

[REDACTED]

Final Report

Case C-7

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

DOWNGRADED AT 8 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS,
DOD DIR 5200.10

UNCLASSIFIED

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DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DIR 8200.10

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An account of the investigation by Capt. Chas. Hardin, USAF, and J. A. Hynek, of the reported visual/radar sightings of Unidentified Objects at Bismarck, N. Dakota and Black Hawk, S. Dakota, on 5/6 Aug. 53.

We arrived in Bismarck at about 1900C, 12 January 1954, where Sgt. Wesley Harry of the Bismarck Filter Center met us. Within 20 minutes we were at the Filter Center and had been offered a cup of coffee. We first examined the original logs of the incident, and Sgt. Harry pointed out that the Filter Center was first alerted at 0515Z 5 August 1953, that an object was about 70 miles south of Dickinson, N. Dak. At 0523Z another call came in stating that an object was 15 miles north of Rapid City. At 0538Z a call came in that an object was just south of Almont. At 0542Z, or 2342CST, Sgt. Harry sighted an object from the Filter Center roof. He had gone out on the roof to look toward the SW to see if he could see anything of the reported object.

Re; Fig. # 1. Sgt. Harry's description of the object has been treated many times in the reports and so I asked him primarily about motions. Fortunately he had power lines near by and as soon as the object appeared he checked his position on the roof by marking points around his shoes. The motion of the object was described as indicated on photos # 1 and 2. He stated that this represents the mean motion of the object, but that in between it moved erratically up and down as much as one or two times the distance between the horizontal telephone wires. He insisted the motion was abrupt. Apparently it came in rather rapidly, but when it got west of the Filter Center it hovered, moving up and down.

Mrs. Owens spent most of her time watching this object and her evidence was essentially the same as that of Harry although she did not see it as soon.

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She maintained that in the western part of the sky it would remain stationary, then hop up several degrees very quickly -- almost instantaneously -- stop, move to the left and then swerve down in sort of a slanting motion, repeating these maneuvers many times. By this time everybody at the Filter Center was very excited and, as they said, shaking, because they had the feeling that somebody was watching them."

This original western object disappeared sometime between midnight and one a.m. Just about midnight, however, the Filter Center people almost simultaneously saw other objects to the east. Object # 2 was sighted at 0611Z to the north of east. At 0745Z and 0747Z two other objects toward the east were seen. The plots of these objects are given on photos 3 and 4. The best drawing of the positions and motions of the objects comes from Sgt. Harry and is included as Fig. 6A.

Mr. Wilhelm was located at the CAA Control Tower, $2\frac{1}{2}$ air miles away such that the Filter Center had a bearing of 321° from the tower. He saw all 4 objects also, but not exactly in the same positions. Since there was a chance here of getting a fix on these objects, we spent a fair amount of time having Sgt. Harry and Mr. Wilhelm sight the remembered positions of the objects at the time a C-124 Globemaster came by at approximately 0800Z. This establishes a point in time, and Fig. 2 and 4 show the position of the object at the time of the passage of the C-124. Object # 1 in Fig. 2 is denoted by the "x". Harry stated that the bearing of object # 1 was 264° at an 08° altitude. Wilhelm gave the position of the object as 295° and 13° altitude. The altitudes do not check, but the bearings place the object about a mile and a half west of the Filter Center. If one adopts a mean value of altitude, the fix places it at $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the airport and $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from the Filter Center. The motion over a good number of degrees, the apparently close position, and the many changes of color would appear to rule out a star.

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Object # 2, at the time of the passage of the C-124, is indicated on Fig. 3 and 6. Mr. Wilhelm states that the object was almost due north and had an elevation about equal to that of the "guardians of the pole," which would place it about 30° up. We visited the control tower several times, once at night with the sky clear, and had ample chance to check positions and comparisons with stars. Wilhelm has had much opportunity to observe stars from the control tower, and it appears inconceivable to me that a man with 13 years experience could have mistaken stars for these objects. Furthermore, Mr. Wilhelm examined the objects with binoculars and pointed out that though they resembled stars, their motion and their color changes were such as to rule out this possibility. At any rate, if one adopts the angles and altitudes of object # 2, one finds that it was about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Filter Center and about 5 miles from the airport at an altitude of about 10,000'. This is obtained as a mean of two figures: 5 thousand and 15,000 feet. Mr. Wilhelm, it appears, consistently estimated altitudes higher than Harry.

Object # 3 is indicated on Fig. 4 and 6. Fig. 5 shows the relation of the Filter Center to the tower. The bearing of the Filter Center is 321° as computed from a surveyor's map of the city. As will be noted, from the Filter Center, object # 3 was a little to the north of east, where as from the tower it was a little to the east of north. This places it almost exactly 3 miles from both the Filter Center and the tower. Again, in altitudes, there is some discrepancy, but taking the mean of 3,000' and 8,000', we get something of the order of a mile high.

Harry as well as Wilhelm stated that object # 2 was the highest in the sky, and # 3 and 4 considerably lower. Object # 4 appears to have been the farthest away, since, as Fig. 4 and 7 show, it had about the same bearing from

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the tower as from the Filter Center. The angles must be regarded as indeterminate, and as far as altitude is concerned it appeared higher from the tower than from the Filter Center. The altitude is indeterminate since we do not know the distance. All observers said the objects could not truly be distinguished one from the other. One or more objects, then, were visible from 0542Z until 0850Z; that is, for approximately three hours.

We interrogated not only Sgt. Harry but Mrs. Owens, Mr. Mandigo, Lt. Koontz, and Mrs. Dahl. While their stories did not agree exactly (and ~~this~~ would have been suspicious if they had) there was general agreement as to color change, motions, and the fact that the objects actually had been there.

One other behavior of the objects is worthy of mention, and it was pointed out repeatedly. At the time of the passing of the C-124, the object closest to it — object # 4 — appeared to blink in a sort of a signaling way. It was likened to the signaling of a ship's signal blinker but not as fast. It was most pronounced in # 4, but they said it was taken up by # 3 and then # 2, as though a wave had passed from # 4 to # 2.

ANALYSIS

Origin:

1. Stars:

There is the possibility that object # 2 might have been Capella, although if the motion as drawn by Harry is to be trusted, this is ruled out. Likewise, in the triangulation from the airport and the Filter Center. Object # 2 appeared to the NE of the Filter Center and due North of the tower. The tower directions are to be trusted since the window faces directly North and object # 2 was seen

square out of the window. It is the opinion of this observer that unless all six observers are unable to distinguish a star from anything else, the stellar explanation will not hold. Further, the angular positions appear to rule this out.

2. Balloons:

If these objects were balloons, they would have to be captive balloons because of their restricted motion and the fact that they did not rise. Extensive inquiries were made as to the possibility of any experiments going on in that area at the time. The weather bureau was consulted, since in previous years there had been some cosmic ray experiments by Dr. Pickard and Dr. Nehr. In both cases they had consulted the weather bureau for wind conditions. The weather bureau knew of no experiments at that time. The Dean of the Bismarck Junior College was consulted to see if he might have known of any experiments at the time. He took us to see the head of the North Dakota State Museum, and he also knew of nothing. We asked to check the hotel register of the best hotel in town, and found no names that might have had any connection with scientific experiments. We likewise checked the newspapers for that period, and although this incident was mentioned, nothing else bearing upon it was. The newspapers did mention that television towers were being erected at approximately this location at the time. Accordingly, the engineer of the TV station was consulted and he stated that at no time were any experiments carried out relative to the construction of the towers.

3. Aircraft:

All observers are reasonably well experienced with aircraft, with of course Mr. Wilhelm being the "authority" among the observers.

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Aircraft must definitely be ruled out. The only hope is that these were balloons, but in the absence of any evidence for experiments going on at the time, or of these lights behaving as balloons, this appears a desperation solution.

All that can be said is that if the angles are correct, or even approximately so, since after all, one person saw the object to the north and the other observer saw it to the east, the phenomenon was a local one. The objects were not observed in the O.P.s around Bismarck though these had been alerted, and it was not reported in Mandan, which is just 5 miles west of Bismarck. They are reported to have a very active Observation Post. In Captain Ruppelt's original report, he stated that although he did not visit Bismarck, he felt that in as much as they had been alerted to watch out for something, they became excited and "saw lights." I cannot accept this interpretation in the least since the observers interrogated were in my opinion a definite cut above the average person. The operation of the Filter Center seemed to be very efficient and it was apparent that they had recruited very good people for the work. Sgt. Harry in particular appears thoroughly reliable and accurate and is very much "on the ball." I would personally tend to discount the rapid up and down motion and the erratic motions because it is well known that a point of light watched consistently will appear to do very strange things. But for the changes of position, especially since the objects were around for nearly three hours, and the changes of color, appear to be substantiated. However, even the color changes may be entirely subjective, so that when one filters down the Bismarck evidence, one comes to the conclusion that some objects were observed there which were not stars nor aircraft and if they were balloons they were extremely strange ones whose presence was totally unexplained. It is most unfortunate that pictures were not taken of these objects, and it is the recommendation of this observer that

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future communications from ATIC should stress emphatically that pictures be taken and instructions included for taking star trails for practice.

The local nature of this phenomenon should be stressed. The appearance of the first object in the direction to be expected from the alert from Roller Skate may be regarded as coincidental. It seems improbable though certainly not impossible that these were the same objects observed near Rapid City.

We can conclude that there is no ready explanation for these objects. To call them aircraft, balloons, or stars becomes somewhat of a desperation move, though the balloon hypothesis would be the least objectionable. The objects were star-like, changed a great deal in color, and were probably fairly local. With reference to the last point, if they were local they were not large, or at least the lights were not very bright because the lights apparently were not much brighter than a 1st magnitude star, and some observers stated that often they were considerably fainter.

Until further explanation is forthcoming, this incident must be put down as one of the best examples of the nocturnal meandering lights which have been reported elsewhere in the literature. To do otherwise would be to doubt the first order objectivity of observers who stood up very well under considerable questioning. The triangulations also bear out Sgt. Harry's visual estimates of the distances, even though such estimates must be subjective. He stated the first object was 2 to 3 miles west of the Filter Center and calculations show 2 miles. Object # 2, he felt was 6 to 8 miles away, and calculations show approximately 3 miles.

Despite the fact that the incident started in Rapid City and Black Hawk, the evidence there does not hold together in the manner of the Bismarck

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evidence. The observers are more excitable and less matter of fact and certainly have less scientific background than the observers in Bismarck, with one or two exceptions.

Three kinds of evidence are present in the South Dakota sightings: visual from the ground, from GOC; radar evidence,; and visual from the air. All visual sightings at Rapid City and Black Hawk were quite low on the horizon. This itself makes matters suspect. The initial incident which started the whole train of events was the sighting by Miss Killian at about 0305Z, of an object which appeared in the south-east, moved rapidly to the SSE, changing color from red to green as it did so. It then hovered there for awhile, she said, and went back quite quickly and disappeared back of the hills. When asked to estimate the time it would have taken to cross the fingers of her out-stretched hand, she estimated about 5 seconds. This is quite in contradiction to the original statements. She was observing it from the front steps of a neighbor's cottage, and accordingly, Fig. 9 and 10 are shots taken from the exact position of the observation. Mrs. Daughenbach, who saw the object simultaneously, said at first "it's nothing but the red tower light." (There is an FM tower with a red obstruction light barely visible from their porch.) This establishes at any rate the redness of the color. The changing to green might be subjective although both were emphatic that it did this. Both women were asked quite independently to draw in the path of the object, and the paths more or less agree, as seen in Fig. 9 and 10. Since this was the instigating incident, it is interesting to speculate whether this was an aircraft. Miss Killian, although an excitable and rather cocky individual, and in some respects overbearing, is nevertheless rated as one of the best observers connected with the Filter Center. She is reputed to know planes in detail and has on occasion identified the aircraft as to type and motor when it would

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only dimly be heard in the distance. To the direct question as to whether this might have been an aircraft, she emphatically stated that this was out of the question; that she knew ^caircraft, period!

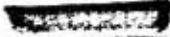
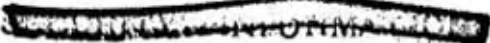
She alerted the Filter Center, and they immediately notified the ADC radar at Ellsworth AFB. The base is located about 10 miles directly east of Black Hawk and Black Hawk is about 7 miles NW of Rapid City. Three posts therefore formed a triangle and it is most unfortunate that at any given time objective observers were not present to give directions. No such observations exist, and the distances of these objects, if present at all, are indeterminate.

Miss Killian next states that she saw an object directly overhead which moved very rapidly to the north. She was the only one who saw this, however, and it is possible, in my opinion, that this might have been a meteor. She states of course no; she knows meteors!

At about that time she got into her car and went over to the Aldren farm, about 3/4 mile away. She went over after the object had disappeared to pay a neighborly call and tell them what she had seen. As she was talking to Mrs. Aldren it was the latter who sighted the second, or really the third object. It's position is indicated in Fig. 11. Note the closeness to the horizon. This object did not move, was starlike, and in my opinion could very well have been the star Capella. It remained in approximately the same position, they state, for over 2 hours. The Aldren boys and the elder Aldrens were inside, and would pay no attention to the talk of the women outside who said they saw some strange object. Jim Aldren told me that he felt the women were just seeing things. Finally, he came out and became convinced that some object was present. He is shown in Fig 11 pointing to the approximate position of the object. Certainly there are a lot of open spaces there in which to

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locate objects.

In the meantime, the original sighting of the object shown in Fig. 9 and 10 had been reported to the radar center, and strangely enough, unknown blips appeared on the radar. Lt. Stockham was up on CAP at the time, having been up for some time, and Mr. Bennett, the radar operator, asked him to have a look around. For quite a while Stockham did not see it (Stockham was not present in Rapid City, but arrangements were made to interview him by phone from Great Falls, Mont.) He stated essentially what he had in his original report: that he finally did notice the object which was bright and star-like, that he observed it for only 20 to 30 seconds, and that it had gone away from him extremely rapidly.

Fig. 12 is the radar scope diagram drawn by Bennett. Unfortunately the radar camera did not work. Bennett, who was quizzed in hospital because of a broken arm, stated emphatically that the blips had definitely been "painted", and that each successive blip designated on the chart was actually a successive one. That is, each swing of the antenna produced the next blip. He stated that he had the F-84 and the UFO in at the same time.

Stockham had come down because of low fuel, and Needham had been sent up. Bennett stated he had Needham and the unknown on the scope until the object was out beyond 85 miles heading north. The radar, it is generally conceded, was not malfunctioning, but some people at the post indicated that reflections, or "anomalous propagation," were not unknown.

There is an interesting personality conflict in both Bennett and Needham. Bennett is rated as excitable, but pretty sure about what he sees. He stated, when asked why Needham had not continued pursuing the object, that Needham had become so excited that he was almost unintelligible on the radio

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and that Bennett felt it would be best to bring him back to base before something drastic happened.

Needham was interviewed for an hour and a half, and of all the people interrogated he was the most difficult to pin down. On one hand he stated that the object had been below him, had risen, and had pulled away from him with considerable speed; and in the next breath he felt that he had seen a star. He stated that Bennett was excitable, and that the radar gun sight in his plane which had locked on was probably malfunctioning. He gave the appearance to me of one who ^{is} trying to back out of an unpleasant situation. He did not wish to commit himself on anything, and gave the impression that the less he heard of it in the future the better. This may be because he felt he had not acquitted himself adequately in pursuing the so-called object. At the time of the pursuit, however, it must be stated that he had had only 12 hours of night flying experience. He substantiated the point that on moon-less nights, it is impossible to have a horizon aloft and that any light that is seen generally appears to be in motion. Mr. Bennett had sent out three radio men from the radar room to take a visual look. The general opinion as to the competency of these men varies. There seems to be enough evidence that they are not particularly reliable, and although they stated in signed statements that they had seen objects moving around, it is impossible to evaluate the correctness of these statements. All three men have since been honorably discharged from the service and could not be located for questioning.

ANALYSIS

As far as the Rapid City sightings are concerned, we have a train of circumstances which, if entirely coincidental, are remarkable indeed.

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Even if we grant that the original sighting was an aircraft, which is stoutly denied by the observer, and that the 2nd object was a star, which is equally denied by the observers, it appears odd that of all the nights for the radar to show strange blips would be on that night. The testimony of the pilots had best be omitted, since it can be taken positively or negatively with equal ease. The alerting of the Bismarck Center at that critical time and their sighting the object(s) is also most coincidental and might well go down in the annals of improbability if the entire incidents were unrelated and the product of mistaken identification.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In the absence of what might be called truly scientific data and in the absence of photographs or other tangible evidence, the facts as stated by about a score of observers separated by 220 miles, are open to two widely opposed interpretations.

One is, that an aircraft was originally sighted, second, that the object observed at the zenith was a meteor, third, that the object in the north-east was a star, fourth, that quite coincidentally, the radar showed reflection blips, fifth, that the pilots were chasing stars, sixth, that an experiment of some sort was going on in Bismarck, evidence for which is entirely unobtainable from local sources, and that the experiment was instigated at precisely the time that the other set of strange coincidences 220 miles away caused the Bismarck Center to be alerted.

This, I say, is an explanation, but one which appears to strain the concept of coincidence to its extremes. Even were the Bismarck incident alone it would be worthy of attention, but fitting as it does into the pattern of the total happenings of that night, it is rather phenomenal.

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The other interpretation, of course, is that unknown aircraft, with the term very broadly defined, were active in the area.

The lack of clinching data at a time like this is particularly deplorable. If, for instance, in the Bismarck area a simple Cessna had been available to make the trip of a few miles to see what the lights were, it would have settled a lot. However, as has been pointed out, perhaps the lights hovered in the Bismarck area because they were not pursued, as where in the Rapid City area they showed extremely rapid motion on the radar because of pursuit. Further, the ground observers stated with utter conviction, that when the jets were up, the lights went out, and as soon as the jets were out of the way the lights reappeared. The entire incident, in the opinion of this observer, has too much of an Alice in Wonderland flavor for comfort.

Original Signed by
J. ALLEN HYNCK

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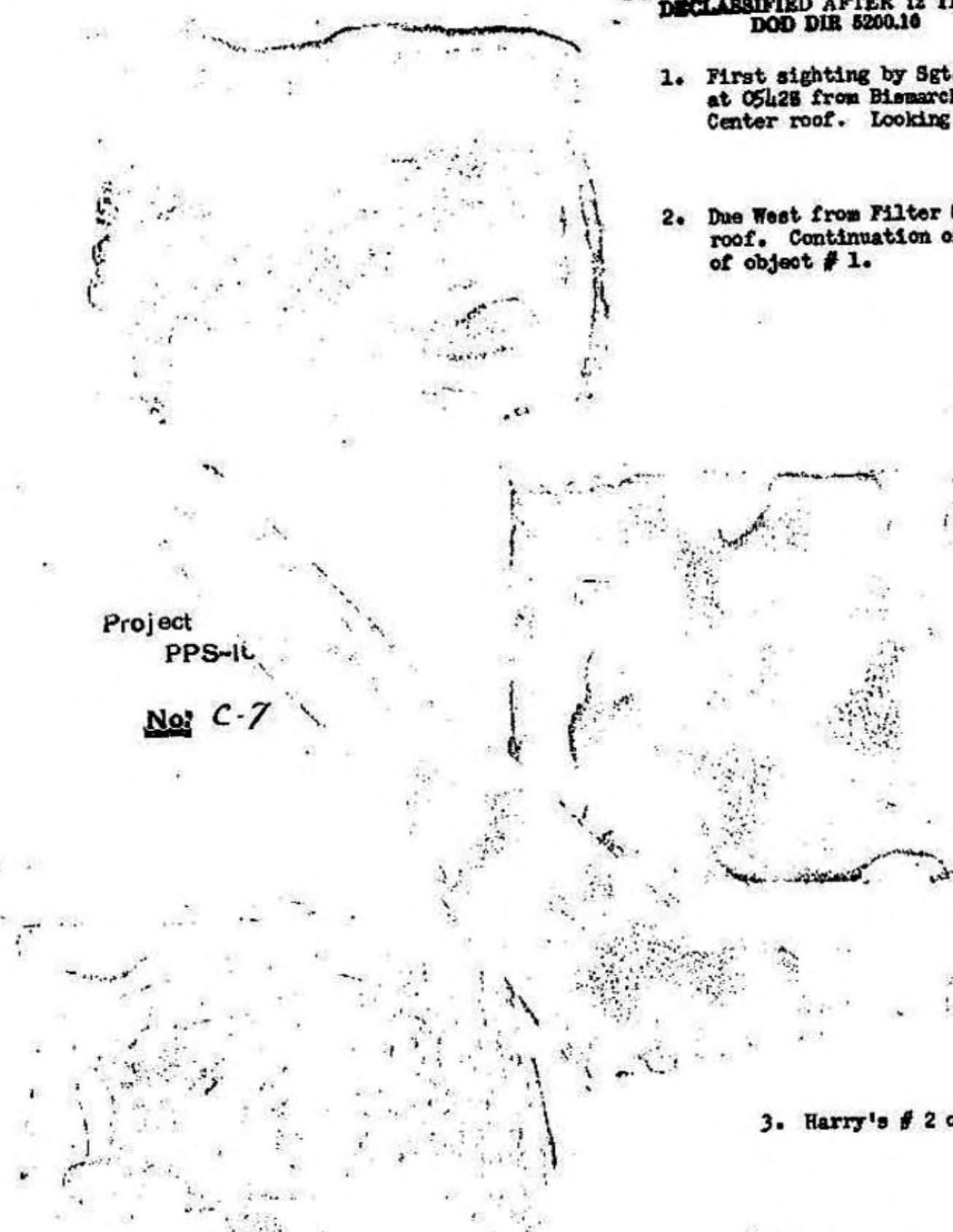
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1. First sighting by Sgt. Harry at 05428 from Bismarck Filter Center roof. Looking S.W.
 2. Due West from Filter Center roof. Continuation of path of object # 1.

Project
PPS-16

No: C-7

3. Harry's # 2 object.

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4. East from Filter Center. Harry's objects 3 & 4 at time of C-12, passing through area.
5. Relation of Filter Center to CAA Control Tower.
6. Due North from Tower. Harry's # 2 & 3 objects; same as Wilhelm's # 3 & 4 objects.

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Project HENRY
PPS-161



No. C-7

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7. Due East from Tower. Position of Harry's # 4 object (Wilhelm's # 2) At time of passage of C-124.
 8. Approach to Bismarck CAA Tower.
 9. Killian original sighting from Daughenbach front steps, Black Hawk, S. D.
 10. Daughenbach observation of same object. Looking S. E.
 11. View N, E. from Aldren farm. Object marked.

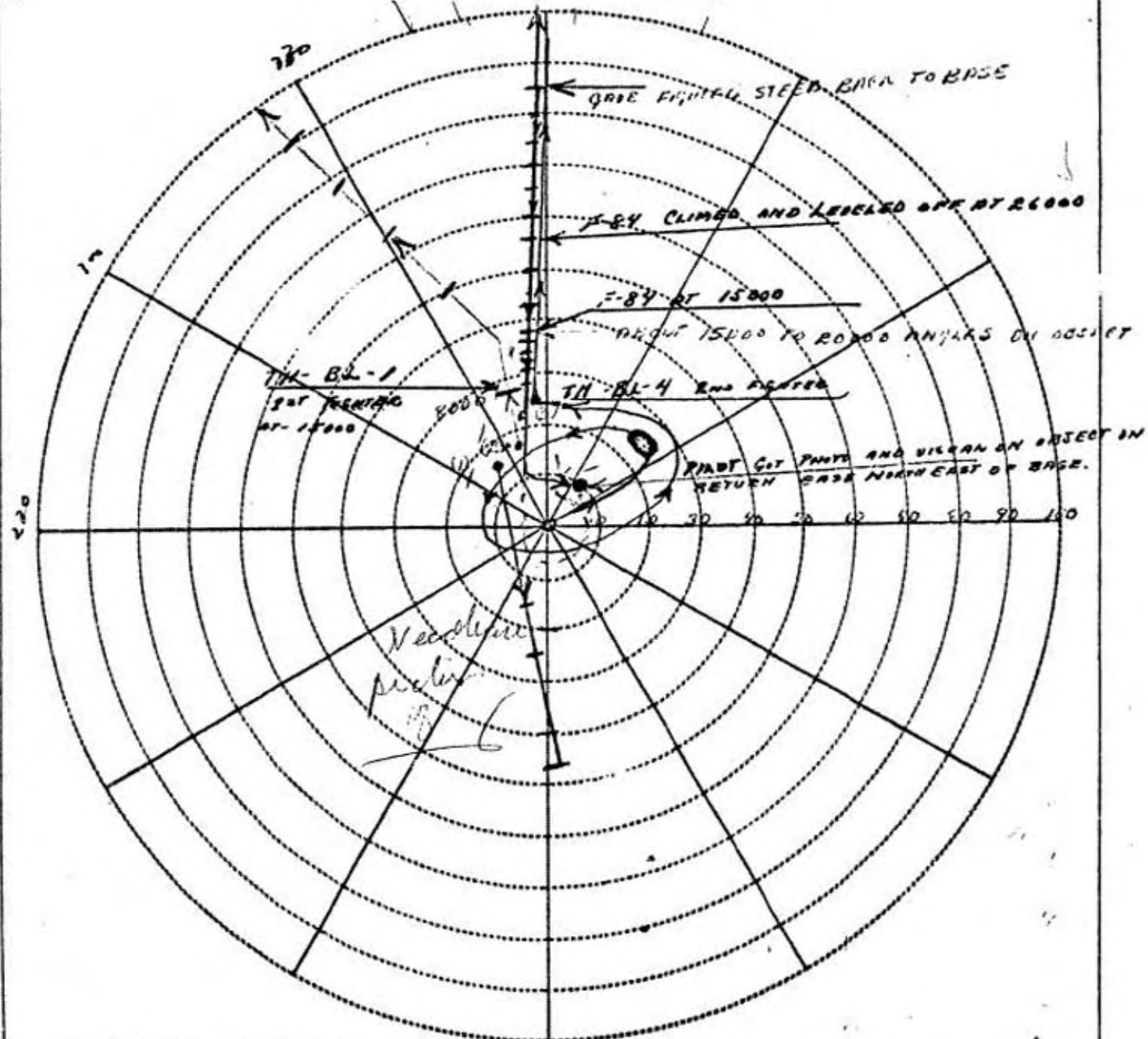
Project HENRY
PPS-161

No. C-7



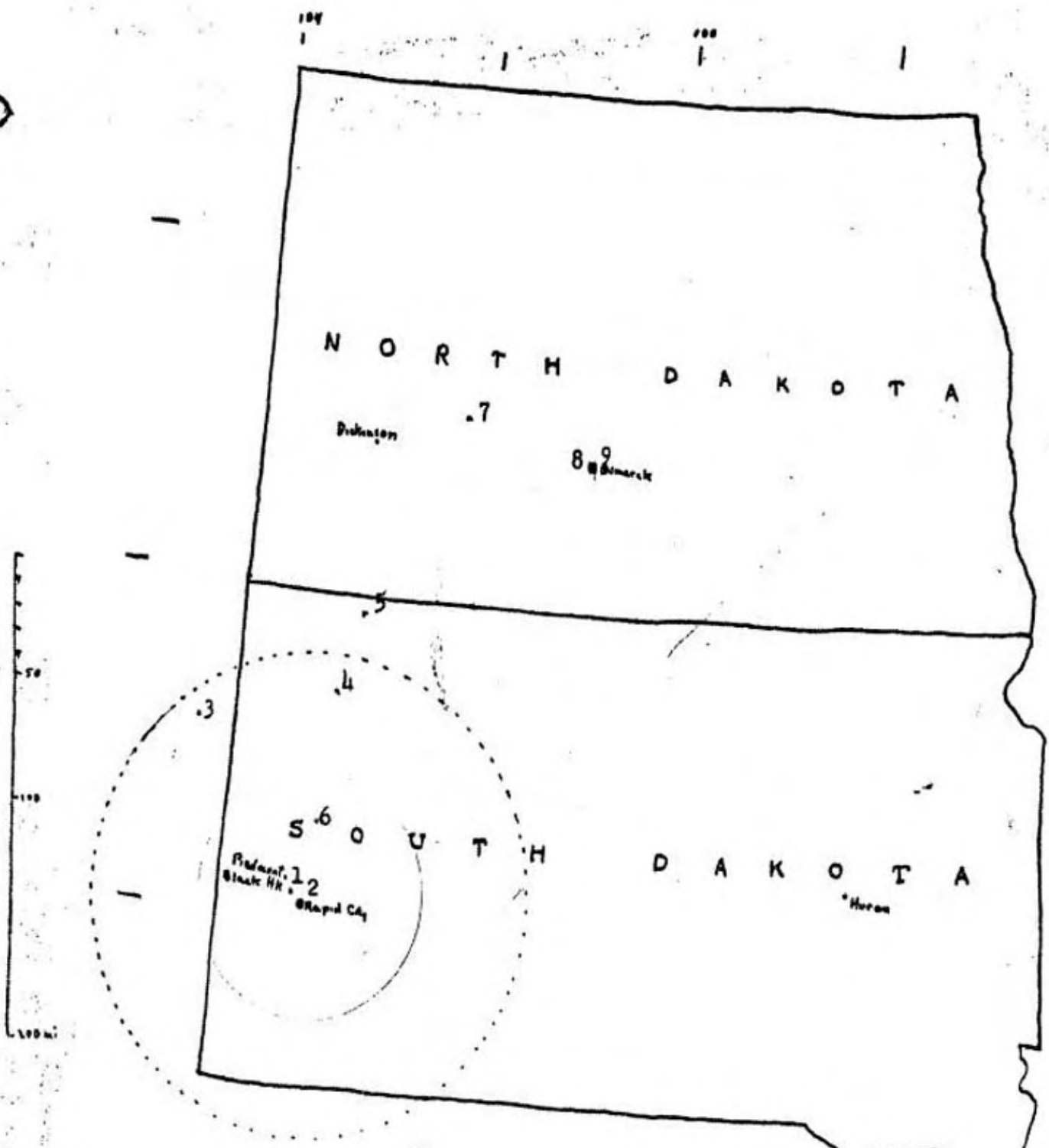
30. IF SCOPE PHOTOS ARE NOT AVAILABLE, PLOT THE TARGET TRACK AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE. GIVE THE TIME AND ALTITUDE (IF MEASURED) FOR EACH POINT PLOTTED. PUT THE NECESSARY RANGE SCALE ON THE DIAGRAM.

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- INITIAL SIGHTING OF OBJECT
- + BLIPS AS SHOWN ON PPI SCOPE
- ↓ DIRECTION OF OBJECT
- ↑ FIGHTERS DIRECTION

these headings are magnetic, not true.



- 1. 2005 Killian initial
- 2. 2055 :50 3 airmen at ~~AC&W~~
- 3. Last blip on object Stockham chased (visual obs. 20|seconds)
- 4. 2155 1:50 Needham breaks off, 85 miles N of base
- 5. 2215 2:10 70 mi. S of Dickinson plot. Radar or visual???
- 6. 2216 2:05 Needham returning to base sights lights 'in hills'
- 7. 2236 2:33 UFO called in to BIS Filter Center
- 8. 2242 2:37 Harry first sights from roof
- 9. 0150 5:45 Clouds obscure objects

Distances: (air)
 Rapid City — Bismarck 220 miles
 Rapid City — Black Hawk 7
 "4" — "5" 32

Object Fixes

Date:

Subject #1 .. At time of calling Williams

From Filter Center:

Az = 264°

Alt = 8°

From Airport

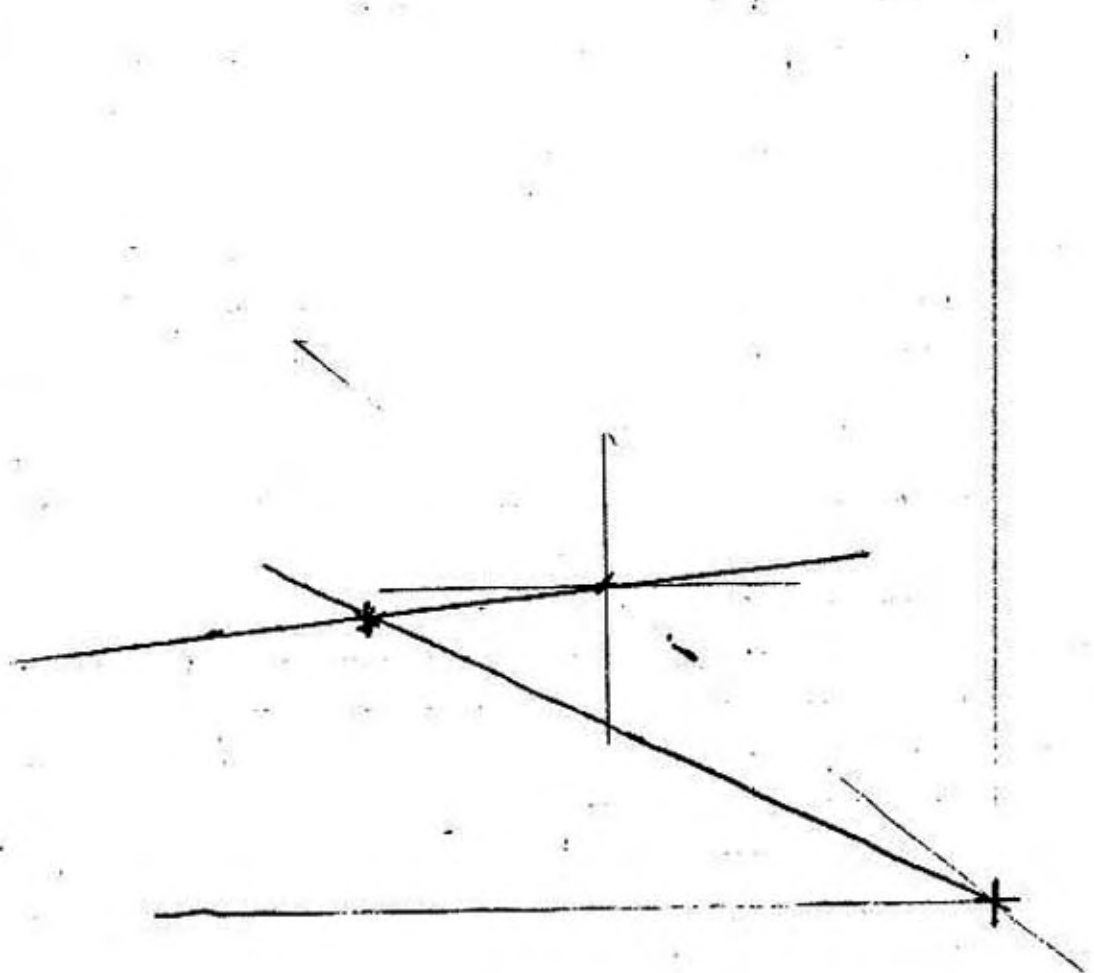
Az = 295°

alt = 13°

altitudes are discrepant and cannot be used. Use 10° from F.C. for a general value.

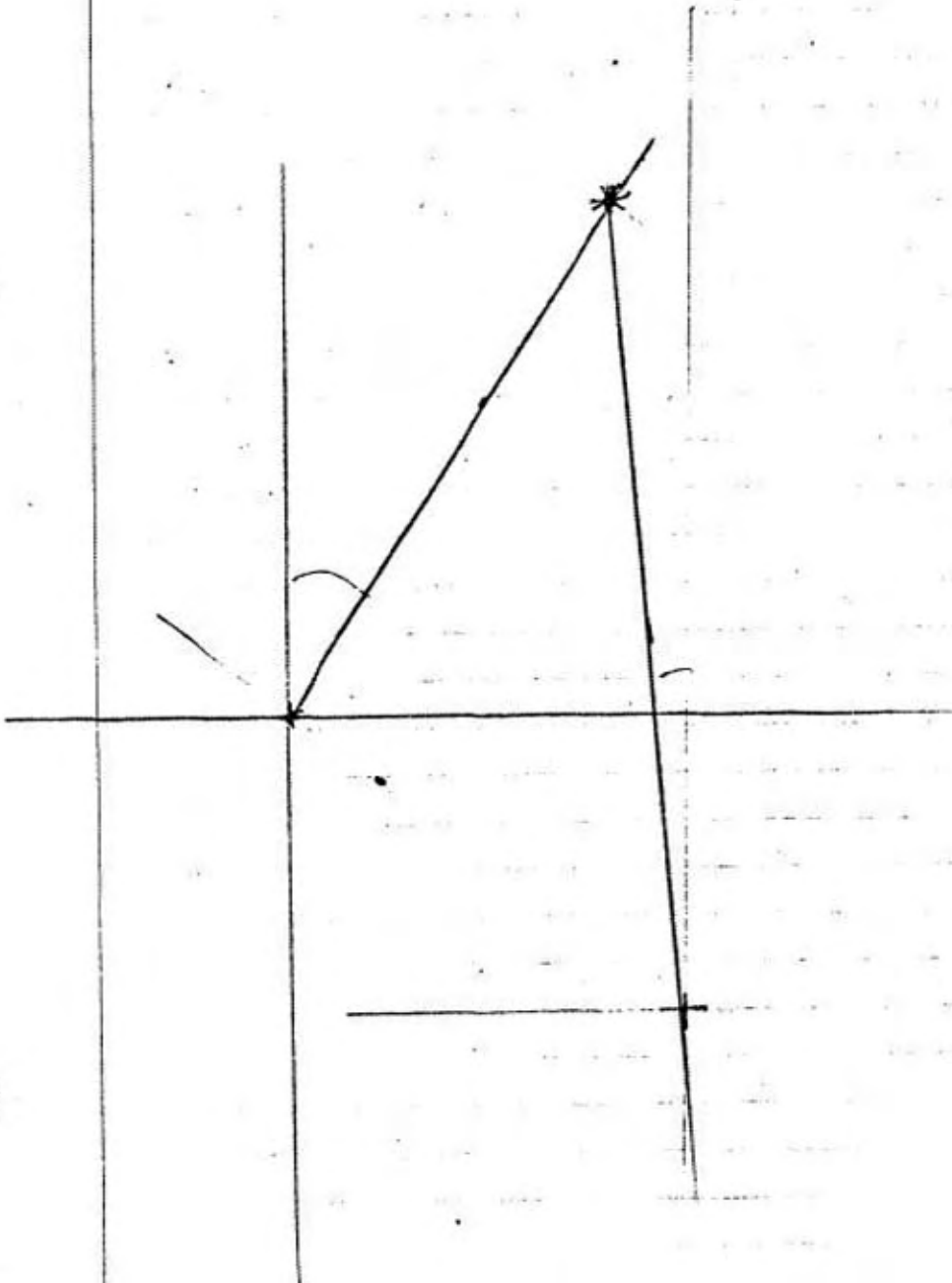
Object not reported in Mandan - 7 mi. WNW of Bismarck.

Lt. Col. Carl P. Mayer
6151 N. Winthrop Ave.
Chicago 40.



$3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Airport
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from F.C.

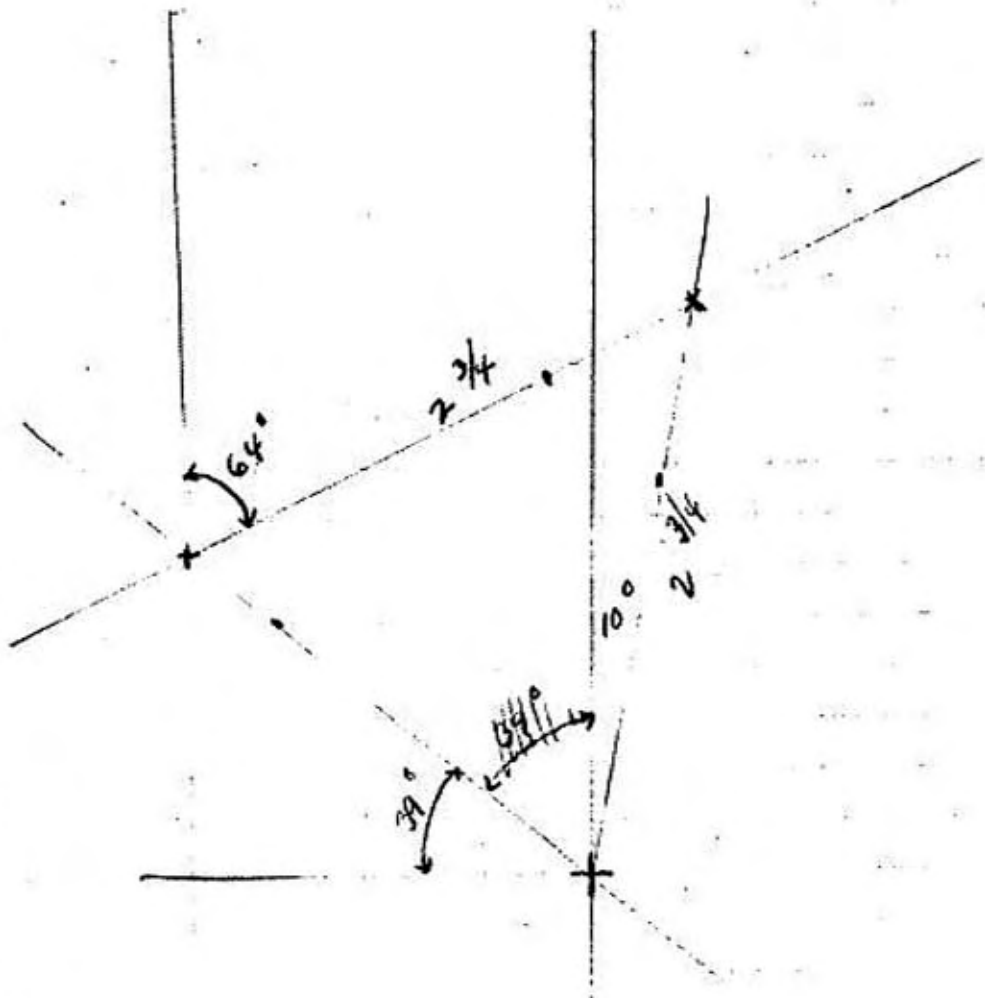
Object # 2
at time of passage of C-114 L.A.H.



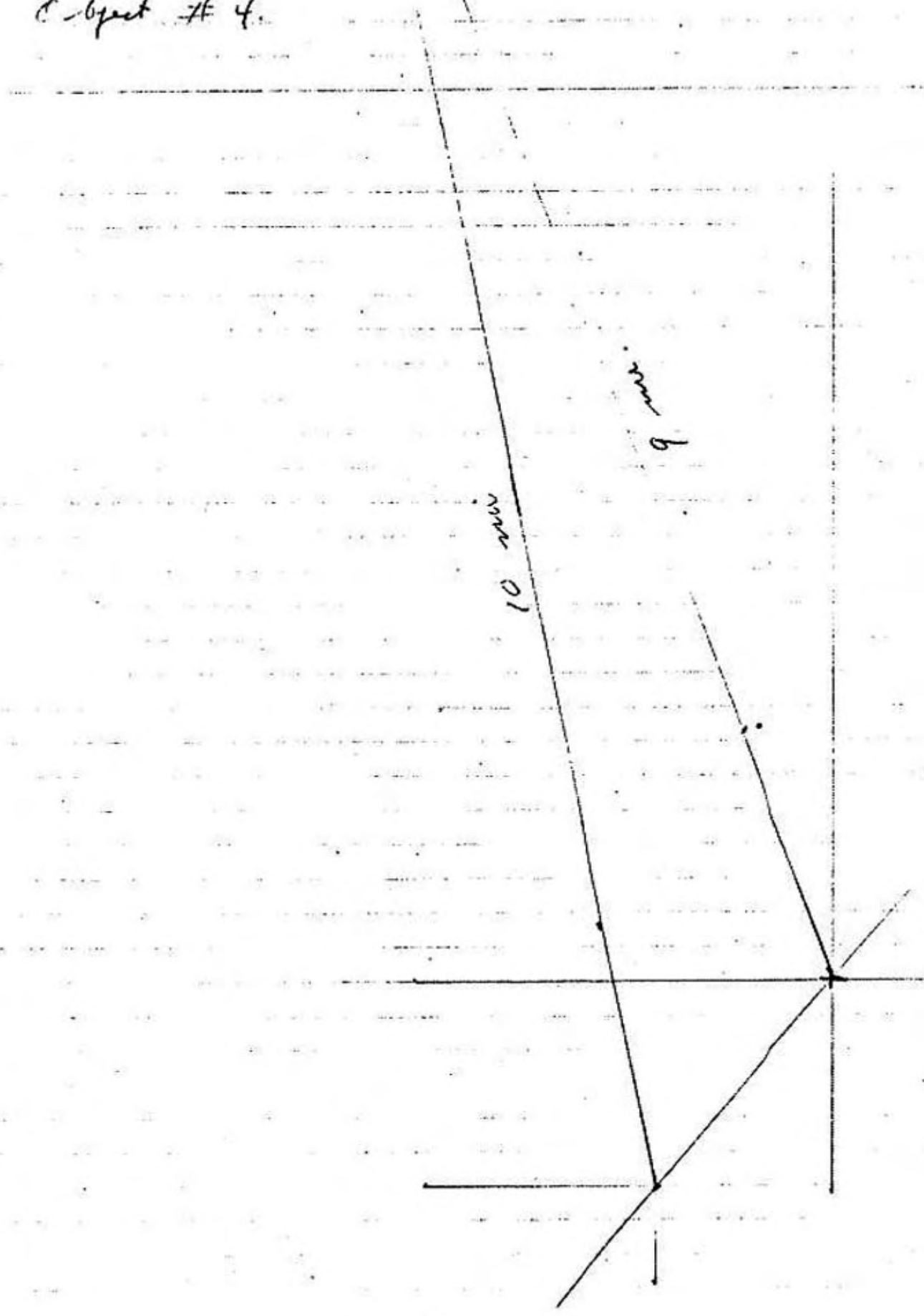
Obj 2, 3 miles from
F.C.

$4\frac{1}{2}$ from
airport

Object #3

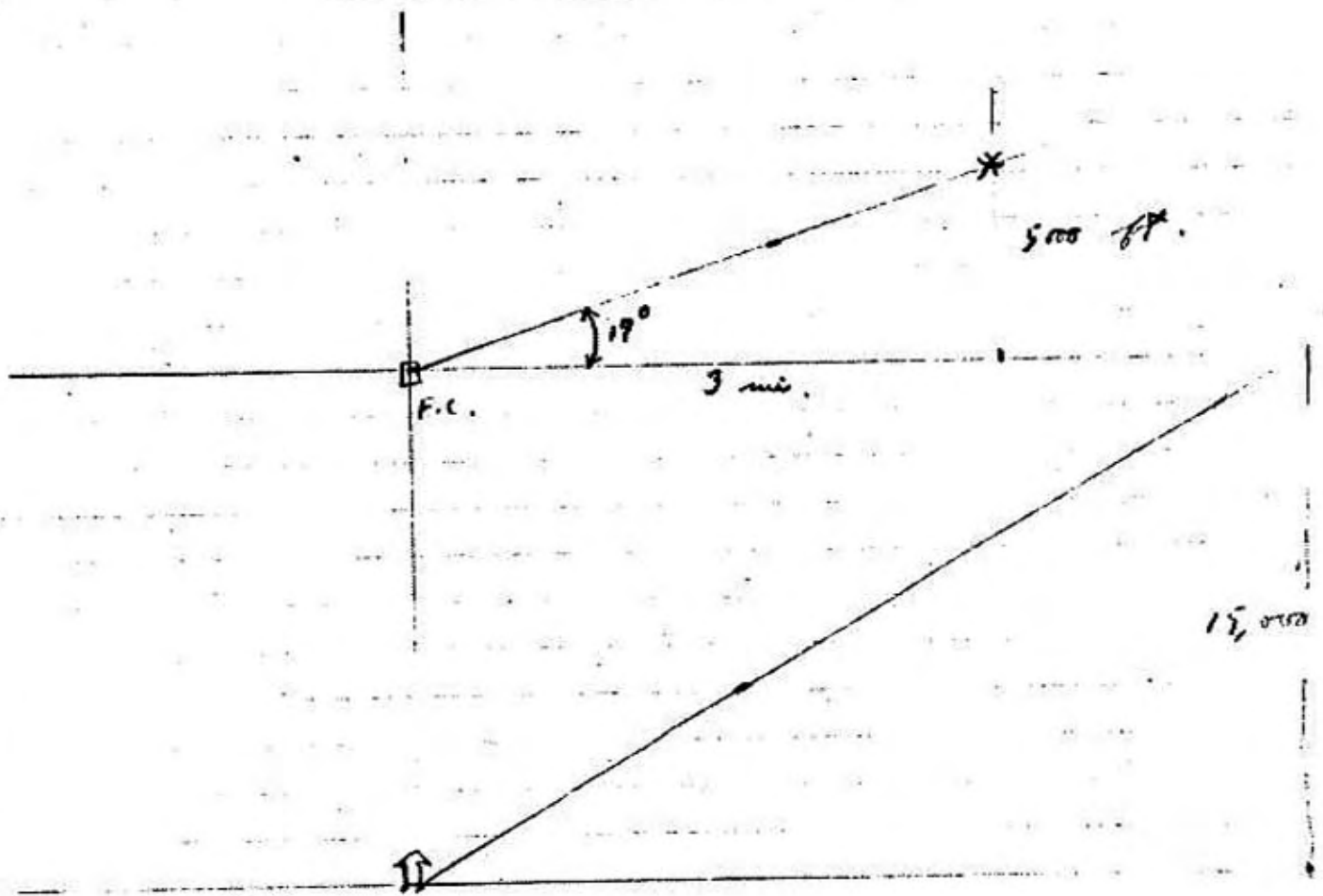


Object # 4.



Altitudes

Subject # 2 : Data : From F.C. 17° Alt
Range 3 mi
From Tower 31° alt
 $4\frac{1}{2}$ mi



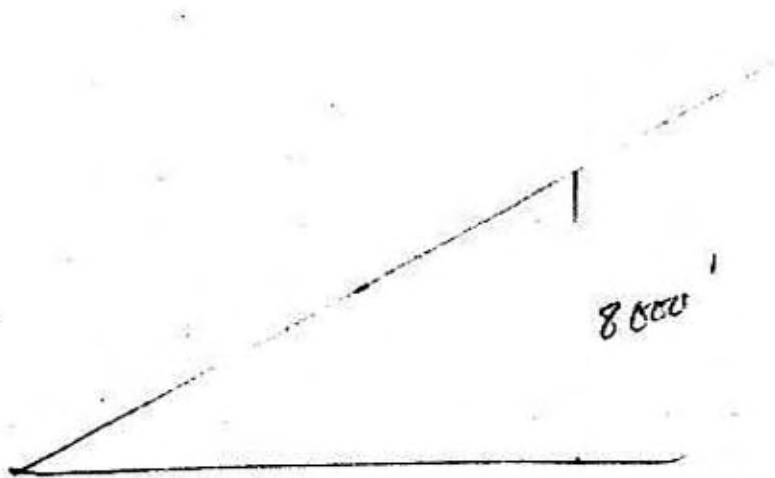
Object # 3

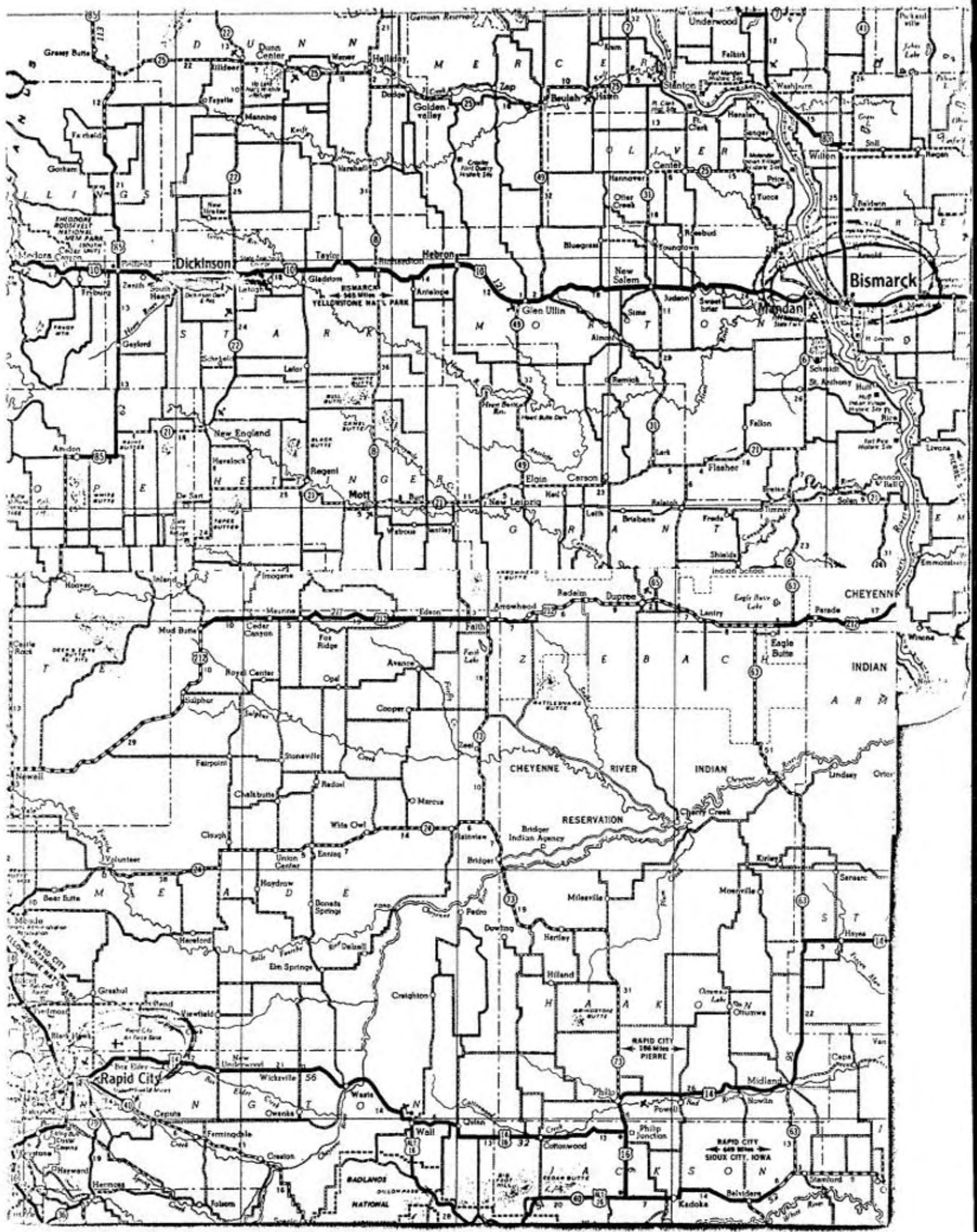
Data

F.C. $62^{\circ} 12'$ alt

Tower: 27° alt

$2 \frac{1}{4}$ miles from each.





Dickinson

Bismarck

Mandan

Rapid City

RAPID CITY
166 Miles
PIERRE

RAPID CITY
640 Miles
SIOUX CITY, IOWA

BADLANDS
NATIONAL

YELLSTONE NAT. PARK

CHEYENNE RIVER
RESERVATION

CHEYENNE

INDIAN
ARIZONA

GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL MONUMENT

GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL MONUMENT

GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL MONUMENT

GRAND CANYON
NATIONAL MONUMENT

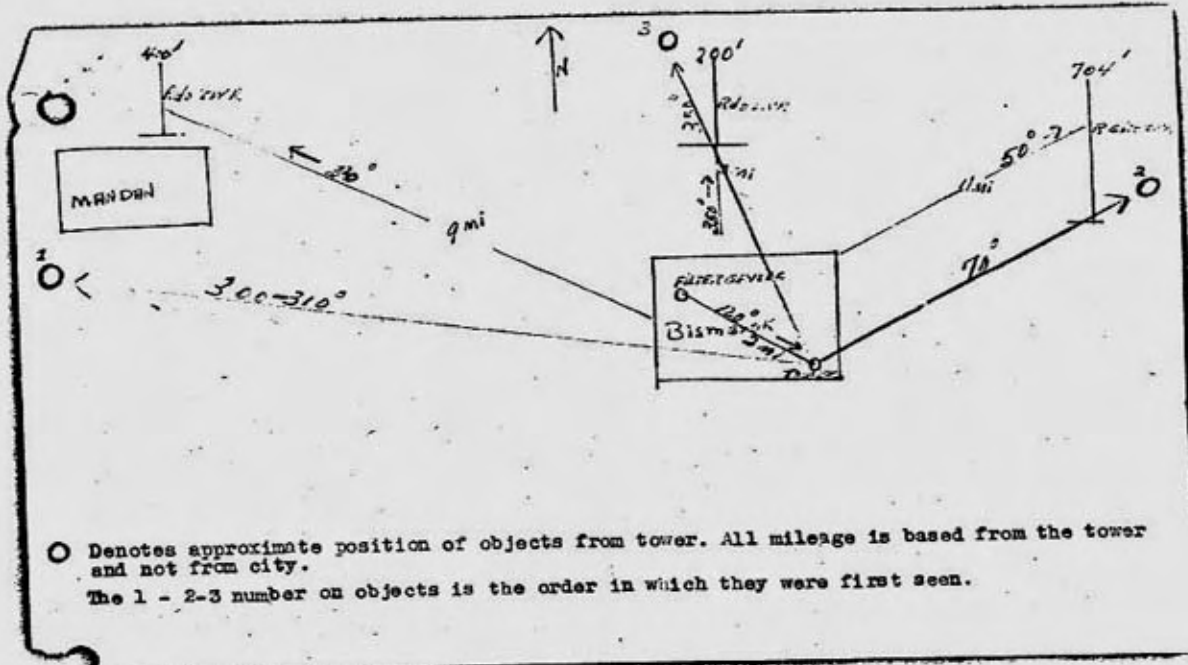


Fig 6A

WEST

NORTH

Object #1 Faded here at 0659Z
Altitude now 2000 feet or less
Distance 4-5 miles.

OBJECT #2 (Object #2 Faded about here at 0842Z
First sighted here Estimated Distance 6-8 miles). Altitude
at 0613Z seemed to vary from 2000 ft.-6000 ft.

Object #3 Faded here
at 0847Z. Estimated
distance 6-8 miles
Altitude seemed to be
between 2000-4000 feet

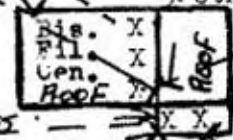
Object #4 Faded here
at 0850Z. Estimated
distance 7-8 miles)
Altitude between 2000
and 4000 feet.

Object #1
sighted here
at 0545Z

Object #1
First sighted
here at 0542Z
Altitude 4000-5000 ft.
Distance 4-5 miles

Object #1 Seemed to hover
in encircled area and erratic
movement took place.

Rismarck Filter Center



3 other points of observation
adjacent Bldg.

Point of my observation

Westbound ← COMMERCIAL & MILITARY AIRWAYS & FLIGHT PATH OF USAF C-124 ←

C-124 crew was contacted
at about 0759Z to try and
make a visual airborne
observation. They could
not see anything, probably
due to cloud and weather
front moving in.

CAA Control Tower
and point from which
Mr. Wilhelm observed
Objects.

LEGEND: ⊗ = Object #1
 ■ = Object #2
 ⊠ = Object #3
 ● = Object #4

Unidentified Objects sighted on
 5-6 August 1953. Visible for 3 hours

X equals the points of observation.
 This is a rough sketch and is some
 what out of proportion, however,
 the distances and circles are as
 accurate as we could get them.

