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AIR 20/7390

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~~2704(22)/58~~

2

**SECRET**



**M.O.D.**  
**II/127/3/48**  
**A.H.B. (RAF)**

NON

~~FLYING OBJECTS  
UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT~~

*P.A.*

- 1. KEEP .....
- 2. AIR CLASS *20* .....
- 3. Index Code .....

**DOWNGRADED TO OPEN SERIES**

*2704(22)/58*

**SECRET**

*Unidentified Flying Objects*

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MINUTE SHEET 3638

SECRET

Air Ministry File No. HM.4362/10E.10.

A.1.3(e) *W*

Min. 1.

3

D.D. Intelligence  
17 Monck Street, S.W.1

Unidentified "Aircraft"

Although there may possibly be some good explanation for it, I wish to report an unusual occurrence which I witnessed at 19.30 hours last night Sunday, 10th December. I tabulate details below:-

- (a) Place  
Wilderness Country Club, 1½ miles N.E. of Sevenoaks, Kent.
- (b) Object Seen  
Bright light in sky moving in West - East direction which did not alter in size or intensity of light during movement. No flame or navigation lights were visible.
- (c) Weather  
Raining. Sky 10/10ths overcast. Cloud base estimated 3 - 4000 ft. Wind negligible.
- (d) Height and Speed  
Although weather conditions made assessment difficult, I estimate the object maintained a steady height of about 3000 ft. at approximately 130 - 150 m.p.h. It was visible for about five minutes until it passed out of sight behind the Club buildings.

2. The matter which really drew my attention to it was the complete absence of sound. Two friends who were with me witnessed the entire occurrence.

3. Although I am an Equipment Officer, I have done nearly 1400 hours flying in 81 different types of aircraft and I held a pilot's "A" licence before the war, therefore, I feel you may regard the assessments I have made as reasonably accurate. I would be interested to know if this information is of any value and whether or not there is an explanation to the phenomena of straight - and - level flight, without sound.

*11th*  
December, 1950  
DC

*[Signature]*  
Group Captain  
D.D.E. 10

(\*11245) Wt. 16502 7A (57212)

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FROM HQ KEAF

TO AIR MINISTRY LONDON

*file BF 58*

*45225/LTC*

T

*MEANS*

DEFERRED 4  
CONFIDENTIAL

AF 129 AUG 16 CONFIDENTIAL

REQUEST INFORMATION ANY RECOGNISED OR INTERNATIONALLY AGREED MANOEUVRES  
AIRCRAFT OF ONE COUNTRY WISHING TO INFORM AIRCRAFT OF

ANOTHER

COUNTRY IT IS OVER PROHIBITED AREA AND MUST LAND AT  
NEAREST AIRFIELD *fly alongside, N/C down or rock wings, N/C*

*DDCR action*

OT 16000Z

*DD OPS (AD)*

26 692

the Envelope may

SECRET2.

5

D.D.Ops. (A.D.)

Attached is a report by D.D.E.10 which is self-explanatory. It is felt that you may like to investigate it in the first instance. I am informing Group Captain Cartmel that his minute has been passed to you.

Group Captain  
D.D.I.3.

14th December, 1950D.D. Ops. (A.D)4.

Please see the attached papers.

2. In view of the fact that the C. & R. system was not functioning in the area at the time it will be quite impossible to find out whether there were any aircraft in the vicinity at the time.

3. Personally I am of the opinion that the Group Captain was observing the moon behind 8/8th cloud. Over the week-end the wind, I think, was generally in the east and this would give the impression that the object was travelling west. Had it been travelling at the speed given by the Group Captain I doubt whether he would have been able to see it for 5 minutes. In view of the fact that he saw it for this length of time and the absence of noise substantiates my theory that he saw the glare of the moon on the cloud.

(sgd) H. RUSSELL,  
Wing Commander

Ops. (A.D) 1.  
20th December, 1950.

Ops. (A.D.) 1.3.

The C. & R. System was non-operational in Southern Sector at 1930 hours on Sunday 10th December, 1950. I am therefore unable to obtain any details of aircraft movements for the period stated. Could you please throw any light on this phenomenon.

(sgd) S. H. BROWN  
Squadron Leader

Ops. (A.D) 3(a)  
19th December, 1950.

5. . . . . 6  
Mr. H.L. Beards (A.S.A.(O))

1. Here are the papers about which I spoke to you over the phone.
2. I suppose reports of this sort if kept and added to other reports of similar phenomena might one day be useful for analysis.
3. I can't think of anything else we could do with this one.

(Sgd.) E.A. DOUGLAS-JONES  
Group Captain  
D.D.Ops.(A.D.)

1st January, 1951.

6.

D.D.Ops.(A.D.)

1. It is impossible to suggest a watertight solution to this phenomenon on the information given. It would be better if one could discuss it with the observer but even then the chances of a satisfactory solution are small.
2. The moon theory is not very good because the passage of cloud before the moon only gives the illusion of speed. The actual movement of the moon in 5 minutes is about 1 degree and this could not make it disappear behind the clubhouse no matter how fast it appeared to be going. Furthermore the light is described as bright and estimated to be below the cloud base. Have you checked the moon's position on this occasion?
3. If the local A.A. was practising one might suggest the possibility of a searchlight reflected from the base of the cloud. This could have any speed you like and could disappear behind the clubhouse. However I would hesitate to believe that an experienced airman would be foxed by either the moon or a searchlight.
4. — I don't rule out the possibility of quite an ordinary a/c with the white navigation light or even some special light fitted. The circumstance which calls up the air of mystery is merely the absence of sound and it is easy to visualise circumstances in which this would occur. Sound, like light is deviated by refraction and the extent depends on atmospheric density, meteorological conditions and the like. It is not unknown for sound and light to be so deviated on entry into the earth's atmosphere that an observer can intercept the one and not the other. Put simply the sound could have been bent upwards sufficiently to have passed over his head, while the light was not bent so much.
5. I doubt whether any further action is necessary beyond saving these papers for future reference.

(Sgd.) H.L. BEARDS

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2.0 pp. 1/8302.

63430

*A/Ans to in*

RF.

AM/DD. OPS. (AD) *12/4274/P* MESSAGE

(Received 20th September, 1952)

From:- C.T.F. 178.  
To:- C. in C. Aircastlant.  
Reptd.to:- Air Ministry London.

*File on folder 58.*

*7  
 1/2  
 1/2  
 (2)*

UNCLASSIFIED DEFERRED

A 1/41 Sep. 19

*DRK  
 25/9.*

Following unusual incident observed R.A.F. Topcliffe by number officers and airmen aircrew 191053 local time. Meteor aircraft observed at approx. 500 feet and descending. White object was seen 5 miles astern at approx. 15000 feet and moving at comparatively slow speed on similar course. Object was silver in colour and circular. It maintained slow forward speed before commencing descent. Swinging in pendular motion like a falling sycamore leaf. Thought by observers to be parachute or cowling from Meteor aircraft. Aircraft had turned towards Dishforth and object. Whilst still descending, appeared to follow suit. Pendulous motion and descent ceased and object began rotary motion about its own axis. Suddenly accelerated at an incredible speed in westerly direction but turning to a S.E. course. Observers stated that its movements were not identifiable with anything they had seen in the air and acceleration was in excess of that of a shooting star. Duration of incident 1 5/20 seconds.

Time of origin 191644 Z

Copies to:-  
 A.I.3.(B) (ACTION)

Recirculated Registry Telegrams 22/9/52.  
 Authority A.I.3.(B).

Copies to:-  
 A.C.A.S.(OPS) (ACTION) (2 copies)  
 A.C.A.S.(I) (2 copies)  
 C.A.S.  
 S. OF S.  
 D.M.O.  
 H. OF DEFENCE FOR D.S.I. (2 copies).

*Opn (AD) 2  
 with PA & open folder  
 "Unidentified A/C or object"  
 Reported to A.M.  
 Sheale  
 R. J. C.  
 12/9/52*

ACAS (Ops)

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D.Ops. 1/6699 .

P.Q. 478/52

d. 1/924

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ACAS Ops  
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Copies to: P.S. to U.S. of S.  
P.S. to C.A.S.  
P.S. to V.C.A.S.  
A.U.S. (A)  
A.C.A.S. (Ops.)  
D.D. Ops. (A.D.)  
D.D. of S. (P)  
S.6

Mr. Nigel Birch will be answering Mr. Julian Snow's question on Scapa Flow in the way suggested by the Secretary of State for Air:

Mr. Snow, - To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, what are the standing orders to defence services stationed within strategic distance of Scapa Flow in the event of radar-operating unidentified aircraft being detected in the vicinity by ground-radar and which fail to obey wireless and visual signals to land for interrogation.

"The honourable Member will not expect us to give details of our defence preparations. The United Kingdom has absolute authority over its own air space, but international law confers no general right to take military action involving attack on aircraft which infringe upon a country's air space."

2. The question was originally tabled for 25th June when Defence answered 5th and then deferred to 16th July when they will answer 2nd.

M. M. C. L. L. and

S. A (b)  
21 7 62

6/F 58.

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3408/56

S.4(b) (through P.S. to S. of S.)

- Copies to:- P.S. to C.A.S.  
 P.S. to V.C.A.S.  
 A.C.A.S.(Ops.)  
 D.D.Ops.(A.D.)  
 D.D. of S.(P)  
 A.U.S.(A)

I have enclosed in this file six copies of a Memorandum which I suggest you should send to the Ministry of Defence, the War Office and the Admiralty on this question. The two remaining copies might be sent to Mr. Gillings of M.C.A. and Mr. J.L. Simpson of the Foreign Office, whom I have consulted. Mr. Simpson is an Assistant Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office and I spoke to him direct by agreement with the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department of the Foreign Office.

2. The general line of the proposed answer, but not the exact wording, has been cleared with V.C.A.S. and A.U.S.(A), after full discussion of the difficulties involved in the question.

3. I suggest that S. of S. may wish to see the Memorandum and approve it before it is forwarded.

S.6  
24th June, 1952  
 BLJ

(M.H. O'GRADY)

*Ops (A.D) 1 (a)*  
*Ops (A.D) 3*  
*26/2*

*Mr. O'Grady came to see me for about an answer to a Parliamentary Q. He has sent me these papers for our information*

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 REFERENCE : AIR 20/7390  
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MR. SNOW'S QUESTION OF WEDNESDAY, 25TH JUNEMEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

1. Mr. Snow is asking the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, what are the standing orders to defence service stationed within strategic distance of Scapa Flow in the event of radar-operating unidentified aircraft being detected in the vicinity by ground-radar and which fail to obey wireless and visual signals to land for interrogation.
2. The purpose of this question is obscure. It appears likely that it is asked in the context of the alleged Russian action against the Swedish Dakota and Catalina aircraft recently. It may be designed to show either that our own reactions would be similar to those alleged against the Russians or that our reactions would be much less sensitive.
3. The difficulty in answering it therefore is to avoid paving the path for propaganda that there was nothing unreasonable in the alleged Russian reactions without laying H.M.G. open to a charge of being unprepared to take action against a repetition of Pearl Harbour.
4. The Question contains certain obscurities, principally:-
  - (a) What is meant by "strategic" distance of Scapa Flow.
  - (b) What is meant by "radar-operating" aircraft.
  - (c) How we should know that the aircraft had failed to obey wireless signals when we should not know on what frequency to order it to land.

As regards (b), it appears probable that by "radar-operating" Mr. Snow is thinking of some form of airborne radar through observation of our defences might be made.
5. The facts, which of course cannot be made public, follows:-

(a) There is at the moment no early warning radar which could detect an aircraft flying in the immediate vicinity of Scapa Flow; the masts at Sango and Netherbutton are at the moment damaged but will be repaired it is hoped by October.

(b) There are no fighters nearer than Leuchars, some 150 miles from Scapa Flow.

(c) There is no ground controlled interception radar nearer than Doreleton on the Firth of Forth.

(d) There are no devices in the Orkneys to detect an aircraft using airborne radar.

It is therefore apparent that we should not know whether any unidentified aircraft flying near Scapa Flow was operating airborne radar, that we should be unable to detect the aircraft's presence by our own ground radar (anyhow until October), that an aircraft could probably make good its escape before fighters could intercept, and that this interception could not be facilitated by ground control. Furthermore, even if all the necessary radar and fighters were available, they would not be on watch on present policy, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

6. The legal position is that a country has complete and exclusive authority over the air space above its territorial waters. This is re-iterated in Articles 1 and 2 of the Chicago Convention of 1944. By the International Air Services Transit Agreement of 1944 signatory countries granted each other the right to over-fly their territories on scheduled services, in other words by pre-arrangement for either a single or a series of flights. Theoretically aircraft over-flying under this agreement must remain in wireless contact with the air traffic control authorities. This is not always practicable because very fast aircraft may have passed over the territory of a country by the time they have changed to the appropriate radio frequency.

7. In the event of aircraft infringing international law, the normal process would be for protests to be made through diplomatic channels. The United Kingdom Air Defence Manual lays down that R.A.F. aircraft will only open fire in the event of a hostile act being committed. The term "hostile act" is carefully defined and does not include over-flying without permission, even if operating airborne radar.

8. It is clear that the above information cannot be revealed either generally or in any detail because of the risk either of an enemy taking advantage of it to attempt a knockout blow without warning ~~xxxx~~ or of political pressure being exerted in this country to improve the present state of preparedness to a degree which is impossible with peace time manpower and economic resources. It is not, however, recommended that the simple answer "it would not be in the public interest etc." should be used, since military measures would not necessarily be appropriate and the suggestion that they would be has political disadvantages referred to above. It is suggested therefore that the answer should be given in broad terms to cover both diplomatic and military measures, the military measures being concealed by the usual security formula. The Air Minister recommends that the reply be given:-

" The United Kingdom has absolute authority over its own air space. Infringement would be met by diplomatic or military measures as appropriate. The House will not expect me to give details of our defence preparations"

One weakness of this answer is that diplomatic measures pre-suppose the aircraft is identified, whereas the question lays down the hypothesis that it is unidentified. In fact, however, if an aircraft behaving in the way suggested was observed on more than one occasion it would not be impossible to move mobile radar and fighters sufficiently near to ~~scope~~ flow to obtain sufficient identification of the aircraft to provide reasonable evidence of its nationality.

24th June, 1952

SECRET

6/10609/58

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RF.

26553/LTC

MESSAGE

NO UNCLASSIFIED REPLY PERMITTED IF THE DATE  
TIME GROUP OF THIS MESSAGE IS QUOTED.

(Received by Registry Telegrams 28th November, 1953)

From:- H.Q. A.A.F.C.E.

To:- Air Ministry London (D.D. Ops.(AD)).

ROUTINE NATO SECRET

BOPR 33860

Subject: Unidentified aircraft movement. Reference your letter D.D. Ops.(AD)/58/9959, Nov. 13. A.A.F.C.E. subordinate Commands have been requested to check on all aircraft movements in connection with this inquiry. To date No. 2 and No. 83 Groups have given negative reports although both groups in process conducting cross checks with stations. Final result of this check and information from other formations will be forwarded soonest.

Time of origin 271746 Z

Copies to:-

D.D. Ops.(AD) (ACTION) (3 copies)

*Hub  
37*

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JF

M E S S A G E

NO UNCLASSIFIED REPLY PERMITTED IF THE DATE-TIME GROUP OF THIS MESSAGE IS QUOTED.

(Received REGISTRY TELEGRAMS 18th December, 1953)

FROM:- HEADQUARTERS AIRCENT FONTAINEBLEAU

TO:- AIR MINISTRY LONDON

ROUTINE NATO SECRET

EOPR 34047

For D.D.Ops.(AD). *10609.*

Subject unidentified aircraft movement. Reference our EOPR 33860, November 27. Reports from all subordinate formations who have now carried out checks have proven negative.

Time of Origin: 171446Z

Copies to:- D.D.Ops.(AD)(ACTION)(2 copies)

*Huber.*  
*18/12.*



SECRET

LOOSE MINUTE

15

D.D.I.3

Ref: Ops.(A.D.)58

You will remember that we have been trying to identify the plot of three aircraft from Holland over East Anglia and return reported by Fighter Command in their letter SC/S.44900/1/4/UKATS of the 5th November of which you had a copy.

2. A.A.F.C.E. have now reported that checks have been carried out by all subordinate formations with negative results. There remains the possibility that the aircraft were of the Dutch or Belgian National Forces - as distinct from their A.A.F.C.E. elements. As we have no identification I do not think it likely that we should get anyone to admit a violation of territorial air.
3. Do you think there is anything to be gained by further investigation?

R. N. BATESON

(R. N. BATESON)  
Group Captain  
D.D.Ops.(A.D.)

22nd December, 1953.

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D.D.Ops.(A.D.)

D.D.Ops.(A.D.)/58/9959

SECRET

13th November, 1953.

Sir,

Unidentified Aircraft Movement

I am directed to refer to an unidentified aircraft movement tracked by radar over the U.K. on the 9th October, 1953. The track was first plotted ~~from~~ the Dutch coast as 3+ at 36,000 feet moving rapidly west. At closer range this was reduced to 2 at 36,000 feet. The track passed over the Harwich area and returned to the Dutch coast. Ground speeds calculated from the plot were approximately 375 knots inbound and 490 knots outbound; upper wind speed for the height was given as 35 knots from 290°. Track continuity and height indications were reported as good. In addition a visual sighting report was obtained of four contrails heading north ~~over~~ the East Coast; this tied in with the radar plot. A copy of the plot is given on the attached map.

2. In an attempt to identify the aircraft, enquiries were made at the time from a large number of Continental bases and from Headquarters 2nd A.T.A.F. and A.T.C.C. BAD WILSON. These were all negative.

/3.

Commander-in-Chief,  
Allied Air Forces Central Europe,  
British Forces Post Office, No. 6.

Copy to: A.I.3(f)

SECRET

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3. In view of the possibility, remote though it may be, that the aircraft were those of an unfriendly power, I am to request that enquiries be made to try and establish the aircrafts' identity. It is requested that the attached map be returned with your reply.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

R. N. BATESON  
(R.N. BATESON)  
Group Captain  
Deputy Director of Operations (Air Defence)

SECRET

MPM

Ops. (A.D.)/58 ✓

12th January, 1954

18

SECRET

Sir,

Unidentified Aircraft Movement

I am directed to refer to your letter FC/S.44900/1/4/UKATS of 5th November, 1953, and to say that a careful investigation has failed to identify the aircraft concerned. However, an Intelligence appreciation considers it unlikely that the aircraft were those of an unfriendly power.

2. I am to add that any reports of similar incidents should be forwarded for investigation as soon after the incident as possible.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

R. N. BATESON  
Group Captain  
Deputy Director of Operations (Air Defence)

The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief,  
Fighter Command,  
Royal Air Force,  
Bentley Priory,  
Stammore, Middx.

Copy to: D.D.I.3

SECRET

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6/9959/58 7  
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(EN)

Headquarters, Fighter Command,  
Royal Air Force,  
Bentley Priory,  
STAMMORE, Middlesex.

FC/S.44900/1/4/U.K.A.T.S.

5th November, 1953

Sir,

Unidentified Aircraft Movements

I have the honour to report that on the 9th October, 1953, unidentified aircraft (track X.481) approached the United Kingdom, flew over the Harwich area and returned to the Continent. A section of No. 63 Squadron at Waterbeach were scrambled but failed to make contact and efforts to identify the movement through Air Traffic Control channels have been unsuccessful. In view of the nature of the movement and the possibility, though remote, that the aircraft may have been those of an unfriendly power it is suggested that 2nd A.T.A.F. be asked to carry out a detailed investigation.

2. A plot of the raid is given on the attached map. It was first seen near the Dutch Islands by Bawdsey C.H. and was presumed to be Dutch fighters but when it crossed the coast and moved rapidly west it was made X and Uxbridge was asked to obtain movement information. The track was initially plotted as 3+ at 36000 feet, was reduced to "2 at 36" on closer range and over this country and was again shown 3+ at 32 - 34000 feet on the outward flight. Track continuity and height indications were good. In addition the Supervisor of Bawdsey reported a visual of 4 contrails heading north at 1302 hours which tied up with the raid.

3. The timing of plots gives approximate ground speeds of 375 knots on the approach, increasing to 420 knots on the short leg over the U.K. and 490 knots on the return to the Continent. The upper wind measurement for the height at 1400 hours was 290° - 35 knots steady.

4. From the time the raid was first notified numerous checks were made with no result and at 1630 hours Uxbridge M.L.S. reported that they had checked every possible base on the Continent and still were unable to obtain identification. Subsequent checks by this Headquarters with the C.A.T.C.O., 2nd A.T.A.F. and A.T.C.C. at Bad Eilsen again produced no result.

5. It is understood that no aircraft belonging to a unit of 2nd A.T.A.F. is permitted to fly to the North Sea area either for training or on local flight without first getting clearance from Headquarters 2nd A.T.A.F. The movement, if it was that of continent-based allied aircraft would, therefore, appear to have been unauthorised and some difficulty would no doubt be experienced in attempting to trace the offender. In view of the implications, however, it is felt that a thorough investigation of the incident is required.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

*J.O.W. Oliver. C.C.*

(J.O.W. Oliver)  
Group Captain,  
Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief,  
FIGHTER COMMAND, ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Under Secretary of State,  
Air Ministry, (D.D.Ops.(A.D.)),  
Whitehall Gardens,  
London, S.W.1.

Copy to :- The Under Secretary of State,  
Air Ministry, (D.D.I.(3)),  
Whitehall Gardens,  
London, S.W.1.

*Copy of plot attached & forwarded to AAFCE for ident. held 13 Nov. 53.*

Copy on file :- FC/42917/2/Int.

**SECRET**

SECRET

*Copy to A) B (D)*

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