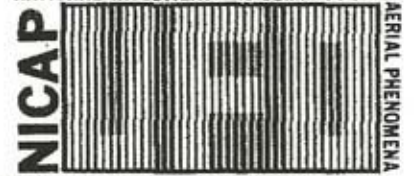


UFO INVESTIGATOR



Three Radars Confirm Unknown Object

Jets Scrambled To Intercept UFO

An unidentified target on Air Force and FAA radars in southern Florida has sent two military jets scrambling into predawn skies to hunt for a mysterious airborne intruder that was reportedly witnessed by ground observers and air traffic controllers as well as three separate radar facilities.

The dramatic intercept attempt came at approximately 6 a.m. on September 14, when the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD), alerted by

tower operators at West Palm Beach International Airport, dispatched two F-106 jet fighters to locate and identify a "glowing circular object" that appeared without warning on the airport radar scope. The fighters were sent from Homestead Air Force Base south of Miami and ordered to use their own onboard radar systems to search for the UFO.

"If it had proved hostile, we would have destroyed it," one Air Force spokesman later stated.

Although no trace could be found of the strange target, one of the pilots, Major Gerald Smith, said there was definitely something in the sky over the city.

"We were getting height cuts from two different military radar installations," he said.

The "bogle" target was tracked for over an hour but disappeared from radar scopes shortly before the jets arrived on the scene. The initial contact, recorded at the airport at about 4:20 a.m., was made by FAA air traffic controller C.J. Fox, who described it as a "good clear target." Another controller, A.W. Brown, confirmed this description, saying, "This object was hard."

Visual reports came from control tower personnel, including FAA watch super-

visor George Morales, who described what he saw as "silver white in color and cigar shaped." He said he viewed the object through binoculars.

Other reports were received from West Palm Beach police, a Florida state trooper, an Eastern Airlines pilot, and local citizens. Most of these described strange lights in the sky, some blinking, some unusually bright. Not all reports coincided in time and location with the radar contacts.

Approximately one hour before the jets were alerted, the sheriff of Palm Beach County, William Heidtman, was notified about the sighting and decided to make his own search for the object in a helicopter. Like the fighter pilots, he found nothing.

In statements to news reporters, the Air Force admitted it could not satisfactorily explain the anomalous radar returns, although it cited "weather phenomena" as a possible answer. The visual reports, it said, could be accounted for as the planet Venus, which is exceptionally bright at this time of year.

Pilot Smith said he agreed with this evaluation. "It looked weird," he said, but "in my personal opinion, it was Ven-
(See Jets Scrambled, page 4)

Jets Scrambled

(Continued from page 1)

us." He said he flew over the airport at low altitude to view the object from the same general position the radar operators were watching it. He passed so close to the tower, he reported, he had to get special permission before he did it. Afterwards, he switched on the plane's afterburners and flew above the clouds to confirm his observation. He later speculated that a "strange roar" reported by citizens on the ground that same morning was only the sound of his afterburners as they cut in to boost the craft skyward.

NICAP's investigator, Carl Thorbahn, talked with controller Brown and some of the West Palm Beach residents who reported the sightings. He said Brown described the radar target as moving erratically in the northwestern sky, at a range of 12 to 16 miles from the airport. It was "like nothing I have ever seen," he told Thorbahn. He added that the object "could not possibly have been gas or other atmospheric (phenomena)."

Another operator was quoted by a Palm Beach newspaper as saying the UFO traveled at an estimated speed of 120 miles per hour through a constantly changing course. Officials at Miami International Airport, which also tracked the strange object, reported no aircraft was known to be in the area where the UFO was spotted.