

Office Memorandum •

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

DATE: January 10, 1949

TO : DIRECTOR FBI

FROM : SAC KNOXVILLE
CC McSwainSUBJECT: "FLYING SAUCERS" OBSERVED OVER
OAK RIDGE AREA
INTERNAL SECURITY - X

There are being submitted herewith two photographs of reputedly "flying saucers" which were seen at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, sometime during July of 1947. All of the information contained in this letter was received from [redacted] Chief Investigator, Security Division, Atomic Energy Commission, and [redacted] Resident Engineer, Air Material Command, United States Army, who is the principal army technician at the Nuclear Energy for the Propulsion of Aircraft Research Center at Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Mr. Roteman [redacted] advised that the attached photographs were taken by [redacted] in July of 1947. He stated that interview with [redacted] revealed that he had been snapping photographs of his family in front of his residence at 218 Illinois Avenue, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, late in the afternoon, when he looked into the sky and observed the vapor trail as exhibited by the photograph numbered "1." [redacted] stated that he took a snap of this trail, was winding the film to the next number, when he looked into the sky and observed the ball of fire as shown in photograph 2. Upon observing the unusual phenomena, he used his last film in taking photograph #2. [redacted] made these photographs available to reporters of the Knoxville News-Sentinel and a story concerning them was run in that paper; however, as shown by the photostatic copy of the newspaper clipping, which is also being submitted herewith to the Bureau, the print was very indistinct; the news story did not contain any factual information; and it was regarded generally by the public at the time as a possible trick.

Later, it was learned by [redacted] and [redacted] that [redacted] had made several copies of this photograph and had [redacted] them among his acquaintances at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Upon [redacted] standing that the photographs had received some distribution, he requested [redacted] as Head of the Compliance and Investigations Division, to recover as many as possible of the photographs, advise the persons in whose possession they were found to say nothing to anyone concerning them, and to return the said photographs to him for transmission to the United States Air Force Intelligence Service. [redacted] advised that he succeeded in rounding up twenty-four copies of these photographs, and that, according to the statements of [redacted] no more copies were made or distributed. [redacted] further stated that [redacted] had appeared extremely concerned over the matter and seemed to be quite emphatic that the matter should be given no more publicity than was absolutely necessary. [redacted] also advised that he studied the negatives from which the reproductions were made, and they appeared to be authentic in that trick photography should have been apparent, but from the

RECORDED - 121

INDEXED - 121

31 JAN 12 1949

EX-31

FIVE

15-8

negatives certainly did not appear to be the case. It was [redacted] observation that had the negative been "doped" with some sort of chemical, it would have removed the emulsion from the face of the film in such a way that the negative would have been thin at the point which is supposedly a ball of fire, whereas, in fact, both the vapor trail and the corona of fire are dark on the negative, indicating that it was an actual exposure. It was the opinion of [redacted] that the photographs were, without doubt, authentic.

In accordance with Bureau instructions, no active investigation of this matter was made, but it was deemed advisable to interview [redacted] prior to submitting the photographs to the Bureau.

[redacted] predicated his remarks concerning the "flying saucers" or "mystery missiles" by stating that he knew nothing of an official nature concerning them, other than the fact that they were believed by air force intelligence officials to be man-made missiles, rather than some natural phenomena. It was his further belief that a great deal of information had been compiled concerning these missiles by air force intelligence, and that research on the matter was being extensively done at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. He also expressed the opinion that information at the disposal of the United States Army Air Force Intelligence had, in all probability, been made available to the Bureau at Washington, D. C.

[redacted] then continued with his own ideas as to what might be the nature of these discs, which ideas he had formulated through review of those known facts and theoretical conjectures of himself and other scientists concerning the nature of flying discs and methods of propulsion for such type of aerial mechanism. According to him, flying discs have long been a theoretical possibility and, in fact, a possibility which would indicate one of the best means by which to break through the barriers of the supersonic area. Scientists have, for many years, been attempting to develop this type of aircraft. Some experimentation has been done even in the United States, but insofar as is known in the United States at the present time, there have never been any practical developments. As a second factor of consideration, [redacted] stated that insofar as is known to U. S. scientists at this time, there is no known chemical fuel which would make possible tremendous range of flight such as is ascribed to the reported "flying saucers." There is only one possible fuel which could be utilized which is in accord with present theory, and that is the utilization of atomic energy. As further evidence of this possible means of propulsion, [redacted] called attention to the vapor trail and gaseous corona described as a ball of fire, which he states might give some evidence to the fact that a radio-active field is present. He explained that the corona, or exhaust, has what appears to be layers of intensity which are circular rather than elongated and have no tendency to trail at the extremities, as would be the case if a normal type of exhaust from a combustion engine was being utilized in the propulsion of these aircraft. He continued that the vapor trail left by the missile appears to be one single line of uniform intensity which is extremely slow in dissipating. It was pointed out by him that in the case of a normal

vapor trail being left by an aircraft moving at extremely high speeds or extremely high altitudes, the vapor trail usually will be from the wing tips and/or the exhaust of the engines, thus presenting several lines. But, in any event, even though only one line were visible, it would be rather quick to dissipate. This indicated to him that the vapor trail represents some atmospheric change along the path of the missile, which would not be the case were it any presently known type of aircraft.

He continued that information furnished by him should be treated with the utmost confidence, in that he was not speaking officially, but as a personal matter of cooperation. He stated that the matter was being given absolutely no dissemination by the air force or other military personnel, and that they had not deemed it advisable to advise him of all information pertaining to the missile. He continued, however, that in his conversation with representatives at Wright Field and in reading reports returned to this country by foreign agents, he had gathered together certain information which might be of assistance in determining whether or not these so-called missiles were authentic, usable and of danger to the United States. First, he pointed out that knowledge of such a possible aircraft is not by any means new, it having been known as early as four years ago that some type of flying disc was being experimented with by the Russians. In addition thereto, he stated that more recent reports have been received from representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency in Southern Europe and Southern Asia to the effect that the Russians were experimenting with some type of radical aircraft or guided missile which could be dispatched for great distances out over the sea, made to turn in flight and return to the base from which it was launched. This fact was extremely worthy of notice as experiments in this country have so far only developed to the point where we are concerned with delivering a missile to the required point of impact, and no consideration has been given to imparting to that missile the ability to return. Secondly, he stated that it is a known fact that the Russians are attempting to develop some type of nuclear energy, that they received a wealth of information concerning nuclear energy at the time of their occupation in Germany, and that they too have at their disposal the limited supply of the necessary fissionable materials. He stated that insofar as any opinion as to whether or not they have the ability and scientific knowledge to create such a nuclear-propelled missile is strictly a matter of conjecture, and that he would hesitate to make any definite statement. He pointed out, however, that the Russians have some very capable scientists in the field of atomic energy and that, in addition thereto, they took into their custody some of the most advanced and capable scientists of the German Nation.

He also stated that a peculiar fact concerning the missiles exists from reports he has received which is worthy of notice, and that is that from all appearances, they usually approach the United States from a northerly direction and have been reported as returning in a northerly direction. None have ever been known to crash, collide or disintegrate over American soil, but it would appear that they come to the United States, cruise around, and go back over the North Pole. He states that insofar as is known to him, there has never

B 41

T. [unclear]

been any piece of one recovered from any source whatever in order that analytical study of its nature could be made. Insofar as was known to him, the only actual material which would be of any value in determining its nature are telephoto photographs which are now in the possession of engineers at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. How detailed and how clear these photographs are, he was unable to state. He stated that one report has been received concerning a collision of these missiles with another type of aircraft. This report, according to him, took place a short time prior to the report of numerous discs over the United States, and the report emanated from Czechoslovakia. This report was that a Czechoslovakian transport had collided with some unidentified missile while in mid-air over the ocean, and that said missile and said transport had been completely disintegrated without recovery of parts or survivors from either. It was the belief of [redacted] that this undescribed missile was perhaps the same type of thing as the flying saucer. Another factor of notice, according to [redacted] and as is portrayed by the photographs, it would appear that the missiles can be maintained at a certain altitude above the contour of the ground. This could be done by means of some type of radio altimeter or radio control. Naturally, the path of the missile is not in exact parallel to the contour, as its purported great speed would create considerable lag in its flight. Another factor which is worthy of note, according to [redacted], is that it is normally reported as being seen at tremendously high altitudes and always traveling in a straight line. He stated that he himself observed, on one occasion, a single vapor trail coming from some type of aircraft at unbelievably high altitude which vapor trail extended from horizon to horizon in a perfectly straight line. He observed the vapor trail while it was in the process of formation and states that it was completely unlike any vapor trail he had ever observed before in all of his experience with the air force. It was his judgment that whatever created the vapor trail was traveling at an unbelievably tremendous speed. This, together with reports that when close to the ground, the missile travels at speeds which make possible visual observation of its actions, would reflect that there is some ability to control the speed of these missiles as well as the altitude.

[redacted] concluded that this matter, while still purely a matter of guesswork, is nevertheless a source of great concern to the military establishment of this country. Great efforts have been expended by the service to determine just what the nature of these missiles might be and, upon so determining, decide whether or not an adequate defense can be established. He also stated that it has given impetus to the research being done by the air force in their own program of nuclear energy for the propulsion of aircraft to develop guided missiles. He also advised that insofar as was known to him, there was absolutely no connection between these missiles and the fact that they were observed close to Oak Ridge, Tennessee. He stated that this was perhaps, and probably, a matter of coincidence and they were seen in this area merely as they were seen in forty-six of the forty-eight states of the United States during the Month of July when so many reports were being received.

This information is being submitted to the Bureau for whatever value it may be, and no further action in the matter is being contemplated by this office, unless advised to the contrary.

CCM:bk CC [unclear]
65-11