Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in the UK Air Defence Region: Executive Summary

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Defence Intelligence Analysis Staff
AN EXAMPLE UAP FORMATION OF THE TRIANGULAR TYPE
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDY METHOD</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEY SUPPORTING FINDINGS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEY FINDINGS OF DEFENCE INTEREST</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 1 - ANNUAL UAP EVENT TOTALS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX A</td>
<td>A1-A6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIDENTIFIED AERIAL PHENOMENA IN THE UK AIR DEFENCE REGION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREFACE

"What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to? What can it mean? What is the truth?. Let me have a report at your convenience".

W.S. Churchill, 28th July 1952

The topic of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) has remained an enigma since well before the Prime Minister's remarks above. Since earliest recorded history probably only two key facets have changed - there are now more UAP reported, and there are also more objects in the sky which can be misreported. The Findings and Recommendations of the first detailed DIS UAP analysis for over 25 years are contained in this Executive Summary. (R)

The Main Report (Volume 1 - RESTRICTED), describes the Background, Methodology used, the Data Base and the Statistical Analysis. Supporting Technical Point Papers covering topics relevant to an understanding of the phenomena are at Volume 2 - RESTRICTED. (U)

Volume 3 (SECRET), considers classified radar performance data. This Volume also contains an assessment of relevant technologies in the context of potential military applications and an assessment of UAP as potential hazards to aircraft. (R)

This assessment is entirely based on material held in DIS, together with the relevant scientific principles for an understanding of the phenomena. (R)

Comments on this document, which has been prepared by are welcomed and should be addressed to MoD, DI ST, DIS Old War Office Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2EU. Tel: (GPTN: MB). (R) not relevant

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INTRODUCTION

1. Reports of UAP (popularly known as ‘UFOs’) are usually described as coloured lights and sometimes as shapes. They are typically spherical, disc, toroidal or cigar shaped. Very occasionally they are reported with sound and even with smell. Reports occur because they comprise unfamiliar and unexpected lights, shapes and patterns, in the context in which the observer sees them. The phenomena occur on a daily, world-wide basis. The UK annual reporting rate, which is for a relatively small part of the earth’s total airspace, is summarised at Figure 1. That UAP exist is indisputable. Credited with the ability to hover, land, take-off, accelerate to exceptional velocities and vanish, they can reportedly alter their direction of flight suddenly and clearly can exhibit aerodynamic characteristics well beyond those of any known aircraft or missile - either manned or unmanned. (R)

2. The topic has, hitherto, defied credible description as to its actual cause. Any worthwhile study of UAP, while maintaining the study aim, has inevitably required a multi-disciplinary approach and an understanding of the interaction of all the contributory factors. It is believed that the correlation of the overview of information reported over a period of about 30 years, with a more detailed examination of the last 10 years, together with the probable underlying science, may point to a reasonably justified explanation of the cause of this phenomena. (R)

3. For convenient cross-reference throughout this Executive Summary, the Contents Lists of Volumes 1, 2 & 3 are at Annex A. (R)

AIM

4. The aim of the investigation has been to determine the potential value, if any, of UAP sighting reports to Defence Intelligence. Consistent with MoD policy the available data has therefore been studied principally to ascertain whether there is any evidence of a threat to the UK, and secondly, should the opportunity arise, to identify any potential military technologies of interest. (R)
STUDY METHOD

5. UAP sightings are reported to MoD in a prescribed format and some 30 years of reports are held. A relational database has been designed to study the pattern and nature of UAP. From April 1997 it was decided that the DIS should receive only reports from ‘credible’ witnesses. This has significantly reduced the number of reports received and as a consequence made up to date records incomplete. For this study a statistically representative sample of the reports received between 1987 and 1997 have been examined in detail, using the database, and hundreds of other reports have been examined manually. The purpose of the statistical analysis was to:

- Provide graphical and tabular analysis of the number of reported UAP events by date, type, time and location.

- Allow clusters of events to be examined in greater detail, to determine whether any information of defence interest can be discovered, for example, relating to particular strategic locations, ‘inspection’ of our aircraft, etc.

- Identify, wherever possible, the atmospheric and terrestrial conditions for the occurrence or formation of a UAP. Although tenuous, in the absence of better quality data, this approach enabled probable causes of the UAP phenomena to be identified and thus eliminate some of the more extreme theses.(R)

6. Flight Safety Aspects Within the limitations of the UAP material available, an examination of all unexplained RAF aircraft fatal accidents was made, to assess the possibility, or otherwise, that past accidents may have been caused due to a startling (i.e. UAP) appearance, immediately ahead of military aircraft flying fast and low. An examination was also made for any possible UAP connection with near-miss aerial scenarios where the second air-object was never identified at the subsequent Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) enquiries.(R)

7. Parallel Activities The nature of all relevant types of atmospheric phenomena and human interaction have been studied, so that any items of defence intelligence interest could be identified. Factors which cause man-made objects to be misreported as UAP have also been studied. The study also necessarily involved a brief examination of the performance of the current UKADR surface and airborne sensors and whether the airspace could have been penetrated by potentially hostile air-objects in the form of UAP. (R)

8. Science-Based Approach A conscious effort has been made to distance the investigation from any external influences [e.g., such as may be found in the media] on the
topic of ‘UFOs’ and mention is made of these aspects only where absolutely necessary as part of the wider understanding of the enigma. (R)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

9. Based on all the available evidence remaining in the Department (reported over the last 30 years), the information studied, either separately or corporately contained in UAP reports, leads to the conclusion that it does not have any significant Defence Intelligence value. However, the Study has uncovered a number of technological issues that may be of potential defence interest. (R)

10. Causes of UAP Reports In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, the key UAP report findings are:

   • Mis-reporting of man-made vehicles, often observed by perfectly credible witnesses, but with unfamiliar or abnormal features; or in unusual circumstances.

   • Reports of natural but not unusual phenomena, which are genuinely misunderstood at the time by the observer.

   • The incidence of natural, but relatively rare phenomena. These may be increasing due to natural changes and possibly accelerated by man-aided factors, such as smoke and dust.

Further:

   • No evidence exists to associate the phenomena with any particular nation.

   • No evidence exists to suggest that the phenomena seen are hostile or under any type of control, other than that of natural physical forces.

   • Evidence suggests that meteors and their well-known effects and, possibly some other less-known effects, are responsible for some UAP. (R)

KEY SUPPORTING FINDINGS

11. Aerial phenomena of the type consistent with those reported as UAP, and with exceptional characteristics, certainly exist - but the available evidence suggests that apart from those which can be more easily and satisfactorily explained, they are comprised of several types of rarely encountered natural events within the atmosphere and ionosphere.