

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

1100(CDT); FRI; 25 JULY 1969

SUBJECT: UFO Report; or: (Chapter II in Current Credulity, Imbecility, Gullibility and/or Hysteria of the Under-30s (U)

TO: ADF

1. At approx 1000(CDT), WED, 23 July 1969, undersigned received a telephone call from an airman, this AFB, wishing to report a UFO seen by him and another airman. Arrangements made for both of them to come to ADF at 1500 same date. Both reported at 1504 and were interviewed by undersigned.

2. The two (2) USAF airmen were:

a. ALC JAMES [REDACTED], (SN: [REDACTED]; SSAN: [REDACTED], [REDACTED]; age: 24; college graduate; BA in Psychology, Bloomfield College, Bloomfield, New Jersey, June 1967. Duty: Site Development Specialist/Surveyor; AFSC: 55330 (8 [REDACTED]).

b. Airman (E-2) [REDACTED], (SN: [REDACTED]; SSAN: [REDACTED]); [REDACTED]; age: 20; completion of two (2) years, Miami Dade Junior College, Miami, Florida, majoring in architecture; June, 1968. Duty: Draftsman; AFSC 22330 ([REDACTED]).

3. Brief Summary:

a. Both stated that on TUES, 22 July 1969, they were returning from Miami, Florida in a 1959 automobile owned by [REDACTED]. At approx 0200(CDT), (0300/EDT for the locality), the car, heading West on U S Highway 98 towards Eglin AFB, "stalled somewhere between Carabelle and Apalachicola," Florida; (approx 2848N; 8445W).

b. Both claimed they saw a round UFO, white-colored, circular shape of half-dime size, with "lighted wings" in an inverted-V extending from it, to the ESE (azimuth approx 110-115). Neither could estimate altitude. They stated that it was generally "stationary" for the next two (2) hours but occasionally moved slightly to the left, to the right, upwards and downwards, in 90-degree motions, then returning to its position "beneath, above, or to the edge of a stationary cloud, oval in shape." Both were unable to estimate the size of the cloud and insisted that it remained stationary for 2.5 hours while other scattered clouds drifted in from South to North, culminating in a thunder-storm around dawn (0500-0530). They estimated angle-of-elevation 50-60 degrees above the horizon for the UFO.

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c. Although in the USAF, neither had ever heard of a ceilometer. ALC [REDACTED], the college graduate, seriously made the statement to me: "Of course, no planet is visible to the naked eye." I spent a minute enlightening him re: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, to say nothing of the planet Terra (Earth).

d. Both airman were aware of a lighthouse near Carabelle, and surprising me, identified it as a lighthouse, instead of as a second UFO.

e. Both reported no aircraft flying, negative sound from the UFO; one reported seeing two (2) meteorites fall, in the South (over Gulf). Both had been traveling, with stops only for gasoline, meals, etc., since 1100(EDT), MON, 21 July 1969, from Miami, Florida, Sans sleep.

f. Both stated, in effect, that "because the inverted-v-shape UFO mystified" them, they felt it to be their "duty to report it . . . we want to know what it was to satisfy ourselves."

g. I refrained from advising them that, if their curiosity is aroused, they should have remained in the Apalachicola area, that morning, and queried the local police, newspaper, etc.

h. The interview with the two (2) airmen required an hour of my time, 1504(CDT) to 1610(CDT), WED, 23 July 1969.

4. Action Taken: by UFO Investigating Officer, Eglin AFB:

a. On THURS, 24 July 1969, I used-up just under seven (7) hours of time, neglecting more important duties and work, on this UFO, including the making of eight (8) long-distance telephone calls (AUTOVON and commercial trunk), charged to Eglin AFB. These calls are briefly summarized below.

(1) Tyndall AFB, Florida (899-1530; Ext 6104), to the Wing Intelligence Officer, an ADC Wing. I spoke to a Major Tumulty and a WAF Sgt Fox. Negative information, from both, on any Tyndall AFB actions in the area of UFO sighting. Sgt Fox, at my request, gave me the telephone number (Port St. Joe telephone system) for the US Coast Guard LORAN Station, Cape SAN BLAS, (near Apalachicola and Eglin AFB Site D-3), Florida.

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(2) USCG LORAN Station, Cape San Blas (AC 904; 227-4001). I interviewed ET/2 JAMES STENGELE for approx seven (7) minutes. Gist: "We are approx 55 miles W of Carabelle and 24 miles WNW of Apalachicola. We have a lighthouse, near here, with revolving beacon. Our station has Standing Lights (Flood-lights) around it, in the shape of an upright-V. We have no airfield or ceilometers." At my request, he gave me the telephone number of the USCG Station, Apalachicola, Florida.

(3) USCG Station, Apalachicola (AC: 904; 653-3661). (Two telephone calls, first of approx four minutes; second of one minute). I interviewed EM/2 ROBERT FERGUSON. Gist: "We have a lighthouse, rotating beacon, at 100' - 120' AMSL, a few miles east of our station. We have no airfield or ceilometers. Recommend you telephone the Army Landing Field in Apalachicola" giving me the telephone number.

(4) US Army Aviation Test Board, Apalachicola. (Possesses a few small, light aircraft, including helicopters; CO, USA Lt Col; 3 officers; approx 35 EM) (AC: 904; 653-8831). I interviewed the CO, Lt Colonel HAWTHORN, who mentioned, inter alia:

a. "We have flown no aircraft in days. We have a small landing strip, without ceilometers or searchlights. Sometimes Tyndall AFB aircraft fly in, at low altitudes, over the Gulf. However, there is an inhabited island, St. George Island, paralleling the coast for 6-to-8 miles, off-shore, between Carabelle and Apalachicola, connected to the mainland by a draw-bridge, a toll bridge. Frequently, the local sheriff has to chase motorists who fail or refuse to pay the two-dollar toll. Suggest that you telephone Sheriff Taylor, Franklin County, at Apalachicola. He lives near there at East Point and may know if searchlights were used on the island that night." He gave me the number.

b. Lt Colonel Hawthorn also informed me that neither he nor anyone in his command had observed, or been informed of, anything resembling the reported UFO that night. We spoke for approx ten (10) minutes.

(5) While waiting for my call to be put through to Sheriff Taylor, I telephoned the Security Officer (Mr. Weaver), Vitro Services, Eglin AFB, to obtain the telephone number and name of person to whom I should speak, at Eglin AFB (Vitro-operated) Site D-3, near Cape SAN BLAS. He recommended that I speak to Mr. JOHN HANSON, Site Chief. I spoke to Mr. DANNY MADDOX, Assistant Site Chief. He informed:

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negative airstrip, searchlights, ceilometer, unusual tests or airborne flares or lights, negative tethered aerial balloons with lights: (I had also inquired, on all of these possibilities, of each of the persons interviewed by me, above and below).

(6) Franklin County, Florida Sheriff, Apalachicola, (AC: 904; 653-5271). In the absence of Sheriff Taylor, I interviewed Deputy Sheriff JOE SILVA, for approx fifteen (15) minutes. He replied negatively on all of my suggested possibilities. However, when I fully described the "inverted-V" lights on the clouds, their estimated approximate size, etc., he informed me: "I know exactly what they are. I have seen them hundreds of times in the past few years. They are powerful searchlights, mounted on tugboats, pulling barges along the intra-coastal waterways, between St. George Island and the mainland. As they approach a draw-bridge, at night or during dark days, they shine the searchlights to signal the keepers of the draw-bridge to open. Sometimes, if anchored for the night, they shine their searchlights upwards at low-hanging clouds, either with one tugboat's two searchlights inter-secting at an apex on a cloud, or with single searchlights of two tugboats doing so." I thanked him, profusely; both of us agreed that this seemed, about 98% so, the logical explanation, viz: the only other possibility: the planet VENUS, with rays distorted by drifting wisps of cloud, air-currents, etc.

b. In the course of trying to obtain AUTOVON numbers for USCG Stations along the Gulf of Mexico, I called the Autovon "Pre-Emption" Operator; (8867; 0), Rockdale, Georgia, who informed me that the small USCG stations were not on AUTOVON circuits.

5. Conclusions:

a. I telephoned ALC I [REDACTED] and informed him, briefly, of the gist of sub-paras 4a(1) through 4a(5) above, and, in greater detail, re: sub-para 4a(6). He accepted the obvious solution of sub-para 4a(6). I then inquired if he wished me to proceed in reporting the UFO, or if he wished to withdraw it. He insisted on "leaving it up to" me. I, equally, insisted that AFR 80-17 did not permit me to decide it, that I needed his "Aye" or "Nay."

b. Finally, somewhat reluctantly, he agreed to withdraw his UFO report, re-emphasizing that he and Airman [REDACTED] felt that it was their "duty to report it."

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c. I, politely and in a kindly (I think) manner, informed ALC [redacted] of a few "facts of life," in hopes that he would avoid future impetuous leaps-to-conclusion. I reminded him, inter alia:

(1) There is, practically always, a logical and prosaic explanation for almost everything, if one's curiosity is so aroused as to cause one to inquire, read or study, and/or look further.

(2) Anyone stationed at Eglin AFB, a Base devoted to tests, experiments etc with flares, aircraft, rockets, missiles, searchlights, balloons etc., should never be surprised by unusual aerial phenomena. Eglin AFB has test-sites along the Gulf down to the Tampa areas.

(3) In consideration of the most astounding event in history, Sunday evening, 20 July 1969, when two Americans landed on, walked on and were photographed by television, on the Moon, to be seen and heard 1.65 seconds later on the Earth, none of us should interpret anything unusual to our personal ken as a UFO.

(4) We can depend on NORAD radars and other facilities to report on any so-called UFOs, and to investigate them.

(5) Re: his somewhat-plaintive, "We had never seen anything like it before; it was our duty to inform someone," I politely informed him that I had never seen a brain surgery performed, but that if I glanced into a hospital window, and saw a surgeon causing blood to spurt from someone's head, I would not inform the police that I suspected that a murder was being committed. I also politely reminded him of the dictum of the late U S Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: "My personal liberties do not permit me to cry 'Fire' in a crowded theater, especially if I'm not sure there is a fire."

d. Aside from the cost of eight (8) long-distance telephone calls, the undersigned used (misused) a grand total of approximately eight (8) duty-hours, the equivalent of one day's full salary paid by the DOD to me, on this matter.

4. Recommendations:

a. That the USAF begin to discourage impetuous UFO reports, from the civilian populace, on the basis of sub-para 5c(3) and 5c(4), above.

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b. That the USAF and DOD begin warning its military personnel that time-consuming and money-wasting reports of UFO sightings may be punishable by Article 15, UCMJ and/or Summary Courts-Martial.

Ben Z M Gershater

BEN Z M GERSHATER
UFO Investigating Officer, Eglin AFB, Fla.

Cy to: FTD (TDPT/UFO) ✓
ADE (Lt Col Keefe)
ADPX (Lt Col Beatty)

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

The above explains, reasonably-completely without going into excruciatingly-exquisite detail, the fiasco for this Unidentified Flying Object which now becomes another Unidentified Filing Object in ADFS files. A copy is being sent to the Command Post (ADPX) for info, since most UFOs are first reported to it and/or to an SDO in it. A copy is being sent to the PIO, Lt Col Keefe (ADE), in case the Franklin County Sheriff's office leaks this one to news-media in NW Florida. A copy is being sent to the UFO office, FTD, W-P AFB, Ohio, since it has no knowledge of this one. On the previous UFO, 2 July 1969, the ADPC Command Post had informed the FTD Ditto; when a week had passed with no UFO Report from ADF, FTD (TDPT/UFO) telephoned me and I informed re: the "silver-colored, cone-shaped kite over the Town and Country Shopping Center, Pensacola, stationary in broad daylight, at 1900(CDT)." Otherwise, self-explanatory.

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O-i-C, "Out-of-this-World" Hallucinations

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