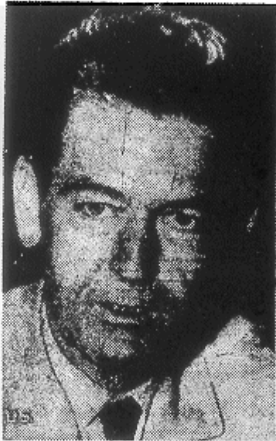


# 'Saucers' Are Natural Phenomena, U. S. Air Force Data Indicate



—Associated Press Wirephoto (left) and United Press Telephoto.

**MAJ. GEN. JOHN A. SAMFORD**, director of Air Force intelligence. Picture at right was taken by a plane spotter at an observation station in Jersey City. Glowing mass is said to be the saucer which is reported to have hurtled over New York City Monday night.

## Experts Answer Questions on Reported Objects to Avert Mass Hysteria.

By **BRIG. GEN. THOMAS R. PHILLIPS, U.S.A. (Retired)**, Military Analyst of the Post-Dispatch.

WASHINGTON, July 30—The Air Force barred all its secrets in respect to "flying saucers" yesterday with the result that all except a few diehards will be convinced that the reports of unexplained objects and lights in the sky are due to natural phenomena.

Harassed by questions concerning a new series of reports of sightings and radar blips over Washington, and fearful of incipient mass hysteria, the Air Force brought its principal "saucer" experts to Washington and, in a press conference conducted by Maj. Gen. John A. Samford, chief of intelligence, and Maj. Gen. Roger Ramey, chief of operations, answered every question posed fully and without equivocation.

### Results of Conference.

At the end of an hour and 20 minutes of exchange between reporters and the Air Force experts the following points had been made:

None of the sightings indicates the presence of a missile or object that is a menace to the United States.

The sightings are not due to any secret weapon being experimented with by the United States.

None of the sightings reported in the last five years has revealed the presence of a material flying object, except where the observer has seen United States airplanes or missiles and has mistaken them for something else.

Radar is more capable than the human eye of playing tricks by producing blips from non-existent objects.

The latest series of reports has been centered on Washington. On July 20, both the Andrews Field radar and the CAA radar at Washington Airport picked up an apparent object about three miles north of Riverdale. On July 27, beginning at 9:58 p.m., the CAA radar picked up between four and twelve unidentified objects. Again, in the early morning of July 28, further objects were reported.

**Two Fighters Sent Up.** The Air Force sent up two fighter-interceptors at 11:25 p.m. July 27. These appeared on the radar scope and were vectored in on several of the unknowns. One of the jet pilots reported sighting four lights approximately 10 miles in front of him. He reported he had no apparent closing speed and they disappeared before he could overtake them.

Later the same pilot reported sighting what he described as a "steady white light," but this disappeared within a minute.

The radar operator fixed the position of the light as about 10 miles north of Mount Vernon. The pilot said the light was about five miles ahead of his aircraft.

Two additional jet aircraft were in the area until 2:20 a.m., but no further contacts, either visual or radar, were reported.

The sightings in the Washington area were the most completely authenticated reports received so far. The contacts were made both visually and by radar, and one, at least, was reported at about the same time by two radar stations. However, the two radar reports on the object were not timed accurately enough to obtain a fix by resection or to make certain that the same object appeared in both scopes.

Washington is completely surrounded by radar stations which track into the area all approaching aircraft. It is significant that no reports which could provide a track had been received.

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## 'SAUCERS' NATURAL PHENOMENA, SAYS U. S. AIR FORCE

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from outlying radar stations. The objects just appeared in the vicinity of Washington and disappeared.

The explanation given by the Air Force scientists is that the objects or lights sighted were probably due to natural phenomena. In the hot-humid weather in Washington during the past two weeks the familiar atmospheric condition of temperature inversion has been present. This is a condition where a cold layer of air is superimposed on the hot ground layer. Temperature inversion is the cause of mirages. Scientists are not in full agreement whether temperature inversion can cause reflection of ground lights. About half of them contend that it does and about half disagree.

There is full agreement, however, that it can cause reflections of ground objects which can be picked up by radar.

### Test Made by Pilot.

In one instance, a night fighter locked his radar beam on such a reflected object and followed it until he realized, just in time, he was heading for the ground and recovered before a crash.

One naval battle was fought in the Pacific with radar sightings against a completely nonexistent enemy.

There is no question about the validity of the sightings around Washington, but it is the opinion of the experts that they were caused by temperature inversion.

The Air Force commenced its investigation of "flying saucers" and other sightings in 1947, placing the responsibility on the Air Technical Intelligence Center at Wright-Patterson Field, Ohio.

At the end of two years' study, the responsibility was placed in normal staff channels. There have been more than a thousand reports since 1947, including radar and ground and air observations, both military and civilian.

### 100 Reports a Month.

The Air Force has attempted to investigate any substantial reports by competent observers. Reports are now coming in at the rate of 100 a month. They increase after magazine stories, such as the ones in Life and Look recently.

Misunderstanding of various natural objects, meteorological phenomena, comets, stars, etc., and hoaxes account for about 62 per cent of the reports.

Because of lack of detail, the absence of facts on which to base an investigation, about 23 per cent are unexplained.

A further 25 per cent of credible reports cannot be explained as due to natural causes, such as the presence of aircraft, balloons or missiles. These unexplained sightings have not followed any definite pattern, either geographical or otherwise.

The fact that they are unexplained has been given more weight than is justified, however. They could have been caused by various forms of natural phenomena which are not understood. "Unexplained" means merely that they cannot be accounted for by the presence of aircraft or balloons or other objects in the air which are known.

The Air Force takes the reports seriously since the Air Force is responsible for the safety of the air space above the United States. At the same time the Air Force experts state that there is no evidence of any growing or disappearing menace to the United States.

Investigations will be continued giving "adequate, but not frantic" attention to the problem.

### Lighted Balloons Used.

There are more than 1000 balloon launching sites in the United States. These send up from four to 10 balloons each daily. The project Moby Dick, which launches balloons for upper air research, sends out lighted balloons at night which reach altitudes of from 50,000 to 100,000 feet. The balloons are strongly enough lighted by batteries so that they can be followed without confusing them with stars. They can be seen as far as 12 miles by the naked eye. Probably such balloons gave rise to the "saucer" idea. With the right light, they would have the appearance of a saucer rather than a sphere.

### 200 Cameras Ordered.

In an effort to identify the source of the lights being reported the Air Force has ordered 200 diffraction cameras. These are cameras with a diffraction grid which breaks down light into its components. Pictures of unexplained lights made with the cameras will enable scientists to determine whether the light is from a comet, an electric source, a star or a gaseous reflection.

It is noteworthy, however, that astronomers, who are constantly photographing the skies, have never reported the discovery of an unexplained outside object.

Reports of phenomena such as are agitating the United States now have been prevalent from Biblical times. They were especially numerous in Europe in 1848. Air Force officials, privately and not for quotation, put no faith in the theory that any objects from space or other countries are reaching the United States.

In the last five years, "flying saucers" have been reported seen over Australia, England, Italy, Manchuria, France, Greece, Japan, Canada, Turkey, Korea and Argentina.

Persons who said they witnessed flights of the saucers offered varying descriptions of what they saw. Most startling came from a London bus conductor in 1950, who reported that he saw a saucer directly over his bus, carrying "lots of little men with ginger hair inside."

Gen. Carl E. Spaatz, former chief of staff of the Air Force, when asked his opinion of "flying saucers," said:

"I have also known men who have seen pink elephants."

### Weather, Radar Experts Dispute Air Force Theory.

WASHINGTON, July 30 (INS)—Radar experts and weather scientists today declined to endorse the Air Force theory that "flying saucers" are ground objects reflected in the sky under freak atmospheric conditions.

Government radar men at the Washington National Airport, where mysterious objects have been tracked three times in the last two weeks, maintained that what they have seen were "unknown objects," twisting and swerving in an unexplainable pattern.

The United States Weather Bureau, while conceding that a "temperature inversion" has existed during the current hot spell, took issue with the theory expounded by Maj. Gen. John A. Samford, Air Intelligence chief.

A Weather Bureau official said reflections due to such an inversion ordinarily would appear on a radar screen as a steady line, rather than as single objects as were sighted on the airport radarscope.

## Einstein 'Not Curious' About 'Flying Saucers.'

LOS ANGELES, July 30 (AP)—Physicist Albert Einstein is serenely unconcerned about "flying saucers."

Evangelist Louis A. Gardner wrote Einstein at Princeton to ask his opinion. Einstein replied: "These people have seen something (underlined). What it is I do not know and I am not curious to know."

This was the extent of his reply, typewritten on stationery with the letterhead of the institute for advanced study, school of mathematics, Princeton, N.J. The Rev. Mr. Gardner, an interdenominational evangelist, said he asked Einstein whether "saucers" originated in outer space, coming from Mars or Venus, or if they are products of military rivals or the United States Air Force.