PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD

1. DATE	2. LOCATION	12. CONCLUSIONS
8 March 1957	Between Mockville & Arrity, N.C	☐ Was Balloon ☐ Probably Balloon ☐ Possibly Balloon
3. DATE-TIME GROUP Local 2400 EST GMT 09/0500Z	**4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION** ☒ Ground-Visual ☐ Ground-Radar ☐ Air-Visual ☐ Air-Intercept Radar	☐ Was Aircraft ☒ Probably Aircraft ☐ Possibly Aircraft
5. PHOTOS ☐ Yes ☒ No	**6. SOURCE** Civilian	☐ Was Astronomical ☐ Probably Astronomical ☐ Possibly Astronomical
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION two minutes	**8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS** one **9. COURSE** Fm NW, circled then NE.	☐ Other_____ ☐ Insufficient Data for Evaluation ☐ Unknown

10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING

One object long w/round nose, 30 feet long color gray-white, green light very bright width of nose--flame 30 feet. long, no sound, alt 2000 feet to 500 feet. Object faded from view.

11. COMMENTS

Possible a/c sighting, jet w/ afterburner.

ATIC FORM 329 (REV 26 SEP 52)

5. BETWEEN MOCKVILLE, CMA N.C. AND MT. ARRIY CMA N. C.

6.

A. [redacted] JR. EU P. O [redacted] CMA FLA CMA PHON

492405 CMA LING DISTANCE TRICK DRIVER

PAGE THREE RJESKB 6D

B. N/A

7. DUE TO THIS REPT. BEING RECV'D THREE DAYS LATE

A. NO WEATHER AVAILABLE

B. NONE

C. NONE

D. NONE

E. NONE

F. NONE

8. NONE

9. NONE

10. NONE

11. OPERATIONS OFFICER 660TH ACWRON CMA NO COMMENT

12. NONE

BT

12/1552Z MAR RJESKB

1. EP TO 35 FT LONG CMA FRONT WAS 10 TO 12 FT IN DIAMETER CMA FLARED OUT TOWARDS TAIL CMA SINGLE VERTICLE FIN PD

A. LONG CMA ROUNT NOSE

B. ~~EP~~ 30 FT LONG

C. GRAY DASH WHITE

D. ONE

E. N/A

F. WIDTH OF NOSE WAS GREEN LIGHT CMA VERY BRIGHT

G. FLAME CMA 30 FT LONG

~~PAGE TWO RJESKB 6D~~

H. NO SOUND CMA PAUED SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR SAME CMA NOT AVAILABLE PD

I. N/A

2. APPROACHED FROM NW MADE COMPLETE CIRCLE

A. SAW IT THROUGH WINDOW OF TRUCK

B. ~~WJPPP~~ 2,000 FT WHILE APPROACHING THEN DECENDED TO 500 FT

C. 500 FT

D. APPROACHED FROM NW MADE COMPLETE CIRCLE CMA DESAPPEARED IN NE

E. FADED OUT OF VIEW

F. TWO MINUTES

3. NAKED EYE

A. GROUND VISUAL

B. NONE

C. N/A

R. 8 MARCH 57 CMA 2400 EST

9 MARCH 1957 ~~PTPPZ~~ 0500

B. NIGHT CMA VERY CLEAR

E. [illegible] CLEAR

[illegible] TO [illegible]

U. [illegible] SMALL

C. [illegible]

[illegible]

V. [illegible]

P. [illegible]

L. LOG [illegible]

Z. [illegible] OUT OF VIEW

D. ALTHOUGHED FROM AN MADE COMPLETE CIRCLE CAN DESVALIEVERED IN ME

C. SEE IT

B. WHEN IT WHILE VERROUCHING LATH DECEVDED TO SEE IT

A. SAW IT THROUGH WINDOW OF TRUCK

S. VERROUCHED FROM AN MADE COMPLETE CIRCLE

I. WAV

H. NO SOUND CAN EARED SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR SAME CAN NOT VARIFIEDE BD

THEY TWO [illegible] OD

8 09/0500Z 0309S-7-1 1

Witness ATIC

1 2 3 } 4E4

13 MAR 57 07 41

44X20 forwd 13/02588

OD 1548

KBA053

PP RJEDEN RJEDWP RJEPWH RJEPNB

DE RJESKB 6D

P 121530Z

FM COMDR 660TH ACWRON MACDILL AFB FLA

TO RJEDEN/ COMDR ADC ENT AFB COLO

RJESKB/COMDR 35TH ADIV DOBBINS AFB GA

RJEDWP/COMDR AIR TECH INT CNTR WRIGHT PATTERSON AFB OHIO

RJEPHQ/DIR OF INT HQ USAF WASH DC

INFO RJEPNB/COMDR EADF STEWART AFB NY

BT

/UNCLASSIFIED/OPS 0120 PD ATTN: EADF CIC PD

TAB	ITEM
A	FINAL ANALYSIS
B	PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS
C	MEMO TO C/S FROM GEN LEWIS (15 Mar 1957)
D	GEN WATSON RELEASE TO PRESS (14 Mar 1957)
E	MEMO TO GEN WATSON (14 Mar 1957)
F	DR HYNEK EVALUATION (14 Mar 1957)

This incident received wide newspaper mention. The Research Section has investigated it, as special representatives of NICAP as well as for CSI, and the following account is the result.

A few minutes before midnight on March 8, 1957, Captain [redacted] took his airliner up from Idlewild Airport, bound to San Juan, Puerto Rico. Co-pilot [redacted], Flight Engineer [redacted], and stewardesses [redacted] and [redacted] completed the crew on Pan American Airlines flight 257. There were 44 passengers aboard. The flight was routine, except that it was necessary to keep to the west of the normal flight course in order to avoid a storm center farther out in the Atlantic.

At 3:33 a.m. (EST) the plane was far out over the Atlantic, about 650 miles to the east of Jacksonville, Florida, flying at 19,000 feet on a south-by-east heading (between 160° and 175° true). At this point, the flight abruptly ceased to be routine. About 80° to their right, [redacted] and Washuta simultaneously saw a brilliant light. [redacted] had the impression of seeing an orange glow at first, although he was later uncertain about this detail. At any rate, it seemed to "come out of nowhere," and immediately assumed the appearance of a round, brilliant greenish-white "spotlight," almost as large as a full moon.

The light appeared "contained," having a clear and well-defined edge; Washuta described it as "rim-like" around the edge. This "rim" seemed to reflect a greenish color, while the center was a brilliant white. It looked like a spotlight directed to the front of them, so that they were not looking directly into the source of light.

[redacted]s first thought was that it might be a jet interceptor with a spotlight in the nose, but he immediately rejected this idea because of the brilliance of the light, and "because they (interceptors) always come at least by twos - one pulling alongside of you ready for action, the other throwing a spotlight on your identification markings from a distance to find out who you are."

The object seemed to be of about airplane size, and no more than a half-mile away (an erroneous impression, as he discovered later). It was exactly level with him, and apparently heading horizontally across the nose of his plane, on a collision course. Within two seconds after first seeing it, he pulled the plane up and to the left in a violent evasive manoeuver to avoid possible collision; the plane climbed 1500 feet in a matter of seconds. In concentrating on handling the plane, he lost sight of the object. (The news accounts reported that V.W. saw the object "slip by under my right wing." (Actually, [redacted] explains, this was not so: the object was hidden from his sight by the right wing as it lifted.)

Washuta, who was seated in the right of the cockpit, had a better view of the light, and reportedly observed it for about four seconds, after which it "went out." By the time [redacted]ad righted the aircraft, the light was no longer to be seen. Neither the co-pilot, busy with the navigation instruments, nor any of the passengers, had seen it.

In the cabin, there was pandemonium. All those who had not had their seat belts fastened had hit the ceiling of the cabin when the tail dropped, and three people were more or less seriously injured: Miss [redacted] with a possible concussion, Mrs. [redacted] of Philadelphia, who appeared to have a broken rib; and one Monserrate Soto, injuries unspecified.

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DIR 5200.10

Classification Cancelled
(or changed to UNCLAS)
Auth Quintanilla
By
Date 27 Jan 61

Miss [redacted] and the co-pilot tried to assuage the panic in the cabin, but it was [redacted] calm reassuring voice over the loudspeaker that was most effective in settling the passengers. The knowledge that a UFO had been responsible for their distress seemed to calm their agitation. (INS erroneously reported that, according to passengers, a strong light "like a hundred suns" filled the cabin of the aircraft.)

Immediately following the incident, [redacted] radio suddenly came alive: at least six other aircraft had seen the object. All were flying roughly SSE on the same route, and they occupied an area, from north to south, more than 300 miles long.

About 150 miles to the north of [redacted], at 31° 35' N, 70° 50' W, was Capt. [redacted], piloting PAA's Flight 269 at 19,000 feet. Capt. [redacted] and Flight Engineer [redacted] saw the object to the WSW, as did [redacted], and described it as arcing upward and then falling slightly in a concave trajectory as it moved on an apparently ESE course. According to the press, [redacted] described it as being "almost a magnesium flash, white with pale greenish tints around it ... At first I thought that it was a flare, then I thought it could be another of those 'mis-guided' missiles. I saw it for about five seconds - it must have been moving at a terrific speed."

Flying 15 minutes ahead of [redacted] Capt. D[redacted], piloting PAA's Flight 257-A at 15,000 feet, did not notice the object. [redacted] gives his own position as 30° N, 70° 40' W.)

Some 180 miles to the southeast of [redacted], at 28° 20' N, 68° 15' W, was PAA Flight 215, flying at 17,000 feet. Capt. [redacted] and Flight Engineer [redacted] saw the object, again to the west of them. "It appeared first as a bright light, traveling fast ... it grew in intensity until it was exceedingly brilliant for a moment as it passed, then it seemed to fade." Its angular size, to Wyland as to [redacted], was "as large as a full moon at the zenith." It was greenish-blue at the perimeter, blending into a white center. He said it "looked at first as though it were coming directly toward us on our flight level. It either veered slightly, or our original impression was in error, as it slanted diagonally across our starboard quarter descending, and seemed to 'go out.' As it passed, there was a definite reddish tinge to the tail or rear portion, and a piece seemed to fall off, or was ejected. The portion that dropped off was 10% the size of the whole, and was definitely reddish in color." Wyland had the object in view from two to five seconds.

About 220 miles SSE of Van Winkle, at roughly 27° N, 69° 20' W (650 miles east of West Palm Beach) was PAA Flight 215-A, piloted by Capt. [redacted], flying at 19,000 feet, the same altitude as [redacted] and [redacted] did not see the object reported by the other pilots, but he had seen something identical almost two hours earlier. [redacted]s flight engineer, [redacted], saw the object(s) involved in both incidents.

According t[redacted] the object seen at 3:33 a.m. - observed by all the other pilots - was seen to the west of his plane and appeared to be going parallel to his direction. He said it seemed as large as "a dime held at arm's length." The second engineer, who called [redacted] attention to the phenomenon, estimated that it was in view for two or three seconds. Round, it had no ragged edges - "smooth" was [redacted]s word for it - and was a brilliant greenish-white in color. He saw a slight projection at the rear that detached itself and turned red as it fell. At this point, the main section began to arc downward at a slight angle, and then suddenly went out. [redacted] did not think the object was a meteor.

Almost two hours earlier, about 12:45 a.m., while Flight 215-A was in the vicinity of Delta Oscar (a positional marker located off the Carolinas), [redacted] and [redacted] had seen a similar object - "smaller than a full moon," according to [redacted] - streaking north or NNW. This object was also due west, or almost due west, of their position. It moved in a completely horizontal trajectory, and had a red tail-like projection, which suddenly dropped off, and fell "like a flare." The main part, which was green, continued in a straight line and passed out of [redacted]'s range of vision. [redacted], who was seated on the right side of the cockpit, looked back as it passed, and thought he saw it quickly disappear into clouds; however, a later check indicated that there were few, if any, clouds in the area. [redacted] said he saw it for about three seconds; Smith slightly longer. Several of [redacted]'s passengers had seen it also.

Returning to the 3:33 a.m. object, three other aircraft are reported to have observed this: another Pan-American flight (unidentified); the pilot of an Eastern Airlines plane who thought the object was a two-stage rocket; and one Trans-Carribbean pilot who said it was a meteor. We have not been able to get in touch with any of these pilots.

True!

It is quite clear from the testimonies of the pilots that the object they saw was much farther away than they at first realized. Note that over a 300-mile baseline, all of them saw it to their west or southwest; that it appeared to be moving in roughly the same direction relative to all observers; and that its angular measurement from all of these widely-separated points was approximately half a degree. These circumstances obviously indicate an exceedingly large object seen at a distance measured in the hundreds of miles. The nearest possible location for the appearing-point permitted by the geometry is at about 29° N, 78° W. This point is 80° to the right of a 160° heading for [redacted], 100° to the right of a 185° heading for Wyland (assuming this is 185° true, not magnetic), and places the object about 250 miles from Wyland, and somewhat more than 100 miles from [redacted] However, since it appeared no larger to [redacted] than to [redacted], and [redacted] a location so close to [redacted] is not very plausible; something like 28° N, 75° W, 300 to 400 miles from all the planes, is more likely. [redacted] himself has calculated that it was from 300 to 800 miles distant from him. An angular measurement of one-half degree at four hundred miles gives the object a diameter in excess of three miles; but such calculations are misleading when applied to luminous bodies, which always appear far larger than they are.

This large scale of the phenomenon is highly suggestive of a meteoric fireball. However, it should be noted that none of the four witnesses ([redacted] whom we have interviewed believed that it was a meteor. [redacted] said he has seen some extremely spectacular meteors, but none has ever resembled this object. The absence of any visible tail; the difference in quality between this "contained" light and a flaming fireball; and its substantially horizontal trajectory at unreasonably low altitudes, seem different from what would be expected of a meteor. And the chances against seeing two such remarkably similar "meteors" over the same area within the span of two hours are "astronomical."

On the other hand, the object appeared for only five seconds at the most - typical of meteors; it exhibited no sort of controlled manoeuver; and the wide area over which it was observed is typical of fireballs rather than of UFO phenomena.

One is inclined to say that this was neither a "normal" UFO nor a "normal" fireball. Can it be classified as a "green fireball"? It was certainly not a deep Kelly-green in color, but the behavior was very similar (cf. Ruppelt, pp. 72-3,78). There is a large group of sightings strikingly similar to this one, some of them in

this same area. On May 8, 1952, at 4:30 a.m., a pilot had a near-collision with a similar object while en route to San Juan. (See The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects, by Ruppelt, pp. 178-80.) On April 23, 1954, several PAA pilots saw an "object with an orange-green light zip by." (Flying Saucer Conspiracy, by Keyhoe, p. 133.) Auriphebo Simoes is one of those who have seen such a "fireball" (O Disco Voador, #3).

And on March 25, 1957 - not three weeks after [redacted]'s report - Capt. [redacted], piloting PAA Flight [redacted] San Juan to New York, had a daytime sighting along the same route. (Details on this observation are now being sought.)

(Note on sources: Besides the data secured directly from four of the witnesses, additional information on the March 9 sighting was gleaned from the N. Y. Times, 3/10 (UP 3/9); N. Y. Mirror 3/10 (AP 3/9); N. Y. Journal-American, 3/9 (INS) and 3/11 (INS by [redacted]); and numerous other papers carrying substantially the same wire accounts. Our thanks go also to Bill Nash of PAA and Chris Pantages of Riddle Airlines for their valuable assistance.)

TAB A

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT REPORT OF PAN AMERICAN AIRLINE CAPTAIN [redacted] ON 9 MARCH 1957

1. There is no compelling reason to believe that the object was other than a "bolide," commonly referred to as a "fireball." These are very rarely encountered, but the object conforms exactly with the description of fireball reports received by the Air Technical Intelligence Center during the last ten years.

2. Interrogation of Captain [redacted] by the New York unit of the 4602d Air Intelligence Service Squadron further confirms this conclusion. His detailed description, in brief, "dazzling bright light with a green halo," coincides with the description given by the other crew members.

3. These objects are extremely bright, resembling magnesium flares; and, unlike meteors, do not burn themselves out in the upper atmosphere, but continue down to lower levels. Their encounter can be a frightening experience, particularly in a pitch-black night, as described by Captain [redacted]

4. The fact that another pilot 175 miles away observed the object at the same moment rules out aircraft and guided missiles. In addition, the Strategic Air Command reports no aircraft were in the area at the time, and Patrick Air Force Base advises no operations were conducted during the period.

5. The attempt by the press to somehow relate Venus must also be ruled out. This planet was not visible at that time and place—3:30 in the morning, at approximately 350 miles east of Jacksonville, Florida.

AFOIN/Gen Lewis/ajs/55613/15 Mar 57

Noted by Chief of Staff
Ret'd 21 Mar 57

15 March 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF STAFF, USAF

1. General White has advised that you are interested in the incident reported by Pan American Airline Pilot, Captain [redacted], of an unidentified flying object which was observed about 350 miles east of Jacksonville, Florida, on 9 March 1957.

2. A preliminary investigation and evaluation of this incident has been conducted by our Unidentified Flying Object Section of ATIC at Wright-Patterson AFB.

3. On the basis of the evidence available, which includes an interview with Captain [redacted], there is good reason to believe that the object was a bolide, commonly referred to as a "fireball." A bolide is a meteor which, instead of burning out in the upper atmosphere, continues to burn in the lower atmosphere. Attached as TAB A is an interesting extract from the Encyclopedia Britannica on "Fireballs and Bolides."

4. [illegible] of the ATIC investigation and evaluation to date.

3 Incls
1. TAB A - Extract
2. TAB B - Report

WILLARD LEWIS
Major General, USAF
Director of Intelligence

COORD CY - DIN-X2B2
DI X REF - OIN-X2B2
FILE CY - OIN

(COPY GEN. WATSONS MSG: TO HQ USAF RE PAA INCIDENT OF 9 Mar 57)

PP YFWKA
DE YFWKC 4
U N C L A S S I F I E D
P 141955Z
FM AFSSO ATIC
TO AFSSO HQ USAF
UNCLAS EFTO CITE: A4-155. (PERSONAL FROM GENERAL WATSON TO COL CHAPPEL.)
REFERENCE REQUEST FOR SOME FIRM CONCLUSIONS OR EXPLANATION REGARDING PAN AMERICAN AIRLINE INCIDENT, 9 MAR 57. ON THE BASIS OF ALL DATA AND EVIDENCE AVAILABLE THE FOLLOWING ARE CONCLUSIONS OF ATIC:

A. THERE IS NO COMPELLING REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE OBJECT WAS OTHER THAN A "BOLIDE", COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS A "FIREBALL," THESE ARE VERY RARELY ENCOUNTERED, BUT THE OBJECT CONFORMS EXACTLY WITH THE DESCRIPTION OF FIREBALL REPORTS RECEIVED BY ATIC DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS.

B. INTERROGATION OF CAPT [redacted] THIS MORNING BY THE NEW YORK UNIT OF THE 4602D AISS, FURTHER CONFIRMS THIS CONCLUSION: HIS DETAILED DESCRIPTION, IN BRIEF, "DAZZLING BRIGHT LIGHT - WITH A GREENISH HALO," COINCIDES WITH THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN BY THE OTHER CREW MEMBERS.

C: THESE OBJECTS ARE GENERALLY OBSERVED ONLY A FEW SECONDS; ARE EXTREMELY BRIGHT, RESEMBLING MAGNESIUM FLARES; AND, UNLIKE METEORS, GENERALLY, DO NOT BURN THEMSELVES OUT IN THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE, BUT CONTINUE DOWN TO LOWER LEVELS. THEIR ENCOUNTER CAN BE A FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE, PARTICULARLY IN A PITCH-BLACK NIGHT, AS DESCRIBED BY CAPT [redacted]

D. MISSILES AND JETS ARE RULED OUT. THE LATTER IS CONFIRMED BY A TWX FROM SAC AND ADC, REPORTING THAT NO AIRCRAFT WERE IN THE AREA AT THE TIME. THE FACT THAT OTHER PILOTS APPROXIMATELY 175 MILES AWAY OBSERVED THE OBJECT AT THE SAME MOMENT, RULES OUT AIRCRAFT AND GUIDED MISSILES.

E. ALTHOUGH NO MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM PATRICK AFB AD YET REGARDING "RUNAWAY" OR OTHER GUIDED MISSILE OPERATIONS, THIS POSSIBILITY SEEMS UNLIKELY. REASONS: FIRINGS ARE USUALLY CONDUCTED DURING THE DAY AND BEFORE MIDNIGHT; THE GENERAL FIRINGS ARE TOWARDS THE SE; AND THE COURSE OF THE OBJECT ENCOUNTERED APPEARED TO COME FROM THE WEST.

F. THE ATTEMPT BY THE PRESS TO SOMEHOW RELATE VENUS, MUST ALSO BE RULED OUT. THIS PLANET WAS NOT VISIBLE AT THAT TIME AND PLACE: 3:30 IN THE MORNING, AT APPROXIMATELY 550 MILES EAST OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA.

IT IS THE RECOMMENDATION OF THIS OFFICE, THAT IN RESPONSE TO ANY QUERIES BY THE PRESS REGARDING THIS INCIDENT, THE AIR FORCE BRIEFLY STATE, SUBSTANTIALLY, THE FOLLOWING:

A. ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION NOW AVAILABLE THE PILOT UNDOUBTEDLY ENCOUNTERED AN OBJECT VERY RARELY SEEN, A "BOLIDE" OR "FIREBALL". THIS COINCIDES WITH THE DESCRIPTION OF OBJECTS IDENTIFIED AS "FIREBALLS" RECEIVED BY ATIC OVER A PERIOD OF TEN YEARS.

B. THE FACT THAT THE OBJECT WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY OBSERVED BY ANOTHER AIRCRAFT 175 MILES TO THE REAR RULES OUT GUIDED MISSILES AND AIRCRAFT. (THIS IS TO COMBAT THE PROPONENTS OF "FLYING SAUCERS" AND SOVIET MISSILE AND AIRCRAFT "THREATENING" OUR SHORES.)

C. THESE CONCLUSIONS WERE CONCURRED WITH BY A WELL-KNOWN ASTRONOMER AND ASTROPHYSICIST FROM THE SMITHSONIAN ASTROPHYSICAL OBSERVATORY, TO WHICH THE REPORT WAS SUBMITTED FOR HIS INDEPENDENT REVIEW.

SIGNED: HAROLD E. WATSON, BRIGADIER GENERAL, USAF, COMMANDER, ATIC
4140 4140
14/2052Z MAR (RE ITEM E. ABOVE: MSG JUST RECEIVED FROM PATRICK AFB STATES: DEFINITELY NO MISSILE OPERATIONS DURING THAT PERIOD.

ROUTING	COORDINATION
AFOIN-4	
AFOIN-4X2	
AFOIN-4X2c	
AFOIN-4X3	
AFOIN-4	
AFOIN-4	
AFOIN-4	
AFOIN-4	
AFOIN-4	
AFOIN-4	
OTHERS	

FILE CLASS: _____
OFFICIAL FILE COPY

_____ OFFICE OF RECORD

14 March 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL WATSON

SUBJECT: Conclusions Regarding Pan American Airline UFO Incident, 9 March 1957

1. Reference Commander's request to undersigned for some firm conclusions or explanation regarding this incident to be submitted to his office by no later than 1400 hours, Thursday, 14 March 1957; also, Memorandum, substantially same subject, dated 13 March 1957.

2. Results of priority requests for investigations to pertinent USAF units have not all been received as of this memorandum. However, long-distance calls were continuously received directly from 4602d AISS, SAC, ADC, and the Eastern Air Defense Force in response to ATIC's request for immediate action. On the basis of all data and evidence available the following are this office's conclusions:

a. There is no compelling reason to believe that the object was other than a "bolide", commonly referred to as a "fireball." These are very rarely encountered, but the object conforms exactly with the description of fireball reports received by ATIC during the last ten years.

b. Interrogation of Capt [redacted] this morning by the New York unit of the 4602d AISS, further confirms this conclusion. His detailed description, in brief, "dazzling bright light - with a green halo," coincides with the description given by the other crew members.

c. These objects are generally observed only a few seconds; are extremely bright, resembling magnesium flares; and, unlike meteors, do not burn themselves out in the upper atmosphere, but continue down to lower levels. Their encounter can be a frightening experience, particularly in a pitch-black night, as described by Capt Van Winkle.

d. Meteors and jets are ruled out. The latter is confirmed by a TWX from SAC, reporting that no aircraft were in the area at the time. The fact that another pilot 175 miles away observed the object at the same moment, rules out aircraft and guided missiles.

e. Although no message has been received from Patrick AFB as yet regarding "runaway" or other guided missile operations, this possibility seems unlikely. Reasons: firings are usually conducted during the day and before midnight; the general firings are towards the SE; and the course of the object encountered appeared to be from South to North.

PERM	
TEMP	
90 DAYS	
INITIAL	

ROUTING COORDINATION

FILE CLASS: _____
OFFICIAL FILE COPY

_____ OFFICE OF RECORD

Memo for General Watson, 14 Mar 57

AFOIN-4

f. The attempt by the press to somehow relate Venus, must also be ruled out. This planet was not visible at that time and place: 3:30 in the morning, at approximately 350 miles West of Jacksonville, Florida.

AFOIN-4X2b

3. Of significance is the fact that our conclusions and available data was submitted to the Associate Director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory for review and analysis. He firmly concurs: his comments and analysis are attached.

AFOIN-4X2c

4. It is the recommendation of this office, that in response to any queries by the press regarding this incident, the Air Force briefly state, substantially, the following:

AFOIN-4X4

a. On the basis of information now available the pilot undoubtedly encountered an object very rarely seen, a bolide or "fireball." The description given by the crew coincides with the description of objects unidentified as "fireballs" received by ATIC over a period of ten years.

AFOIN-4A

b. The fact that the object was simultaneously observed by another aircraft 175 miles to the rear rules out guided missiles and aircraft. This is to combat the proponents of "flying saucers" and Soviet missile and aircraft "threatening" our shores.

AFOIN-4

c. These conclusions were concurred with by a well-known astronomer and astrophysicist from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, to which the report was submitted for his independent review.

AFOIN-4C

George T. Gregory

1 Incl
Statement by Dr. Hynek

GEORGE T. GREGORY
Captain, USAF
UFO Project Officer

AFOIN-4D

COORDINATION:

AFOIN-4EA [redacted] DATE 14 March 1957

AFOIN-4B IFRG DATE _____
Col Gilbert

AFOIN-4X1 [redacted] DATE _____
Mr. [redacted]

AFOIN-4F

OTHERS

PERM	
TEMP	
90 DAYS	
INITIAL	

14 March 1957

STATEMENT BY DR. HYNEK

Following prepared for Captain Gregory after an examination of preliminary reports on [redacted] case of 9 March 57:

a. Bolides, or fireballs, differ from ordinary meteors in that they are very much brighter (sometimes transforming night into temporary day) and appear like a magnesium flare hurtling through the lower atmosphere, and in that they persist to much lower levels in the atmosphere. Predominantly white-yellow in color, these often have orange and greenish tints intermixed. A bolide is generally a mass of meteoric material that ignites through friction with the earth's atmosphere. It becomes visible at heights above 50 miles but, unlike an ordinary meteor, does not burn out in the air but frequently persists until it crashes to earth.

b. A close encounter with such an object is an extremely rare occurrence, and represents a frightening experience. However, astronomical records show that people who have observed real fireballs (and the majority of people don't see one in a lifetime) grossly underestimate their distance. There are cases on record in which two observers 200 miles apart both reported the flaming object to have landed "just beyond the hill" or "in the next field."

c. A fireball appears to travel at uncommonly high speeds (actually travel at 6-40 miles per second) and the great apparent angular rate leads even the best observers unconsciously to regard object as very much closer than it actually was. A typical fireball lasts from a few seconds to 10 or 20 at most.

d. In present instance, a pilot 175 miles away saw it simultaneously, it lasted 5 seconds, and it had the appearance of a flare. Even the greenish color reported fits the pattern of a typical, but rare, observation of a bolide.

e. One case of a bolide comes to mind in which a truck driver, late at night, drove the truck completely off the road as a result of the light received by a fireball sighting, a fireball that landed several hundred miles from the truck.

f. There is therefore no basic evidence that contradicts the hypothesis that the Pan American flight had an encounter (and perhaps at some distance) with a bolide. The reported fact that object passed beneath right wing is explainable by the fact that bolides do crash to earth and do often appear to perform a low, nearby horizontal path.

[C O P Y]

g. However, although the evidence is not contradictory, and although it appears probable that the sighting was due to a bolide, the possibility of a guided missile or flare is, of course, not ruled out, but all available information does not indicate the presence of such at the time of sighting - 3:30 A.M.*

J. A. Hynek

Dr. J. A. Hynek
Associate Director
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory

* Patrick does not, as a rule, fire at that time - the morning. Msg sent. Msg from Patrick AFB regarding any firings for that date or time, Negative.

999

[COPY]