed in the "unidentified" category by the Air Force.

Many UFO sightings are reported by civilian pilots.

At approximately 3 a.m. on March 9, 1957, the pilot and copilot of a commercial airliner flying from New York to Puerto Rico reported that a "brilliant greenish object resembling a huge spotlight" suddenly appeared in their path. The pilot took violent evasive maneuvers which hospitalized some of his passengers.

Military and civil aviation agencies later confirmed that the same object was observed at 3 a.m. on the same day by two other airliners 175 miles away.

Based on descriptions given by the crew and passengers who observed the object and the reports from the Civil Aeronautics Administration and the Navy, the Air Force concluded that the UFO actually was a seldom-seen form of meteor—a bolide—commonly referred to as a "fireball." The analysis was independently reviewed and confirmed by a well-known astrophysicist now with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.

However, most "saucer" reports come from observers on the ground.

In search for verifiable photo of a "flying saucer," AF investigators review hundreds of pics. This is a typical photo of a lens flare. —Photo by A1C William Applewhite





Shining object was photographed by individual flying over Richmond, Ind., in 1954. It was identified as a "sun dog," or refraction of the sun's rays, a phenomenon similar to the one producing a rainbow.

A New York farmer reported seeing a flying saucer 20 feet thick and 50 feet long hover over his barn on August 19, 1965. The strange object pulsated with red, yellow and green colors. The farmer reported that the flying saucer disturbed a bull in a nearby field, caused his dog to bark, and caused his cow's milk production to drop from two and one-half cans to one can per day.

State policemen and other investigators could not agree as to whether the sighting was a hoax. Air Force records indicate that although the sequence of events are dubious, the sighting is carried as "unidentified" because there is no definite concrete explanation.

Strange lights of varying shapes frequently are seen at night over lakes, ponds, marshes, or swamps. Scientists have long known that decaying vegetation forms gases which ignite spontaneously. "Marsh gas" is listed by the Air Force as the probable explanation for the highly publicized UFO sightings at Dexter, Mich., on March 20, 1966, and at Hillsdale, Mich., on March 21, 1966. An Air Force news release made by on-the-scene investigators of the cases accompanies this article.

Occasionally, an observer will report seeing a "creature" associated with a flying saucer landing. One such incident allegedly occurred at approximately 10:30 p.m. July 31, 1966, at Presque Isle State Park near Erie, Pa.

Picnickers reported seeing a square or hexagonal-shaped object which appeared to fall from the sky to a position between 5 to 10 feet above the beach. The object reportedly descended left to right, approximately north to south taking about three to five seconds. A soft buzz or hum was heard for about three seconds, followed by a groan or turbine sound which stopped as the object hit the beach. Immediately, according to the reports, several bright, small spotlights came on, seem-

ingly arranged in a circle around the top of the object. The circle of lights moved around as individual beams on the sand and nearby trees. Approximately five minutes later, the park police arrived and immediately the lights from the object disappeared.

As three observers approached the object they heard a rustling in the nearby bushes. One witness reported seeing a "dull black shape, bigger than a man, big head and shoulders, arm-like appendages, no hands, no face visible, as though it had its back turned." The alleged "black creature" lumbered into the bushes when the occupant of a nearby car blew her horn.

After leaving the scene, the original observers and policemen returned to the beach, searched the area and discovered food missing from the picnic tables.

Early the next morning, two policemen searched the area and noticed three V-shaped marks in the sand. Damp spots also were noted in the sand near the marks.

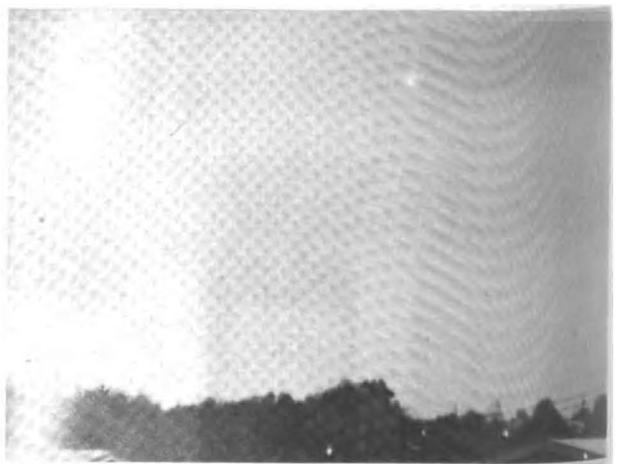
Air Force investigators give the following analysis of the incident:

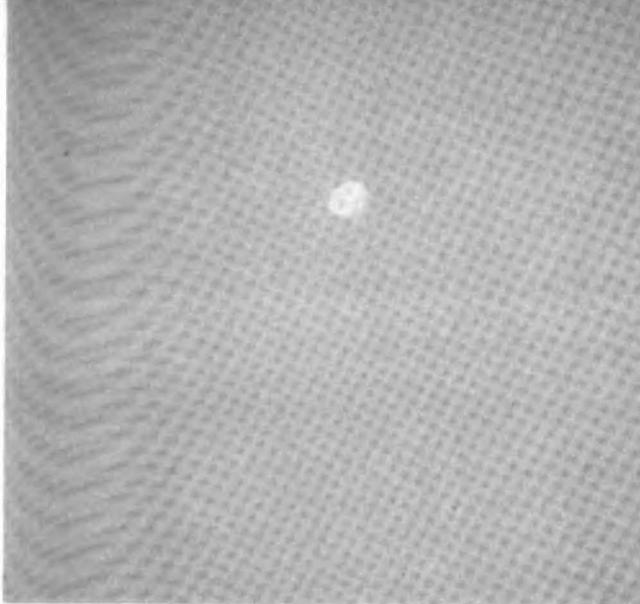
"No evidence exists to relate the damp sandy areas and the indentations found on the beach to the visual sighting." The Air Force Dynamics Laboratory at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, reported that "considering the three indentations, no evidence is present to indicate a landing of any type occurred." Chemical analysis of the soil was performed by the Air Force Materials Laboratory. The report: "There was nothing unusual in the samples except urine.

"There is no evidence to substantiate the presence of a black monster," the Air Force report continued. "No unusual markings were found to indicate such a 'thing' was observed. The scratching sounds and missing food are indicative of some type of animal in the area.

"As yet," stated the report, "there is no explanation of the lights that were observed. The Smithsonian Institution has no information of any meteors being observed over the area on July 31. The park police and nearby US Coast Guard base reported they had not seen any unusual lights over the park."

The position of the planets in the night sky can often create the strange effect of a UFO. Bright spot in the sky here is Jupiter. —Photo by O. Wab





A photographer inspects a negative in his darkroom and finds he's photographed a UFO; only here the "UFO" is a drop of chemical on the film. —Photo by Richard Bacom

Another report had its beginning when a forest ranger discovered a hard, metal spherical object in a Wisconsin woods October 13, 1966. The object, originally suspected by some persons to be part of a flying saucer, turned out to be space debris—one of the rare instances when a piece of a rocket or satellite did not burn up when it re-entered the earth's atmosphere.

While most UFO sightings received by the Air Force come from intelligent, well-meaning persons, some reports are out-and-out hoax attempts.

One such report forwarded to the Air Force by the Federal Bureau of Investigation occurred in California in 1956. A teen-age girl submitted to the FBI a photograph of a "flying saucer" which she allegedly had obtained while taking a time exposure of the moon. She reported leaving the camera for 20 minutes while it was pointed toward the moon. Upon developing the film, she was "startled when the photograph revealed a flying saucer hovering over the tree in the front yard between the camera and the moon." She insisted to the FBI that the camera was not moved during the time-exposure photographing period.

Air Force officials report that magnification of the photos disclosed that the moon track had been interrupted. Measurement of known diameter and movement of the moon revealed that the camera had been moved and also revealed the duration of time during which the camera was not focusing on the moon. Photo analysis also revealed that the light fixture had been superimposed before the camera was returned to its original position. The conclusion was that the photograph was obviously a hoax.

The alleged wreckage of a flying saucer at Spitzbergen, Norway, some years ago has been denied by the Royal Norwegian Air Force. The Royal Norwegian Air Force stated to the United States Air Attache in Oslo that the information regarding the flying saucer was definitely a hoax perpetrated by a newspaper in a neighboring country.

During May 1957, an individual submitted colored motion pictures taken at night which showed bright spots moving through the sky. The owner, when sending this film to the Air Force, contended that the spots were flying saucers.

When the Air Force subjected the motion-picture frames to high magnification under various densities of light, wing and tail surfaces were revealed. The objects were identified as fighter aircraft with their jet afterburners in operation.

The position and shape of the moon in the frames confirmed that the objects were photographed on the same date when a base near the photographer's home was conducting night training operations. Because the photographer gave incorrect dates of the incident and indicated that he planned to exploit and publicize the film for his own interests, the Air Force recorded the incident as an "attempted hoax."

After 19 years of investigation and more than 11,000 reported sightings, the Air Force does not have a single photograph, film, or graph of a UFO.

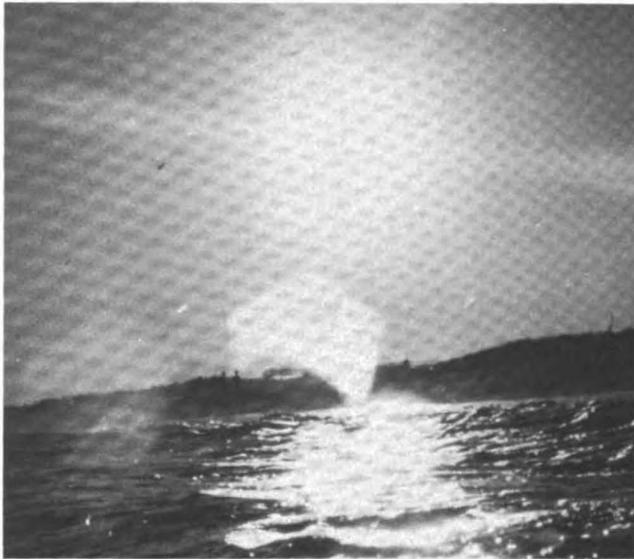
"It's very simple," say Project Blue Book officials. "Every photograph of an alleged UFO forwarded for analysis has proved to be an astronomical body, balloon, lens flare, emulsion flaw, double negative, photographic defect, etc. A small percentage have been hoaxes."

After scientific analysis of a print or film, the Air Force returns the material to the owner.

Photo analysts state that a photograph cannot be scientifically analyzed without the negative. Project Blue Book officials indicate that persons who include photographs of alleged UFOs with their report often fail to include the negative or refuse to submit the negative. While some individuals attempt deliberate hoaxes by double-exposing the negative, most reports are from honest, well-meaning persons who submit legitimate photographs—occasionally with a negative—of objects which they cannot identify.

Dust devils, common in the open areas of the western US, are like miniature tornadoes. They often cause flattening out of bushes and grass.





Camera often plays tricks on the photographer. The weird image in this seashore shot is identified as a reflection of the iris diaphragm. —Photo by Janet Viertel

At the request of the Air Force Director of Information, the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board looked into the matter of UFOs last year and concluded that the UFO phenomena posed no threat to the security of the United States. The Board did recommend that the Air Force UFO program be expanded to include investigation of selected sightings by independent scientists.

As a result of the recommendation, the Secretary of the Air Force announced on October 7, 1966, that the University of Colorado had been selected to conduct independent investigations into unidentified flying object reports. The research agreement, valued at approximately \$300,000, covers a 15-month period.

Air Force Project Blue Book files, as well as other UFO information in the possession of the Air Force, according to the research agreement, will be made available to the University of Colorado. The University of Colorado investigators will be free to follow whatever lines of study they decide are best and will be free to release and publish their findings. The report will be made available to the public sometime next year.

Dr. Edward Condon, professor of physics and former head of the National Bureau of Standards, is the scientific director of the University of Colorado study of UFOs. Dr. Condon has requested that the public continue to make reports of sightings to the nearest Air Force base, or directly to Project Blue Book at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. "However," he says, "reports may be received by the university group at Boulder (Colorado) when there is some special reason to handle them this way."

What does the Air Force *really* know about flying saucers? Are they fact or fiction?

You be the judge. You know about as much now as the Air Force does. And as General J. P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, said, "Medals, fame, and our gratitude await any citizen who brings us a flying saucer."

Dexter and Hillsdale, Michigan UFO Sightings

March 20-21, 1966

Scores of persons will never forget the strange sights they witnessed at Dexter, Mich., on March 20, 1966, and at Hillsdale, Mich., on March 21, 1966. While the total observers is unknown, at least 12 police officers, a civil defense director, various educators and 85 college students watched weird glowing objects dance and whirl in defiance of the mystified witnesses. The sightings drew crowds of spectators and national publicity.

Air Force on-the-scene investigators listed "marsh gas" as a possible cause of the sightings. The Air Force statement says: "The majority of observers in both the Dexter and Hillsdale cases reported only silent glowing lights near the ground—red, yellow, and blue-green. They did not describe an object. The only two observers who did describe an object stated that they were no closer than 500 yards—better than a quarter of a mile away—a distance which does not allow details to be determined.

"Witnesses described glowing light—lights that seemed to move but never far from a definite place, or lights which suddenly disappeared and popped up at another place. The locale in both cases was a swamp. In both cases, the location of the glow was pinpointed—in Dexter it was seen between two distant groups of people and at Hillsdale it was seen in a swampy depression between the observers and the distant trees. It was, in both cases, a very localized phenomena. The swampy location is most significant.

"A swamp is a place of rotting vegetation and decomposition. Swamps are not a province of astronomers. Yet, the famous Dutch astronomer, Minnaert, in his book, *Light and Colour in the Open Air*, describes lights that have been seen in swamps by the astronomer Bessel and other excellent observers. The lights resemble tiny flames sometimes seen right on the ground and sometimes rising and floating above it. The flames go out in

To the unpracticed eye this photo taken near Sloan, Nev., in March 1965 seems to reveal a UFO. The "saucer" was nothing but a developer smear. —Photo by Lewis Pierce



one place and suddenly appear in another, giving the illusion of motion. The colors are sometimes yellow, sometimes red, and sometimes blue-green. No heat is felt and the lights do not burn or char the ground. They can appear for hours at a stretch and sometimes for a whole night. Generally, there is no smell and no sound except for the popping sound of little explosions such as when a gas burner ignites.

"The rotting vegetation produces marsh gas which can be trapped during the winter by ice. When the spring thaw occurs, the gas may be released in some quantity. The flame, Minnaert says, is a form of chemical luminescence, and its low temperature is one of its peculiar features. Exactly how it occurs is not known and could well be the subject of further investigation.

"The glowing lights over the swamps near Dexter and Hillsdale were observed for two or three hours, and they were red, green and yellow. They appeared to move sideways and to rise a short distance. No sound was heard except a popping sound.

"It seems entirely likely that as the present spring thaw came, the trapped gases, CH₄, H₂S, and PH₃, resulting from the decomposition of organic material, were released. The chemistry book by Sienko and Plane has this to say: 'In air, Phosphine PH₃ usually bursts into flame apparently because it is ignited by a spontaneous oxidation of the impure P₂H₄. The will-o'-the-wisp, sometimes observed in marshes, may be due to spontaneous ignition of impure PH₃ which might be formed by the reduction of naturally occurring phosphorous compound.'

"It has been pointed out to the investigating personnel by other scientists in this area that in swamps the formation of H₂S and CH₄ from rotting vegetation is common. These could be ignited by the spontaneous burning of PH₃.

"The association of the sightings with swamps in this particular instance is more than coincidence. No group of witnesses observed any craft coming to or going away from the swamp. The glow was localized, and a deputy sheriff described the glow from beyond a rise adjacent to the swamp as visible through the trees. He stated that the light brightened and dimmed much as stage lights do—smoothly and slowly—and this description exactly fits the Hilldale sighting also. The brightening and dimming could have been due to the release of variable quantities of marsh gas.

"The disappearance of the lights when people got close with flashlights or car lights would indicate that the glow seemed bright to dark-adapted eyes. The night was dark and there was no moon. The Hillsdale girls kept their rooms dark in order to see the swamp lights.

"It appears very likely that the combination of the conditions of this particular winter (an unusually mild one in that area) and the particular weather conditions of that night—it was clear and there was little wind at either location—were such as to have produced this unusual and puzzling display."

The Need for Positive, Credible Proof

There is a rational and rather straightforward explanation for the great majority of sightings of unidentified flying objects, or "flying saucers." Since the first mysterious object was reported almost 20 years ago United States Air Force official investigators have tabulated thousands of sightings. They can account for more than 98 percent as balloons, aircraft, reflections of ground lights, satellites, meteorites, planets, hoaxes perpetrated by pranksters, or, more recently, ball lightning or plasma cloud phenomena observed and photographed near high-tension power lines.

But it is that unaccounted two percent that makes flying saucer enthusiasts cling tenaciously to their conviction. I cannot account for that two percent either. But a lifetime spent in testing of rockets has taught me to be extremely careful with eyewitness accounts of mishaps during launch. If three experienced observers are questioned after a typical mishap, their accounts of what they saw will differ widely. We are invariably confronted with this situation, even though the experienced observers have not only seen many firings but have the great advantage of being mentally prepared for the imminent test.

For this reason I am highly skeptical about the objectivity of any "sighting" report of a fleeting, mysterious object in the sky submitted by an equally surprised and inexperienced observer. And that unaccounted-for two percent of UFOs absolutely fails to raise my blood pressure. To me, 98 percent is a mighty good batting average. I wish we could account for 98 percent of what we observe in many other fields of human endeavor! But it has not been customary since the Middle Ages for science to call upon ghosts or witches—or little green men from Mars—to explain a phenomenon for which we do not yet have a satisfactory answer.

To those who still insist that objects of extra-terrestrial origin are roaming through our atmosphere, I can only say that I cannot believe in their existence without positive, credible proof.

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