

UFO POTPOURRI

John Schuessler, Post Office Box 369, Morrison, CO 80465-0369

Schuessler@mho.net

No. 436

August 2000

Radar-Visual Case from the Archives

The following radar case is replicated from "Project Blue Book – Report no. 9," Project No. 10073, dated 31 January 1953, Air Technical Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. It was originally classified "Confidential," with a special stamp on the cover page that read "Security Information." This incident is labeled T53-3695 and is important because the witnesses were well-qualified military personnel. The object was observed visually and on radar. Interestingly, the first line of the report contains an improperly spelled word, as shown below. Note also on page 2, para. 3, the use of the word "effect" the radar rather than "affect."

Continental Divide, New Mexico

26 January 1953

I. Description of Incident

On 26 January 1953 at 2115 MST Air Force personnel stationed at an AC&W station in this area observed an aerial phenomenon simultaneously by electronic and visual means. To the naked eye the object appeared as a very bright reddish-white object estimated to be 10 miles west of the radar site. The object passed behind a hill and then reappeared apparently heading in a northerly direction at a slow speed. The airman making this visual observation reported it to personnel manning the radar equipment. They stated that they had an unidentified blip on the radar scope, appearing west of the station approximately 9 miles away. The scope the object to be on a 270 degree azimuth at an altitude of 10-15,000' moving away from the site at 12-15 mph. It was eventually lost on radar at the 18 mile range. The object was under visual and radar observation intermittently for 45 minutes. The elevation of the station is 7,500' above sea level.

Weather at this time was characterized by a high thin overcast and low scattered clouds. Winds aloft were from 270 degrees at 30 knots at 10-30,000'. An atmospheric inversion layer existed at 18,000' with the top at 21,000'.

II. Discussion of Incident

This is the most complete report ever received by ATIC on the sighting of an unidentified object. The intelligence officer of the 34th Air Division, ADC, is to be complimented on his initiative and complete covering of all of the angles bearing on the observation. Moreover, the combination visual-electronic sighting is the best type of sighting to work with because it affords the most information.

The intelligence officer preparing the report checked on weather balloon releases in the area of observation as a possible answer to the sighting. It was found that a 9' radiosonde balloon released from Winslow, Arizona, would offer the only possibility. The unknown object was observed to move from east to west, against the prevailing winds aloft which rules out the balloon theory. Also the sighting time of 0415 Z is 1 hour and 15 minutes after the Winslow release and by that time it is probable that the radiosonde had burst at altitude long before.

The fact that the object was detected on radar and seen visually for so long a period of time eliminates the possibility of an astronomical solution, such as a star or fireball, and especially if both radar and eye were seeing the same object, it is unlikely that these objects would cause radar returns. Since the object was tracked at 12 to 15 mph, aircraft are also eliminated as a possibility.

ATIC electronics specialists advanced the theory that the slow speed and large visual radar size of the target make it appear that weather effects may be the cause of the electronic pick-up. However, the inversion layer at 18,000' appears to be too high to effect the radar which was tracking the object at 10 to 15,000'. The weather-effect explanation cannot, of course, account for the simultaneous visual sighting. There is a possibility which ATIC is now checking that the radar personnel may have been looking at the planet Venus, very low and bright on the western horizon this time of year, and that the radar possibly encountered the aforementioned weather interference at the same time. This would require a high degree of coincidence, however, and the radar and visual sightings seem to coincide too exactly to give much weight to the theory that both were observing different objects.

Two other items added to the completeness of the report. ATIC supplied the reporting intelligence officer with a USAF Technical Information Sheet covering the radar pick-up. Further analysis of this sighting awaits adiabatic weather charts for the date and area of sighting and until this information is received, this report is carried in Project Blue Book's files as an unknown.

III. Conclusion

Unknown