

Ufo – unidentified flying object essay sample



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The Oxford English Dictionary defines a UFO as “ An unidentified flying object; a ‘ flying saucer’.” The word was first used in print by Donald Keyhoe in 1953.[1] The acronym “ UFO” was coined by Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, who headed Project Blue Book, then the USAF’s official investigation of UFOs. He wrote, “ Obviously the term ‘ flying saucer’ is misleading when applied to objects of every conceivable shape and performance. For this reason the military prefers the more general, if less colorful, name: unidentified flying objects. UFO (pronounced Yoo-foe) for short.” [2] Other phrases that were used officially and that predate the UFO acronym include “ flying flapjack”, “ flying disc”, “ unexplained flying discs”, “ unidentifiable flying object”, and “ flying saucer”.[3][4] The phrase “ flying saucer” had gained widespread attention after the summer of 1947.

On June 24, a civilian pilot named Kenneth Arnold reported seeing nine objects flying in formation near Mount Rainer. Arnold timed the sighting and estimated the speed of discs to be over 1, 000 mph. He described their movement like “ a saucer skipped across water,” leading to newspaper accounts of “ flying saucers”. (see Kenneth Arnold UFO sighting for details). In popular usage the term UFO came to be used to refer to alien spacecraft. [5] and because of the public and media ridicule associated with the topic, some investigators prefer to use such terms as unidentified aerial phenomenon (or UAP) or anomalous phenomena, as in the title of the National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena or NARCAP.[6] The equivalent acronym for UFO in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian is OVNI (Objeto Volador No Identificado, Objeto Voador Não Identificado,

Objet volant non identifié or Oggetto Volante Non Identificato), pronounced as one word (ov-nee). Studies

Studies have established that the majority of UFO observations are misidentified conventional objects or natural phenomena—most commonly aircraft, balloons, noctilucent clouds, nacreous clouds, or astronomical objects such as meteors or bright planets with a small percentage even being hoaxes.[7] After excluding incorrect reports, however, most investigators have acknowledged that between 5% and 20% of reported sightings remain unexplained, and therefore can be classified as unidentified in the strictest sense. Many reports have been made by such trained observers as pilots, police, and the military; some have involved simultaneous radar tracking and visual accounts.[8] Proponents of the extraterrestrial hypothesis suggest that these unexplained reports are of alien spacecraft, though various other hypotheses have been proposed. While UFOs have been the subject of extensive investigation by various governments and although some scientists support the extraterrestrial hypothesis, few scientific papers about UFOs have been published in peer-reviewed journals.[9]

There has been some debate in the scientific community about whether any scientific investigation into UFO sightings is warranted.[10][11][12][13][14][15][16] The void left by the lack of institutional scientific study has given rise to independent researchers and groups, including NICAP (the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena) in the mid-20th century and, more recently, MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) [17] and CUFOS (Center for UFO Studies).[18] The term “Ufology” is used to describe the collective

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efforts of those who study reports and associated evidence of unidentified flying objects. According to MUFON, as of 2011 the number of UFO reports to their worldwide offices has increased by 67% from the previous three years and now averages around 500 reported sightings per month.[19] UFOs have become a relevant theme in modern culture,[20] and the social phenomena have been the subject of academic research in sociology and psychology.[9]

Early history

Unexplained aerial observations have been reported throughout history. Some were undoubtedly astronomical in nature: comets, bright meteors, one or more of the five planets that can be seen with the naked eye, planetary conjunctions, or atmospheric optical phenomena such as parhelia and lenticular clouds. An example is Halley's Comet, which was recorded first by Chinese astronomers in 240 BC and possibly as early as 467 BC. Such sightings throughout history often were treated as supernatural portents, angels, or other religious omens. Some current-day UFO researchers have noticed similarities between some religious symbols in medieval paintings and UFO reports[21] though the canonical and symbolic character of such images is documented by art historians placing more conventional religious interpretations on such images.[22] On January 25, 1878, The Denison Daily News noted that John Martin, a local farmer, had reported seeing a large, dark, circular object resembling a balloon flying "at wonderful speed."

Martin, according to the newspaper account, said it appeared to be about the size of a saucer, the first known use of the word "saucer" in association with a UFO.[23] On February 28, 1904, there was a sighting by three crew members on the USS Supply 300 miles west of San Francisco, reported by Lt.

Frank Schofield, later to become Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Battle Fleet. Schofield wrote of three bright red egg-shaped and circular objects flying in echelon formation that approached beneath the cloud layer, then changed course and “soared” above the clouds, departing directly away from the earth after two to three minutes. The largest had an apparent size of about six suns, he said.[24] The three earliest known pilot UFO sightings, of 1, 305 similar sightings cataloged by NARCAP, took place in 1916 and 1926. On January 31, 1916, a UK pilot near Rochford reported a row of lights, resembling lighted windows on a railway carriage, that rose and disappeared.

In January 1926 a pilot reported six “flying manhole covers” between Wichita, Kansas, and Colorado Springs, Colorado. In late September 1926 an airmail pilot over Nevada said he had been forced to land by a huge, wingless, cylindrical object.[25] On August 5, 1926, while traveling in the Humboldt Mountains of Tibet’s Kokonor region, Russian explorer Nicholas Roerich reported, members of his expedition saw “something big and shiny reflecting the sun, like a huge oval moving at great speed. Crossing our camp the thing changed in its direction from south to southwest. And we saw how it disappeared in the intense blue sky. We even had time to take our field glasses and saw quite distinctly an oval form with shiny surface, one side of which was brilliant from the sun.”[26] Another description by Roerich was of a “shiny body flying from north to south. Field glasses are at hand. It is a huge body. One side glows in the sun. It is oval in shape. Then it somehow turns in another direction and disappears in the southwest.”[27]

In the Pacific and European theatres during World War II, “foo-fighters” (metallic spheres, balls of light and other shapes that followed aircraft) were reported and on occasion photographed by Allied and Axis pilots. Some proposed Allied explanations at the time included St. Elmo’s Fire, the planet Venus, hallucinations from oxygen deprivation, or German secret weapons. [28][29] On February 25, 1942, U. S. Army observers reported unidentified aircraft both visually and on radar over the Los Angeles, California, region. Antiaircraft artillery was fired at what were presumed to be Japanese planes. No readily apparent explanation was offered, though some officials dismissed the reports of aircraft as being triggered by anxieties over expected Japanese air attacks on California. However, Army Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall and Secretary of War Henry Stimson insisted that real aircraft were involved.

The incident later became known as the Battle of Los Angeles, or the West coast air raid. In 1946 more than 2, 000 reports were collected, primarily by the Swedish military, of unidentified aerial objects over the Scandinavian nations, along with isolated reports from France, Portugal, Italy and Greece. The objects were referred to as “Russian hail” and later as “ghost rockets” because it was thought that the mysterious objects were possibly Russian tests of captured German V1 or V2 rockets. Although most were thought to be such natural phenomena as meteors, more than 200 were tracked on radar by the Swedish military and deemed to be “real physical objects.” In a 1948 top secret document, Swedish authorities advised the USAF Europe that some of their investigators believed these craft to be extraterrestrial in origin. Investigations

UFOs have been subject to investigations over the years that varied widely in scope and scientific rigor. Governments or independent academics in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Peru, France, Belgium, Sweden, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, Spain, and the Soviet Union are known to have investigated UFO reports at various times. Among the best known government studies are the ghost rockets investigation by the Swedish military (1946–1947), Project Blue Book, previously Project Sign and Project Grudge, conducted by the United States Air Force from 1947 until 1969, the secret U. S. Army/Air Force Project Twinkle investigation into green fireballs (1948–1951), the secret USAF Project Blue Book Special Report #14[30] by the Battelle Memorial Institute, and Brazilian Air Force Operation Saucer (1977). France has had an ongoing investigation (GEPAN/SEPRA/GEIPAN) within its space agency CNES since 1977; the government of Uruguay has had a similar investigation since 1989. Project Sign

Project Sign in 1948 produced a highly classified finding (see Estimate of the Situation) that the best UFO reports probably had an extraterrestrial explanation; the private but high-level French COMETA study of 1999 reached a similar conclusion. A top secret Swedish military opinion given to the USAF in 1948 stated that some of their analysts believed that the 1946 ghost rockets and later flying saucers had extraterrestrial origins. (see Ghost rockets for document). In 1954 German rocket scientist Hermann Oberth revealed that an internal West German government investigation, which he headed, had arrived at an extraterrestrial conclusion, but this study was never made public. Project Magnet

Classified, internal reports by the Canadian Project Magnet in 1952 and 1953 also assigned high probability to extraterrestrial origins. Publicly, however, neither Project Magnet nor later Canadian defense studies ever stated such a conclusion. Project Grudge

Project Sign was dismantled and became Project Grudge at the end of 1948. Angered by the low quality of investigations by Grudge, the Air Force Director of Intelligence reorganized it as Project Blue Book in late 1951, placing Ruppelt in charge. Blue Book closed down in 1970, using the Condon Commission's negative conclusion as a rationale, thus ending official Air Force UFO investigations. However, a 1969 USAF document, known as the Bolender memo, along with later government documents, revealed that non-public U. S. government UFO investigations continued after 1970.

The Bollender memo first stated that " reports of unidentified flying objects that could affect national security . . . are not part of the Blue Book system," indicating that more serious UFO incidents already were handled outside the public Blue Book investigation. The memo then added, " reports of UFOs which could affect national security would continue to be handled through the standard Air Force procedures designed for this purpose." [31] In addition, in the late 1960s a chapter on UFOs in the Space Sciences course at the U. S. Air Force Academy gave serious consideration to possible extraterrestrial origins. When word of the curriculum became public, the Air Force in 1970 issued a statement to the effect that the book was outdated and that cadets instead were being informed of the Condon report's negative conclusion. [32] USAF Regulation 200-2

Air Force Regulation 200-2,[33] issued in 1953 and 1954, defined an Unidentified Flying Object (“ UFOB”) as “ any airborne object which by performance, aerodynamic characteristics, or unusual features, does not conform to any presently known aircraft or missile type, or which cannot be positively identified as a familiar object.” The regulation also said UFOBs were to be investigated as a “ possible threat to the security of the United States” and “ to determine technical aspects involved.” The regulation went on to say that “ it is permissible to inform news media representatives on UFOB’s when the object is positively identified as a familiar object,” but added: “ For those objects which are not explainable, only the fact that ATIC [Air Technical Intelligence Center] will analyze the data is worthy of release, due to many unknowns involved.”[34][35] Project Bluebook

J. Allen Hynek, a trained astronomer who served as a scientific advisor for Project Bluebook, was initially skeptical of UFO reports, but eventually came to the conclusion that many of them could not be satisfactorily explained and was highly critical of what he described as “ the cavalier disregard by Project Blue Book of the principles of scientific investigation.” [36] Leaving government work, he founded the privately funded Center for UFO Studies, to whose work he devoted the rest of his life. Other private groups studying the phenomenon include the Mutual UFO Network, a grass roots organization whose investigator’s handbooks go into great detail on the documentation of alleged UFO sightings. Like Hynek, Jacques Vallée, a scientist and prominent UFO researcher, has pointed to what he believes is the scientific deficiency of most UFO research, including government studies. He complains of the mythology and cultism often associated with the phenomenon, but alleges

that several hundred professional scientists—a group both he and Hyneck have termed “ the invisible college”—continue to study UFOs in private.[20]

Scientific studies

The study of UFOs has received little support in mainstream scientific literature. Official studies ended in the U. S. in December 1969, following the statement by the government scientist Edward Condon that further study of UFOs could not be justified on grounds of scientific advancement.[12] The Condon report and its conclusions were endorsed by the National Academy of Scientists, of which Condon was a member. On the other hand, a scientific review by the UFO subcommittee of the AIAA disagreed with Condon’s conclusion, noting that at least 30 percent of the cases studied remained unexplained and that scientific benefit might be gained by continued study. Critics argue that all UFO evidence is anecdotal[37] and can be explained as prosaic natural phenomena. Defenders of UFO research counter that knowledge of observational data, other than what is reported in the popular media, is limited in the scientific community and that further study is needed.[20][38] No official government investigation has ever publicly concluded that UFOs are indisputably real, physical objects, extraterrestrial in origin, or of concern to national defense.

These same negative conclusions also have been found in studies that were highly classified for many years, such as the UK’s Flying Saucer Working Party, Project Condign, the US CIA-sponsored Robertson Panel, the US military investigation into the green fireballs from 1948 to 1951, and the Battelle Memorial Institute study for the USAF from 1952 to 1955 (Project Blue Book Special Report #14). Some public government reports have

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acknowledged the possibility of physical reality of UFOs, but have stopped short of proposing extraterrestrial origins, though not dismissing the possibility entirely. Examples are the Belgian military investigation into large triangles over their airspace in 1989-1991 and the recent 2009 Uruguay Air Force study conclusion (see below). Some private studies have been neutral in their conclusions, but argued that the inexplicable core cases call for continued scientific study. Examples are the Sturrock Panel study of 1998 and the 1970 AIAA review of the Condon Report. United States