

ENCOUNTER OVER REEF STATION, CA.

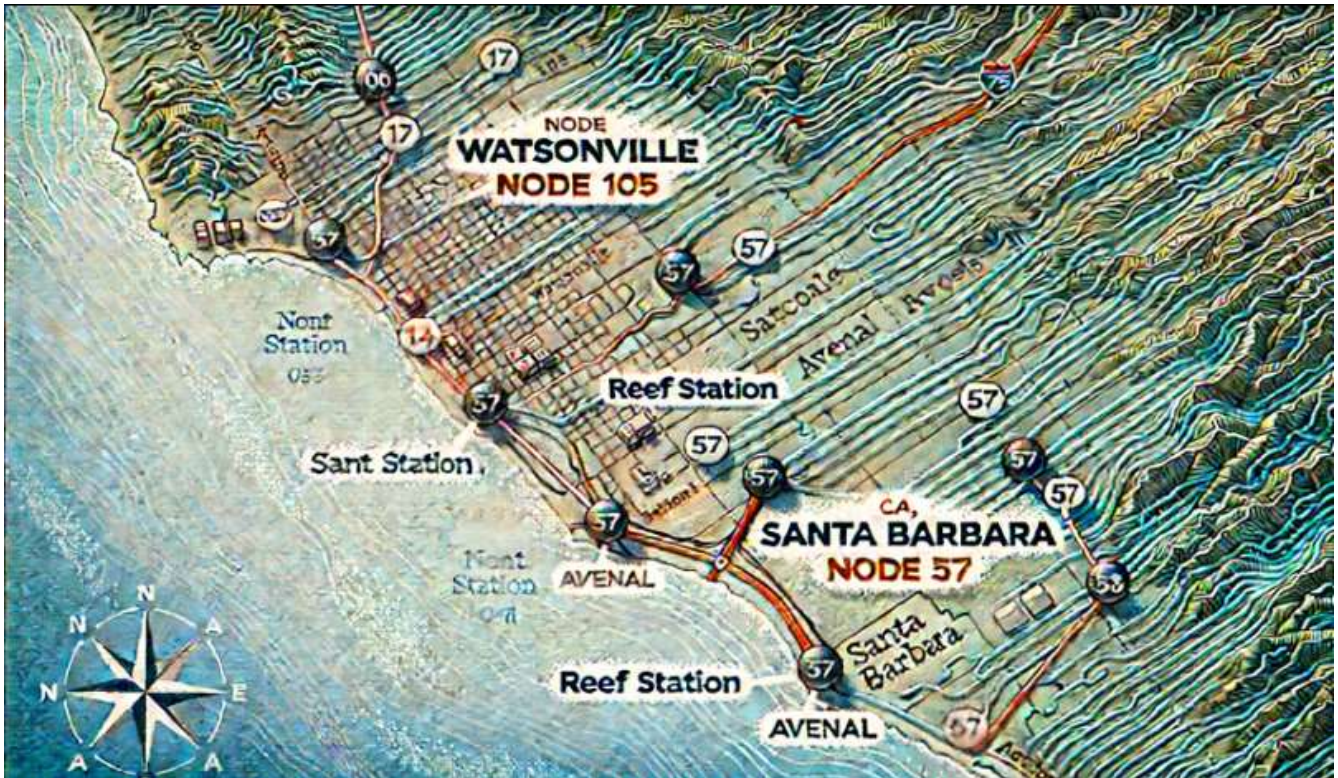
September 17, 2024

by fran ridge



The military uses the King Air 350iER (Extended Range) edition for intelligence missions, aerial survey and surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance missions. The military has put the Beechcraft King Air 350 and earlier King Air models to use as transport planes and electronic warfare use. They refit the cabin with electronic sensors, radios, video cameras and jammers. Using the Beechcraft King Air aircraft equipped with the latest Communications Electronics Attack with Surveillance and Reconnaissance (Ceasar), the ground troops get information regarding enemy devices and translations of enemy communications.

Early on the morning of September 17th our Chief of Tech Support, Eric Calkins, picked up a transmission from a pilot trying to file an “air incursion incident” with Columbia Gorge Regional Airport in Washington state. Eric had also reported an unusual amount of jets flying around Goldendale. My preliminary data went into a file for that date. Before the day was over some new NUFORC entries had wound up in the same folder. Something was going on, on the West Coast.



The upper left of this map supplied by Kevin Day shows MADAR site 105 at Watsonville. Bottom center is site 57 at Santa Barbara. The distance between the two sites is 220 miles. Something even more interesting had occurred later in the day in S. California. The encounter point is within 100-120 miles of the two sites.

On September 17th at 14:45 Pacific, a report 183083 was filed with NUFORC by an air traffic controller (ATC) at an undisclosed airport. The sighting had occurred at 14:26 Pacific, just 19 minutes before. While working air traffic he had received a report from a pilot, and another aviation expert, of a military Kingair progressing the Avenal Navaid (Avenal, CA) of a football sized black cylinder passing approximately 10ft. under their right wing. Within a minute the pilot's crew member was able to locate the object on their onboard radar at a bearing of 094 for their aircraft at a distance of roughly 60 miles.

At 14:55 Pacific NUFORC received a second report, 183084. It had occurred at 14:25, and involved three aviation experts, service unknown. This then was the same event but filed by the pilot, himself. The pilot of TROY21, a military B350 with onboard radar, reported a gray cylindrical object passing directly underneath the aircraft. The pilot estimated the object to be 10 feet under the aircraft when passing by. The pilot then reported observing the object via their onboard radar about 60 miles away. The pilot was on an IFR flight plan in direct communication with air traffic control. TROY21 was at an altitude of flight level two zero zero (20,000 feet) traveling northwest, and the object was traveling east at 3,000 mph. Total time 2 minutes.

At this point we're not sure whether this was Air Force or Navy incident, or a civilian drug interdiction flight, but it was a Beechcraft B350 King Air. This type of aircraft usually carries surveillance equipment and sophisticated radar, and indeed had radar. The pilot of TROY21 reported the gray cylindrical object was observed for two minutes while over Reef Station, California, passed directly under the aircraft about 10' away at one point and then was tracked with the B350's radar at 3,000 mph traveling east.



I went to the MADAR display and punched in the coords for Reef Station and Avenal and the registration dots, tracer 500 and tracer 501 popped right up, both within 100-120 miles of the three MADAR sites. The two sites South of the encounter area were Santa Barbara site 57 and Santa Barbara 222. The site 222 was offline at the time but 57 was operating and showed a significant magnetometer spike of 19.12 milligauss at 21:21:33 which is 14:21 local PDT. Allowing for a 1 minute error, that's 3-4 minutes prior to the encounter. Site 105 at Watsonville had no spikes.

There were no "code blues" or MADAR alerts, since the MADAR sites were coming out of a "roll-back" and the shield (threshold) was set at 200. With the software change most sites were at that level and being reset at about 10 per day. Never-the-less site 57 at Santa Barbara had the significant magnetometer spike during that minute. This suggests that something anomalistic had entered the airspace south of Reef Station somewhere near Santa Barbara which was 100 miles to the south. It is doubtful that a small probe would cause this, so the data suggests that a scout craft entered that regional airspace and produced enough E-M near Santa Barbara then launched a probe which at some point was involved in the regional activity.

A FOIA request was filed by one of the members of our MADAR Task Force on October 1st. The reason it was delayed somewhat was due to some strange coordinates that were in both NUFORC reports. After Christian Stepien from NUFORC provided the coords by the ATC or pilot we were good to go.

With the radar data we should be able to determine if the probe travelled west to east during the two minutes or if the football-sized cylinder might have travelled north from near Santa Barbara, turned east and shadowed the B350 and crew for a minute before heading east at 3,000 mph.

At this point there are no witnesses available to contact, except the air traffic controller who left a number with Christian Stepien. Because of this I set up a MADAR Task Force with several specialists to make sure we didn't miss anything and at least make an attempt to get radar data ASAP.

PENDING RADAR DATA