

U.S. Navy lifts veil on flying saucer mystery

NEW YORK, February 13.—Flying saucers sighted in the past 3½ years were huge new plastic balloons used in cosmic ray studies, the United States Navy disclosed yesterday.

The explanation was given to the New York 'Times' by Dr. Urner Liddel, chief of the nuclear physics branch of the Naval Research Office, Washington.

Reports of flying saucers started in 1947. The navy at that time began to use a new 100 foot plastic balloon to carry electronic instruments aloft for studying cosmic rays and other phenomena of the atmosphere.

Dr. Liddel said flying saucer reports coincided roughly with the number of balloons sent into the sky.

Balloons sometimes rose to a height of about 19 miles, said Dr. Liddel. They were swept along by winds of 200 miles an hour.

Stronger balloons, nicknamed "sky hooks," were released at many points in the United

States and were free to travel unlimited distances.

Dr. Liddel said dusk on summer evenings would be the best time to see a "saucer." Study of the reports showed many flying discs were seen at this time.

"Lateral rays of the sun at dusk illuminate the base of the balloon," he explained. "There is no chance whatever of seeing the full roundness of it, because you are so far below it you see only the illuminated cup of the bottom.

"If your imagination soars, light reflections on one side may impress you as the glow of

may impress you as the glow of an atomic engine. A wisp of the balloon's instrument filled tail may impress you as an exhaust. The sun's rays may suffuse a plastic bag to a fiery glow."

The navy project was kept secret, in line with Govern-

ment policy on research bearing—however indirectly—on atomic developments.

"Now there is no longer any need for secrecy on a scientific basis," said Dr. Liddel. "Certainly there is no longer any need to keep the public in the dark about what flying saucers really are.

"The pilot found dead in a crashed plane after he radioed he was chasing a strange sky object was pursuing a sky hook balloon," said Dr. Liddel. "The plane reached 30,000 feet, but the pilot could never have reached the altitude of the balloon."

Persistent reports of flying saucers had previously been denied by the armed forces and President Truman. Some said the United States was being invaded from Mars or another planet by two-foot men in strange machines.