

False Alarms Try Out U.S. Bomb Defence

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado
(Associated Press).—An airliner trying to make up lost time . . . a wandering private plane . . . reflections of city lights against the clouds . . . a nearby planet . . . shooting stars . . . whales.

Those are some of the things that send American fighter interceptor pilots into the blue about a dozen times a day for a close inspection of unidentified objects in the sky.

The birdmen, who guide craft at twice the speed of sound, have never yet found what they went up for, and they are not sorry: It would be an inbound hostile plane or missile.

Attached to some 80

Attached to some 80 squadrons on the continent's defence line, the pilots fly at the instant a radar screen or ground observer picks up an object that cannot be identified.

Most unidentified objects turn out to be simply commercial and private planes that wander outside the avenues of their flight plans.

Poor flying weather contributes to the numbers of false alarms.

Under those conditions, commercial and private pilots are hard-pressed to stay precisely within their flight plan.

The slightest variance immediately classifies the plane as an unidentified object and touches off an alarm at a fighter interceptor base.

Now and then radar is fooled.

Once a radar screen projected a blip that turned out to be three whales lolling in the Atlantic.

Ground observers are most likely to be deceived by reflections of lights against unusual cloud formations or the proximity of a planet like Mars or Venus.

Mars or Venus.

On an average day some 25 or 30 unidentified objects set off preliminary alerts at the guardian bases.

The identity of half of them is cleared in the few minutes before the fighter interceptor is airborne.

Once the plane is aloft, it is hardly seconds before it is alongside and identifies the object.

Either a ringing bell or a moaning horn sends the interceptor pilot and his radar observer scrambling.

Ideally, the pilot dashes from the ready room, sprints across the runway, skips nimbly up a ladder and plops into the cockpit.

A group of F106 pilots—seasoned birdmen who fly the 1,520 m.p.h. Delta Dart—know, however, that it is not always so smooth.

They recalled some of their experiences while here to rewrite the F106 pilots' manual.

They nurse memories of black eyes, cut hands, twisted ankles, broken collar bones and other injuries suffered in

and other injuries suffered in the mad dash to the plane.

One pilot remembers two blackened eyes suffered when an alarm was sounded the first night beds were rearranged in the ready room.

He slammed into a wall instead of the hallway on his run to duty.

Another birdman slashed a hand when he ran full speed into a door, with a glass insert, that refused to open when he banged in the fire bar.

At an Alaskan base one pilot remembers being bruised and battered at the bottom of a firemen's slide pole.

This served to speed the pilots from their second floor ready room to the ground floor.

This airman remembered as soon as he reached the bottom that he did not have on his flying boots. He tried to climb back up the pole but was crushed under a descending rush of other pilots

Forgetting your boots and running out in your stocking-foot—is the most common result of being served

... is the most common result of being roused from a sound sleep to answer an alert, the F106 pilots say.

Sometimes they scramble at home.

One remembers the time his young son got a toy fire engine with a bell.

Taking an afternoon nap at home, the airman came sailing off the bed and bruised his head against the wall when the bell sounded.