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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: NewsFlash: UFO News Sightings

From: Bruce Maccabee <brumac@compuserve.com>
Date: Sun, 8 Nov 1998 22:59:31 -0500
Fwd Date: Mon, 09 Nov 1998 08:42:18 -0500
Subject: Re: NewsFlash: UFO News Sightings

>From: Steven L. Wilson Sr <Ndunlks@aol.com>
>Date: Sat, 7 Nov 1998 17:10:21 EST
>Subject: NewsFlash: UFO News Sightings
>To: updates@globalserve.net

>From: Iam Dorian
>To: <Ndunlks@aol.com> (Researcher Steven L. Wilson, Sr)
>From: Capt AJ 3

> <http://www.bufora.org.uk/times/news/news.htm>

>UFO News Sightings

>UFO News

>New Information or Dis-information?

>WASHINGTON (AP) -- With growing hysteria over alleged UFO
>sightings in the 1950s, the Air Force repeatedly concocted false
>cover stories to hide the fact that their super-secret spy
>planes had been spotted, an intelligence study says. >

>Historian Gerald K. Haines writes that the Air Force, responding
>to alleged UFO sightings during the Cold War years, frequently
>provided explanations that were untrue to deflect attention away
>from the spy planes.

>"Over half of all UFO reports from the late 1950s through the
>1960s were accounted for by manned reconnaissance flights
>(namely the U-2) over the United States," Haines wrote in the
>spring issue of Studies of Intelligence, an unclassified CIA
>journal. The article was found Saturday on the Internet. >>

Deja vue or what?

This was hot news in August of 1997 when the US press
"discovered" the Haines article in "Studied in Intelligence"
that had been published in May 1997.

Oh well, it's still garbage a year later. To see why, read the
following paper:

CIA'S UFO EXPLANATION IS PREPOSTEROUS

by Bruce Maccabee

June 3, 1997

"The CIA's Role in the Study of UFOs, 1947-90" is a recently published article that describes CIA involvement in the history of UFO phenomena. The article, by CIA historian Gerald Haines, is published in the unclassified version of "Studies in Intelligence," a twice-yearly CIA journal (Volume 1, 1997, pg. 67).

The article presents the history of CIA involvement as determined mostly from documents released by the CIA nearly 20 years ago. There is also some updating on CIA activities since the documents were released in December, 1978.

According to the CIA documents, in the early days (late 40's early 50's) the CIA got its UFO information from the Air Technical Intelligence Center at the Air Materiel Command headquartered at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio. This was the "home" of Projects SIGN, GRUDGE and BLUE BOOK (see below). Consequently the CIA was "fed" the conventional AF position on the subject (no evidence of truly new technology; no evidence of a threat). In the late summer of 1952 the CIA investigated Project Blue Book and concluded that it was satisfactory if all one wanted to do was separate explainable sightings from those which were not explainable. However, the CIA analysts were critical of the Air Force for not studying the unexplained sightings to find out the underlying causes of the reports. The CIA evaluated the whole subject and concluded that there might really be something unusual going on. During the fall of 1952 at least one CIA official, Marshall Chadwick, apparently believed that the unexplained sightings were a real mystery. However, before carrying out an in-depth study to be authorized by the National Security Council, he wanted to have a panel of experts review the situation. This panel, which came to be known as the Robertson Panel after its chairman, carried out its review in early 1953. After this review, which basically adopted the AF official position that everything could be explained, the CIA apparently lost interest in the subject.

All of the above has been known for years. However, the new article reveals some information which was still classified Top Secret in December, 1978 when the FOIPA documents were released. According to Mr. Haines' article, when the U-2 high altitude spy plane began flying (first flight on August 4, 1955), CIA project directors discovered that

"commercial pilots and air traffic controllers began reporting a large increase in UFO sightings."

The U-2 is the high altitude spy plane made famous by the 1960 shootdown of Gary Powers as he flew over the Soviet Union and by photos taken from a U-2 of Russian missile sites in Cuba during the "Cuban Missile Crisis."

Mr. Haines has written,

"According to later estimates from CIA officials who worked on the U-2 project and the OXCART (SR-71 or Blackbird) project, over half of all UFO reports from the late 1950's through the 1960's were accounted for by manned reconnaissance flights (namely the U-2) over the United States. This led the Air Force to make misleading and deceptive statements to the public in order to allay public fears and to protect an extraordinarily sensitive national security project.

While perhaps justified, this deception added fuel to the later conspiracy theories and the coverup controversy of the 1970's.

The percentage of what the Air force considered unexplained UFO sightings fell to 5.9 percent in 1955 and to 4 percent in 1956."

This explanation for many ("over half of all") UFO reports has never before been publicized. It was not contained within documents released by the CIA in December, 1978 after a lawsuit filed under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIPA) by Ground Saucer Watch, a civilian UFO organization which ended its activities in the early 1980's.

According to Mr. Haines the U-2 was reported as a UFO because "the early U-2's were silver (they were later painted black) and reflected the rays of the sun, especially at sunrise and sunset. They often appeared as fiery objects to observers below. Air Force BLUE BOOK investigators, aware of the secret U-2 flights, tried to explain away such sightings by linking them to natural phenomena such as ice crystals and temperature inversions. By checking with the Agency's U-2 Project Staff in Washington, BLUE BOOK investigators were able to attribute many UFO sightings to U-2 flights. They were careful, however, not to reveal the true cause of the sighting to the public."

Project BLUE BOOK was the publicly known Air Force effort to collect and explain, if possible, UFO sightings. Any sightings which they could not explain were categorized as unknown. No careful analyses of the unknowns were carried out. Project BLUE BOOK ran from early 1951 through 1969. When it closed BLUE BOOK and its predecessors (Project SIGN, 1948, and Project GRUDGE, 1949-1951) had collected about 13,000 sightings, of which about 700 were left unexplained.

The claim that the U-2 caused "over half of all UFO reports from the late 1950's through the 1960's" is, to put it gently, preposterous. The U-2, with its 80 ft long by 6 ft wide (front to back) wingspan flew at 60-70,000 feet and at that altitude was essentially invisible during the day. It created no contrail because of the lack of moisture at that altitude. It was, after all, designed to be attract little attention from the ground as it flew at a higher altitude than could be attained by any Russian defense missiles! Nevertheless, during the hour before sunrise and the hour following sunset it would be possible for an unpainted aircraft to reflect the sun enough to be visible, perhaps with a reddish glow resulting from the reddening of sunlight (caused by passage of the sunlight through the atmosphere, which acts like a filter that removes blue and green relative to red). High altitude balloons (e.g., Project SKYHOOK) did cause some UFO reports during these times of day and were so identified by the Air Force and civilian investigators. However, only a small fraction of sightings occur during these times. The largest fraction of sightings is at night when the U-2 can't be seen and the next largest fraction is during the daytime.

A check of the Project BLUE BOOK sighting statistics in the "Condon Report" ("Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects," D.S. Gilmor, Ed., Air Force publication, 1968; Bantam edition, 1969, pg. 514), which includes sightings by pilots and air traffic controllers as well as by military personnel and civilians, shows the following numbers of sightings for the six months before to the six months after flights began in early August: Feb - 34, Mar -41, Apr - 33, May - 54, Jun - 48, Jul - 63, Aug - 68, Sep - 57, Oct - 55, Nov - 32, Dec - 25, Jan (1956) - 43. Notice that the August increase of 5 reports over the number in July may have been just a continuation of the overall increase that began in April, 1955. Then the number of reports per month dropped even though the number of U-2 flights increased. The total number of reports during the 6 months before the start of U-2 flights is 273. The total number for the 6 months following the start (Aug - Jan) is 280. Thus there was a $100 \times (7/273) = 2.6\%$ increase in the number of reports following the start of U-2 flights using the six month totals. These numbers are the sum of explained and unexplained sightings and so include U-2 sightings, if any. These statistics suggest that the U-2 was causing no more than a few percent of the sightings (and may have caused NONE of the sightings!). Comparing yearly statistics in the Condon Report we find: 1953 - 509, 1954 - 487, 1955 - 545. In 1956 there was an increase during the summer months with 72 in July, 123 in August and 71 in September which, when added to the nominal rate for the other months (40 to 50 per month) resulted in a total of 670 for the year. The year 1957 had 1005 reports, mostly as a result of the "Sputnik Flap" (103 in October, 361 in November and 136 in December; other months were in the range 40 - 70 reports). Although the number of U-2 aircraft and the number of flights increased during the following years the number of sightings showed no correlation: 1958 - 627, 1959 - 390, 1960 - 557, 1961 - 591, 1962 - 474, etc.

Statistics based on a different set of data are contained within the "U Database" of over 14,000 sightings by Larry Hatch (Larry Hatch Software, 142 Jeter St., Redwood City, CA 94025-1957). This excellent PC based software provides statistics that are based on unexplained sightings recorded by Project BLUE BOOK and by other organizations (civilian UFO groups). If Project BLUE BOOK investigators explained some sightings as the U-2, these sightings would not appear in the list of unexplained BLUE BOOK sightings and hence would not be included in this database. On the other hand, the far larger collection of non-Blue Book sightings in this database could include U-2 sightings, if the CIA is correct, that were not identified by civilian investigators who were unaware of the U-2's existence. Hence a comparison of the sighting statistics before and after U-2 flights started could provide evidence that the U-2 was being reported as a UFO. In this database I find the following:

YEAR/MONTH	Ja	Fe	Ma	Ap	Ma	Ju	Ju	Au	Sep	Oc	Nov	De	TOTAL
1954	13	13	12	17	25	28	18	14	18	4	15	10	187
1955	11	8	9	4	12	11	30	29	12	13	12	6	157
1956	10	11	7	5	13	20	33	43	9	6	12	3	174
1957	3	6	7	3	6	5	12	7	9	10	110	11	189
1958	5	0	4	8	3	5	2	8	4	12	6	1	58

As one can see from the above table, there is no evidence of an increase in monthly sighting rate following the first flight of the U-2 on Aug. 4, 1955. The large increase in November, 1957 occurred just after Sputnik 2 was launched. (This flap is noted for the large number of close-range car-stopping events. Most of the sightings were not sightings of Sputnik itself.)

An even more telling set of statistics uses the sightings which occurred near sunrise or sunset when, according to Mr. Haines, the U-2 would have appeared as a shiny or fiery bright spot in the sky.

TIME 0400 to 0700 (which encompasses the time before sunrise)

(With a time window this wide we get an overestimate of the number of sightings just before sunrise; the time of sunrise varies during the year.) August 1955 is noted by *2*.

YEAR/MONTH

1953	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5
1954	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	7
1955	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	*2*	1	1	1	0	7
1956	0	1	0	1	1	2	6	2	1	0	1	0	15
1957	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	13	1	19
1958	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

TIME 1700 to 2100 (which encompasses the time after sunset)

(With a time window this wide we get an overestimate of the number of sightings just after sunset; local sunset time varies during the year.)

YEAR/MONTH

1953	9	3	2	1	2	3	2	4	6	2	7	3	44
1954	3	2	0	5	5	8	5	2	4	2	4	0	40
1955	5	3	3	0	5	0	10	*7*	2	4	5	2	46
1956	5	1	2	2	2	2	6	12	2	0	3	0	37
1957	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	2	26	3	38
1958	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	10

Clearly there is no statistical support for a sudden increase in the number of sightings at sunrise or sunset when the U-2 started flying. In fact, the number of sightings during the evening time period was lower in August, 1955, than during July.

In the early 1960's many of the U-2s were painted black or other camouflage colors thus reducing the number of U-2's that could potentially be seen by glint reflection from the sun. Hence the probability of seeing one was even less than before.

Aside from the statistics it should be pointed out that many of the unexplained sightings involved relatively nearby, structured objects rather than far distant, nearly invisible points of light. Many of the unidentified objects were reported to move rapidly at apparent (angular) speeds that would far exceed the apparent speed of a U-2 (about 500 mph) flying at 60 - 70,000 ft (the U-2 would seem to move slowly, if seen at all).

The documented history of the agency involvement has been published in "Clear Intent" by Larry Fawcett and Barry Greenwood, In "UFOs, The Public Deceived" by Philip Klass (in my opinion, Phil deceived the public!) in "Above Top Secret" by Timothy Good and most recently in "The FBI-UFO Connection/the REAL X-files" by Bruce Maccabee (available from the author).

The complete CIA history paper is available on the web page of

the Center for the Study of Intelligence at www.odci.gov/csi
(where odci = Office of the Director of Central Intelligence...
shudder!). When you get to the "front page" look under What's
New and then check through the table of contents of Studies in
Intelligence, No. 1, 1997, semiannual unclassified edition.

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