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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

From: Bruce Maccabee <brumac@compuserve.com>
Date: Mon, 7 Jun 1999 12:47:44 -0400
Fwd Date: Tue, 08 Jun 1999 15:57:59 -0400
Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

>From: James Easton <voyager@ukonline.co.uk>
>To: UFO UpDates <updates@globalserve.net>
>Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes
>Date: Sat, 5 Jun 1999 04:19:27 +0100

>Regarding:

>>Date: Fri, 4 Jun 1999 09:25:15 -0400
>>From: Bruce Maccabee <brumac@compuserve.com>
>>Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes
>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>

>Bruce wrote:

>>>Date: Wed, 02 Jun 1999 19:51:19 -0500
>>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>>From: Dennis Stacy <dstacy@texas.net>
>>>Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

>>Regarding Arnold's first sighting... which has been the
>>subject of my discussion... there is no assumption that Arnold
>>was "absolutely incapable of human error." Anyone who thinks
>>there was such an assumption does not understand the nature of
>>the analysis. In fact, the arguments assume that Arnold could
>>have been in error in some places.

>Bruce,

>Surely it's not debatable whether Kenneth Arnold "could" have
>been in error in "some" places, that fact is acknowledged and
>highlighted in your paper - 'The Complete Sighting Report of
>Kenneth Arnold, with Comments and Analysis'.

>>But, let's get down to the crux of the matter: which Arnold
>>statements would you like to reject or modify?>

>We could start with those you have previously accepted!>

>>1) Arnold says he saw flashes of sunlight on his plane. Did he
>>or didn't he? What did he see?

>So far as I can see, this claim didn't surface until Arnold's
>much later book, 'The Coming of the Saucers'.

So far as you can see.....hmmmmm. ..how far can you see?
(Oh, say, can you see.....)

Well, let me quote from Arnold's letter to the Air Force as

found in the Blue Book file: (after searching for the downed military aircraft and then turning east toward Yakima)

" I hadn't flown more than 2 or 3 minutes on my course when a bright flash reflected on my plane. It startled me as I thought I was too close to some other aircraft." Arnold then started looking around, and saw the objects to the north of Rainier, flying southward. "They were approaching Mt. Rainier rapidly and I merely assumed they were jet planes. Anyhow, I discovered that this was where the reflection had come from, as 2 or 3 of them, every few seconds, would dip or change their course slightly, just enough for the sun to strike them at an angle that reflected brightly on my airplane."

Later on he refers to seeing them over the complete time of the sighting:

" I might add that my complete observation of these objects, which I could even follow by their flashes as they passed Mt. Adams, was around two and one half or three minutes....."

>>2) Arnold said the initial flashes came from an area north of >>Mt. Rainier. Did he perhaps get the direction wrong, or is there >>something else?

>Did Arnold state this before it was claimed in his book, or did >he originally and consistently say the objects were first seen >over the slopes of Mount Rainier, for example:

>'Pendleton, Oregon East Oregonian - June 26, 1947'

>"Mr. Arnold reported he was flying east at 2:50 p.m. Tuesday >toward Mt. Rainier when the objects appeared directly in front of >him 25-30 miles away at about 10,000 feet altitude".

>'Norman, Oklahoma Transcript - June 26, 1947'

>"Arnold said the strange aircraft were skittering across the >southwest slope of Mount Rainier when he first sighted them".>

>'Oregon Journal - June 27, 1947'

>"Arnold, general manager and owner of the Great Western Fire >Control Company, said he first saw the objects when they flashed >in the sun low over the slopes of Mt. Rainier".

Thanks for publishing the newspaper versions of the story... please note Maccabee's First Law of Reporting: media in, garbage out...

Anyway, what I quoted above came from his letter to the Air Force written several weeks later. He definitely says the initial sighting direction was to the NORTH of Mt. Rainier.

>>3) Arnold thought the objects were a little higher than he was >>(9,500 ft, vs his 9,200). What do you think the TRUE altitude >>was, if you don't accept Arnold's statement?

>From your detailed analysis, I thought you had determined, "it >appears that they were lower than 6,000 ft and that Arnold >overestimated their altitude".

>Further quoting from your research:

>"These statements about how they flew with respect to the >mountain peaks are very important because they provide >information on the distance from Mr. Arnold. These mountain peaks >lie along a wide north-south line extending southward from Mt. >Rainier to Mt. Adams. These peaks were about 20 miles east of >Arnold at the time. These statements also provide the altitude of >the objects. To Arnold they appeared to be approximately at his >altitude because they seemed to be 'pretty much on the horizon to >me.' Since he was flying at 9,200 ft, this implies that they were >close to that altitude. (Arnold actually stated in his letter that >they were at 9,500 ft.) However, the mountain peaks south of >Rainier generally are 5,000 to 7,000 ft high, with the higher >ones being farther away (more to the east) from Arnold. Hence his >statement that there were higher peaks on the far side of the

>pathway indicates that the objects were definitely lower than
>about 7,000 ft".

>"Is it reasonable to assume that he could have made an error of
>several thousand feet in estimating their altitude? The answer to
>this question lies in the fact that Arnold inferred the altitude
>by observing that the objects appeared to be almost exactly on
>his horizon (i.e., level with his altitude). But it is very
>difficult to determine the exact horizon from an airplane. In
>his case, the angle (the "depression angle") between exact
>horizontal and his downward sighting line to the mountain peaks
>south of Mt. Rainier was very small. The depression angle from
>Arnold's plane at 9,200 ft altitude to the top of a 5,500 ft high
>mountain at a distance of 20 miles (105,600 ft) was about 20.
>Such a small angle would be difficult to detect from an airplane.
>So the answer is yes, he could easily have made an error of 4,000
>ft in estimating the altitude of the objects. Perhaps if he had
>looked up the actual altitudes of the mountain peaks south of Mt
>Rainier he would have revised his statement".

The preceding paragraphs were taken from my paper where I
concluded that the objects were probably at about 5,000 ft. To the
perceptive reader, however, there will be no contradiction
between that previous analysis and the discussion here which is
related to whether or not BIRDS at 5500 ft altitude could have
caused the sighting;

Arnold said that he believed they were at his level. The
interpretation of this statement is that there was at most a
SMALL depression angle, as I calculated in the preceding
analysis. I estimated it at about 2 degrees (written erroneously
as 20 in the above paragraph; figure the angle of 4000 ft drop
over a range of 105,000 ft is 2.2 degrees). Now try to imagine
the situation with BIRDS which would have been MUCH closer. For
example, birds might have been, say as much as 1 mile away

>>4) Arnold described them as "flipping and flashing". If this is
>>not what he saw, then what do you think he saw?

>He also described them as "fluttering and sailing". Would you
>disagree that's consistent with birds and far removed from a
>'craft'?

What counts is the "flashing". Can birds create a flash
like a mirror reflection or a metallic reflection?

>>5) Arnold claimed he looked at his dashboard clock when the first
>>one passed Mt. Rainier.... Did he get the time wrong? If so, by
>>how much?

>Although I can't see it's significant, curiously, he also claimed
>the timing was taken on his watch:

>'Chicago Daily Tribune - June 25, 1947'

>"I took out my watch and checked off one minutes and 42 seconds
>from the time they passed Mount Rainier***".

>'Norman, Oklahoma Transcript - June 26, 1947'

>"I clocked them with a stop watch during the time it took them to
>fly from Mount Rainer to Mount Adams".

>The question is, if Kenneth Arnold's estimate of the objects'
>altitude was in error by some 4,000-5,000 feet - in which case
>the objects were only flying at about half the altitude he
>thought - then how can we have any confidence in his other
>perceptions?

He wasn't in error in stating that the objects were at about his
altitude. As I pointed out, he could well have made an error
of 2 degrees in depression angle, thinking it was actually
horizontal. That 2 degrees translates to 4,000 ft or so at a
distance of 20 miles. However, may I suggest you calculate
what the distance down from the plane would be for birds only 1
mile from the plane at a 2 degree depression angle. (Hint:
birds are at 1/20 of the distance, so at 1/20th of the distance
down from the plane). Can birds fly at nearly 9,000 ft?

>If that was so grossly mistaken, as evidenced in your analysis,
>then it MUST affect all related judgements and estimates.

Sorry.... logical deduction based on incorrect premise. Hence,
wrong.

>>6) Arnold looked again at the clock as the last one passed
>>Rainier.... did he get the time wrong? If so, by how much?

>The timing isn't an issue, it's whether the objects were perhaps
>much closer than he guessed.

True. If you accept his timing.,... then distance (and size)
is everything.

>Obviously the closer these objects actually were, the faster they
>would appear to travel between two distant, fixed points.>

True. And there are other consequences. Such as the
depression angle. Birds 4000 ft below the plane and only 1
mile away are at nearly 40 degree depression angle.

>>7) Arnold said he turned the plane sideways and looked through
>>his open window. At this time he would have been flying south,
>>parallel to the objects. Was he wrong/lying?>

>In that early radio interview, he claimed, "I turned the plane
>around and opened the window".

>When he turned his plane "around" it was during the timing
>exercise and we don't know if he changed direction by 90 degrees,
>180 degrees, or something else.>

Only makes sense to turn to the right. Otherwise would be
flying away from the objects. Window on left, pilot on left...
so turn plane to the right and roll down left window. Head
south.

>What effect might the change of direction have had on his
>perception of the objects' speed and respective distances between
>them, his plane and the mountains?

Well, for one thing, if they were birds he would have realized
within a few seconds that he was gaining on them (Arnold..100 mph
or more; birds - 50 mph or less)

>>The analysis of the Arnold sighting has been carried out with
>>the fulfill realization that Arnold could have been wrong on
>>some fine points. But to get a conventional explanation one has
>>to assume Arnold was wrong on some major points.

>Isn't this the conclusion of your own critique?

Only the incorrect altitude estimate.... which was not
surprising considering the distance of the objects.

>As you remarked:

>"So the answer is yes, he could easily have made an error of
>4,000 ft in estimating the altitude of the objects">

>How can that be a "fine point"?
Explained above.

>Has that analysis examined what Kenneth Arnold reported to the
>press in the days following his sighting?>

>I've been looking at this and note, for example, that the
>'Pendleton, Oregon East Oregonian' newspaper on 26 June reported,
>"Mr. Arnold admitted the angle from which he viewed the objects
>would make difficult precise estimation of their speed...">

Yes, Arnold was honest. From his position nearly 50 mile north
of Mt. Adams he could not be certain exactly when the objects
reached the distance of Mt Adams. So he couldn't be sure of the
exact timing of the objects from Rainier to Adams. He might
have underestimated a bit.

>>If you are going to "complain" that Arnold wasn't perfect, then

>>specify where you think he was wrong and we can argue over
>>whether or not it makes sense in the context of the sighting to
>>assume he was wrong..

>I trust some relevevant points are cited above.
and "demolished" above.

>Kenneth Arnold's original story is a relatively simple tale.

>He observed nine reflective objects which at first he thought
>were geese, because their flight characteristics were similar.

No, he first thought they were jet aircraft. He assumed they
were metallic because of the flashes. Actually his first
thought was that he had gotten too close to some airplane. Then
he looked around and saw flashes froming from north of Rainier.

>Arnold then dismissed this possibility as the objects appeared to
>be travelling too fast, concluding they must instead be
>airplanes.

>Yet Arnold never seems to raise any objections to the objects
>being birds, other than the perceived airspeed. Even in
>subsequent interviews, he doesn't rule out the prospect due to
>what we might have assumed the most obvious conclusion - that
>birds wouldn't be visible if the objects were truly some 20-30
>miles distant.

So far as I know he never considered that they might be birds
even though he compared their flight characteristics with
birds.. which means he could have proposed to himself the bird
hypothesis and rejected it. Arnold referred several times in
his letter to the Air Force to his opinion that they were fast
jets.

>Arnold then decided to take this opportunity to 'clock' the
>airspeed of the 'planes'.

>It's perhaps crucial to appreciate that Arnold only decided to
>carry out this exercise because, as he says in the radio
>interview, "I just thought I'd see how fast they were going,
>since among pilots we argue about speed so much".

Crucial? Only? He thought they were jets. Probably
wondered just how fast the military aircraft could go

>It wasn't a result of Arnold believing the airplanes were
>travelling at an incredible speed. He only concluded that after
>first carrying out a timing between two prominent landmarks and
>then later calculating how far apart those landmarks were in
>conjunction with the 'stop watch' reading.
Wrong. He assumed from the first that they were jets.

>As he timed the objects' - believed to be airplanes - what then
>surprised him was a realisation that they didn't have any
>'tails'.

>However, as Arnold related, he didn't give either this or the
>apparently fast airspeed too much thought at the time.>

It didn't bother him too much while he was flying, even after he
found a time of only 102 seconds from Rainier to adams \
because, as he wrote to the AF, h knew that th army and air
forces had fast aircraft.

>Consequently, he worked out that the distance between the two
>fixed points was some 50 miles and that if the objects had
>travelled that distance, as he thought, in the 1 minute and
>forty seconds recorded, they must have been travelling at an
>unprecedented speed.
This was after he landed.

>If, as you explained in the detailed analysis, Arnold's estimate
>of the objects' altitude was grossly mistaken and that when he
>apparently turned his plane around during this timing exercise,
>we don't know if he changed direction by 90, or 180 degrees, or
>something else, then consequently, there can be surely be no
>confidence in his overall perceptions.

As described above his incorrect estimate of the altitude is
understandable. This has no bearing on the accuracy of his

recall in turning the plane. As for the turn itself, if he turned to the right he would open the left window near him and look out while flying parallel to the objects. Had he turned to the right he would have flown away from them.

No point in turning 180 degrees or 360.

Makes sense for him to turn to the right, whether unknowns or birds. However, if birds he would have realized immediately that he was going faster

>Obviously the closer these 'fluttering' objects actually were,
>the faster they would appear to travel between two distant fixed
>points.

Yes, when flying a "crossing" pattern. And, if Arnold initially saw them toward a direction north of Rainier, then by the time they got right in front of him (and below) they would have been closer.

>When logic kicks in and we consider that the observation was
>wholly subjective, has proven misconceptions and that Kenneth
>Arnold reported a subsequent sighting with similar
>characteristics and which was almost certainly of birds... at
>what point does this remotely become sustainable evidence of
>'alien spacecraft'?

When logic kicks in and one attempts to formulate a reasonable reconstruction based on Arnold (traveling 100 mph or faster at 9,200 ft) and birds (traveling 50 mph or slower at 5,000 ft) one finds it just doesn't work. Arnold would have gotten close enough to recognize birds by their shapes and by their lower speed and lower altitude.

Sorry.... this pelican has its bellyful.

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