

Plastic Balloons For Cosmic Ray Study :

U.S. NAVY LIFTS THE VEIL ON 'FLYING SAUCER' SECRETS

NEW YORK, February 12.

"Flying saucers" sighted in the past three and a half years were huge plastic balloons used in cosmic ray study, the United States Navy disclosed today.

Their explanation was given to the "New York Times" by Dr. Uner Liddel, chief of the nuclear physics branch of the naval research office in Washington.

The Navy in 1947 began to use 100-foot plastic balloons 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.

The balloons sometimes rose to a height of 19 miles, said Dr. Liddel. They were swept along by the wind at 200 miles per 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 that dusk on a summer evening would be the best time to see a "saucer."

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A study of reports showed that many flying discs were seen at this time.

"The lateral rays of the sun at dusk illuminate the base of a balloon," he explained.

"There is no chance whatever of seeing the full roundness of it, because you are so far below it that you can see only the illuminated cup of the bottom. If your imagination soars, light reflections on one side 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 the plastic bag to a fiery glow," he said.

The Navy project was kept secret

The Navy project was kept secret in line with Government policy on research bearing directly or indirectly on atomic development.

"Now, there is no longer any need to keep the public in the dark about what 'flying saucers' really are," he said.

"A pilot found dead in a crashed plane after he radioed he was chasing a strange 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" previously had 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.