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**INTELLIGENCE
REVIEW**

Number 47

9 Jan 1947



RECORDED

20 JAN 1947

INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, WDGS

WAR DEPARTMENT • WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Authority NND 58658

By BKT, NARA, Date 6/16/26

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FEATURE SECTION

"GHOST ROCKETS" OVER SCANDINAVIA

Flying missiles were first reported over southern Sweden in late May 1946 by the press, which gave the missiles the name of "Ghost Rockets." In June, the missiles also had been reported over Finland and Denmark. By July, the number of sightings over Sweden had greatly increased, and several also had been reported over Norway. The great majority of these reports were made by untrained observers and, as would be expected, varied widely in the description of the actual missiles as well as, of their course, altitude, and speed.

Descriptions of the Missile

The two most common descriptions of the missiles were "a ball of fire with a tail" and a "shiny cigar-shaped object." The reported direction of flight covered all points of the compass, with a northerly direction being slightly predominant. Variations in altitude ranged from treetop height to 160,000 feet, the higher altitudes almost exclusively being reported from Finland. Speeds reported were from 65 m. p. h. to "lightning fast," with the majority described as having great or very great speed. The missiles generally have been described in horizontal flight; a few have been reported as diving into the ground or into lakes, or exploding in the air. In no case have fragments been found other than bits of material described as "nonmetallic slag."

One of the few reports available from an individual who should be more reliable and competent than the average

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layman is that of a Swedish Air Force pilot. On 14 August, at 1000 hours, he was flying at 650 feet over central Sweden when he saw a dark, cigar-shaped object about 50 feet long and 3 feet in diameter flying 200 feet above and approximately 6,500 feet away from him at an estimated speed of 400 m. p. h. The missile had no visible wings, rudder, or other projecting part; and there was no indication of any flame or light as has been reported in the majority of other sightings. His report states that the missile was maintaining a constant altitude over the ground and, consequently, was following the large features of the terrain. The last statement casts doubt on the reliability of the entire report because of the inability of a missile, without wings, to maintain a constant altitude over hilly terrain. However, the pilot does imply that there may have been wings which he was unable to see, because he stated that it could not have been a Swedish jet plane as there was none flying in the vicinity at that time.

The Scandinavian press, with the exception of the Communist papers, initially reported the incidents in some detail and openly attributed them to missiles fired by the U. S. S. R. In August, a partial censorship was imposed on the press, restricting the publication of exact details or localities where missiles were seen. The Communist press has continued to ridicule the entire matter and claims that there was no basis for the reports that the missiles were of Soviet origin. In fact, a charge was made that they came from the United States and that Gen. Doolittle was sent over to observe the effects of the missiles!

Official Investigations

Official investigations of these reports were begun by the Swedish authorities in June. The Defense Staff requested the public to report any unusual observations, and by the

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end of July almost 1,000 such reports had been received. The investigation has been carried out by the Swedish Defense Staff in a very peculiar manner. In the beginning, many of the key personnel were on summer leave, and they were not recalled to deal with the problem. Spokesmen for the Defense Staff repeatedly have told the United States Military Attaché that they definitely believed there were rockets over Sweden, and that they were launched by the Soviets from Peenemünde on the German Baltic coast. However, they have not been able to produce any evidence to support these statements. To date, no United States military or naval personnel in Sweden have seen any fragments, points of impact, or other direct evidence to prove that guided missiles have appeared over Sweden.

The official communiqués issued to the press by the Defense Staff have not reflected the same tone as the statements made by individual officers in conversations. In fact, the communiqués themselves have varied. The last one, issued on 10 October, very strongly indicated that the great majority of the reported incidents were of celestial origin, which is a complete change from the one of 6 August when it was reported that, except in a few cases, they could not be meteorites.*

Attitude of Swedish Officials

To arrive at any definite conclusion from the conflicting evidence available on these reported missiles is impossible. The contradictory attitude of Swedish officialdom would tend to indicate that it was doing very little to arrive at a definite conclusion, perhaps for political purposes. The complete change in attitude between the communiqués issued on

* In September and October, flying objects were reported over widely separate points in Europe and Africa, including Belgium, Greece, Italy, Morocco, and Austria. In the main, these reports have not been confirmed and appear to be due to explainable causes, such as meteors or *Very* flares, fireworks, etc.

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6 August and 10 October indicates that the Swedish Staff was trying to minimize the entire matter which had grown to such a size that the Staff was afraid of its having official repercussions on Swedish-Soviet relations.

Conclusions

The Soviets are known to be working on various guided missiles. They have the ability to produce, and probably have tested, missiles of the V-1 type. Without warheads and with slightly improved motors, these missiles could have a range of 500 miles, and are the only available German missiles believed capable of horizontal flight at low altitudes. There is some evidence that such work has been carried out at Stolp (in Polish-administered Germany) or on the Baltic islands of Oesel or Dago. Three of the people reporting sightings have mentioned the noise of an outboard motor, a characteristic of the impulse duct motor used on the V-1 by the Germans; and one of them stated that what he saw looked like the V-1 he had seen over London during the war. Others have reported little or no sound, a condition which may indicate the use of a turbo-jet instead of a pulse-jet.

The best evidence, at present, is that there have been only 2 or 3 real incidents, perhaps as many as 5 or 10, of low-flying missiles of the V-1 type. The high-altitude missiles reported seem definitely to have been meteors or fireworks. The Swedish Defense Staff probably has taken advantage of the situation for political purposes and allowed the newspapers to make a big story out of the missiles, without admitting that the Staff had any evidence to indicate that there actually were any such missiles. This was done at a time when the Swedish public was demanding reductions in defense expenditures.

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