Approved for Release 2026

~~SECRET~~
~~Security Information~~

14 August 1952

BEST COPY
AVAILABLE

FLYING SAUCERS

During the past weeks, with the phenomenal increase in the number of Flying Saucer reports there has been a tremendous stimulation of both public and official interest in the subject. Requests for information have poured in on the Air Force, including an official query from the White House. Finally, on July 29, General Samford held a press conference in which he stated, that analysis showed "no pattern of anything remotely consistent with any menace to the United States;" that recent Washington sightings were possibly due to "temperature inversions," others to ionized clouds, ice formations, etc.; that instrumentation would be emphasized henceforth in the Air Force study. He emphatically stated that the unexplained sightings could not have resulted from any experiments or tests conducted by the United States.

At this point, eOSI felt that it would be timely to make an evaluation of the Air Force study, its methodology and coverage, the relation of its conclusions to various theories which have been propounded, and to try to reach some conclusion as to the intelligence implications of the

~~SECRET~~
~~Security Information~~

Approved for Release 2026

problem -- if any. In view of the wide interest within the Agency, this briefing has been arranged so that we could report on the survey. It must be mentioned that outside knowledge of Agency interest in Flying Saucers carries the risk of making the problem even more serious in the public mind than it already is, which we and Air Force agree must be avoided.

In order to supply both breadth and depth to the survey we have reviewed our own intelligence, going back to the Swedish sightings of 1946; reviewed a large number of individual official reports, recent press and magazine coverage and the main popular books. Indexes of the Soviet press were scanned. We interviewed a representative of Air Force Special Study Group. Following this, we spent a day at Wright Field in a thorough discussion with the officers conducting the ATIC study, and finally we took the problem to a selected group of our own consultants, all leaders in their scientific fields.

From all this, we have come up with facts, theories, explanations and some conclusions which we will cover in a brief summary of Flying Saucers history, an analysis of the ATIC work, and a discussion of the

Approved for Release 2026

explained sightings and of possible theories regarding the unexplained. We make no recommendations of action. We would ask that questions be held till the end.

The Saucer furore in this country started in June 1947 when Kenneth Arnold, a reputable business man flying his own plane reported nine discs flying in formation past Mount Rainier at an estimated speed of 1000 miles per hour. This was quickly followed in early July 1947 by reports from a doctor in Phoenix, Arizona, the pilot and co-pilot of a United Air Liner at Boise, Idaho, and field staff members at Muroc Test Base, California. The public was somewhat preconditioned by the earlier Swedish reports of unidentified rockets and the press had a field day. Among the continuing and increasing mass of reports over the months, three further incidents which received wide publicity might be mentioned as they did much not only to maintain interest but also to supply bases for some of the more fantastic theories. In January 1948, an interception was attempted at Godman Field Kentucky and the pilot -- Captain Mantell -- crashed and was killed. In October 1948, a National Guard fighter pilot at Fargo, North Dakota -- Lt. Gorman -- coming in after dark spotted a

Approved for Release 2026

moving light below him -- also seen from the field — and for twenty minutes put on a dog-fight with it, finally, being outdistanced at 17,000 feet. The third incident occurred in April 1949 at White Sands Proving Ground when a Navy Commander, tracking a missile flight by theodolite, watched two discs maneuvering at high speed around the test rocket. Three such sightings were made at White Sands within a month.

Meanwhile in 1948, Air Force initiated Project Saucer to study the phenomena, issued a preliminary report in April 1949 and in December 1949 released sections of its secret report to the press. The conclusion was that the sightings stemmed from three causes:

1. Mass hysteria
2. Hallucination and hoax
3. Misinterpretation of known objects

This satisfied much of the public but not certain sensational writers. The resulting highly speculative books and magazine articles combined with continued reports of sightings built up such a resurgence of public interest that Air Force, early in 1951, reopened its study, instituted a world-wide reporting system, and alerted its bases to intercept the

Approved for Release 2026

unidentified objects. Planes had orders not to shoot.

Now, let's examine for a moment what all these people claim to have seen. Grouped broadly as visual, radar, and combined visual and radar, ATIC has two major visual classes — first, spherical or elliptical objects, usually of bright metallic lustre, some small (2 or 3 feet across), most estimated at 100 foot diameter and a few 1000 feet wide. There are variants in this group, such as torpedos, triangulars, pencils, even mattress-shapes. These are all daylight reportings.

The second visual group, all night reporting, consists of lights and various luminosities, such as green, flaming-red or blue-white fire balls, moving points of light, and luminous streamers.

Both categories are reported as single objects, in non-symmetrical groups and in formations of varying numbers.

Reported characteristics include three general levels of speed: hovering; moderate, as with a conventional aircraft; and stupendous, up to 18,000 miles per hour in the White Sands incident. Violent maneuvering was reported in somewhat less than 10%. Accelerations have been given as high as 20 g's. With few exceptions, there has been a

Approved for Release 2026

complete absence of sound or vapor trail. Evasion upon approach is common.

Radars have shown many unidentified "blips" but there is no reported instance of complete tracking in and out of the maximum drume and no report of a track from station to station. The blip, in almost every case, passed through the center of the scope.

In combined visual and radar sightings, I might mention as illustrations three specific reportse

First, a visual sighting from a plane over Sandy Hook coincident with a blip seen on a ground radar at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

Second, a recent Far East report from an aircraft carrier operating between southern Korea and Honshu. Here ships radar reported a high speed target approaching from the north. Observers on the bridge picked it up visually as a plane. When still far out, it did a superspeed 180° turn and shortly thereafter split in two, disappearing both visually and in the PPI scopes.

The third occurred a few days ago at Wright Field and has not yet been fully analyzed. Two F-94's with camera guns were vectored in on

Approved for Release 2026

BEST COPY
Available

Approved for Release 2026

DRAFT

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTIVE

SUBJECT: Unidentified flying objects

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 102 of the National Security Act of 1947 and for the purposes annunciated in Paragraphs d and e thereof, the National Security Council hereby authorizes and directs that:

1. The Director of Central Intelligence shall formulate and carry out a program of intelligence and research activities required to solve the problem of instant positive identification of unidentified flying objects.

2. This effort shall be coordinated with the military services and the Research and Development Board of the Department of Defense, with the Psychological Strategy Board and other Governmental agencies as appropriate.

3. Upon call of the Director of Central Intelligence, Government departments and agencies shall provide assistance in this program of intelligence and research to the extent of their capacity provided, however, that the DCI shall avoid duplication of activities presently directed toward the solution of this problem.

4. The Director of Central Intelligence shall disseminate information concerning the program of intelligence and research activities in this field to the various departments and agencies which have authorized interest therein.

3

Approved for Release 2026

a blip. Both pilots sighted an object and one locked on with his AI equipment. Reaching his maximum allowable altitude, he triggered his camera and the negative shows "an object."

Since 1947, there have been about 1500 official reports of sightings plus an enormous volume of letters, phone calls and press reports. During this July alone, official reports totalled 250. Of the 1500, ATIC carries 20% as unexplained and of those received since the first of this year, 28%. ~~They feel that the latter figure might be reduced to 10% on the basis of more information or fuller investigation.~~

Now to shift away from Air Force for a moment and into the public domain, there are four major theories in explanation of the Flying Saucer.

First, that it is a U.S. Secret weapon development. This has been denied officially at the highest level of government and to make doubly certain we queried Dr. Whitman, Chairman of the Research and Development Board. On a Top Secret basis, he, too, denies it. However, in the light of the Manhattan District early super security, two factors might be mentioned which tend to confirm the denials - first, the official action of alerting all Air Force commands to intercept, and second, the unbelievable risk aspect of such flights in established airlanes.

Approved for Release 2026

[redacted] Security Information

The second theory is that these are a Russian development. Though we know that the Russians have done work on elliptical and delta wing principles, we have absolutely no intelligence of such a technological advance as would be indicated here in either design or energy source. Further, there seems to be no logical reason for the security risk which would be involved and there has been no indication of a reconnaissance pattern. However, it should be mentioned that there is a totally unsupported thesis that this may be a Russian high altitude development of the World War II Jap balloon effort using preset flares and the resulting US press reports to check flight tracks.

The third theory is the man from Mars -- space ships -- inter-planetary travellers. Even though we might admit that intelligent life may exist elsewhere and that space travel is possible, there is no shred of evidence to support this theory at present. There have been no astronomical observations in confirmation — no slightest indication of the orbitting which would probably be necessary — and no tracking. However, it might be noted that Comdr. Mc Laughlin (of the White Sands report), a number of General Mills balloon people

[redacted]

Approved for Release 2026

and many others are reported to be convinced of this theory.

The fourth major theory is that, now held by the Air Force, that the sightings, given adequate data, can be explained on the basis either of:

Misinterpretation of known objects, or of as yet little understoodo natural phenomena.

So much for the history of the problem. B-3 will now pick up with an analysis of the Air Force study.