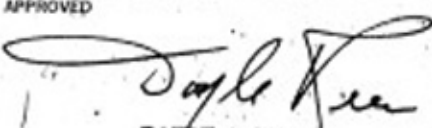


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HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS		FILE NO. 24-5	DATE 13 Dec 48
REPORT OF INVESTIGATION		REPORT MADE BY CHARLES HAPPELBERG, Jr.	
TITLE UNKNOWN (Aerial Phenomena)		REPORT MADE AT DO #17, Kirtland AFB	
		PERIOD 6 - 9 December 1948	
		OFFICE OF ORIGIN DO #17, Kirtland AFB	
		STATUS PENDING	
CHARACTER SPECIAL INQUIRY			
REFERENCE None, this is an initial report.			
SYNOPSIS Investigation requested by District Commander, 17th District OSI. Telephonic report received from Security Officer at Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico, on 6 December 1948, advised that an Air Force Pilot had observed an unidentified object similar to a green flare on 5 December 1948, at 2105 hours, west of Las Vegas, New Mexico, and again at 2127 hours on the east slope of the Santa Mountains near Albuquerque, New Mexico. A commercial pilot reported a similar incident at 2135 hours west of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Pilot of G-47, AF-9921, is identified as Captain A. COADE, AO-55463. Captain Pilot of Pioneer Flight No. 63 is identified as Mr. HERBERT VAN LLOYD. New Mexico State Police, Santa Fe, New Mexico, were contacted and had no information to offer reference unusual aerial phenomena. Mr. K. D. FLOCK, Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest, Santa Fe, New Mexico, stated he has received no reports of incidents of this type during the current year. However, in the summer of 1947 a Mrs. MADELINE G. MERCHANT had made numerous reports to him concerning unusual aerial manifestations in the area from Tierra Amarilla to Los Alamos, New Mexico.			
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File 2		APPROVED  DOYLE EVERS 1st Lt., USAF	

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SYNOPSIS (Continued)

Chief MATT O'BRIEN, Chief of Police, Las Vegas, New Mexico, stated he had received no prior reports of unusual occurrences of this type.

Patrolman ROLAND UTZ, New Mexico State Police, Las Vegas, New Mexico, stated he had heard a rumor concerning aerial flares in the neighborhood of Las Vegas.

Mrs. JOSEPH MARSHALL, Office Manager, Las Vegas Flying Service, Las Vegas, New Mexico, stated no night flying conducted from Watson Airport, Las Vegas, and she had heard no rumors concerning aerial flares.

Mr. J. D. MILLER, Chief Aircraft Communicator, CAA Municipal Airport, Las Vegas, New Mexico, stated he had heard of no incident of this nature and, in particular, had received no information from any aircraft on 5 December 1948.

Mr. JOHN J. NEWMAN, Mr. E. C. FRANCIS, Mr. C. T. RICH, and Mr. ROY W. TOLLIVER, Aircraft Communicators, CAA, Las Vegas, New Mexico, all stated no previous reports or knowledge of unusual aerial phenomena. These individuals were alerted to report future incidents to the proper investigative agency.

Mr. BILLIE R. WATSON, Manager Pioneer Air Lines, Las Vegas, New Mexico, stated he had heard only a rumor from one of his pilots and knew of no unusual incidents regarding flares or lights in the Las Vegas area. Mr. WATSON stated he would report future incidents to Mr. MILLER of CAA.

Mr. WILLIAM KEATHEAD, Ranger, Las Vegas, New Mexico, stated he had no knowledge of any incidents of this type and will submit any future reports to Mr. FLOCK in Santa Fe.

Special Agents STAHL and HENF observed an intense green light in the sky at approximately 13,500 feet altitude near Las Vegas, New Mexico, on 5 December 1948. Agents were unable to identify this object and could not estimate distance or size, since no other object was visible on which to base the comparison.

Col. WILLIAM P. HAYES, stated he has observed an unusual phenomenon, bright, white in color, similar to a miniature sun somewhat larger, larger than a basketball, on three (3) different occasions in the vicinity of Vaughn, New Mexico. First observation was made late in 1947; second observation on 3 or 4 November 1948; third observation on 25 November 1948.

Dr. LINCOLN LA PAZ, Director, Institute of Meteoritics, University of New Mexico, stated that phenomena being investigated could not be explained by him, nor could they be considered as meteors. Dr. LA PAZ

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SYNOPSIS (Continued)

mentioned three (3) previous anomalous incidents, the Memphis, Tennessee, incident of 7 May 1948; the Texas Observers' incident of 1948, 7 January, and the very remarkable "fireball" fall of 1948, 31 May, 3:42 a.m., MST, across the Los Alamos reservation which was probably meteoritic, but from which no meteorites have been secured in spite of careful search. Dr. LINCOLN LA PAZ personally witnessed the occurrence of a similar incident on 12 December 1948, at Las Vegas, N. M. A statement by Dr. LA PAZ is inclosed.

Col. HAROLD A. GUNN, Base Commanding Officer, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico, advised that he knew of no maneuvers being conducted within this area.

Major WILLIAM P. GORDON, 4th Army Intelligence Liaison, Sandia Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, advised that he knew of no maneuvers being conducted within this area.

Mr. JOSEPH H. TOULOUSE, HRO Security, Sandia Base, observed a green flare directly over Sandia Base at 2255 hours, 6 December 1948.

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DETAILS:AT ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

1. This investigation predicated upon verbal request District Commander, 17th District Office of Special Investigations (IO) USAF, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico.
2. This is a joint investigation of Special Agents JOHN J. STAHL, Jr., HERMAN B. KENNEDY, MELVIN E. KEMP, and the writer.
3. On 6 December 1948, Captain JOSEPH HAYLEN, Security Officer, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico, reported the following incidents:

At 2130 hours, 5 December 1948, a C-47, Number A1-9921, enroute from Lowry Air Force Base, Denver, Colorado, to Williams Air Force Base, Chandler, Arizona, reported his position to the Central Tower, Kirtland Air Force Base, as being approximately ten (10) miles east of Albuquerque. Pilot stated that he had seen a green flare arise from the ground to an altitude of approximately five hundred (500) feet on the east slope of the Sandia Mountains. This incident occurred at about 2127 hours. Pilot stated that he had seen the same type of flare at approximately 2105 hours just west of Las Vegas, New Mexico. No other information was offered by this pilot.

At 2300 hours, 5 December 1948, the Central Tower, Kirtland Air Force Base, contacted Pioneer Air Flight #63, which had just completed a flight from Tucuman, New Mexico, to Las Vegas, to Santa Fe, to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Captain of this flight stated he had seen a green light just west of Las Vegas at approximately 2135 hours. Pilot stated he had believed the light to be a shooting star at first, but, upon questioning, stated the opinion that the light was too near the ground to have been a shooting star. Pilot suggested that the light could have been a Very Pistol flare.

At 2320 hours, 5 December 1948, Captain VAN LLOYD, pilot of Pioneer Flight #63, reported by telephone to Kirtland Air Force Base Central Tower, stating that when he first saw the light it appeared to be coming straight toward his airplane and added that he had attempted to jerk the airplane from its course to avoid the light. VAN LLOYD said that the light appeared to be coming straight to the ship, then trailed off to the ground. The light was pale green and had a pale green trail. Captain VAN LLOYD said he was hesitant about reporting such incidents since they are generally not accepted.

4. On 6 December 1948, ERNEST VAN LLOYD, Captain and Pilot, JAMES L. SMITH, Co-pilot, and ELIZABETH CONNER, Flight Hostess, all

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civilians, Pioneer Flight #63, were interviewed by S/A MELVIN H. KNEF. This interview was conducted at Pioneer Airline Operations, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico. VAN LLOYD and SMITH advised that at 2135 hours, 5 December 1946, they were approaching Las Vegas, New Mexico, in a C-47 type airplane at an altitude of 9,000 feet, with a compass heading of 272 degrees. They observed directly ahead and slightly above their altitude, in the vicinity of the Montezuma Kanyon, a phenomenon which first appeared as a bright white flash, then an object came into view which was described as being a whitish, orange color. This object at first appeared to be coming directly toward their airplane, then arched downward and disappeared from sight. This object was in view for only a few seconds and no estimate could be made of the size or distance of the object. Both VAN LLOYD and SMITH were of the opinion that it would have been impossible for anyone in the passenger compartment to have observed this phenomenon. Miss CONNER stated that she did not observe this object and added that to the best of her knowledge all of the passengers were asleep.

NOTE: It is to be noted that there is a discrepancy in the color of Capt. VAN LLOYD's initial report and that obtained by interview.

5. On 9 December 1946, Colonel WILLIAM F. HAYES, Infantry, Civilian Component Affairs Officer, New Mexico Military District, was interviewed in his office, Building 2-25, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico. This interview was conducted by S/A JOHN J. STAHL, Jr., S/A MELVIN H. KNEF, and the writer. Colonel HAYES advised that he had first observed an unusual aerial phenomenon during the latter part of 1947. This occurred in the vicinity of Vaughn, New Mexico. The phenomenon appeared to be approximately four or five hundred feet above the ground when first observed and descending slowly and steadily in a vertical manner toward the earth. The object appeared to be slightly larger than a basketball, bright white in color, like a miniature sun. Upon reaching a point approximately two hundred feet above the surface of the earth, the object appeared to explode although no noise was apparent. Colonel HAYES stopped his automobile and got out to watch the object. At this time the explosion, or disintegration, appeared to be taking place some forty to sixty yards distant, and still no noise was noticed. At this time the fragments assumed a fiery red color and descended toward earth like numerous sparks, being extinguished before touching the ground. Colonel HAYES stated that he was on Highway #60 at this time, near a railroad and separated from the vicinity where the fragments were landing by a fence. Colonel HAYES did not cross the fence or investigate further.

6. Colonel HAYES advised that on either 3 or 4 November 1946, and again on 23 November 1946, he observed two similar phenomena as described previously. These observations were in the same vicinity of the original phenomenon on Highway #60, near Vaughn, New Mexico. All three of these incidents occurred at approximately 2200 hours. Col. HAYES

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also advised that as far as he knew no maneuvers were being held by the National Guard or the Reserve Units in New Mexico.

NOTE: Colonel HAYES did not report any of these incidents, but upon receiving information of similar occurrences having been observed, did volunteer the information contained in this report.

7. On 9 December 1945, Dr. LINCOLN LA PAZ, Director, Institute of Meteoritics, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, was interviewed in his office by Special Agent MELVIN E. KNEF. Dr. LA PAZ produced his credentials which indicated that during the 2nd World War he was Technical Director, Operations Analysis Section, Hq., 2nd Air Force, and is closely associated in an official capacity with Dr. E. E. LANDSHNER, Executive Director, Committee on Geophysics and Geography, Research and Development Board, Pentagon, Washington, D. C. In connection with this capacity he has a secret and a top secret clearance by the Air Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

8. Dr. LA PAZ explained the behavior of meteors and stated that these phenomena being investigated could not be explained or be considered as meteors. He advised, in view of the unexplained Memphis, Tennessee, incident, the occurrence at Los Alamos, New Mexico, and the proclaimed meteorites fall in Russia, that has not been explained, that the present phenomena should be investigated and an attempt be made to identify them.

9. On 13 December 1945, Dr. LA PAZ gave a statement concerning an incident, which he witnessed at 9:03 p.m., on 12 December 1945. Dr. LA PAZ's statement is inclosed as Incl. No. 1.

10. On 11 December 1945, Major WILLIAM P. GODSON, 4th Army Liaison Intelligence Officer, Sandia Base, New Mexico, advised S/A M. C. KNEF, that there were no maneuvers in this area, and no experiments involving the use of rockets or flares.

11. On 12 December 1945, Col. HAROLD A. GUNN, Base Commander, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico, was interviewed by S/A MELVIN E. KNEF. Col. GUNN advised that he knows of no aerial maneuvers, and feels that in the event that there were, he would be so advised.

AT CHANDLER, ARIZONA

12. On 7 December 1945, S/A HERMAN E. HUNTER, reported from Williams Air Force Base, Chandler, Arizona, that Air Force C-47, Number AF-9921, was piloted by Captain A. GOARD, AO-55453. The co-pilot was determined to be Major R. M. GANER, AO-40767, and the Flight Engineer was M/Sgt. R. S. WALSH, AO-299736 - (unknown in its entirety). All of the above personnel were reported to be permanently stationed at Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, and were enroute from San Antonio,

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Texas, to Williams Air Force Base, Arizona. Aircraft and crew departed for Mather Air Force Base, California, before an interview could be conducted.

AT SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

13. On 5 December 1948, Captain E. K. MILLER, New Mexico State Police, State Police Headquarters, Highway 85, Santa Fe, New Mexico, was interviewed reference possible previous reports concerning unusual aerial phenomena, flares, lights in the sky, etc. Captain MILLER stated no reports had been received by his office from any of the State Police stationed throughout the state of New Mexico.

NOTE: Captain MILLER stated that he would report any incidents of this type to the State Police Office in Albuquerque and request that they contact the Office of Special Investigations, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico.

14. On 5 December 1948, Mr. E. D. FLOCK, Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest, Federal Court House Building, Santa Fe, New Mexico, was interviewed reference possible previous reports concerning unusual aerial phenomena, flares, lights in the sky, etc. Mr. FLOCK stated that he had received no reports of incidents of these types during the current year; however, in the summer of 1947, a woman named MARLENE S. MERCHANT (LEAD) P. O. Box 263, Santa Fe, New Mexico, had reported unusual aerial manifestations to him on numerous occasions. Mrs. MERCHANT, a writer, and her husband were prospecting throughout the State of New Mexico, and on at least five different occasions, during a period of five to six weeks, Mrs. MERCHANT had visited Mr. FLOCK and reported having observed objects which she described as being "cigar-shaped with a glowing tip" in the sky. No information was available as to the altitude, size, speed, or frequency of these objects. Mrs. MERCHANT stated that she had personally observed these objects from Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico, to Los Alamos, New Mexico. Mrs. MERCHANT is believed to have contacted the military security personnel at Los Alamos Atomic Energy Commission (LEAD) installation, and also to have contacted the Governor of New Mexico reference her observations. It is not believed that Mrs. MERCHANT is now residing at Santa Fe.

15. Mr. FLOCK stated that he had alerted his Forest Rangers to watch for unusual lights or objects in the sky, but to date had received no reports from them. Mr. FLOCK recommended that WILLIAM KRAHARD, Forest Ranger, Las Vegas, be contacted for a report of possible activities of this nature in the Las Vegas area.

NOTE: Mr. FLOCK was unusually cooperative and security-conscious. Mr. FLOCK stated that he would discreetly alert his Rangers again and have them report to him all incidents of this nature immediately. These reports will be transmitted in turn to the Office of Special Investigations, Kirtland Air Force Base, Kirtland Field, New Mexico. Mr. FLOCK stated also that he would be glad to cooperate by permitting members of the Office of Special Investigations to make use of temporarily inactive fire towers, or ranger stations, upon request.

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AT LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO

1. On 8 December 1948, Mr. Matt O'BRIEN, Chief of Police, Sixth and University, Las Vegas, New Mexico, was interviewed reference reports of unusual aerial phenomenon. Chief O'BRIEN stated that he had received no reports of this nature and added that this was the first he had heard of possible occurrences in the vicinity of Las Vegas. Chief O'BRIEN recommended that NOLAND UTZ, State Police, on duty in Las Vegas, be contacted.
 2. On 8 December 1948, Patrolman NOLAND UTZ, New Mexico State Police, San Miguel County Court House (Old Town), Las Vegas, New Mexico, was interviewed reference reports on unusual aerial phenomenon. Mr. UTZ stated he had received no reports of this nature and added that only on one occasion had he overheard a conversation about aerial flares in the neighborhood of Las Vegas. This conversation occurred during a meeting of several enforcement agents and Mr. UTZ stated he had no idea who had mentioned the subject. Mr. UTZ stated if he received reports of this type he would report same to the proper Federal agency. Mr. UTZ said that possibly a man named "HOUSE" who was flying a plane locally and doing advertising with a loud speaker attached to the plane could throw some light on the flares claimed to have been seen in the vicinity of Las Vegas.
 3. On 8 December 1948, Mrs. JOSEPH MARSHALL, Office Manager, Las Vegas Flying Service, Watson Airport, East County Road, Las Vegas, New Mexico, was interviewed reference reports of flares observed at night in the vicinity of Las Vegas. Mrs. MARSHALL stated that she was the wife of JOSEPH MARSHALL, Owner of Las Vegas Flying Service. Mrs. MARSHALL stated that business was unusually slow at the Watson Airport, due to the near-abolishment of training of student pilots under the G.I. Bill. No flying is conducted at night from this air field. Mrs. MARSHALL added that possibly information could be obtained from the local newspaper office and added that she had heard no reports on flares in the Las Vegas area.
- NOTE: Contact was not made with the local newspaper due to a desire of keeping publicity about this investigation to a minimum.
4. On 8 December 1948, Mr. J. D. MILLER, Chief Aircraft Communicator, Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Administration (hereinafter referred to as C.A.A.), Box 1029, Municipal Airport, Las Vegas, New Mexico, was interviewed reference possible previous reports of unusual aerial phenomenon. Mr. MILLER stated he had heard of no incident prior to this interview and added that he was very much interested in events of this nature. Mr. MILLER stated he had received no information from any aircraft on 5 December 1948. A check of the C.A.A. records for this date verified this statement. Mr. MILLER stated that beginning immediately he would alert his Aircraft Communicators to report promptly incidents of this nature to him. These reports would in turn be reported to the Office of Special Investigations, Kirtland AFB, Kirtland Field, New Mexico. If the reports appear to necessitate immediate investigative action, a report will be made to a Federal agent residing in Las Vegas. Mr. MILLER requested that four of

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his six Aircraft Communicators, on duty at time of interview, be interviewed collectively and informed briefly of the type of reports desired and the necessity for reporting such incidents immediately to Mr. MILLER.

5. On 8 December 1948, Mr. JOHN J. NEWMAN, Mr. K. C. FRANCIS, Mr. C. T. RICH, and Mr. ROY W. TOLLIVER, Aircraft Communicators, C.A.A. Municipal Airport, Las Vegas, New Mexico, were interviewed collectively and informed of the investigation being conducted relative to unusual aerial phenomena. None of these men had received previous reports of this nature. All of these men agreed to maintain this information on a discreet basis and to handle the information as being highly classified. Permission was granted to these four communicators to brief the two communicators absent at this time reference the information desired. The two men absent were listed as Mr. IRWIN L. MERICLE and Mr. ROBERT L. HISH. The four communicators interviewed stated that the only night flying at Municipal Airport, Las Vegas, was by the two commercial airlines located there; Pioneer Airlines and Continental Airlines. It was pointed out that a Mr. LLOYD BIRLE, Owner-Manager of a flying school located on Municipal Airport was not licensed to make night flights and was not authorized to permit his students to fly at night. It was further noted that Mr. WOCHROW HOUSE, owner of a Piper Super Cruiser used for advertising purposes in the vicinity of Las Vegas, was not licensed to fly at night.

6. On 8 December 1948, Mr. BILLY R. WATSON, Manager, Pioneer Airlines, Municipal Airport, Las Vegas, New Mexico, was interviewed reference reports on unusual aerial phenomenon. Mr. WATSON was interviewed in his home, 816 Fourth Street, Las Vegas, New Mexico, and stated that with the exception of a rumor from one of his Pioneer pilots (Mr. VAN LLOYD) he had heard of no unusual incidents regarding flares or lights in the sky in and around the Las Vegas area. Mr. WATSON stated that he would stay on the alert in an attempt to gather any future information from pilots or crew members of Pioneer Airlines, but added that he did not feel like confiding in his two assistants, since they were very youthful and would undoubtedly disclose information regarding this investigation. Mr. WATSON stated that a Mr. W. R. McGOVERN, home address, 1001 Sixth Street, Las Vegas, Manager of Continental Airlines was presently out of town but was due to return on Friday, 10 December 1948. Mr. WATSON, upon being requested to do so, stated he would discreetly brief Mr. McGOVERN as to the nature of reports desired, and would impress Mr. McGOVERN as to the confidential classification of this investigation. Mr. WATSON concluded by stating that any information he obtained, and information obtained by Mr. McGOVERN, would be reported to Mr. MILLER of C.A.A. for subsequent transmittal to the proper investigative agency.

7. On 8 December 1948, Mr. WILLIAM BRAINARD, Ranger, Santa Fe National Forest Service, Federal Post Office Building, Las Vegas, New Mexico, was interviewed reference possible previous reports of unusual aerial phenomenon. Mr. BRAINARD stated that at no time in the past since his assignment to Las Vegas in February 1948 had he received any report or observed any incident regarding occurrences of this nature. Mr. BRAINARD said he would report any future incidents of this type to Mr. FLOCK in Santa Fe, for subsequent transmittal to the investigative agency concerned.

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