

A Narrative of UFO Events at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota

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Sign Oral History Project

www.minotb52ufo.com

Abstract

In the early morning hours of 24 October 1968, United States Air Force (USAF) maintenance and security personnel stationed within the Minuteman, Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) complex surrounding Minot AFB, North Dakota, observed one—and at times—two similar UFOs. The Minot Base Operations dispatcher initiated radio communications with personnel reporting in the field, Minot, Radar Approach Control (RAPCON), and the crew of a returning B-52H aircraft.

RAPCON alerted the pilots to the location of a UFO, which the B-52 navigator observed on the radarscope at co-altitude maintaining a three-mile distance throughout a standard 180° turnaround. As the B-52 started its descent back to Minot AFB, the UFO appeared to close distance to one mile at a high-rate of speed, pacing the aircraft for nearly 20 miles before disappearing off the radarscope. Both B-52 UHF radios would not transmit during the close radar encounter with the UFO and radarscope film was recorded.

Shortly afterwards, RAPCON provided vectors for the B-52 to overfly a stationary UFO on or near the ground. After turning onto the downwind leg of the traffic pattern, the pilots observed a large, illuminated UFO ahead of the aircraft for several minutes, before turning onto the base leg over the UFO while observing it at close range. After the B-52 landed, both outer and inner-zone intrusions alarms were activated at the remote missile Launch Facility Oscar-7. The duration of reported observations was over three hours (2:15-5:34 am).

USAF Strategic Air Command, Offutt AFB, Nebraska, initiated inquiries. In the weeks following, staff at USAF Project Blue Book, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, completed a final case report mandated by Air Force Regulation 80-17.

INTRODUCTION



A Boeing B-52H Stratofortress on the runway at Minot AFB. For more than 50 years, the B-52 has been the backbone of the U.S. manned strategic bomber force, and is expected to remain in service until at least 2040 — nearly 90 years after its first flight. *[Click on all images for enlargements and alternate images].*

Preface

As an unidentified flying object, the UFO presents a particular challenge to scientific authority. Observations are random, often transitory or difficult to grasp objectively, and may even appear to exceed known technological capabilities. Lacking an acceptable theory to explain how UFOs can do what they are repeatedly observed to do, the phenomenon is broadly relegated to popular myth, while the study of individual cases after the fact can only tell us that some UFOs defy conventional explanations. ^[1]

Folklorist Thomas Bullard explains:

¹ See: [UAP in the UK Air Defence Region: Executive Summary](#), 15 May 2006, p. 4.

UFOs as experiential phenomenon and UFOs as popular cultural myth entangle in a knot of confusion. I suspect that this entanglement stands as one of the greatest impediments to understanding the nature of UFOs, and scientific acceptance as a subject worthy of serious attention. A historical perspective offers a grip on the end of the string, a chance to untangle the mess to some degree.^[2]

In this regard, the 24 October 1968, Minot AFB UFO case offers exceptional opportunity to untangle the myth, particularly given the extent of the primary documentation, including the B-52 radarscope photographs that provide quantifiable data sets, and independent testimonial evidence. According to astrophysicist Bernard Haisch, “To look at the evidence and go away unconvinced is one thing. To not look at the evidence and be convinced against it nonetheless is another.” This [www.minotb52ufo.com website] was created to provide readers an opportunity to examine all of the available evidence of the 24 October 1968, Minot AFB UFO events, in order to determine for oneself whether it is convincing.

Background

In 1968, Strategic Air Command (SAC) was the operational establishment of the United States Air Force, responsible for the bomber-based and ballistic missile-based strategic nuclear arsenal. Minot AFB, located in the northwestern part of North Dakota, was a principal SAC dual-wing base. The two wings headquartered at Minot included the 5th Bombardment Wing, with 15 B-52H Stratofortress strategic bombers capable of delivering nuclear and conventional ordinance worldwide; and the 91st Strategic Missile Wing, responsible for 150 Minuteman, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) housed in underground Launch Facilities scattered across an area of more than 8,500 square miles. Today both wings continue operations under the major command of the Air Force Global Strike Command.^[3]

² Personal communication with author. See: Thomas E. Bullard, "UFOs: Lost in the Myths," in *UFOs and Abductions: Challenging the Borders of Knowledge*, ed. David M. Jacobs (University Press of Kansas, 2000), 141-191.

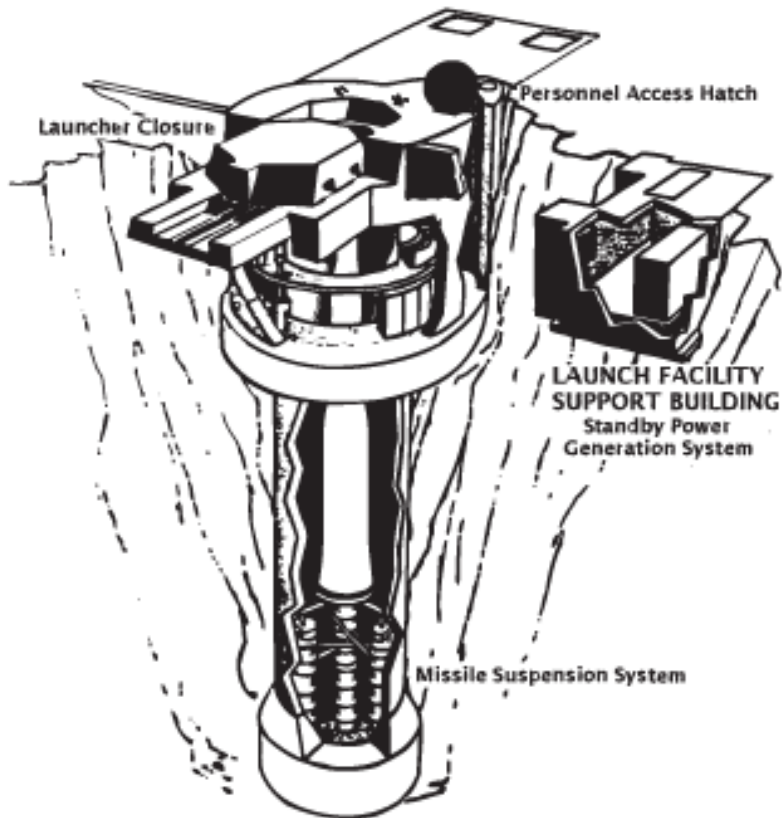
³ See: <https://www.minot.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/>



Typical unmanned Minuteman missile Launch Facility.



An ace in the hole.



By April 1967, 1,000 Minuteman missiles were emplaced and operational at [six sites in seven states](#). Prior to launch, the 20-ton Launcher Closer covering the missile was blown open with explosive charges. Entry to the lower equipment rooms surrounding the missile was through the Personnel Access Hatch. The separate Launch Support Building housed electrical equipment, a standby diesel generator, and brine chiller that provided temperature and humidity-controlled air to the launcher. For panoramic views of Launch Facilities at Ellsworth AFB, SD, see: [Minuteman Missile National Historic Site](#).

A Brief Summary of UFO Events⁴

1. Initial ground-visual Observations

Early in the morning of 24 October 1968, Oscar-Flight Security Controller Staff Sgt. William Smith received a report from a security Camper Team posted at the Launch Facility (LF) designated Oscar-6 (O-6). According to Smith, the team was providing aboveground security for

⁴ The ABC News two-hour primetime special, “Peter Jennings Reporting: UFOs—Seeing Is Believing,” was initially broadcast in February 2005. A segment of the special features the American history of the UFO phenomenon, including a four-and-a-half-minute exposé of the 24 October 1968, Minot AFB case. Available from: <https://minotb52ufo.com/media/jennings-abc-documentary.mp4>

a Target Alignment Team working underground in the missile silo when they observed a large glowing object that "went down by some trees not far away."^[5] Shortly after, at 2:30 a.m., a missile maintenance team of Airman First Class Robert O'Connor and A1C Lloyd Isley were en route to the November-7 (N-7) Launch Facility when they reported an unusual light in the east to Base Operations. The strange light rose up and appeared to be pacing their vehicle while growing brighter. By the time they arrived at N-7, the bright UFO had taken up a position circling to the south.^[6]

In response, the Minot, Base Operations dispatcher patched in the observers at N-7 with the ground controllers at Radar Approach Control (RAPCON) establishing an open-line for reporting, and kept a log of the UFO activity over the next two hours. Soon, Flight Security Controllers (FSC) — the officers responsible for the security requirements at the Launch Control Facilities (LCF) — were also reporting sightings via their separate communications network linked to missile Wing Security Control (WSC).

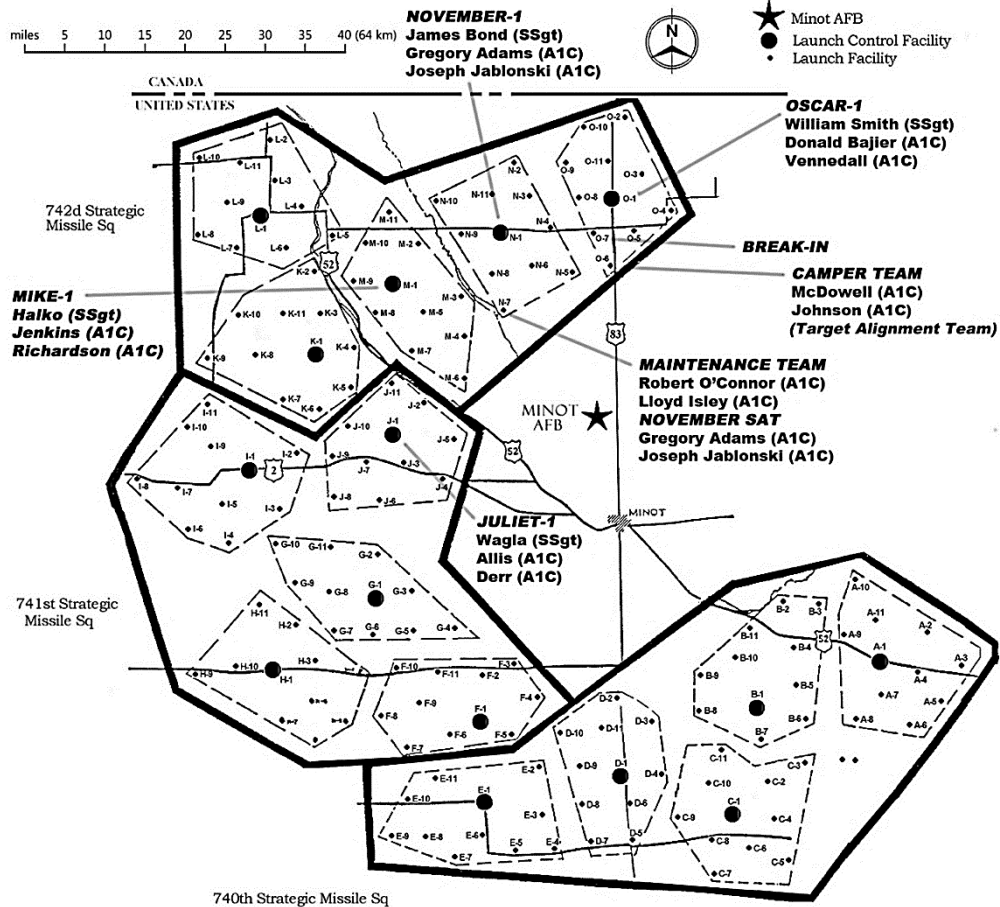
In one instance, security personnel at three of the LCFs similarly described “the object separate in two parts and go in opposite directions and return and pass under each other.”^[5] In another rather enigmatic report, a FSC reported that an “object which looked to him as the sun” came near the hardened antenna within the security fencing of his LCF. It then moved away and he dispatched his two-man Security Alert Team (SAT), who followed the object to within a half-mile of where it appeared to be landing. When the object reached the ground, the light dimmed and extinguished. After this, they could see nothing.^[7] Independent reports of record by as many as twenty-one military personnel mutually describe a very large, brightly illuminated aerial object that would alternate colors from brilliant white to amber and green, with an ability to hover, accelerate rapidly and abruptly change direction.^[8]

⁵ [Smith, William, Jr., 2001b. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tullen and Jim Klotz, 25 August \(Sign Oral History Project\), 8, 14-15.](#)

⁶ [Isley, Lloyd M., Air Force Form 117 \(AF-117\), Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire, 28 October 1968, 9;](#) and, [O'Connor, Robert M., Air Force Form 117 \(AF-117\), Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire, 28 October 1968, 1, 7.](#)

⁷ [Wing Security Controller's summary.](#) The controller identified N-1 as the location of this event; however, November FSC SSgt. Bond did not recall the event during our interview. He stated: "It might have been at another site that they were talking about . . . it wasn't anywhere near the antenna, didn't come near my LCF. Just didn't happen." See: [Bond, James, 2005. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tullen, 26 February \(Sign Oral History Project\), 20-23.](#)

⁸ [Basic Reporting Data and Format \[Telex\], 290428Z OCT 68, SUBJ: UFO REPORT, 1-2.](#)

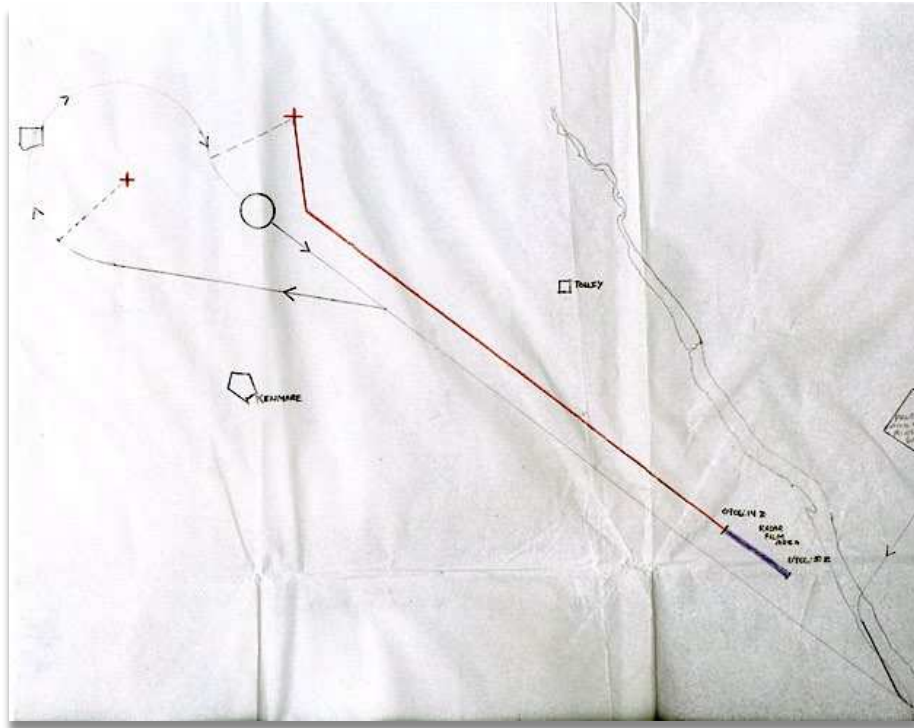


Locations of 16 ground observers within the missile complex surrounding Minot AFB. The 91st Strategic Missile Wing comprised the 740th, 741st, and 742nd Strategic Missile Squadrons, each responsible for 50 Minuteman missiles. Each Launch Control Facility (and underground Launch Control Center) are responsible for 10 missile Launch Facilities.

2. B-52 Air-radar Observations

At about 3:00 a.m., a B-52H Stratofortress returned to Minot AFB from a routine 10-hour training mission. The pilots practiced high-altitude instrumented procedures and approaches to the runway, eventually requesting clearance to fly out to the Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) initial approach fix (“WT fix”), 35 nautical miles northwest of the airbase. Given clearance to Flight Level 200 (20,000 feet altitude), RAPCON ground controllers then asked the crew to “look out toward your 1:00 [one o’clock] position for the next 15 or 16 miles and see if you see any orange glows out there. Somebody is seeing flying saucers again.”^[9]

⁹ [Transcription of Recorded Conversations](#), Transcript of tape for 24 Oct 68, 0830-0915, 0835. The UFO observations occurred from 2:15 until 5:34 a.m. (CDT), for 3 hours and 19 minutes. Daylight Saving Time ended on Sunday, 27 October. See also: [Discrepancies and Omissions in the Transcription of Recorded Conversations, 24 October 1968](#).



Partial scan of Minot AFB investigating officer Colonel Werlich's Overlay Map showing the flight track of the B-52, including the 180-degree turnaround back over the WT fix (black circle). Relative positions of the UFO are in red; and the blue section (Radar Film Area) is Werlich's estimate of the location of the B-52 when the 14 radarscope photographs were exposed (Werlich Overlay Map).

The B-52 crew observed nothing out of the ordinary during the flight out. Approaching the WT fix, they initiated a standard 180-degree turnaround that would eventually bring them back over the WT fix on a straight approach to the runway. At 3:52, as they started the wide turn, ground controllers informed the crew “the UFO is being picked up by the weathers [*sic*] radar also, should be your 1:00 position 3 miles now.”^[10]

The B-52's own radar detected the radar return (UFO) co-altitude at three miles away, sparking air safety concerns among the crew. However, as the B-52 banked around the roughly 6-mile diameter turn the UFO maintained a constant 3-mile separation, moving to the northeast — outside of the turn radius and to the left of the B-52 as it finally rolled out.

Upon clearing the WT fix to begin the descent back to the runway, the radar return suddenly changed position. In one sweep of the radar — less than three seconds — the UFO appeared to close distance to one mile, while subsequent sweeps would indicate that the return was matching

¹⁰ [Transcription](#), 0852Z.

the forward velocity of the B-52. The seemingly phenomenal and instantaneous movement of the UFO startled B-52 navigator Captain Patrick McCaslin:

I knew whatever it was that there was something there that I'd never seen on radar. I don't know of anything that could go laterally in three seconds, two miles, and just stop. It was maintaining our descent rate, and then just laterally to one mile... perfect formation.^[11]

At the same instant as the return's abrupt change of position, the B-52's two UHF radios ceased transmission on all frequencies with RAPCON. The UFO continued pacing the aircraft off the left wing for nearly 20 miles. Near the end of the descent trajectory, the radarscope camera filmed the UFO as it appeared to spiral around behind the B-52, after which the radar return disappeared and radio communications returned to normal.^[12]

3. B-52 Air-visual Observations

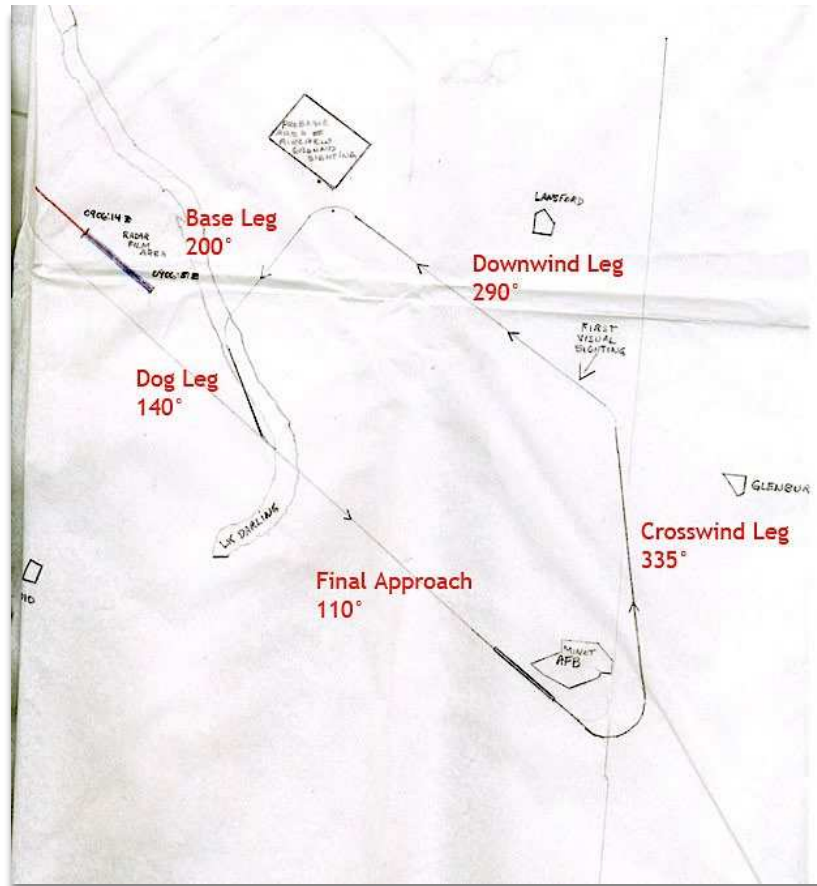
Following the inexplicable radar encounter, the B-52 pilots practiced a missed approach to the runway and were vectored back around to land. However, on final approach to the runway a General officer radioed a request not to land, but to continue around in order to fly over and photograph the object if possible.^[13] Accordingly, RAPCON controllers vectored the B-52 once again onto the traffic pattern to the location of a stationary UFO on or near the ground, roughly 16 miles north-northwest of the airbase. Immediately after turning onto the downwind leg of the pattern, both pilots observed an illuminated object more than 10 miles ahead of the aircraft. The non-crew pilot Major James Partin compared the UFO to "a miniature sun placed on the ground below the aircraft."^[14]

¹¹ [McCaslin, Patrick D., 2001. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tullen, 25 February \(Sign Oral History Project\), 19.](#) Each scan (35mm frame/photo) is a 3-second time-exposure synchronized to one complete rotation of the radar.

¹² [Transcription](#), 0858-0402Z.

¹³ [Runyon, Bradford, Jr., 2000. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tullen and Jan Aldrich, 5 May \(Sign Oral History Project\), 11.](#)

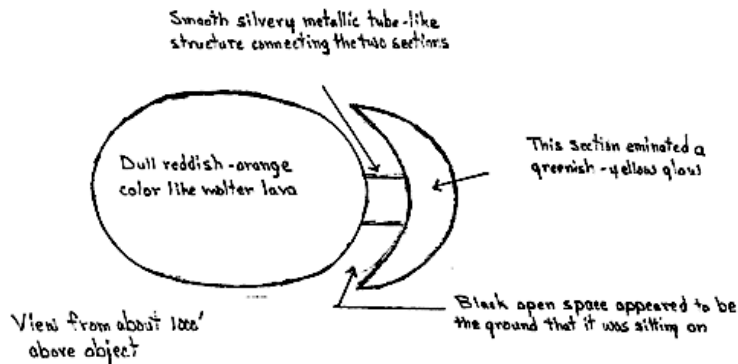
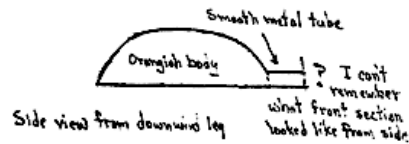
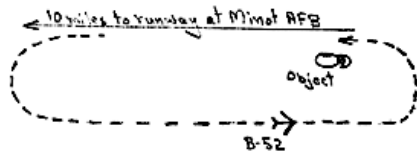
¹⁴ [Partin, James, Air Force Form 117 \(AF-117\), Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire](#), 30 October 1968, 7. Partin was not a regular crewmember, rather onboard this particular mission receiving routine flight evaluation by the aircraft commander, Capt. Don Cagle, in accordance with the standardization and evaluation (STANEVAL) program.



Partial scan of Minot AFB investigating officer Col. Werlich's Overlay Map showing the flight track of the B-52 around the first traffic pattern. Werlich did not plot the second extended go-around when the pilots observed and overflew the UFO. Nevertheless, he indicates the location of the B-52 during the pilot's "first visual sighting" following the turn onto the downwind leg of the pattern, and "probable area of aircrew ground sighting" in the rectangular box (Werlich Overlay Map).

Upon reaching the object the B-52 flew alongside and executed a left turn over and around it. As the B-52 banked over the object, copilot Capt. Bradford Runyon was able to observe the UFO through the pilot's window as it passed beneath the aircraft. He described a huge egg-shaped object with a surface that appeared to give off a dull reddish color like molten steel. As they began the turn, he noticed a smooth metallic tubular section extending horizontally from the long-end of the elliptical object, connecting to the mid-point of a curved crescent-shaped protuberance, not unlike a bumper. This section encompassed the width of the body and emanated a greenish-yellow glow from its interior back, illuminating the tubular section and the front of the egg-shaped main body of the object. Once again, their radios would not transmit during the very close approach.^[15]

¹⁵ Runyon, Bradford, Jr., 2005. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tulien, 25 February (Sign Oral History Project), 15-16, 18; and, Runyon 2000, 14.



* Drawing by BRADFORD RUNYON. 11/28/00 BRAT

Capt. Brad Runyon's drawing of the UFO dated 28 November 2000. The B-52 was at a standard altitude of 3200 MSL, or roughly 1500 feet above the ground. Runyon cautiously estimated the size of the UFO as being 200 feet in length, 100 feet in width, and 50 feet in height.

The B-52 turned left onto the base leg of the traffic pattern and lost sight of the UFO. They continued around to the runway at Minot AFB and came to a terminal landing at 4:40 a.m. At 4:49, both the outer and inner-zone security alarms sounded at the missile Launch Facility Oscar-7, and SSgt. Smith immediately dispatched his Security Alert Team to investigate. The team discovered the front gate unpadlocked, and an access hatch on site standing open, but no other evidence of intruders. In the meantime, November security personnel continued reporting a UFO west of N-7, until the light gradually diminished around 5:30.

Investigations

Following the early morning events Strategic Air Command commenced investigations. Later in the afternoon, Minot AFB investigating officer Col. Werlich notified Project Blue Book in the Foreign Technology Division at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, per Air Force Regulation 80-17. Over the next couple days, six of the ground observers completed the Air Force Form 117 *Sighting*

of *Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire* (AF-117). Although Maj. Partin completed an AF-117 the following week, Blue Book investigators did not interview the B-52 crewmembers during the official investigation. Not until recently have they publicly discussed their experiences. Given their clearances and responsibilities, Capt. Runyon understood at the time they were not to discuss the matter. Aware that the Air Force was engaged in an ongoing investigation of the UFO phenomenon, he naturally assumed that conclusions would eventually be available to the public. However, over 30 years later, still lacking any explanation for what they had observed that morning, Runyon's curiosity led him to contact the J. Allen Hynek, Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) in Chicago, and complete a *UFO Sighting Questionnaire* regarding his experience.^[16]

Documentary Evidence

Based on Runyon's sighting report we initiated a search for documentation pertaining to the 24 October 1968 Minot AFB UFO case, and were fortunate to discover 145 pages of primary documents in the declassified operational files of Project Blue Book.^[17] All of the documents are available in the [DOCUMENTATION](#) section of the website. In order to provide a sense of the evidentiary value of the source materials, we have categorized the documents into four basic types.

[Transactional Documents](#) are primary evidence produced in compliance with official military regulations. In this case, [Air Force Regulation 80-17](#) established the Air Force UFO program, and specified the responsibilities (actions) for investigating, analyzing, and submitting UFO reports.^[18] The regulation required Minot AFB investigating officer Lt. Colonel Arthur Werlich to have principal witnesses complete the AF-117 *Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire*, and compile information in response to a formatted list of questions (Basic Reporting Data). Upon receipt, Project Blue Book was required to evaluate the data and prepare a final case report. The transactional documents total 83 pages.

¹⁶ [Runyon, Bradford, Jr. 2000. UFO Sighting Questionnaire-General Form](#), 11 February (Center for UFO Studies, Chicago, IL). CUFOS director Mark Rodeghier forwarded a copy of Runyon's questionnaire initiating research on this case. Astronomer, Dr. J. Allen Hynek (1910-1986) served as scientific consultant for the USAF UFO program from 1948-1968, and founded the Center for UFO Studies in 1973. He authored two books: *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry* (1972), and *The Hynek UFO Report* (1977).

¹⁷ *Records of Project Blue Book, 1947-1969*, Record Group 341.15, Publication Number: T1206, Roll 82, Minot AFB, ND, 24 Oct. 1968, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. See index: [NARA Microfilm Publication T1206](#). The Project Blue Book records are accessible from: <https://www.fold3.com/title/461/project-blue-book-ufo-investigations>.

¹⁸ United States. Department of the Air Force. Research and Development. [Air Force Regulation No. 80-17, Unidentified Flying Objects \(UFO\)](#), 19 September 1966. Washington D. C. Also, AFR 80-17 with changes and attachment: <http://www.project1947.com/shg/condon/appndx-b.html>.

[Selective Documents](#) are primary evidence recorded during the events, which the recorder deemed important or worth noting. These include logs of events noted by the Base Operations Dispatcher and missile Wing Security Controller, and a Transcription of Recorded Conversations between the B-52 copilot and RAPCON. The records also contain timelines useful for reconstructing the events. In addition, during the B-52 radar encounter the navigator filmed the radarscope, which shows the UFO and its relative movements. A targeting studies officer analyzed the film and selected fourteen 35mm frames from the larger sample as indicative of the UFO's performance characteristics. These first-generation 8x10 positive prints contain quantitative information of the UFO encounter, and provide a means for assessing physical characteristics of the UFO. Werlich also prepared a map overlay (transparency superimposed on a classified 200-series map), plotting the B-52 flight track, and relative positions and movements of the UFO. The selective documents total 19 pages, plus 2 maps.

[Memo\[s\] for the Record](#) document telephone conversations between Blue Book staff and Minot AFB investigating officer Lt. Col. Werlich. Also included are conversations between Headquarters, Strategic Air Command/Operations with Blue Book staff, and the assistant Deputy Chief of Staff/Intelligence at SAC with Blue Book chief Lt. Col. Quintanilla. These conversations provide more details, insight into the process of the official investigation, and especially personal information and attitudes generally absent in transactional documents. The memoranda of conversations, including two telex communications, total 20 pages.

[Oral History Interviews](#). During our research, we conducted more than 30 interviews with military observers and witnesses to the events. Transcriptions of the interviews are available in the INTERVIEW section of the website. While an oral report may be a true description of an event, it is crucial to understand that information in an oral history interview is a selective recollection, removed from the original event and further abstracted by human memory. Nevertheless, there are ways to evaluate reliability, and in this case, the oral history interviews make an important contribution to our understanding. For example, regarding the B-52 crewmembers, individual recollections reflect particular situations at the time of the event respective to their stations in the aircraft. We can compare individual recollections to cross-validate any particular memory claim with more reliability given to claims independently recalled by more than one witness. In some instances, the way something is recollected, or even the lack of a recall can be meaningful.

Although oral history is subjective interpretation, it is eminently valuable in recovering levels of experience and understanding other perspectives that are not normally available to historians. Moreover, we can assess the validity of the recollections by contrast and comparison to the event itself as revealed in the primary source materials. A statement is not necessarily more accurate or true if written down at the time than if recalled later in testimony. Written documents possess immediacy and are uninfluenced by subsequent events, however, the documents can be incomplete, in error, or even written to mislead. In this case, the cumulative recollections of various witnesses form a general narrative of the events, which reveals significant information that is missing and unavailable in the official record.^[19]

Sign Oral History Project

In May 1999, independent researchers, writers, and historians established the Sign Historical Group (SHG) and convened a foundational workshop in Chicago to discuss the application of traditional historical methodology to the “sometimes sketchy, often misinterpreted and always incomplete” subject of UFO history.^[20] One area identified as lacking was the collection of oral testimonies, so we resolved to establish the Sign Oral History Project (SOHP) to preserve first-person accounts and significant historical information.

In May 2000, along with SHG colleague and Project 1947 director Jan Aldrich, we interviewed Bradford Runyon. Runyon’s testimony reasonably corroborated the events as revealed by the Blue Book documentation, while providing supplementary details and lines of inquiry not evident in the official documentation. In many respects, the case presented exceptional opportunities for historical research, particularly since it had never received any publicity.^[21] The events evolved over a three-hour period, involving a significant cross-section of officers and military personnel. Since various groups had no contact with each other, it was possible to examine a body of testimonies untainted by other’s experiences and interpretations. The extent of the primary

¹⁹ See for example: [Discrepancies and Omissions in the Transcription of Recorded Conversations, 24 October 1968](#). For an overview of oral history, its problems of interpretation and value as historical evidence see: Linda Shopes, “[Making Sense of Oral History](#)” at History Matters.

²⁰ *Proceedings of the Sign Historical Group UFO History Workshop (1999)*: <https://sohp.us/Sign-Historical-Group-Workshop-Proceedings.pdf>

²¹ A brief discussion of the case appears in Hynek (1977); Randle (1999); and Velasco (2004). *SciFi Magazine* (2006) in France published the article, [Panique à Minot Air Force Base](#), based on early drafts.

evidence provided an abundant means by which to assess, cross-validate, and corroborate information by seeking correspondence with multiple sources.

Over the next several years, with the assistance of SHG colleague James Klotz, we interviewed all the B-52 crewmembers and the non-crew pilot Major James Partin.^[22] Our process was to record an initial telephone interview followed by a formal videotaped interview. In addition, we interviewed the 5th Bombardment Wing intelligence officer responsible for the radarscope film analysis (SSgt. Richard Clark); the commander of the 810th Strategic Aerospace Division (Brig. General Ralph Holland); and the 91st Strategic Missile Wing commander (Col. B.H. Davidson). In all cases, we were the first public contact the witnesses had regarding their experiences.



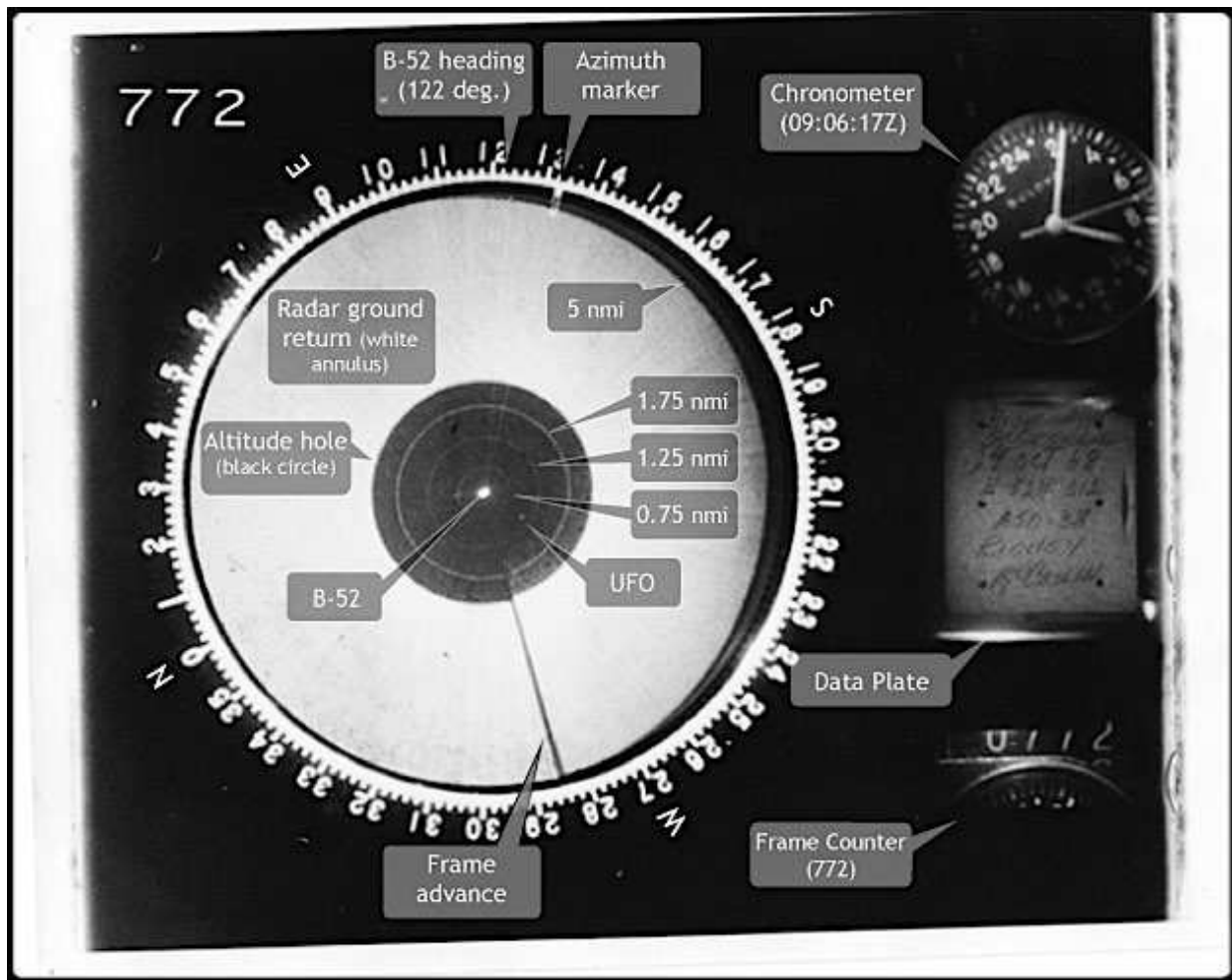
B-52 Aircraft Commander, pilot Capt. Don Cagle, Co-pilot Capt. Bradford Runyon, Radar Navigator Maj. Chuck Richey, Navigator Capt. Patrick McCaslin, Electronic Warfare Officer Capt. Thomas Goduto, and Gunner Tech/Sgt. Arlie Judd. All crewmembers were rated as instructors in their respective positions, establishing them as one of the top crews at Minot AFB in 1968.

Unfortunately, the Minot AFB officer responsible for investigating the case, 862nd Combat Support Group, Operations Division chief Lt. Colonel Arthur Werlich, is deceased, though we have spoken with family members. The events of 24 October 1968 made a lasting impression on

²² B-52 radar navigator Maj. Charles (Chuck) Richey is deceased (30 April 1995).

his then-teenage daughters Kim and Melody, when they were awakened “in the middle of the night” and overheard an urgent telephone call to their father reporting the mysterious UFO activity.

The B-52 Radarscope Photographs



The B-52 radarscope consists of an illuminated bearing ring and 10-inch diameter tube face called a Plan Position Indicator (PPI). The chronometer, data plate, and counter to the right are superimposed via a separate optical path. The time on the twenty-four clock is 090617Z (4:06:17 CDT). Below it, the handwritten data plate identifies locations in the flight plan (Bismarck and St. George); the date (24 Oct. 68); aircraft identification (B-52H 012); radar system designation (ASQ-38); and names of the operators (Richey and McCaslin). The counter identifies the frame as #772. The B-52 is the bright spot in the center of the radarscope, on a heading of 122 degrees (0 degrees is north). The UFO echo appears at 242 degrees azimuth, 1.05 nautical miles (nmi) aft of the right wing of the B-52. The black circle in the center is the “TR hole” (transmit/receive) or “altitude hole,” and the white annulus extending five nmi out to the edge of the bearing ring is radar ground return. The diameter of the altitude hole decreases as the B-52 descends in altitude. There are three inner range rings visible within the altitude hole corresponding to .75, 1.25, and 1.75 nmi. The radial line at 284 degrees is the point where the next frame advances in the camera to begin another three-second time exposure, corresponding to the clockwise rotation of the radar antenna mounted beneath the nose of the B-52. The marker at 132 degrees is a manually adjusted azimuth marker. [View all 14 B-52 radarscope photographs.](#)

While researching the case, we were fortunate to discover first-generation radarscope photographs filmed onboard the B-52 during the radar UFO encounter. Early in the morning on 24 October 1968, 5th Bombardment Wing intelligence officer Staff Sergeant Richard Clark arrived at work and was instructed to examine the original negative radarscope film. Clark requested two sets of 14 photographic prints from the larger sample, which clearly exhibit the UFO movement from front-right of the airborne B-52, as it appears to spiral around behind the aircraft to a position off the left wing. He included one set of the photos in his report and retained the other as a personal file-copy. Later, Clark passed the photographs along to his brother-in-law, fellow Minnesotan, William McNeff, who generously contributed them for our analysis.

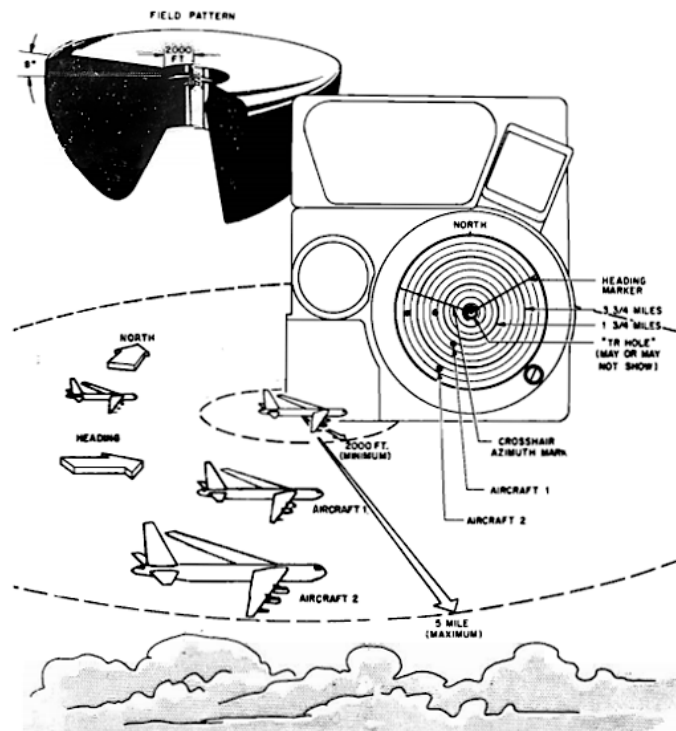


Figure 3-7. Station-keeping operations.

This illustration demonstrates the radar field pattern surrounding the B-52, and corresponding display on the radarscope for “Station Keep” mode, in which coverage is elevated to aid navigation during formation flying, or when lining up with the docking boom of an air-refueling tanker. McCaslin switched the radar to this mode after being notified by RAPCON of the UFO in close proximity to the B-52.

The 14 radarscope photographs present successive 3-second, time-lapse exposures, corresponding to less than 40 seconds when the UFO echo was “painted” by the radar. The photos comprise a quantifiable data set, which, among other things, provides a means to determine the

altitude and location of the B-52 in three-dimensions at the precise time of the photograph. This allows for an extrapolation of the flight track of the B-52 in real-time, and comparison to the documentary timelines, while providing an additional means to inform the interpretation and narrative reconstruction of the events.

In addition, the radarscope photographs contain information to examine the nature of the UFO that is typically not available in a majority of UFO reports. In this instance, the photographs allow us to infer accelerations and trajectories, providing insight into the physical characteristics of the UFO.

Martin Shough, an experienced and critical radar analyst in Scotland, has studied the B-52 radarscope photographs. He has contributed an analysis to this report, titled [Anomalous Echoes Captured by a B-52 Airborne Radarscope Camera](#), with the goal of testing the internal consistency of the witness narratives and official records against the physical evidence while seeking an explanation for the anomalous radar echoes. He considers many conventional interpretations of the echoes, concluding that none of the possibilities are convincing.

Building on Shough's foundation, Centre National d'Études Spatiales (CNES), French space agency scientist and astronomer Dr. Claude Poher has contributed a photogrammetric analysis of the radarscope photos, titled [Analysis of Radar and Air-Visual UFO Observations on 24 October 1968 at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, USA](#). Incorporating a multidisciplinary approach, Poher systematically formulates hypotheses leading to theoretical considerations concerning the energetic potential of the UFO. For instance, if it were possible for the UFO to sustain the inferred accelerations for more than a dozen hours it would in theory attain relativistic speeds approaching that of light, such that an interstellar voyage is possible.

Summary

In order that the reader can appreciate the historical context and circumstances surrounding the UFO events, the following **BACKGROUND** section includes historical summaries of the Strategic Air Command; Minot Air Force Base; and two operational wings at Minot, the 5th Bombardment Wing and 91st Strategic Missile Wing. The following **NARRATIVE** section recounts the story of the 24 October 1968 Minot AFB UFO case in detail based on the primary source materials and testimonies, while the **INVESTIGATION** section examines the process by

which the Air Force and Project Blue Book investigated the case over a three-week period resulting in Blue Book's final case report.

Finally, the [RADAR ANALYSES](#) section of the web site presents the contributions of Martin Shough and Dr. Claude Poher. All of the primary documents are included in the [DOCUMENTATION](#) section, while the [INTERVIEW](#) section contains complete transcripts of many of the pertinent oral history interviews. For supplemental information, the [MAPS](#) section contains historical maps accumulated during the process of research, including a series created to illustrate the text, and the [ARCHIVES](#) section contains many relevant historical records of the Air Force, including unit histories and official publications for the period. In addition, all of the chronological sections and individual documents comprising the web site can be directly accessed from the [SITEMAP](#) at the top right corner of the main page.

BACKGROUND

United States Air Force, Strategic Air Command (SAC)



SSgt. Billy Davis stands guard at the entrance to the Headquarters facilities of the Strategic Air Command, Offutt AFB, Nebraska, in June 1959 (*The National Security Archive*).

In the early 1950s, many senior officials within the Air Force were necessarily concerned about spending limited resources in the development of long-range missiles, which ultimately may not prove to be technically feasible. By late 1951, however, these concerns were overshadowed by

covert reports from the Soviet Union revealing the planned development of huge rockets, lending renewed urgency to the task of making the SAC's retaliatory capabilities so overpowering that it could counter any Soviet aggression.

These Soviet plans precipitated a difficult period in Cold War history. For the first time the United States would no longer be isolated from potential conflicts, since the warning time for crises was quickly plummeting from years to a literal matter of minutes. The only way the threat could be countered was with our own system of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), in such strength that the retaliatory power would discourage the leaders of the Soviet Union from even considering a first strike. In August 1953, less than a month after the Korean War ended, the first test explosion of a Soviet hydrogen bomb underscored the escalating nuclear threat, and the arms race was effectively underway.



First flight of the B-52A Stratofortress on 5 August 1954.

On 30 October 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower formally approved National Security Council Paper No. 162/2. The top-secret document made clear that America's nuclear arsenal would be maintained and further expanded to meet the communist threat. As a result, the SAC mission grew rapidly while defining the concept of deterrence as "instant massive

retaliation.”^[23] SAC implemented the long-range B-52 Stratofortress strategic nuclear bomber force in the 1950s; extending that capability in the development of the ICBM, culminating in the 1960s with the Minuteman missile program; and the eventual third leg of the strategic nuclear triad, U.S. Navy submarines with launch capabilities for ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Under this strategy, the country’s nuclear defense was assured by the use of three distinct and versatile weapons delivery systems.^[24]



The manned tail gun position of a Wichita-built B-52E with its four, radar-directed .50-caliber machine guns. In this early variant the gunner was isolated in a pressurized cabin in the tail. The B-52H made its first flight on 6 March 1961 and remains in service today. In all, Boeing produced 744 B-52s between 1952 and 1962. (*Boeing*).

²³ [NSC 162/2](#) defined Cold War policy during the Eisenhower administration. Central to the assessment was the requirement for the development and maintenance of “a strong military posture, with emphasis on the capability of inflicting massive retaliatory damage by offensive striking power” (quote on p. 5).

²⁴ For more information on the origins and history of the Cold War, see: [The Missile Plains: Frontline of America's Cold War](#): Section I, Chapter 1: The Cold War (1945-62).



A Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker air-refueling a B-52. To complete an aerial refueling, the receiver aircraft moves to a position behind the Stratotanker, aided by director lights or directions radioed by the boom operator. Once in position, the operator extends the flying boom, inserting it into a receptacle on the receiving aircraft. Fuel is then pumped through the boom at a rate of 1000 U.S. gallons/6500 lbs. per minute.

In June 1955 SAC took delivery of the first B-52B Stratofortress from Boeing, which has proven to be one of the Air Force's most successful and long-lasting weapons systems. The turbojet bombers could reach speeds of 650 miles per hour cruising at altitudes up to 50,000 feet, while carrying a heavy load of 43,000 pounds. With aerial refueling the B-52 had a proven intercontinental range able to strike any target on the face of the earth. In 1962 a crew commanded by Major Clyde Evely from Minot AFB set a distance record when they flew their B-52H aircraft 12,519 miles from Japan to Spain without refueling.

With the introduction of ICBMs, production of the B-52 ended in the summer of 1962. In October, the last production model, the B-52H, was delivered to the 4135th Strategic Wing at Minot AFB. Although physically resembling the other B-52's, this marked the first time in the history of strategic bombing that an aircraft had been designed explicitly for a low-altitude penetration mission, allowing the B-52H to fly under enemy defense radar to its target. Along with the airborne refueling capability provided by the KC-135 Stratotanker, the B-52 became SAC's principal

strategic bomber. At its peak in the early sixties, more than six hundred B-52's were allocated to thirty-eight Bombardment Wings stationed at SAC airbases worldwide, and many continue in service to the present day.



The first-generation Atlas and Titan ICBMs were activated in 1958, though by 1962 these were already being replaced with the smaller, more sophisticated, Boeing LGM-30A Minuteman-1.

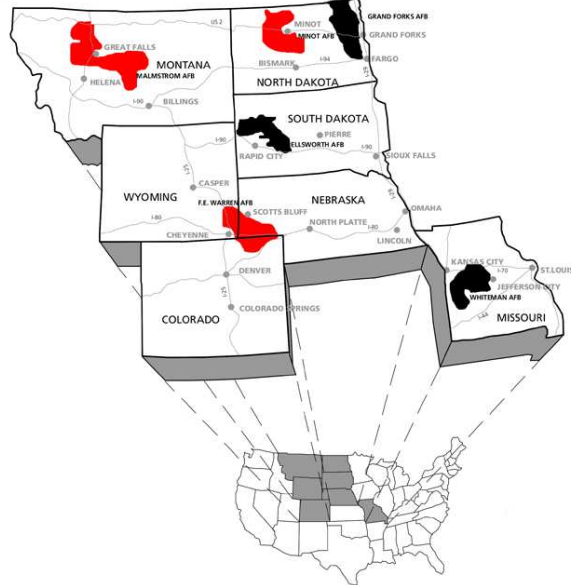
Minuteman ICBM test launch from the Western Launch and Test Range at Vandenberg AFB, CA. Missiles launched from silos were preceded by the characteristic "smoke ring" that was a Minuteman trademark.

The Minuteman was a three-stage solid-fuel propelled missile, which could be launched directly from an underground silo. Each missile stood nearly 60 feet tall, and could attain a maximum speed of 18,030 miles per hour (29,030 kph) with a maximum range of 6,000 miles (9,700 km). At its peak the Minuteman force numbered 1,000 missiles housed in widely dispersed underground Launch Facilities in the countryside of the Dakotas,

Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and Missouri, establishing the backbone of strategic deterrence.^[25]

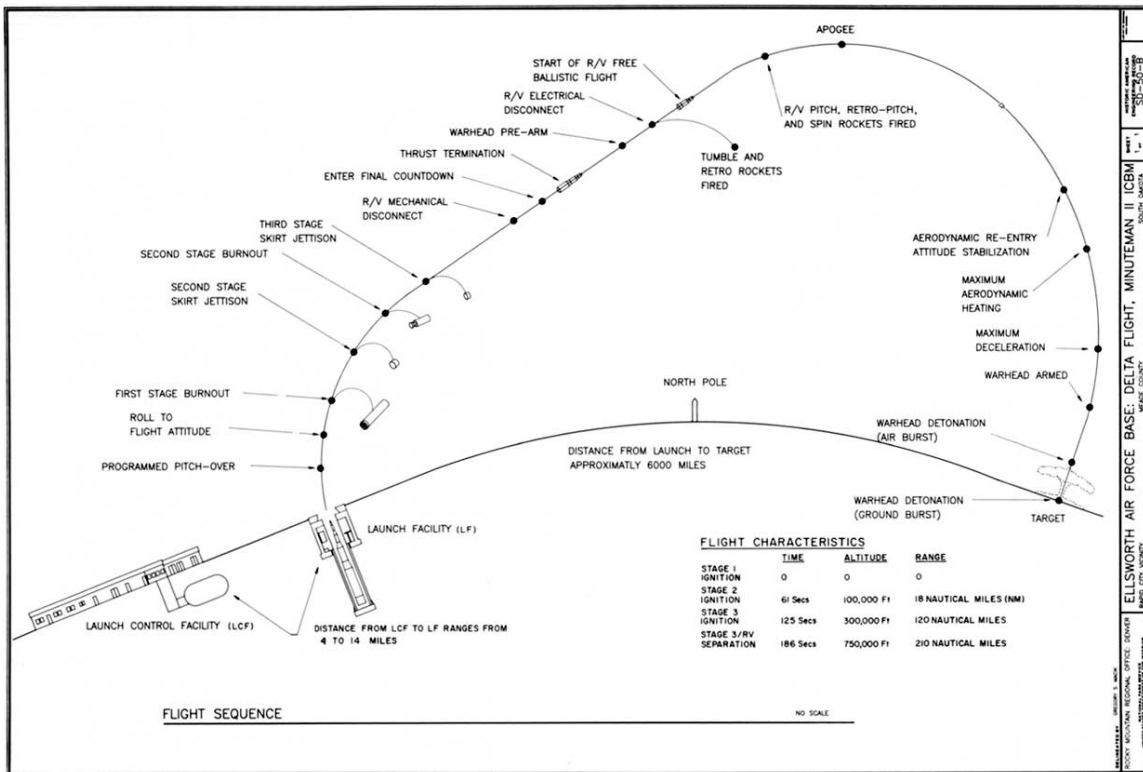
²⁵ For more information and a concise history of the U.S. ICBM programs, see: [The Missile Plains: Frontline of America's Cold War](#), Section 1, Chapter 2, U.S. Strategic and Missile Armament Systems (1950s-60s).

Locations of the six Minuteman ICBM complexes. The red sites, including Malmstrom AFB, Minot AFB, and F.E. Warren AFB, remain active with 450 Minuteman III; while the black sites including Whiteman AFB, Ellsworth AFB, and Grand Forks AFB, were decommissioned in the 1990s as a result of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in 1991.



Flight sequence of a Minuteman II. Unlike the large Atlas and Titan liquid-fuel ICBMs that rose slowly into the air, the Minuteman streaked out of the silo. Three seconds after launch the missile began a gentle turn toward the target. The first stage separated after 60 seconds at an altitude of nearly 19 miles. The second stage separated after 120 seconds, and the third stage separated from the reentry vehicle at about 180 seconds, at which time the missile had reached an altitude of 142 miles and was traveling at a velocity of 23,000 feet per second (15680 mph). At the apogee of its parabolic flight path the reentry vehicle reached an altitude of over 700 miles above the earth's surface. Minuteman III missile flight animation from:

<https://minotb52ufo.com/media/minuteman-iii-missile-flight-animation.mp4>



Minot Air Force Base



“Only the Best Come North”



The main entrance gate at Minot AFB in 2002.

Following the Soviet Union’s detonation of its first atomic bomb in 1949, U.S. military strategists realized that the main attack route for enemy bombers would be over the Arctic. They therefore sought to locate radar stations and military bases in the northern tier states along the Canadian border. One of these long-range defense radar stations, Minot Air Force Station was established south of Minot, ND in 1951. A few years later, Minot was chosen as a location for a fighter-interceptor base and construction of the new facility began in May 1956. Officially activated on 10 January 1957, Minot AFB began as an Air Defense Command (ADC) base until the first permanent Strategic Air Command unit, the 4136th Strategic Wing, was activated in September 1958. Gearing up for the permanent SAC mission, in 1959 the 906th Airborne Refueling Squadron (ARFS) was assigned to Minot AFB, which grew to include a squadron of fifteen KC-135 Stratotankers providing air refueling for the defense operations and the eventual introduction of SAC aircraft.

In 1961, SAC's mission continued to expand when the 4136th SW received a squadron of fifteen B-52H bombers, and the Air Force selected the land around Minot for a new Minuteman ICBM complex. Construction of the missile sites commenced in January 1962. In May, it was announced that the 810th Strategic Aerospace Division (SAD) would be activated at Minot AFB, and assume an intermediate level of command of both wings, subordinate to the Fifteenth Air Force.^[26] On 30 June 1962, control of Minot AFB passed from ADC to the commander of the newly activated 862nd Combat Support Group, which assumed administrative responsibility for the base, while providing operations and logistical support for both wings. Thus, Minot AFB was officially designated a Strategic Air Command base. With the bombing and air refueling missions well underway, all eyes turned to the missile complex.

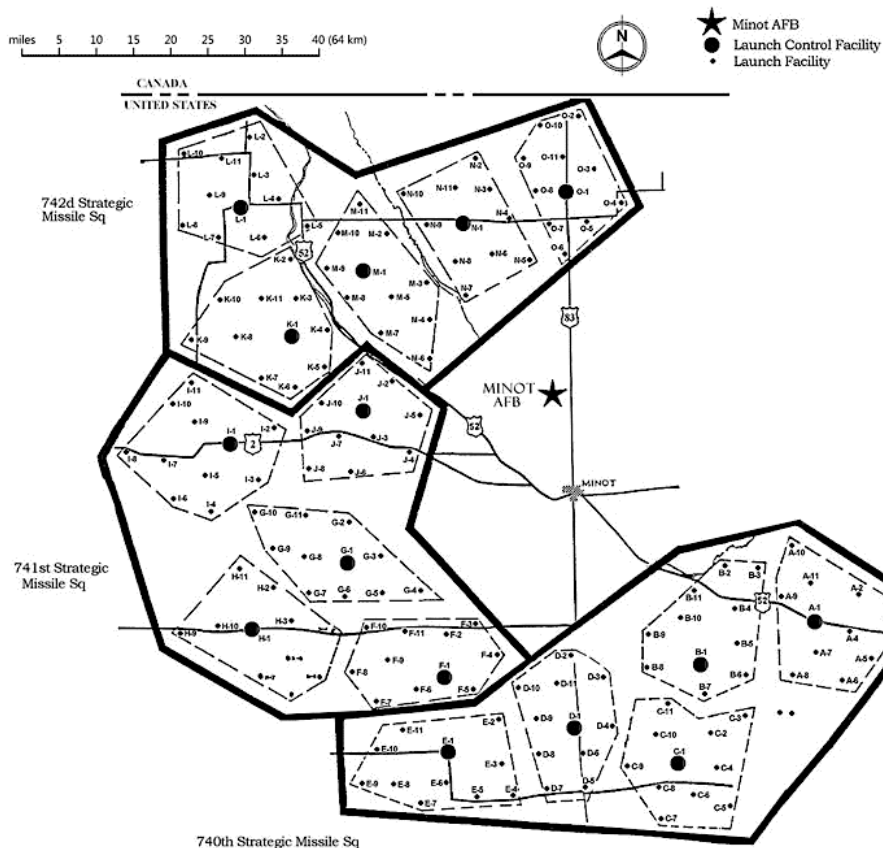


The main entrance gate at Minot AFB in 1965.

As the complex took shape, in November 1962 SAC activated the 455th Strategic Missile Wing (SMW). Although the missile complex was far from operational, training began in order that the wing could support its mission once the construction was completed. In February 1963, SAC

²⁶ 810th SAD USAF Fact Sheet: <http://www.afhra.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=10152>. The Fifteenth Air Force, March AFB, CA was a level of command subordinate to Strategic Air Command. The Numbered Air Forces are tactical echelons that provide operational leadership and supervision.

activated the 450th Bombardment Wing-Heavy to support the B-52 and KC-135 operations. The first Minuteman I missiles began to arrive in September 1963, and from that day on missiles arrived almost daily until the last missile was emplaced in February 1964. By April, the 455th SMW was fully operational with the Minuteman I weapon system. In just over two years, the North Dakota plains were implanted with a combat-ready ICBM system born of the latest technological advancements, and Minot AFB became the home of two powerful legs of the American strategic triad.^[27]



The Minuteman missile complex surrounding Minot, ND, comprising 15 Launch Control Facilities (LCF) and 150 Launch Facilities (LF). Each LCF and underground Launch Control Center (LCC) were responsible for 10 Minuteman missiles housed in underground silos. The 24 October UFO events occurred to the north and northwest of Minot AFB.

Throughout the 1960s, Minot AFB continued to modify and upgrade its operations and strategic arsenal. Base organizations were reassigned in July 1968 when the 91st Strategic Missile

²⁷ For more information on the history and development of the Minuteman ICBM, see: [The Missile Plains: Frontline of America's Cold War](#): Section 1, Chapter 3: Minuteman and the Next Generation (1960s-present).

Wing assumed operations from the inactivated 455th SMW, and was selected as the first wing in the Air Force to be upgraded to the triple-warhead Minuteman III.



Aerial view of Minot AFB, including the location of the Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) UHF transmitter beacon. TACAN is an air navigation system that provides an aircrew with the distance (slant-range) of the aircraft, and direction of flight (degrees-of-bearing) to the geographic location of the surface beacon.

At the same time, the 5th Bombardment Wing-Heavy took control of the assets and personnel of the inactivated 450th BW, and in support of American forces in Southeast Asia sent B-52 crews for conventional bombing missions under operation *Arc Light*, and tanker squadrons under operation *Young Tiger*. Minot AFB grew to be one of the largest dual-wing SAC airbases, covering over 5,000 acres of land; with the Minuteman complex distributed over 8500 square miles in the eight counties surrounding the base. There were 5,742 officers and enlisted personnel working at the base with another 468 at the radar sites, making Minot one of the largest of the forty-nine Strategic Air Command bases in the world.

The importance of the base cannot be overemphasized. It fielded a full arsenal of weapons for nuclear deterrence, including 150 Minuteman ICBMs in underground silos; 15 B-52H Stratofortress nuclear bombers, also capable of air-to-ground missile launch systems; 15 KC-135 Stratotanker refueling tankers; Huey rescue helicopters; and the 5th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron of twenty F-106 Delta Darts. Conductors on Amtrak often told their rail passengers as they stopped at the station in Minot that if North Dakota withdrew from the United States the state would have the third-largest stock of nuclear weapons in the world, behind only the United States and the Soviet Union.

5th Bombardment Wing-Heavy



“Guardians of the Upper Realms”

The 5th Bombardment Wing (5th BMW) at Minot AFB consisted of the 23rd Bomb Squadron flying the B-52H Stratofortress, and the 906th Air Refueling Squadron flying the KC-135 Stratotanker. Its primary mission was to train in global strategic bombardment and defensive warfare in accordance with the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) and specified by the SAC Emergency War Order (EWO).^[28] At all times there were B-52 crews poised on alert status that could be airborne within 10 minutes on their way to targets in the Soviet Union.

²⁸ The Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) specifies how American nuclear weapons will be used in the event of nuclear war. The first plan was developed in 1960 consisting of a National Strategic Target List and the assets to be used. This was revised to become SIOP-62—a massive strike with the entire U.S. arsenal of 3,200 warheads against the USSR, China, and Soviet-aligned states. A revision in 1963 by the Kennedy administration resulted in SIOP-63—a strong counterforce strategy with a number of options in which the “no first use” policy became implicit. See, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 130: [The Creation of SIOP-62](#).



A B-52H from the 23rd Bomb Squadron on the flight line at Minot AFB.

Rotating crews would routinely spend seven days confined in the alert facility, prepared to swiftly respond to Operation Readiness Inspections (ORI), simulating actual combat missions as though we had gone to war. They would also regularly fly airborne alert flights in which the combat-ready bombers would remain on station orbiting the North Pole, poised to go to predetermined targets in the Soviet Union. When not on alert status they routinely flew 10-hour Combat Crew training missions, involving airborne refueling, navigational legs that included simulated bombing runs, low-level flying, and overall crew proficiency exercises to maintain ratings.

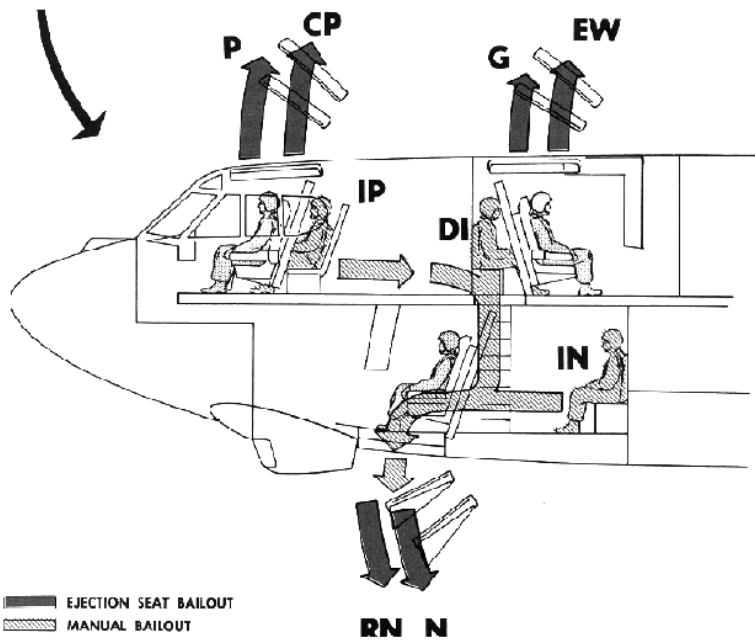


Illustration of the positions of the six B-52 crewmembers: pilot, Copilot, gunner, electronic warfare officer, radar navigator and navigator, and temporary positions for the Instructor Pilot (IP); Defense Instructor (DI); and Instructor Navigator (IN).



A B-52 pilot and co-pilot prepare for departure (Minot AFB).

When a B-52 crewmember first arrived at Minot, they were initially placed with a non-ready crew (N-crew) that trained together under the supervision of instructors at the base. Once proficient and ready for a check ride, certified instructors administering the Standardization and Evaluation

Board (STANEVAL, or STANBOARD) program evaluated the crewmember. Following the evaluation, the crewmember would brief the mission to the wing commander, and subsequently be certified a combat-ready E-crew to begin flying training missions. As proficiency advanced, individual crewmembers would receive promotions to a higher-level crew. Above E-crews were R-crews, and the top of the hierarchy were designated S-crews, who were rated to be instructors and administer STANEVAL protocols. The system reflected the legendary SAC Commander General Curtis LeMay's style, which had the best crews setting the highest standards, while providing plenty of training and flying time for other crews to reach those standards.



By the late 1960s, the Air Force was undergoing a change in regime and overall reorganization. Many of the officers and pilots who had enlisted during World War II and the Korean War were approaching retirement, and a new generation was taking their place. At the time of the 24 October 1968 UFO events, the B-52 crewmembers in this report were certified as an S-crew. As one of the top crews at Minot AFB, they did less of the day-to-day training missions, while spending more time instructing and evaluating other crews. In fact, an additional pilot, Maj.

Partin, was onboard during this mission being evaluated by the Aircraft Commander Captain Don Cagle. At the time, Cagle was the youngest STANEVAL Instructor Pilot to achieve this position in SAC. In his words:

Ours was one of the first new-generation STANEVAL crews. Those guys were so good, and I was fortunate enough to put those guys together, and we kind of blazed a trail and left a pretty good wake that I'm rather proud of.^[29]

91st Strategic Missile Wing



“Rough Riders”

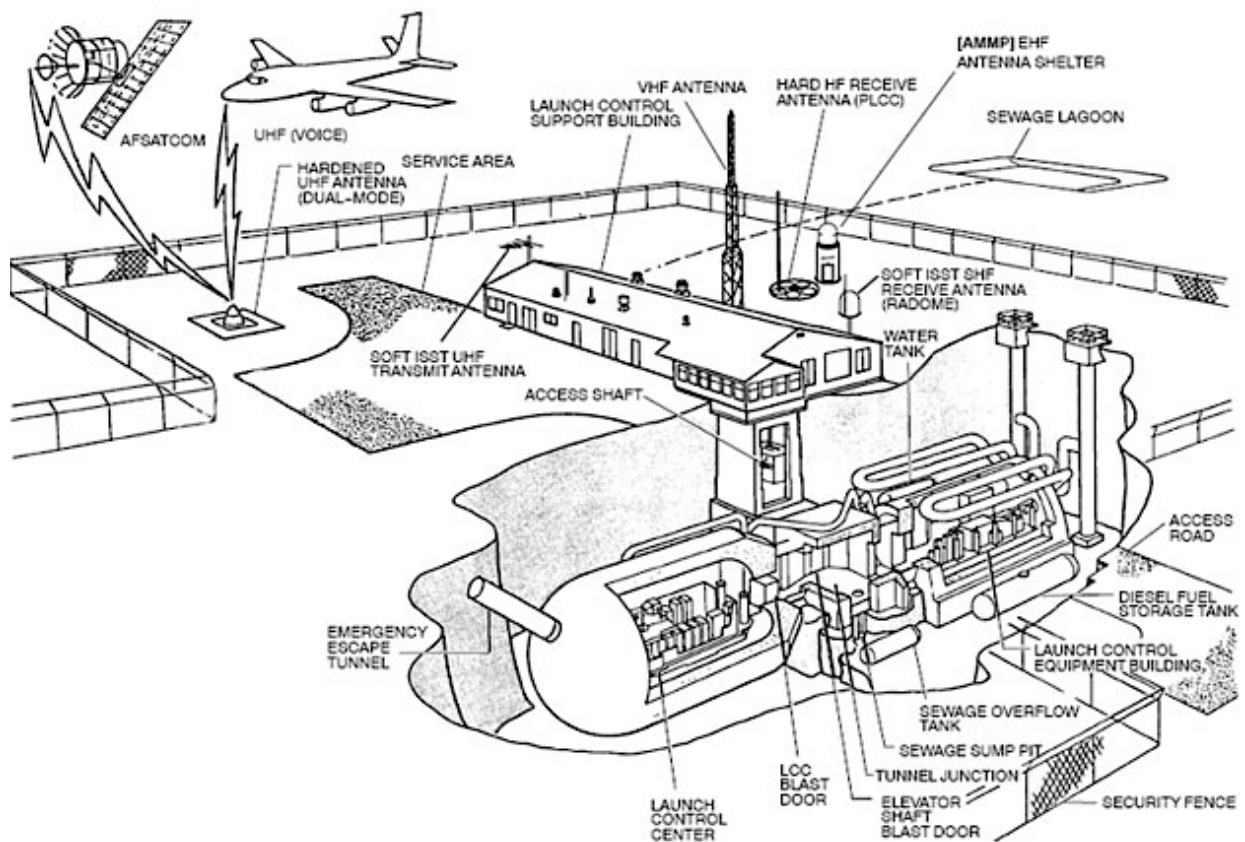
The second wing assigned to Minot AFB was the 91st Strategic Missile Wing (SMW). Its primary mission was to develop and maintain the operational capability to conduct strategic warfare according to the SAC Emergency War Order (EWO). The 91st SMW were responsible for 150 LGM-30B Minuteman-1 ICBMs dispersed over an area of 8,500 square miles surrounding Minot.

The wing was comprised of the 740th, 741st, and 742nd Strategic Missile Squadrons. Each squadron consisted of five Flights, responsible for 50 missiles dispersed over a wide area to prevent any attack from destroying more than a handful. Each Flight consisted of a centralized Launch Control Facility (LCF) and underground Launch Control Center (LCC), with primary control and

²⁹ Cagle, Don 2001. Transcript of interview by James Klotz, 18 March (Sign Oral History Project), 18.

responsibility for 10 missiles housed in hardened underground silos at remote Launch Facilities (LF).

Since the missile Launch Facilities were unmanned, two Missile Combat Crew Commanders (capsule crew) stationed for 24-hour tours of duty in the underground Launch Control Center (capsule) constantly monitored missile status and security. For purposes of secure command and control communications, hardened underground cables linked the Launch Control Centers to the Launch Facilities, and ultimately to the Wing Command Post at Minot AFB.



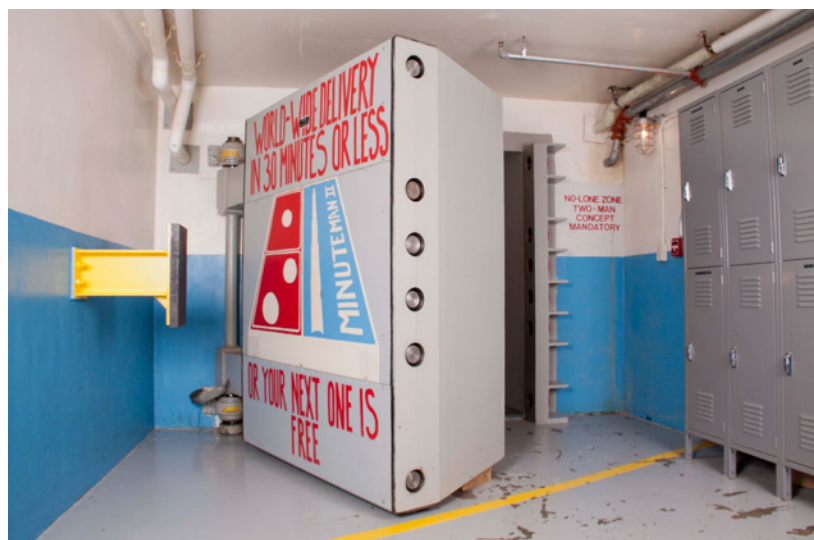
Typical aboveground Launch Control Facility (Support Building), and underground, hardened Launch Control Center. In the late sixties, SAC initiated the Airborne Launch Control System in which airborne ALCS-equipped EC-135 aircraft could transmit launch codes to the ground-based missiles in the event that the LCC was rendered inoperable due to a direct nuclear attack.



Two Missile Combat Crew Commanders stationed in front of their communications consoles in the underground Launch Control Center. Upon receiving a coded Emergency War Order, the crew would verify the launch instructions and then set the required war plan and launcher selector switches. Next, the officers would insert keys into the launch switches, separately located at opposite ends of the LCC, and simultaneously turn the keys to initiate the automatic launch sequence. Sixty seconds later the missiles roared out of the underground silos, and in thirty minutes they would reach their targets ([Library of Congress](#)).

The Launch Control Center's massive steel and concrete blast door, which seals the capsule crew into the underground Launch Control Center (capsule). Spherical panoramic photos of various Launch Facilities at Ellsworth AFB, SD, are available from:

[Minuteman Missile National Historic Site.](#)



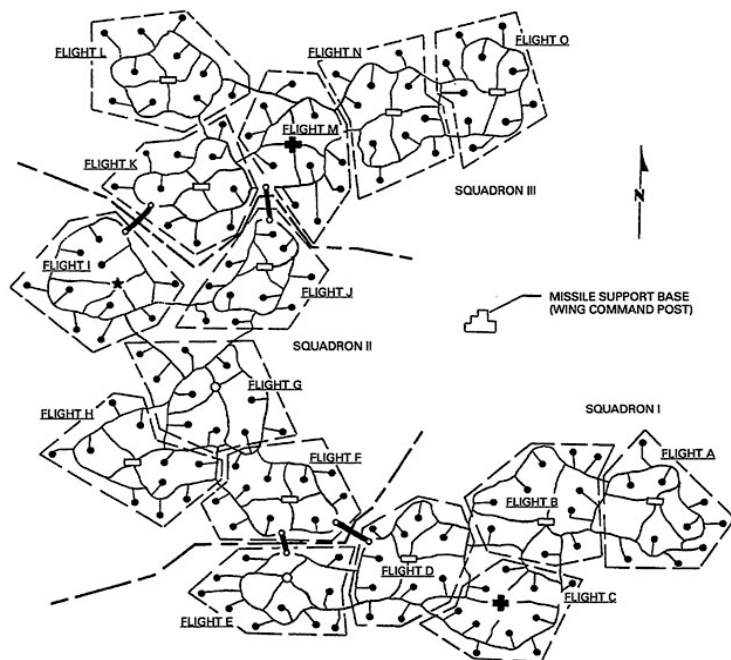


Illustration of the Hardened Intersite Cable System at Minot AFB. The system provided secure command and control communications for the 740th, 741st, and 742nd Strategic Missile Squadrons, consisting of 15 underground Launch Control Centers and 150 remote Launch Facilities. Three Squadron Command Post (SCP) LCCs, serve as command units for their respective squadron within the wing, and report directly to the Wing Command Post. One SCP serves as the Alternate Command Post (ACP) for the Wing Command Post. The other 12 LCCs are designated as primary LCCs. The four primary LCCs within each squadron report to their respective command post (SCP).

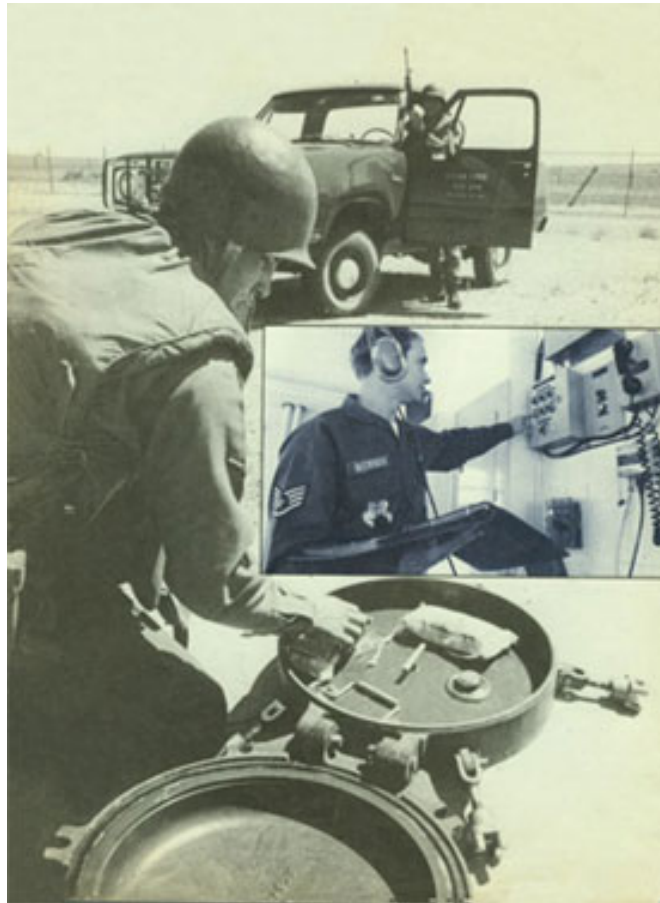
- ★ ALTERNATE COMMAND POST (1 PER WING)
- ⊕ SQUADRON COMMAND POST (2 PER WING)
- PRIMARY RELAY (2 PER WING)
- PRIMARY LCC (10 PER WING)
- LAUNCH FACILITY
- CIRCUIT RUNS
- ⚡ INTERSQUADRON CONNECTION

Above ground, the Launch Control Facility (LCF) was constantly manned by a minimum of six security personnel, who were responsible for the security requirements of the Missile Combat Crew Commanders who remain locked in the underground capsule for 24-hour tours of duty. The security personnel were divided into two teams of three people each, consisting of a Flight Security Controller (FSC) and two Security Alert Team (SAT) members. Each team operated in 12-hour shifts over a three-day period. There was also a facilities manager and cook at each facility totaling eight personnel at all times.





Personnel arrive by Huey helicopter during a change of shift at a Launch Control Facility (*Library of Congress*).



The Flight Security Controller supervised the LCF, providing flight-area security status and entry control into Launch Facilities with the assistance of the Security Alert Team (SAT), who could quickly respond to the security requirements in the field. Additionally, Camper Teams consisting of a SAT team in a camping vehicle with enough food to last the duration of their stay would be posted at Launch Facilities whenever the missile and nuclear warhead were exposed during work, or the security systems were malfunctioning.

Security Alert Team at a LF inspect the access hatch to a vault containing controls for opening the Personnel Access Hatch; and (inset) a Flight Security Controller monitoring missile-flight security status from the LCF (F.E. Warren, AFB, 1978).



At the time of the 24 October 1968 UFO events, a Camper Team was posted at Oscar-6 providing security for a Target Alignment Team working underground in the silo. In addition, teams from the 862nd Missile Maintenance Squadron (MIMS) would systematically visit the missile sites to perform routine maintenance and repairs in the Launch Support Building, coordinating site access with the FSC. Exacting procedures were required in order to enter the Launch Facilities, including the SAC two-man Nuclear Safety Policy, keys, and coded identification procedures.^[30]

A typical camper vehicle used by alert teams to provide security whenever work was being performed in the missile silos and the warhead exposed, or alarm systems malfunctioned at an LF and could not be reset (*Library of Congress*).

Airborne Launch Control System (ALCS)

By the late 1960s, the accuracy of ICBMs on both sides had improved tremendously, and Air Force planners worried that it might be possible for the Soviets to stop an entire squadron of missiles by destroying just the Launch Control Centers. The requirement for a back-up method of launching the underground Minuteman missiles became crucial. In response, the Post Attack Command and Control System (PACCS), and the Airborne Launch Control System were established, consisting of five alert EC-135 aircraft that could serve as a SAC Airborne Command Post should ground-based facilities and command centers become inoperable.

Strategic Air Command began the mission on February 3, 1961. One of the five assumed the codename “Looking Glass” because the mission mirrored ground-based command, control, and communications. From that date, a Looking Glass aircraft was continuously airborne out of Offutt AFB, Nebraska.

³⁰ A description of the assignments for each of the Air Force personnel at a Minuteman LCF and LCC at: [The Missile Plains: Frontline of America's Cold War](http://www.nonplused.org/panos/minuteman/index.html), Section II, Chapter 5: Missileer Culture: Day-to-Day Life (1960s-91). Spherical panoramic images of Minuteman launch facilities at Ellsworth AFB, SD, from: <http://nonplused.org/panos/minuteman/index.html>.

The other four EC-135 aircraft were parked at the end of the runways at Ellsworth AFB, SD, and Minot AFB ready to takeoff with less than 10 minutes warning. When warned, the four alert ALCS aircraft flew to orbits near the Minuteman bases they were responsible for assisting. If the



“Go Code” had ever been received, the airborne launch control officers on each aircraft would begin polling the underground LCCs to see if they were still functioning. If the underground crews did not respond, the ALCS officers could launch all of the Minuteman missiles by directly transmitting commands via UHF radio.



The airborne Looking Glass battle staff, commanded by a SAC general officer, monitors several communications systems and maintains contact with the SAC/HQ underground, alternate command posts, the National Military Command Center, and SAC alert forces. Looking Glass guaranteed that U.S. strategic forces would act only in the precise manner dictated by the President (*2nd Airborne Command & Control Squadron*).

The end of the Cold War...

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, world conditions eased to the extent that the Strategic Air Command ended its Looking Glass operations after 29 years of continuous airborne alert. More than 281,000 hours were flown without an accident or any requirement for action. The quiet cessation of this mission seemed to speak volumes for the prospects of peace. The Cold War as we knew it in the 20th century was over.

The many years researching this case have presented an opportunity to appreciate the significant accomplishments of the Strategic Air Command and the dedication of the service personnel who ultimately prevailed in the Cold War. With a nuclear striking power that exceeded the powers of every nation combined, no other military organization in all of history has possessed such awesome power, and it reflects well upon the United States that such supremacy was used to deter war.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has noted in “[Origins of the Cold War](#)” (1967),

The orthodox American view, as originally set forth by the American government and as reaffirmed until recently by most American scholars, has been that the Cold War was the brave and essential response of free men to communist aggression.

However, he asserts that this view is simplistic and quite inadequate to an understanding of the Cold War, concluding,

Each side believed with passion that future international stability depended on its own conception of world order. Each side, in pursuing its own clearly indicated and deeply cherished principles, was only confirming the fear of the other that it was bent on aggression... Each side felt compelled to adopt policies which the other could not but regard as a threat to the principles of the peace. Each then felt compelled to undertake defensive measures... So the machinery of suspicion and countersuspicion, action and counter-action, was set in motion.^[31]

³¹ Original article: [Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., “Origins of the Cold War.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 1, October 1967, 22-52.](#)

No matter what personal opinions one has on the Cold War, nuclear weapons policies, and the actions of the United States and the Soviet Union, all must recognize that the Cold War's lasting social, economic, political, and cultural legacy is a significant part of the nation's history, which demands to be better appreciated and understood.

Additional Resources

- In 1999, Congress established the [Minuteman Missile National Historic Site](#) at Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota, to "preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the structures associated with the Minuteman ICBM missile defense system." National Park Service staff provide tours of an intact Minuteman Launch Control Facility, and Launch Facility.
- A special Historical Resource Study was prepared by the National Parks Service to provide history and context for the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. See: Jeffrey A. Engler (Mead & Hunt Inc.), [The Missile Plains: Frontline of America's Cold War](#), Prepared for United States Department of the Interior, NPS, 2003.
- Panoramic photographs of Minuteman Launch Facilities. Bruce Ecker has produced spherical panoramic images depicting some of the major features of the Delta-01 LCF, and Delta-09 LF facilities at Ellsworth AFB, including several sections of the missile silo and launch support buildings not normally accessible. Available from the [Minuteman Missile National Historic Site](#).
- [The National Security Archive](#) is an independent non-governmental research institute and library located at The George Washington University. For students of the field, The Nuclear Vault is an excellent source of information on the history and role of nuclear weapons in U.S. policy, including reading lists, bibliographic information, links to key documents, and significant contributions in the form of Electronic Briefing Books. Available online from: [The Nuclear Vault: Resources from the National Security Archive's Nuclear Documentation Project](#). Three short films produced by the USAF in response to growing public concerns about safety and U.S. control of nuclear weapons are available from The Nuclear Vault at: [The Air Force versus Hollywood](#).

A Narrative of UFO Events at Minot AFB on 24 October 1968

Thomas Tulien

Sign Oral History Project

www.minotb52ufo.com



Minot AFB, North Dakota, circa 1973

1. Ground-visual UFO Observations (2:15-3:44)^[32]

The initial observation of an unidentified flying object was reported by a Camper Team, comprising Airman First Class (A1C) R. McDowell, and A1C W. Johnson. A camper team is a two-man security detachment in a camper truck, that can be posted on the remote missile Launch Facilities (LF) for extended periods to provide security during equipment failure, often, when alarm systems fail to reset, and whenever a nuclear warhead is exposed during maintenance and targeting procedures. In this instance, it appears McDowell and Johnson were stationed at the missile Launch Facility designated Oscar-6, providing aboveground security for a Target Alignment Team working on the Minuteman ICBM in the underground silo.^[33]

At 2:15 a.m., the camper team radioed Oscar-Flight Security Controller (FSC), Staff Sergeant (SSgt.) William Smith Jr., at the O-1 Launch Control Facility (LCF), to report the presence of a strange light near their post. In an August 2001 interview, Smith recalled the Camper Team observed “a large glowing object go down by some trees not far away,” and



that members of the Target Alignment Team also observed the strange light.^[34] Shortly afterwards, at 2:30, Smith observed the glowing object himself in the vicinity of O-6. In his Air Force Form 117 (AF-117), Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire, he stated:

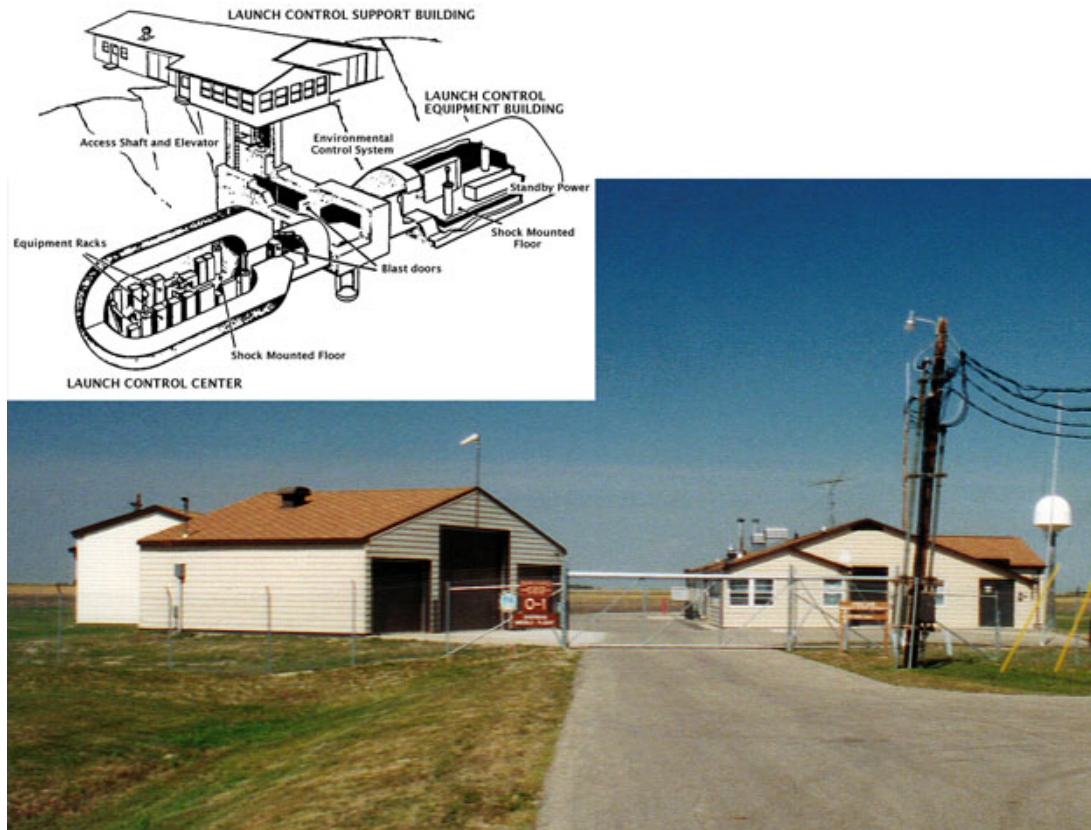
I was notified it had been seen in an adjacent area. I alerted my [sentries]. The object was first seen in the southern part of my area by a posted sentry. I directed

³² The UFO observation reporting began at 2:15 until 5:34 a.m. (CDT), for a total period of 3 hours and 19 minutes. Daylight Saving Time ended on Sunday, 27 October. “3:44” is the corrected time (for the documented 3:34) based on our reconstruction of the B-52 flight track. See: [Discrepancies and Omissions in the Transcription of Recorded Conversations, 24 October 1968](#).

³³ Information and procedures regarding the targeting and alignment of Minuteman ICBMs available from the Association of Air Force Missileers: [Part 1](#) (Dec. 2006); [Part 2](#) (Mar 2007); and [Part 3](#) (June 2007).

³⁴ [Smith, 2001b, 14-16](#). In addition: [Smith, William, Jr., 2001a. Transcript of telephone interview with Jim Klotz, 11 July \(Sign Oral History Project\), 6-7](#); and [2001a, 10-11](#). Regarding the Camper Teams: [2001b, 8](#).

my gaze south of my position and saw the object about fifteen minutes after my sentry sighted it.^[35]



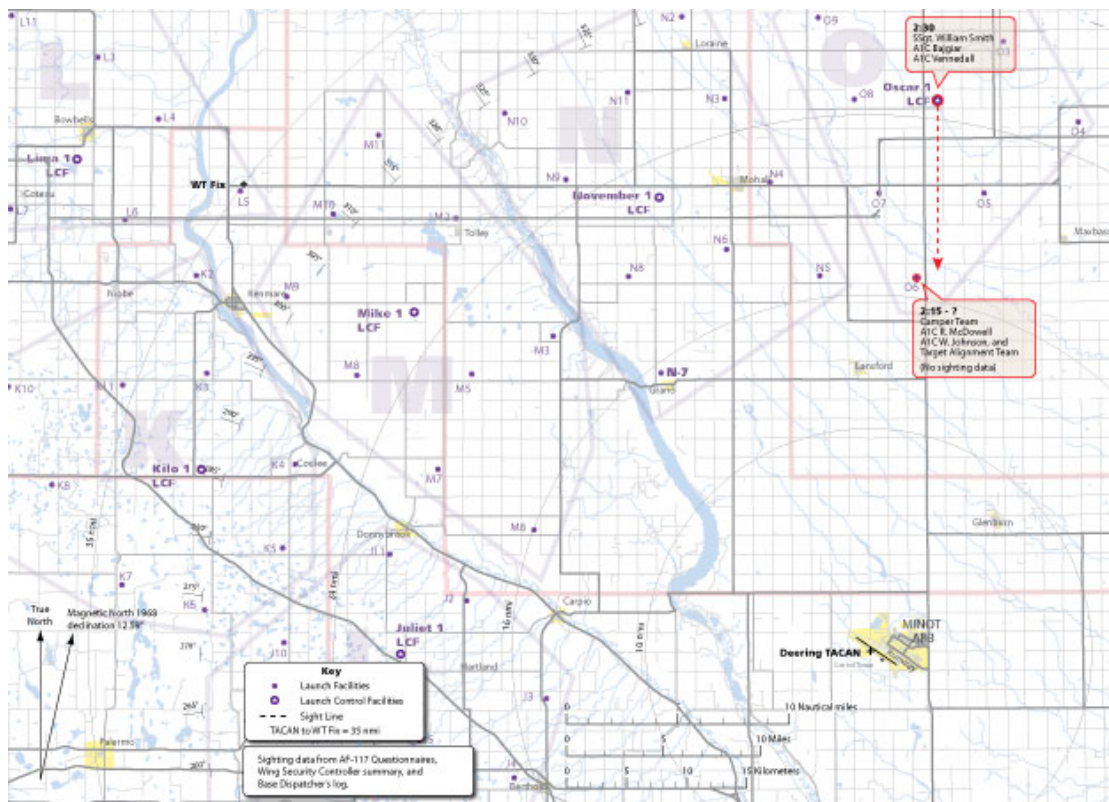
Oscar-1 Launch Control Facility (LCF) located 28 miles north of Minot AFB, looking north; and (inset) the underground Launch Control Center. Two Missile Combat Crew Commanders (capsule crew) are stationed underground in the LCC, and constantly monitor missile launch status and security for 10 missiles. Aboveground, the LCF is manned by a minimum of six security personnel responsible for the security requirements of the capsule crew who are locked in the capsule for 24-hour tours of duty. The personnel are divided into two teams of three people each, consisting of a Flight Security Controller (FSC) and two Security Alert Team (SAT) members who operate in 12-hour shifts over a three-day period.

Smith reported his observation to TSgt Bowles at the 91st Strategic Missile Wing, Security Control, at Minot AFB.^[36] Apprehensive about the unknown object so close to the exposed nuclear warhead, he recalls the Captain in charge of the targeting team informed the Missile Combat Crew Commander in the underground Oscar-Launch Control Center, to the effect, “we can do this

³⁵ [Smith, William Jr., Air Force Form 117 \(AF-117\), Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire, 26 October 1968](#), 1, 5. Smith estimated the distance to the object at 10 miles implying it was 1-2 miles southeast of O-6 (7).

³⁶ [Smith, AF-117](#), 8. The 91st Strategic Missile Wing, Command Post (Missile Support Base), provides logistics support and control communications for the 740th, 741st and 742nd Strategic Missile Squadrons at Minot AFB.

another time, it's just not worth us being out here," and they closed the missile silo, secured the site and returned to base.^[37]



Locations of the initial observations of “a large glowing object” by the camper team at O-6, and security team at the Oscar-1 Launch Control Facility, 9 miles to the north. Project Blue Book investigators did not interview the camper and targeting team personnel during the subsequent investigation. [Click for enlargement].

For weeks prior to these events, SSgt. Smith had been observing inexplicable lights traveling across the sky that would reverse direction.

SMITH: Most of what we saw were just back and forth patterns. They weren't going very high.... We were looking south so they were moving east-west, west-east. They would stop, and they might go up a little bit and go slower, and we're saying “a helicopter might do that, but—” We did call and make the reports as we were

³⁷ [Smith, 2001b, 14-16](#). And: [Smith, 2001a, 10-11](#). Nov-FSC SSgt. Bond was also informed of the UFO incident at O-6 by his MCCC. “They told me, well, believe it or not, there’s a maintenance crew over there that’s really scared out of their gourds because this thing is right in the area where they are, and they’re trying to do a reprogram on one of the birds that’s in one of the holes over there and I thought that a little strange (2005, 15). Unfortunately, the camper team and targeting and alignment team at O-6 were not interviewed during the subsequent investigation and did not complete an AF-117.

supposed to of anything that you cannot explain, but nothing was done. So, I talked to the capsule crew again, and said “sir, we're just not happy with what we're seeing.” We had reported this before and they said, “Well, just keep them under observation.”



Oscar-6 Launch Facility looking south-southwest. O-6 is located 19 miles north of Minot AFB, just west of Highway 83. According to Smith, the camper team was providing aboveground security for the targeting team working in the missile silo, when they observed a large glowing object go down behind some trees not far away. Concerned about an unidentified glowing object near the exposed nuclear weapon they secured the site and returned to base. [Click for images].

Smith recalls that a few days before the events of 24 October there was a noticeable increase in the activity. Asked to explain what he was observing, he recalled:

SMITH: Seeing a white light, and on clear nights you could see it almost change colors. When I say colors, we're talking a reddish-dark light, almost like a light bulb in the distance that would have a somewhat reddish hue to it. You could even see it change a little bit, almost like an aircraft a long distance away that would have red and green lights, and would revolve—not bright white, dull reddish white. But the lights themselves were doing different things, I mean, we talk about one light

but we saw several on occasion, and they were just not doing things we thought aircraft should be doing this time of the morning.^[38]

During the same time as the observations near O-6, Airman First Class Robert O'Connor, and A1C Lloyd Isley of the 91st Minuteman Maintenance Squadron were driving to the November-7 Launch Facility [located 15 miles W-SW of Oscar-6] to perform routine missile maintenance. Five miles north of N-7, their attention was drawn to a luminous object hovering near the horizon in the east. When it first observed at 2:30 a.m., O'Connor reported "It appeared to be between two farmer yard lights, which were a little smaller, then the object grew brighter moving S.E."^[39] In a February 2005 interview, he explained that as they continued down the gravel road the object rose up and began to pace their movements:

O'CONNOR: We were going down the dirt road and then I glanced out [turns to his left] the truck window and noticed that some farmer had left his yard light on.

INTERVIEWER: There were farms along there?

O'CONNOR: I don't know because at nighttime it's so hard

to see. You can't tell if there is a building. It was dark—it gets dark out there when it is cloudy. We started down that road and I noticed that farmer's yard light, and then—I don't know what made me glance over at it again—then I saw it raise up and start paralleling our truck going down the road. . . . It was almost on the ground, probably at normal height, which would have been 30-40 feet something like that.



³⁸ [Smith 2001b, 10-12](#), 22. He had also been receiving reports of strange lights at O-2, near the Canadian border: "Some of our Camper Crews, and some officers had told us that they had seen lights up at Oscar-2. A lot." And, [Smith 2001a, 11-12](#).

³⁹ [O'Connor, AF 117](#), 1, 7. In this instance, S.E. refers to the ordinal direction in relation to their position, and not the direction the object was traveling. O'Connor was an electrician and Field Maintenance Team chief, while Isley was a heating and air conditioning technician responsible for environmental control systems.

It was illuminating the ground. After it picked up and started following us down the road, I noticed that the farmer's light wasn't there [any] more.^[40]



Looking east from the location of O'Connor and Isley's initial UFO observation at 2:30 a.m. The O-6 Launch Facility is due east about 13 miles distant, and November-7 is 5 miles to the right. *[Click for more views].*

A1C Lloyd Isley also recalled that the unidentified object appeared to follow them down the road to N-7:

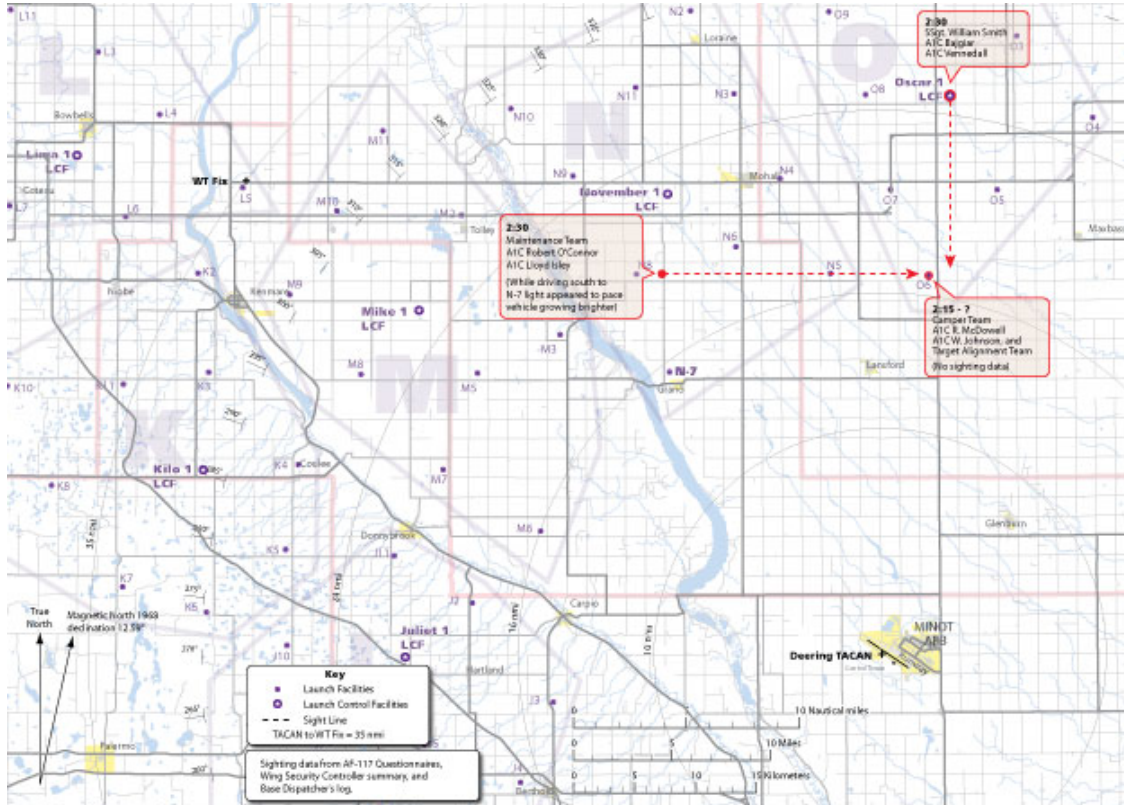
ISLEY: It would've been up above the horizon line, now whether we could see—it was hard at all times to determine how far away, for whatever reasons, there wasn't ever a good fix in my mind as to how far this thing was from us. It just seemed to stay with us, and at times, at that time seemed pretty close to us, close enough that it would have been following us and nothing else, you know.



⁴⁰ [O'Connor, Robert M., 2005. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tulien, 23 February \(Sign Oral History Project\), 6-7.](#)

INTERVIEWER: What gave you the impression it was following you?

ISLEY: Well, it wasn't really behind, it was off to the side of us and it just seemed to be staying at the same speed we were.^[41]



At 2:30 a.m., SSgt. Smith observed the object at the same time as the maintenance team's observation on the road 5 miles north of N-7. It appears they were observing the same object: Isley and O'Connor's observation was near the horizon to the east, in a direct line with O-6 about 13 miles distant; at which time Smith reported the UFO south of O-1, about 10 miles at 15 degrees elevation, also in the direction of O-6. A simple triangulation illustrates the UFO in the immediate vicinity of O-6, as reported to Smith by the Camper Team.^[42]

O'Connor noted in his AF-117 that the "object seemed to be observing us. When we stopped the object seemed [to] hover or stop when we turned out our headlights."^[43] Growing uneasy with a strange light following them, they radioed the base Transportation Control Center to inquire whether there were any aircraft operating in the area, but were informed there were no helicopters or other aircraft out at this hour of the morning.^[44] Since the object did not appear like aircraft

⁴¹ [Isley, 2001, 7-8.](#)

⁴² [Smith, AF-117, 1, 7;](#) [Isley, AF-117, 1;](#) and [O'Connor, AF-117, 1.](#)

⁴³ [O'Connor, AF-117, 3;](#) and [O'Connor, 2005, 6-7.](#) This is also suggestive of a *parallax effect*: the apparent shift of an object against a background due to a change in observer position.

⁴⁴ [Isley, 2001, 6-8.;](#) and [O'Connor, 2005, 7.](#)

routinely observed around the base, they were uneasy regarding its intentions, particularly because they were unarmed. “I remember Isley getting in the back of the truck and grabbing an axe, just in case there were some little green men or something,” O’Connor recalled. “I didn’t know what was going on but I was totally concerned.”^[45]

When Isley and O’Connor arrived at N-7 they parked outside the front gate and continued observing the object from outside the truck. In his AF-117, Isley noted it remained circling about 2 miles south of the Launch Facility, and “came within hearing distance twice.”

We first saw the object to the east of us while we were traveling toward the site. It started moving south. We arrived at the site then started observing the object from outside the truck. It was moving in a large circular area to the south of us. ^[46]

Isley initially reported the object high above the horizon at 50 degrees: “The object had lights on the front like headlights or landing lights. It had a green flashing light toward the middle or rear.” Unable to determine the precise size or shape, he nevertheless compared its size to a KC-135 Stratotanker “by the lights on the object.” ^[47]

Likewise, O’Connor reported that:

The object appeared self-luminous like a big ball of white-light that seemed to change to a dim green light then later to a dim amber color. The object seemed to take on the appearance of a stingray fish. . . . I was unable to make out a definite shape because the object put out such a bright light. ^[48]

Asked to describe the object he recalled:

⁴⁵ [O’Connor, 2005, 11](#). In addition, ISLEY: “We were both pretty much wide-eyed and a little bit, you know, a little bit frightened by being out in the middle of nowhere like that” ([2001, 6](#)).

⁴⁶ [Isley, AFR-117, 7, 9](#). Also: [Isley, 2001, 8-9](#). Isley notes the sighting time as 12:30 until 4:30 a.m., and the length of time in sight as “3 1/2 to 4 hours” based on “the length of time we were on N-7” (1, 3). His recall is inaccurate by 2 hours. For a discussion of this see: [Isley, 2001, 10-11](#).

⁴⁷ [Isley, AF-117, 1, 4, 6](#). Also: [Isley, 2001, 9, 13, 17-18](#). The KC-135 Stratotanker is an air-to-air refueling tanker similar in appearance to a Boeing 707.

⁴⁸ [O’Connor, AF-117, 4, 6](#). Also: [O’Connor, 2005, 8-9](#).

O'CONNOR: I couldn't really see a shape other than the light and that it was glowing... You would almost think it was an aircraft but it wasn't [laughs]. It was hovering above the ground and you could not hear [anything] so I knew it wasn't a helicopter.

INTERVIEWER: How far away was it?

O'CONNOR: I would say 300-400 yards—it was quite close. I could not compare it to anything other than I knew it was probably as big as a B-52—in that size range.^[49]



November-7 Launch Facility looking southeast from the front gate, and (inset) illustration of the Minuteman missile in the underground silo. O'Connor and Isley parked outside the gate and continued to observe the bright UFO circling to the south. Shortly after 3:00, O'Connor entered the facility and went down into the Launch Support Building to report to Flight Security Controller, SSgt. James Bond, at the November Launch Control Facility, 10 miles to the north. An aerial view of November Flight (zoom-in to view N-7) is available from [Wikimapia](#).

In response, Transportation Control routed the maintenance teams call to the Base Operations Dispatcher, who further verified there were no aircraft in the area. The dispatcher then notified the Minot AFB, Control Tower operator, and controllers at Radar Approach Control (RAPCON) establishing a phone patch, and open-line of communications with the remote observers at N-7. He

⁴⁹ [O'Connor, 2005, 7-8](#). 400 yards is about a quarter mile. In his [AF-117](#), he estimated the distance to the phenomenon as “1/2 to 6 miles,” and noted: “The noise I heard was similar to that of a jet engine only more steady and at a lower pitch” (7).

instructed O'Connor to continue describing what he was observing, and over the next two hours the dispatcher kept a written log noting the time and circumstances. His first entry, at 0800Z (3:00 a.m. CDT), describes the

Object S/E of N-7 moving toward site with brilliant light like the sun. Lights flashing on and off. It's too brilliant and big for an aircraft now moving south and hovered over N-7, turned green, amber off than on. [50]

27. INFORMATION WHICH YOU FEEL IS PERTINENT BUT WHICH IS NOT ADEQUATELY COVERED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, ALTERNATIVELY PROVIDE A NARRATIVE EXPLANATION OF THE SIGHTING.

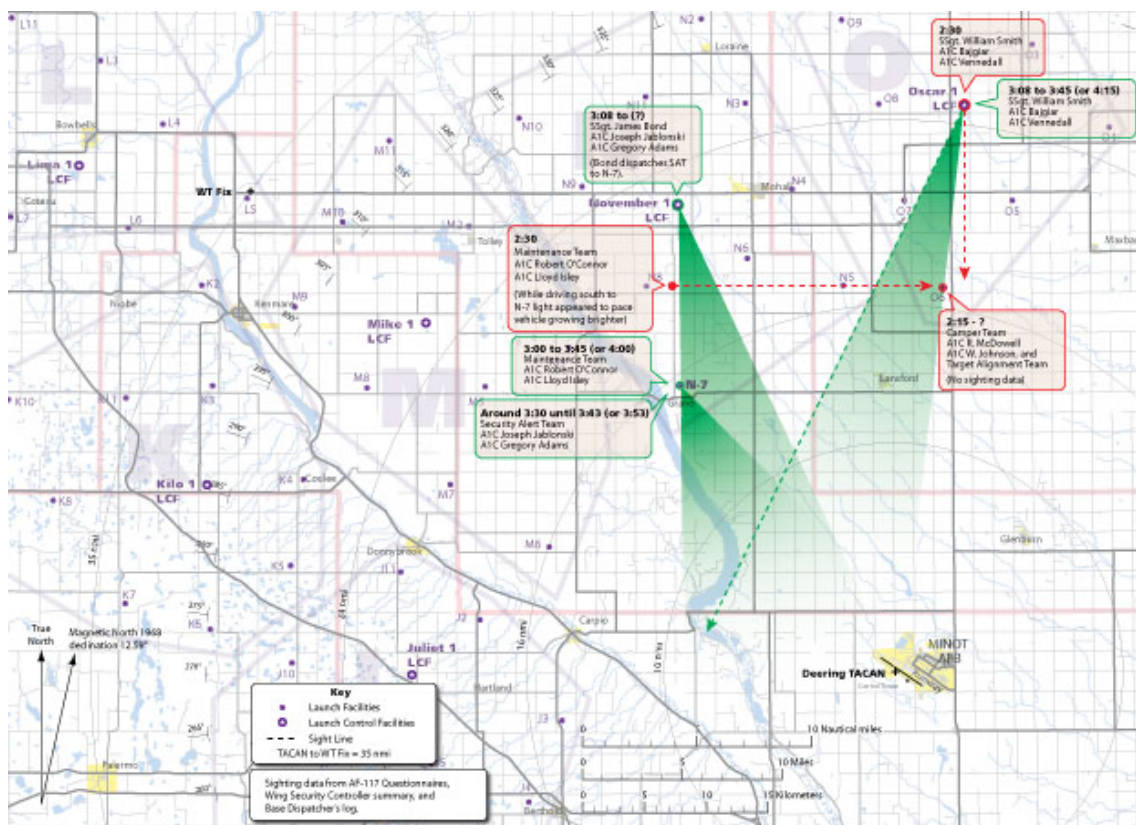
We first saw the object to the east of us while we were traveling toward the site. IT STARTED MOVING SOUTH. WE ARRIVED AT THE SITE & THEN STARTED OBSERVING THE OBJECT FROM OUTSIDE THE TRUCK. IT WAS MOVING IN A LARGE CIRCULAR AREA TO THE SOUTH OF US. IT CAME WITHIN HEARING DISTANCE TWICE. THE SOUND WAS THAT OF JET ENGINES. IT WAS IN THIS SAME AREA FOR TWO OR THREE HOURS. WHEN WE LAST SAW IT, THE OBJECT WAS IN THE SOUTH EAST AND WENT LOW AND OUT OF SIGHT.

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Isley's drawing from his Air Force Form 117.

⁵⁰ [Base Operations Dispatcher's log](#), 24 Oct 1968, 0800. Object S/E of N-7, 0800.

After observing the object for a while, O'Connor unlocked the gate and hurried down into the Launch Support Building adjacent to the silo, to phone in their arrival. According to procedure, he authenticated identification and assigned entry codes with Flight Security Controller, SSgt. James Bond, at the November-Launch Control Facility. Bond, along with his Security Alert Team of A1C Joseph Jablonski, and A1C Gregory Adams, received O'Connor's report shortly after 3:00 a.m.^[51]



At 2:15, the Camper Team reported a glowing object near O-6 to SSgt. Smith at O-1. At 2:30, Smith observed the UFO in the south, at the same time the maintenance team of O'Connor and Isley reported a UFO in the east. While driving south to N-7, the UFO appeared to pace them while growing brighter. By the time they arrived at N-7, the “big ball of white light” was “moving in a large circular area to the south.” They reported the observation to SSgt. Bond at N-1, who reported an observation at 3:08. It appears the UFO traversed roughly 15 miles from O-6 to a position a few miles southeast of N-7 where it remained for the next hour.

In a February 2005 interview, Jablonski recalls O'Connor's hysteric-sounding voice over the radio and imagined O'Connor was describing the object hovering directly over them at N-7. Going outside for a better view, he and Adams could see the security lights of N-7 to the south, and a bright light above it, about 35 degrees above the horizon “alternating all kinds of pretty colors.”^[52]

⁵¹ O'Connor, 2005, 7, 10-11; and, O'Connor, AF-117, 8. In addition: Isley, 2001, 8-9; and, Isley, AF-117, 8.

⁵² Jablonski, Joseph, 2005. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tulien, 22 February (Sign Oral History Project), 9-10.

And: Jablonski, Joseph P., Air Force Form 117 (AF-117), Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire, 25 October 1968,

At 3:08, Bond reported the maintenance team's observation to SSgts. Underhill and Neal at missile Wing Security Control.^[24] The Wing Security controller then alerted adjacent Flight Security Controllers, and the 91st Strategic Missile Wing, Command Post.^[53] The controller also summarized events in a document later provided to Blue Book investigators. According to his first entry:

At 3:08 hours the initial report was received from a maintenance team en route from N-8 to N-7. An A1C O'Connor was the maintenance Team Chief and he stated that all members of the team observed the lighted object. They further stated that it was reddish orange in color, a very large object, with flashing green and white lights. After they entered N-7 the object came directly overhead with the sound of jet engines.^[54]

The idea that the object "came directly overhead" appears to result from O'Connor's initial excitement, and the original report by Bond that the object appeared to be hovering above N-7. Neither Isley nor O'Connor reported the object overhead, though O'Connor reported, "at one time the object came within about ½ mile of site," and "the noise I heard was similar to that of a jet engine only more steady and at a lower pitch."^[55] Isley noted that when first seen it appeared about 50 degrees above the horizon, and "came within hearing distance twice. The sound was that of jet engines."^[56] In an August 2001 interview he recalled,

ISLEY: At least once it seemed like it was passing pretty close overhead, and it was at one of these times that I heard some air noise or something that an aircraft might make. I don't remember hearing any jet engines... maybe what a plane would make

1, 5. Also: [Adams, Gregory, Air Force Form 117](#) (AF-117), *Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire*, 25 October 1968, 1, 5; and [Bond, James F., Air Force Form 117](#) (AF-117), *Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire*, 26 October 1968, 1, 5.

⁵³ [Basic Reporting Data](#), 5. The 91st Strategic Missile Wing, Command Post (Missile Support Base) provides logistics support and control communications.

⁵⁴ [Wing Security Controller's summary](#), n.d., *On 24 Oct 68 the following personnel*. Note: The 3:08 time of the "initial report from a maintenance team" is *actually* when Bond and his SAT first reported the UFO.

⁵⁵ [O'Connor, AF-117](#), 3, 7; and [O'Connor, 2005, 8, 19](#).

⁵⁶ [Isley, AF-117](#), 1, 9.

going through the air without its engines on—just the air movement across the wings, or whatever.^[57]

After receiving O'Connor's report, SSgt. Bond dispatched Jablonski and Adams to assist the maintenance team at N-7. Jablonski recalls that after observing the object, he and Adams returned to the LCF to get their weapons, and on their way to the pickup passed by all of the N-1 personnel outside observing the bright light in the distance.

Once on the road, the team observed a second, similar object appearing out of the east and traveling to the south. Jablonski reported: "When first dispatched to N-7 another object exactly the same appeared out of the east and had picked up speed in a path moving towards the other. Never did see the two join or meet as the second one disappeared and no longer could be seen."^[58]

Adams concurred: "When en route to N-7 another object appeared (same as first one). They seemed to get pretty close at one time and all of a sudden one disappeared."^[59]



In February 2005, Jablonski further elaborated that after leaving N-1 he and Adams observed numerous points of light streaking across the sky, originating from the bright object in the south:

JABLONSKI: I don't even know if I put this in my report, but I saw lights coming off that, like smaller craft, going like (gestures back and forth path) Now these lights that I saw coming off of it while we were going down there were like what you were saying—small, almost like shooting stars but they weren't because they

⁵⁷ [Isley, 2001, 9, 13](#). The [Dispatcher's log](#) notes at 3:28: "Jet engines heard now very clearly," and at 3:30, "could hear engines."

⁵⁸ [Jablonski, AF-117](#), 4.

⁵⁹ [Adams, AF-117](#), 4.

were actually maneuvering (gestures curving paths), and they were going towards (pointing) that direction of Oscar Flight.

INTERVIEWER: So those objects would have been to the east of you, going up north?

JABLONSKI: Yeah. And he [Adams] saw them too, but he didn't want to see them (laughs). I said, "Look at what's going on!"

INTERVIEWER: Did they just disappear?

JABLONSKI: They faded out. But there were so many of them.

INTERVIEWER: How many—more than 10?

JABLONSKI: Oh yeah. This is when we first started out you know, then we focused mainly on that site because we were getting more in a straight line [heading south], and then we weren't seeing any more of them. ^[60]

In fact, between 3:20 and 3:25 a.m., at least nine other ground observers at three LCFs observed two objects in strikingly similar terms. During the same time that Jablonski and Adams were driving to N-7, the Wing Security controller noted:

[03:20] SSgt Smith at Oscar-1 saw the object separate in two parts and go in opposite directions and return and pass under each other. At this time [03:24] Juliet Flt and [03:25] Mike Flt Team observed the same things and described it in the same way. ^[61]

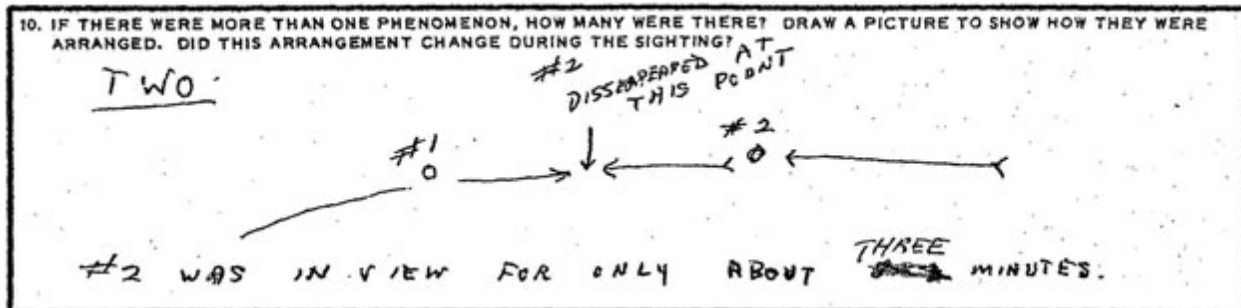
In their AF-117's, Isley and O'Connor included drawings of a second object southwest of N-7, while the first object remained in the southeast.^[62] The time of this observation is not given, although the dispatcher's log notes at 3:28: "Two are seen now." In addition, Bond included a drawing of two objects on a course towards each other, in which the second object "was in view for only about three minutes."^[63]

⁶⁰ [Jablonski, 2005, 11-13](#). Bond's recall of radio conversations with the SAT while on the road at: [Bond, 2005, 16-17](#).

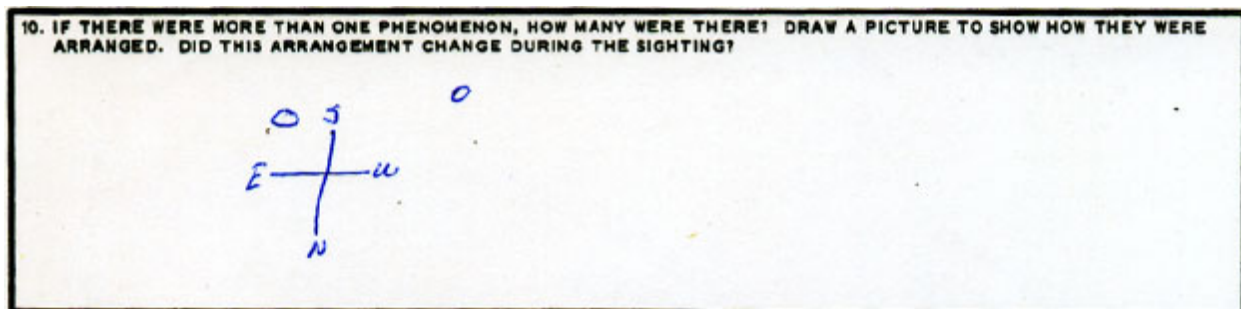
⁶¹ [Wing Security Controller summary](#), 1. Also: [Smith, 2005, 17](#).

⁶² [O'Connor, AF-117](#), 4; and [Isley, AF-117](#), 4.

⁶³ [Bond, AF-117](#), 4.



SSgt. Bond's drawing in his AF-117 (4). If this is his view from N-1 looking south, then the second object was in the southwest traveling to the east before disappearing at the point of contact.

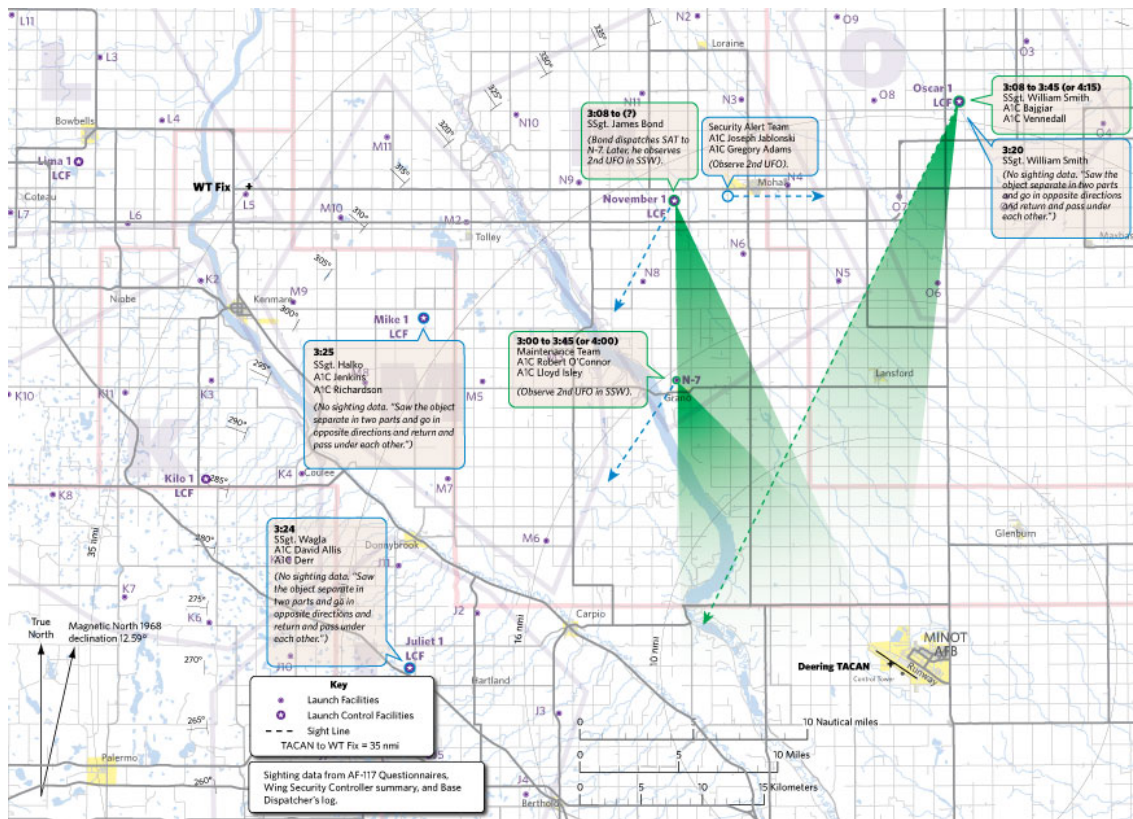


A1C O'Connor's drawing in his AF-117 (4) (Click image for full scans).

Over a distinct period of time, two similar objects were reported moving in relation to each other by fourteen ground observers in diverse locations. Unfortunately, no specific observational data was obtained during the subsequent investigation, nor from the security personnel at the Juliet-1 and Mike-1 Launch Control Facilities, which would allow for correlations. Later, Minot AFB investigating officer, Colonel Werlich, merely notes in the Basic Reporting Data, "AT ONE POINT DURING THE GROUND SIGHTINGS, THE FIRST OBJECT WAS OBSERVED JOINED FOR A SHORT TIME BY A SECOND LIKE OBJECT."^[64] Other instances in the documentation point to the presence of two UFOs. For example, at 3:30 [3:40], when the Transcription of Recorded Conversation commences between RAPCON and the crew of a returning B-52, the initial entry notes, "Controllers received information on UFO 24 miles NW."^[65] This location is near Mike-1 LCF, about 12 miles west-northwest of the observers at N-7, who were continuing to report a UFO in the southeast from 3:00-4:02.

⁶⁴ [Basic Reporting Data](#), 8. Security personnel at Mike-1, Juliet-1, and the Oscar-Security Alert Team of A1C Bajgiar and A1C Venedall did not complete AF-117s.

⁶⁵ [Transcription of Recorded Conversations](#), *Transcript of tape for 24 Oct 68, 0830*. The source and actual time of this UFO report received by RAPCON is unknown.



Locations of the observations at 3:20-3:25 of two objects separating in opposite directions and returning to pass under each other. While on the road to N-7 Jablonski and Adams observed a second identical object in the east on a path to the first, which got close and disappeared. O'Connor and Isley noted, "at one time there were two in the area," indicating a second object in the southwest. Bond at N-1 noted two objects moving toward each other, and the second object disappearing at the point of contact, which "was in view for only about three minutes" (AF-117, 4). The possibility of two UFOs was merely noted during the subsequent Blue Book investigation, so the sighting data is lacking. In any case, complete data from all three LCFs would have certainly resolved the probability that observers were reporting a celestial object.

Jablonski and Adams arrived at the N-7 missile silo around 3:30.^[66] Jablonski recalls that when they pulled up the gates were standing wide open, and O'Connor and Isley were in a frantic state:

JABLONSKI: I was too excited to be scared. When we got there, to see a man with that rank running, I mean they were all telling us 'Shoot it!' when we pulled up.

INTERVIEWER: It's that close?

⁶⁶ Jablonski recalls that shortly after observing the object at 3:08 they were dispatched to N-7, estimating a drive time of "maybe 15-20 minutes" (2005, 10).

JABLONSKI: Evidently, it was close in the beginning and then it moved off, but it stayed in the vicinity, you know, it gained altitude or whatever, and you could not hear any engines. ^[67]

In his AF-117, he noted that the phenomenon was not in sight continuously, indicating that this was

Not due to our movement, but the behavior pattern of the phenomenon. Object appeared as orangish-red lighted, seemed to switch to almost completely white and there was some green. This pattern was not always the same, and at certain times a combination of all could be seen at once. Object first appeared to hover, then move slowly, speed up, always alternating in color. Then lights would vanish, but return some 5 minutes later. ^[68]

He also recalled:

JABLONSKI: Whatever it was, you could not make out the shape. It was long and slender with lots of lights on it. In the debriefing [they said] that it was the size of a B-52 with a tanker—it had come up on base radar as that big. But the thing of it was the lights, which were alternating—they were bright white to like an amber-red and to a green, back—

INTERVIEWER: What would you compare it to—a nut or a basketball?

JABLONSKI: Oh, it was bigger than that, I mean, it was like the size of the B-52. You could not make—as far as shape you know, ‘saucer-like,’ whatever; it was oblong, slender with lots of lights on it. ^[69]

⁶⁷ [Jablonski, 2005, 9-11, 17](#). Also, Bond: “I remember the combat crew said something about the maintenance team getting a little flaky out there and they might need some help from security, because they were getting a little scared” ([2005, 21](#)).

⁶⁸ [Jablonski, AF-117, 3, 4](#); and [Adams, AF-117, 3, 4](#).

⁶⁹ [Jablonski, 2005, 10](#). In his [AF-117](#), Jablonski noted that a match held at arm’s length would cover about one half of the object (6). At estimates of 3-5 miles (7) the object size would be 197-330 feet. Adams noted that one third of the object would be covered (6). At estimates of 2-5 miles (7) the object size would be 212-530 feet. Bond noted that a match head would be covered (6). At estimates of 10-12 miles (7) the object size would be 350-420 feet. Isley compared its size to a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft.

Jablonski took over responsibility for radio communications, reported back to Bond and the capsule crew at N-1, and continued relaying movements and descriptions of the object to the dispatcher and the RAPCON controller, who, by this time, was in contact with a returning B-52.^[70] He explained the difficulty of providing RAPCON with the precise coordinates of the UFO because:

JABLONSKI: The lights were not always on. When it made a move, it was without the lights. That's what was so tough with the B-52, because they wanted coordinates and everything. But when the lights were off you could not see it, as dark as it was.

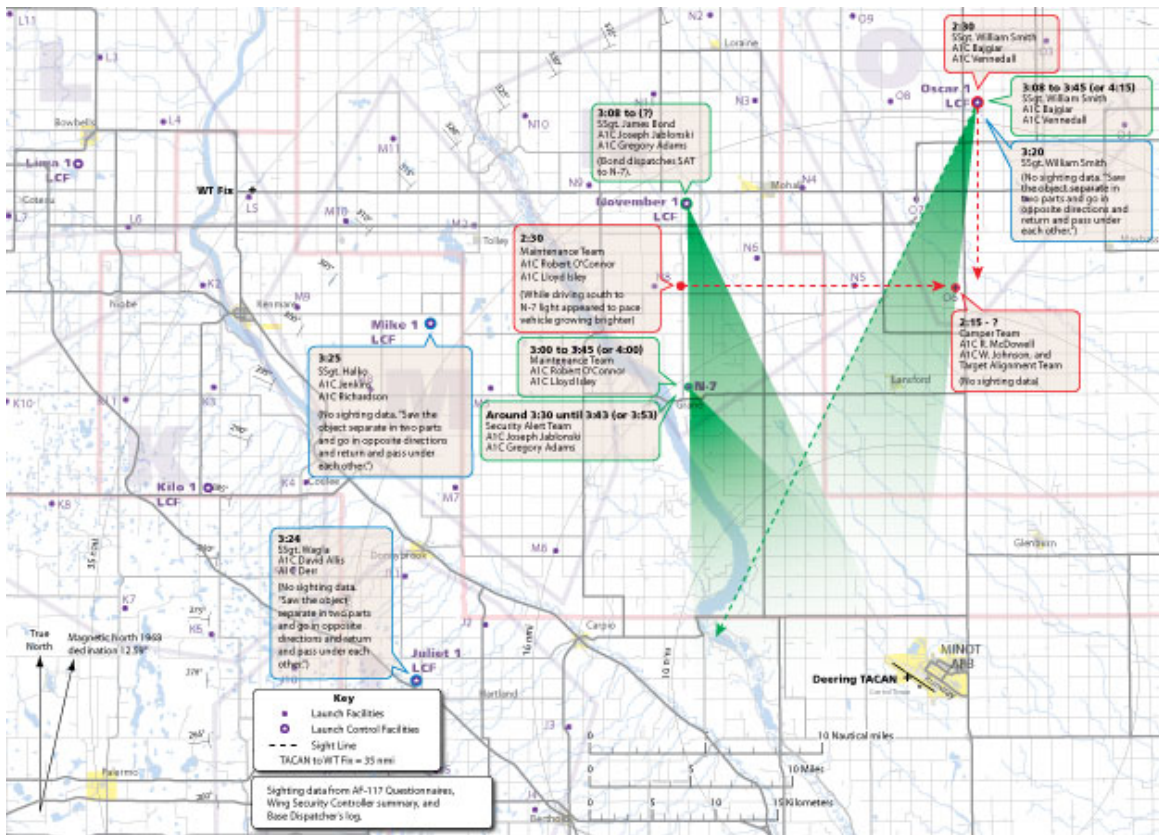


INTERVIEWER: Then the light would appear in another spot?

JABLONSKI: Right. It was when it was hovering that you could actually see all these pretty lights and everything. That's when it was staying in one place. But when it actually went to move you might see a little white, and then nothing—blank, you know, and then here it is over here (gestures right), then here it is over here (gestures left).^[71]

⁷⁰ [Jablonski, 2005, 11-12](#). Unfortunately, the Transcription of Recorded Conversations begins at 3:34 [3:44], when the B-52 is over the runway. However, the first entry at 3:30 notes, “Controllers received information on UFO 24 miles NW.” This location is in Mike-Flight about 7 miles west-northwest of the observers at N-7, who were reporting a UFO in the southeast.

⁷¹ [Jablonski, 2005, 19-20](#).



After Jablonski and Adams arrived at N-7 around 3:30, the personnel continued observing the UFO in the southeast for another 32 minutes. During this time, Smith was also observing the UFO from O-1, 19 miles to the northeast of N-7. Based on data in the AF-117s, Smith observed the UFO “off and on” south southwest of his position for one hour and fifteen minutes (2:30-3:45); and also reported the time of his last sighting as 4:15, for one hour and forty-five minutes (1, 3). O’Connor continued to observe the UFO southeast of N-7 or one and a half hours (2:30-4:00), and also reported the time of his last sighting at 3:45, for a period of one hour and fifteen minutes (1, 3). He estimated the distance of the UFO as 1/2-6 miles (7). Jablonski notes they observed the UFO for 35 minutes after 3:08 (until 3:43), estimating the distance of the UFO as 3-5 miles (AF-177, 3, 7). Adams notes they observed the UFO for 45 minutes after 3:08 (until 3:53), estimating the distance of the UFO as 2-5 miles (AF-117, 3, 7). All of the observers at N-7 agree the UFO disappeared at the same time the B-52 appeared in the west. Based on information in the Transcription and our reconstruction of the B-52 flight track, this was until 4:02.

As the observers at N-7 continued reporting the UFO, the base communications networks were buzzing with activity. O’Connor recalls: “We conversed back and forth and then everybody, we started hearing all the chatter on the radio from everybody else that was seeing this thing.”^[72] Jablonski recalls that after they arrived at N-7:

JABLONSKI: We took over because we were talking to my boss [Bond] and the capsule crew. I mean, there were so many people on that radio that...

INTERVIEWER: Who else?

⁷² O’Connor, 2005, 7, 10, 23. Also: Smith, 2001, 12-13; Bond, 2005, 15; and, Isley, 2001, 6, 8.

JABLONSKI: People from the Squadron, people at the base, then when they diverted the B-52, I was talking to the ‘52 people.^[73]

The missile Wing Security Control communication network was also patched in to RAPCON, and the capsule crews were listening in the hope that an incoming B-52 would provide their eyes in the sky. Smith insisted:

SMITH: I’m the Staff Sergeant and I don’t usually call out of my chain of command



unless I’m really frightened. So, I used my chain of command, I called back the people that I deal with, so I’ve done what I’m supposed to do and I just keep it under advisement. I talked to my capsule crew. Depending upon the crew they were interested or not interested. But it got frustrating; we got really angry that

nobody was listening to us. So, I remember after I got my crew more interested they [finally] called. Now the plot thickens because they started calling people and said, “My people upstairs are saying here’s what’s happening and we want some more information.” So, they did call the Tower, and matter of fact, I remember listening on the phone—they let me stay on and listen. They called their operations [Wing Security Control], who said, “OK, let’s get somebody else to think about this.” Then the B-52 crew was called in. They said, “we have a B-52 that’s out and we’ll see what they can see.” That is how we got the [B-52] crew involved. ^[74]

⁷³ [Jablonski, 2005, 11.](#)

⁷⁴ [Smith, 2001b, 11-13.](#) See also: [Bond, 2005, 17-18.](#) Smith recalls that his capsule crew contacted Air Defense Command at Minot Air Force Station, located about 15 miles south of Minot, ND: “And so when the [B-52] crew did that my Capsule [Crew] also were excited, really excited, so one of them I think had an idea that they might call Air Defense Command, I think he had some connections or knew some people there. And from what he was saying they were able to use some radar manipulations, and were able to see something operating 50 miles above where we were in the general vicinity—they couldn’t pinpoint it but they said—50 miles above” ([2001b, 13;](#) and [2001a, 19-20](#)). Regarding Minot AFS, see: <http://www.radomes.org/museum/showsite.php?site=Minot+AFS,+ND>.

2. B-52 Air-radar UFO Observation (3:44-4:02)^[75]



B-52 Aircraft Commander and pilot, Captain Don Cagle; Co-pilot, Capt. Bradford Runyon Jr.; Radar Navigator, Major Charles “Chuck” Richey (dec.); Navigator, Capt. Patrick McCaslin; Electronic Warfare Officer, Capt. Thomas Goduto; and Gunner, Technical Sergeant Arlie Judd Jr. All crewmembers were rated as instructors in their respective positions, establishing them as one of the top crews at Minot AFB in 1968. During this particular mission, there was an additional pilot aboard from another B-52 crew, Maj. James Partin, being evaluated by Cagle. When it became apparent that the crew were being asked to look for a UFO, Cagle dismissed himself from the flight deck, leaving Partin and Runyon in charge for the remainder of the flight.

In the midst of the events, a Boeing B-52H Stratofortress long-range bomber of the 23rd Bombardment Squadron, 5th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) at Minot AFB, returned from a 10-hour training mission.^[76] The precise time the B-52 returned, and particularly, its whereabouts for the first hour and a half of the UFO observations are not clearly established in the Project Blue Book documentation.^[77] Col. Werlich later commented in the Basic Reporting Data:

⁷⁵ 3:34 [3:44] is the beginning of the communications between Minot, RAPCON and the B-52 pilots, when the B-52 is on low-approach over the runway ([Transcription](#), 0834). 4:02 is when the UFO disappeared from the B-52 radarscope and the B-52 radio transmission resumed ([Transcription](#), 0902). However, according to the B-52 radarscope chronometer time, 4:06:51 (9:06:51Z) is the time of the last photograph when the UFO disappeared from the radarscope. Regarding discrepancies in the transcription and B-52 onboard time: [Discrepancies and Omissions in the Transcription of Recorded Conversations](#).

⁷⁶ Regarding the SAC B-52 mission, see; [Runyon, 2005, 4-8](#). Also: [Goduto, Thomas, 2001. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tulien, 20 February \(Sign Oral History Project\), 4-7](#); and, [Judd, Arlie, 2001. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tulien, 27 February \(Sign Oral History Project\), 7-8](#).

⁷⁷ Project Blue Book was the official USAF program to investigate UFOs. The project was active from January 1948 until January 1970, and documented approximately 13,000 UFO reports. *Records of Project Blue Book, 1947-1969*, Record Group

AT THE TIME OF THESE EVENTS, A B-52 WAS IN THE LOCAL AREA. THE AIRCRAFT INITIALLY ARRIVED IN THE AREA ON A 50 [NAUTICAL] MILE RADIUS CLEARANCE WITH A BLOCK ALTITUDE OF FL210 [Flight Level 21,000 feet] TO FL230 AND BEGAN VARIOUS INSTRUMENT PRACTICE MANEUVERS INCLUDING A VERTICAL “S” PATTERN. THIS TOOK PLACE AT ALMOST THE SAME TIME AS THE FIRST GROUND SIGHTING.^[78]

The B-52 Navigator, Captain Patrick McCaslin, recalls that they were returning about 3:00 in the morning, possibly from Grand Forks AFB, east of Minot:

McCASLIN: I want to say we’d been over to Grand Forks and shot some approaches there. I don’t think we had done a lot of navigation-type things like low-level routes, or high-level bombing, or any of that stuff. I think it was mostly a pilot’s-type mission. But at some point around—my memory is about 3:00 in the morning—we showed up at Minot, and the reason I think we were coming from Grand Forks, my memory is that we were coming from the east to the west and flew an approach of some kind into the runway, did a low approach as I remember it.^[79]

Upon entering the Minot area, defined by a 50-nautical mile circumference around Minot AFB under the control of Minot, Radar Approach Control (RAPCON), the B-52 pilots practiced routine high-altitude instrumented procedures. Because of their altitude, and with the landing lights turned

341.15, Publication Number: T1206, Roll 82, Minot AFB, ND, 24 Oct. 1968, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. See index: [NARA Microfilm Publication T1206](#). The Project Blue Book records are accessible from: <https://www.fold3.com/title/461/project-blue-book-ufo-investigations>.

⁷⁸ [Basic Reporting Data](#), 5. Werlich notes the time of the initial ground sighting at “0800Z (0300 CDT)” (2). He also notes the B-52 arrived at the 50 nmi clearance at 3:00: “THE AIRCRAFT INITIALLY ARRIVED . . . AT ALMOST THE SAME TIME AS THE FIRST GROUND SIGHTING.” According to the documentation, the initial ground sighting (2:15) preceded the arrival of the B-52 by 45 minutes.

⁷⁹ [McCaslin, 2001, 11](#) Also: [Runyon, 2005, 8-9](#); and, [McCaslin, Patrick D., 2000. Transcript of interview with Jim Klotz, 11 November \(Sign Oral History Project\), 5](#).

off, it is doubtful that anyone on the ground could possibly have seen them, particularly with the extended overcast above 10,000 feet altitude.^[80]

The B-52 Co-pilot, Captain Bradford Runyon Jr., recalls during a February 2005 interview:



RUNYON: I think we did some high-altitude work, probably some vertical S's, maybe some steep turns you know, maybe some 60-degree bank turns.

INTERVIEWER: That is at 20,000?

RUNYON: Right, at higher altitude, like for the vertical S's we might have gotten a block from 20 to 30, or 30 to 40,000 feet for that.

INTERVIEWER: That is what?

RUNYON: Just go up and down, certain air speeds, certain rates of descent and then do 60-degree banking turns—that is high altitude. We are probably at 40,000.

INTERVIEWER: So, nobody could see you up there. You don't have your landing lights on?

RUNYON: No, no way, and we were probably not over our base anyway—were out in the middle of nowhere. ^[81]

⁸⁰ (A) 0255 CDT - RADAR 11,000 FEET BROKEN, 2100 FEET OVERCAST, VISIBILITY 25 STATUTE MILES, TEMPERATURE 32, DEW POINT 28, WIND 160 DEGREES. 3 KNOTS, ALTIMETER SETTING 30.14 INCHES, RADAR CLOUD TOPS, BROKEN 19,200 FEET AND OVERCAST 27,700 FEET ([Basic Reporting Data](#), 3-4).

⁸¹ [Runyon, 2005, 8.](#)

Following this, the B-52 departed FL200 and descended from the southeast for a low approach over the runway at Minot AFB. At 3:34 [3:44], co-pilot Capt. Runyon requested clearance to fly out to the Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) aid, referred to as the TACAN initial approach fix, or simply “WT fix,” located 35 nautical miles to the northwest near Bowbells, North Dakota.^[82] Werlich comments:

AFTER A VOR PENETRATION, LOW APPROACH AND MISSED APPROACH TO RUNWAY 29 AT MINOT AFB THE AIRCRAFT CLIMBED TO FL200 ON A HEADING OF 292 DEGREES^[83]

The Transcription of Recorded Conversations between Runyon and the RAPCON ground controller begins at 3:34 [3:44], and establishes a timeline and relative location of the B-52 over the next hour. However, the first statement at 3:30 [3:40] notes RAPCON controllers “received information on UFO 24 miles NW” of the base. The source of the information is unknown. The location is in Mike-Flight about 7 miles west-northwest of the observers at N-7, who were reporting another UFO in the southeast.

Transcript of tape for 24 Oct 68 from 0830 to 0915^[84]

ct = *radar approach* controller (MIB)

ac = *B-52* aircraft (JAG31)

tw = *control* tower

03:30 [3:40] Controllers received information on UFO 24 miles NW

⁸² [Transcription](#), 0834. The transcription is time-coded to GMT (-5 hours CDT). In aviation, distances are expressed in nautical miles (1 nmi, US = 1.151 statute mile, or 1852 meters). Tactical Air Navigation system is an ultra-high frequency electronic navigational aid that provides military aircraft with a continuous indication of bearing (azimuth angle) and distance (range) to a TACAN station. At Minot AFB, distances are relative to the Deering TACAN transmitter (ground-to-aircraft beacon), located adjacent to the runway at 37% of the length from the northwest end. The “WT fix” is a virtual point 35 nmi from the TACAN transmitter in approach with the runway, at which the B-52 begins its descent from FL200 and “penetration” of the Minot airspace. Technical information on TACAN systems from: https://minotb52ufo.com/archives/minot_afb/tacan_ch2.pdf.

⁸³ [Basic Reporting Data](#), 5. The runway at Minot AFB is designated runway “11/29” depending on the magnetic heading to the runway of azimuth 110/290 degrees (southeast/northwest). Flight Level (FL) is the nominal altitude of an aircraft referenced to a standard pressure datum, as opposed to the real altitude above mean sea level. Above 18,000 feet, FL is expressed in rounds of hundreds; for example, FL200 is a flight level altitude of 20,000 feet. “VOR,” short for: VHF Omni-directional Range, became the primary navigational system in the 1960s. In this instance and elsewhere, VOR is used generically in reference to the TACAN system used by military aircraft. Aircraft altitudes are Mean Sea Level (MSL), whereby an aircraft’s altitude is measured relative to an average (mean) sea level, rather than the local terrain it is flying over.

⁸⁴ The Transcription continues past 0915 (4:15), although following 0921 (4:21) the remaining time-code references are omitted. Regarding the initial time references, see: [Discrepancies and Omissions in the Transcription of Recorded Conversations](#).

03:34 [3:44] JAG 31 a B-52 on a TA calibration check to rw [runway]
 11 requested clearances to WT at FL200

03:34 [3:44] ac MIB approach control does JAG 31 have clearance to
 WT fix at FL200?

ct JAG 31 roger climb out on a heading of 290 climb and
 maintain 5000. Standby for higher altitude. We're trying to
 get it from center now.

03:35 [3:45] ct JAG 31 climb and maintain FL200

ac Roger 31 leaving 5000 for 200

ct 31 roger

ct And JAG 31 on your way out to the WT fix request you
 look out toward your one o'clock position for the next 15
 or 16 miles and see if you see any orange glows out there.

ac Roger Roger.... glows 31

ct Somebody is seeing flying saucers again.

ac Roger I see a ...(garbled).^[85]

When it became apparent the pilots were being asked to search for a UFO, Aircraft Commander Capt. Don Cagle excused himself from the flight deck, and for the remainder of the flight isolated himself in the bunk area leaving Runyon and Major James Partin—a non-crew pilot being evaluated by Cagle during this mission—in charge.^[86] Cagle planned to be on a commercial flight to Atlanta later that morning for a job interview with Delta Airlines. He had missed a similar appointment one month earlier, due to an unannounced Operational Readiness Inspection on base. His concern was that any direct involvement would require him to be present at Minot and miss yet another opportunity for a new career.^[87]

⁸⁵ [Transcription](#), 0830-0835. The term “TA calibration check” may refer to Terrain Avoidance System, which provides an aircraft with a situation display of the ground and obstacles so that the pilot can maneuver the aircraft to avoid the obstruction.

⁸⁶ [Runyon 2005, 7](#).

⁸⁷ Don Cagle made the appointment and was hired by Delta. After thirteen years of military service he resigned his commission in January 1969. Cagle was an instructor and evaluation pilot at Delta, before moving to management as Chief Pilot of the International Base after they took over the assets of Pan-Am. He retired from Delta in 1997. During several interviews he claims to have no recollection whatsoever of the UFO events. See also: [Runyon, 2000, 8-9](#); [Runyon, 2005, 18](#); and, [McCaslin, 2001, 27-28](#).

After RAPCON's request at 3:35 [3:45] for the pilots to look out in the direction of N-7 for "any orange glows out there," and a final "(garbled)" response, there were no further communications with the B-52 for 7 minutes. Ascending to the flight level altitude at 20,000 feet, the pilots would have had limited ability to see anything as a result of the extended overcast and haze reported above 10,000 feet.^[88] When communications resumed at 3:52, the B-52 was about 34 nautical miles northwest of the base, and in the beginning stages of executing a standard 180-degree right turnaround back over the WT fix. On completion, the aircraft was aligned on a straight approach to the runway to begin its descent back to Minot AFB. Once again, RAPCON alerted the B-52 crew:

03:52 ct JAG 31 MIB apch
 ac 31 go ahead
 ct 31 the UFO is being picked up by weathers radar also,
 should be your 1:00 position 3 miles now
 ac We have nothing on our airborne radar and I'm in some
 pretty thick haze right now and unable to see out that way
 ct roger
 ct JAG 31 upon reaching the WT fix you're cleared for
 approach report leaving FL200
 ac Roger 31.^[89]

McCaslin, downstairs in the belly of the B-52, aroused Radar Navigator Major Charles (Chuck) Richey, requesting that he switch the radar to a 360-degree surveillance mode designated "Station Keep."^[90] In this mode, the coverage is elevated and concentrated close to the aircraft; used primarily for formation flying, and lining up behind the docking boom of a KC-135 air-

⁸⁸ Werlich notes in the [Basic Reporting Data, 3-4](#): "THE B-52 AIRCRAFT, OPERATING IN THE LOCAL AREA, REPORTED A HEAVY HAZE CONDITION AT FL200 DOWN TO 10,000 FEET" (4). Also: "(A) 0255 CDT - RADAR 11,000 FEET BROKEN, 2100 FEET OVERCAST, VISIBILITY 25 STATUTE MILES... RADAR CLOUD TOPS, BROKEN 19,200 FEET AND OVERCAST 27,700 FEET. (B) 0355 CDT- RADAR 9,000 FEET OVERCAST, VISIBILITY 25 STATUE MILES, TEMPERATURE 32, DEW POINT 29, WIND 160 DEGREES 4 KNOTS ALTIMETER SETTING 20.12 INCHES, RADAR CLOUD TOPS, OVERCAST 24,700 FEET.

⁸⁹ [Transcription](#), 0852. Also: [Runyon, 2005, 10](#); and, [Runyon, 2000, 7](#). No information was released to the Blue Book investigators regarding any radar tracking of the UFO. On two occasions Lt. Marano attempted to phone Werlich requesting information regarding the weather radar detection but received no response. The statement concerning the weather radar in the Transcription appears to imply that RAPCON was *also* tracking the UFO.

⁹⁰ [McCaslin, 2000, 6](#); and, [McCaslin, 2001, 12-13](#). The Radar Navigator was also responsible for the B-52H's AN/ASQ-38 Bomb Navigation System. For a description of the B-52 navigation station, see: [McCaslin, 2001, 8-9](#). Also, [Goduto, 2001, 8](#).

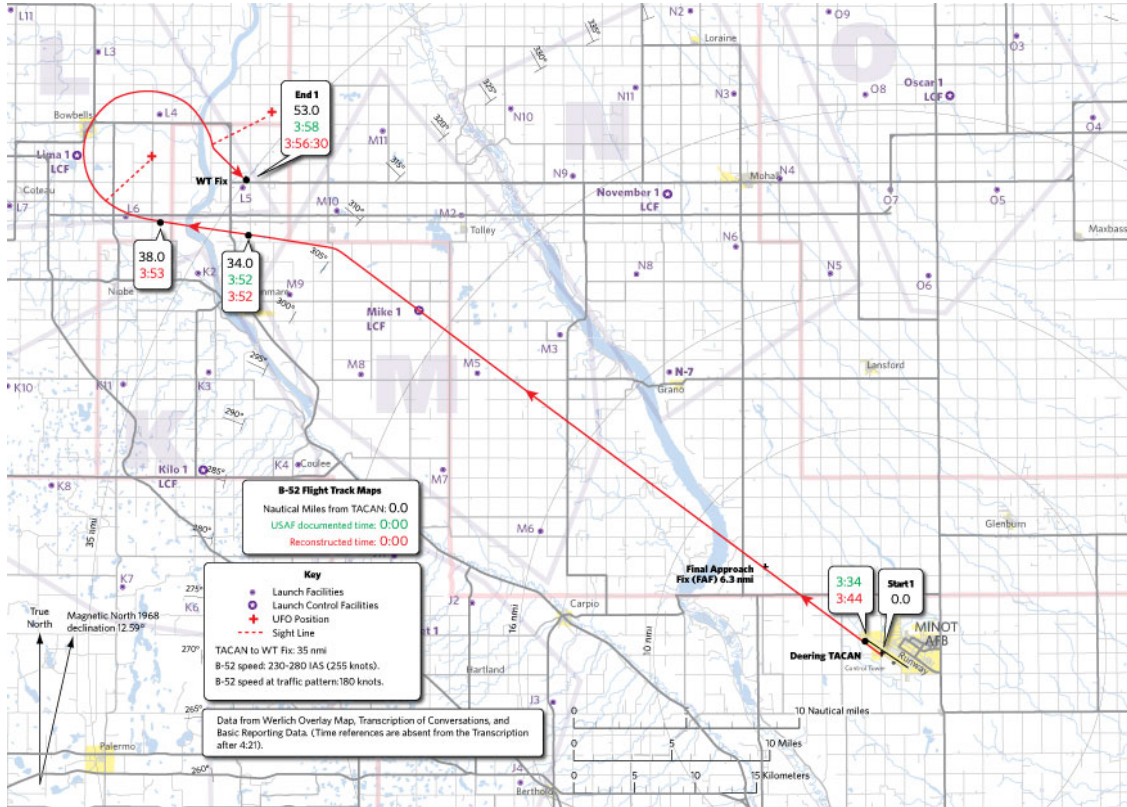
refueling tanker.^[91] Following this, McCaslin noticed a bright echo appear on his radarscope in the same location indicated by RAPCON at co-altitude, 1:00 position 3 miles:



McCASLIN: We're climbing out to do this approach, and we were asked to keep our eyes open for anything strange. No one had said anything like UFO or anything like that. It was just, "Keep your eyes open for anything." Since I was flight-following the approach anyway, I asked Chuck to put it in Station Keep mode, because I figured if there is anything in the area my best chance to see it would be in Station Keep—more energy, closer. And he did that for me. As we climbed out, I monitored the direction we were heading, the altitude, and I watched the scope. At some point on the way out to the VOR, or to the Nav-aid, I saw a weak—off to our right, maybe 3 miles out—I saw a weak return, one scan. The next scan, there was a very strong return at that location about 3 miles off our right wing, which meant to me that something had either climbed into the radar energy, which was why it would be weak as it entered it, and then was about co-altitude in the next sweep, or it could've descended into it. Don't know which. But it was clear that something was out there and it was large. It was as big or bigger than a KC-135. My impression was it was a larger return than the KC-135 gave me. So, I called the pilots and said, "There's traffic off our right wing at 3:00. Looks like co-altitude,"

⁹¹ [McCaslin, 2001, 14](#); and, [Goduto, 2001, 7](#).

and nobody saw anything. So, I kept watching this thing. The pilots basically said, “Keep us advised,” and I think I may have called them a time or two and said, “It’s still out there.”^[92]



At 3:34 [3:44] the B-52 is over the runway requesting clearance to the WT fix. At 3:35 [3:45] RAPCON requests that they lookout at their right (general location of N-7) for the next 15-16 miles “for any orange glows out there.” At 3:52, RAPCON informs the pilots that the weather radar located the UFO 3 miles to their right at one o’clock. McCaslin asked Richey to switch the radar mode to Station Keep, and at about 3:53 observed the UFO 3 miles off the right wing of the B-52. As the B-52 continued the turnaround back over the WT fix, the UFO (red Xs) maintained the 3-mile distance, transiting to the northeast outside of the B-52 turn radius.

McCaslin also requested that Richey switch on the 35mm camera mounted over the top of the radarscope. The camera films the 10-inch radarscope, while superimposing the data plates via a

⁹² [McCaslin, 2001, 15](#), [McCaslin, 2000, 6-7](#). “POSITION OF AIRCRAFT DURING AIR-ELECTRONIC OBSERVATION: INITIAL SIGHTING POSITION WAS 38 NAUTICAL MILES NW OF THE DEERING TACAN, 300 DEGREES RADIAL, FL200” ([Basic Reporting Data](#), 3). At this time, Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) Captain Thomas Goduto powered his receiver equipment back up but “could not substantiate anything on my equipment that was unusual”([Goduto, 2001, 12-14](#)). Also, Gunner Tech Sergeant Arlie Judd recalls at some point during the encounter he observed a large return on his rear-facing ASG-21 “fire control radar” for a 5-10 second duration, first at 1,000 yards, then at 12,000 yards before it disappeared ([Judd, 2001, 11-14](#)). Later, at a debriefing in the Division Commanders office, Judd brought up the returns: “I mentioned my radar returns. That was my confirmation of what somebody else had seen. I said, ‘Well it was also on my radar.’ But there wasn’t any follow through” ([2001, 21-22](#)).

separate optical path. It automatically exposes one frame during a three-second time exposure, which is equal to one complete rotation of the radar beam sweep.^[93]

Safely turning a B-52 around requires about a three-mile radius, and the presence a large, unknown aircraft at co-altitude inside the turn-radius presented a serious safety concern for the crew. Yet, as the B-52 banked around the wide turn, McCaslin watched the object on the radarscope moving out to the northeast, while maintaining the three-mile separation in relation to the turning aircraft. This allowed the B-52 to safely turn inside, and the object ultimately assumed a position 3 miles to the left of the B-52 at the completion of the turnaround:

McCASLIN: I advised the pilots that it was still out there, and as we approached the VOR [WT fix], my memory is that we were going to make a right turn into the VOR . . . and then start our descent over the VOR headed back toward the base. And that was of some concern to me because we were turning into this thing.

INTERVIEWER: It was off your right side?

McCASLIN: Yeah, and I may have—I can't believe that I would not have advised the pilots, "we're going to be making a right turn in the direction of this thing," and it was, "Keep us advised." So they started their turn back to the VOR, and my clear memory is that as we turned back, this return moved out at the same rate we were turning in—it moved out to the northeast—and by the time we rolled back out headed southeast to start the approach it was 3 miles off our left wing, and I advised the pilots of that.

INTERVIEWER: So, it moved relative to you? How many miles?

McCASLIN: I can't remember the turn rates of a B-52 anymore—but relative to a track over the ground, it must've moved 6, 7, 8 miles to the northeast to accommodate the turn we made.

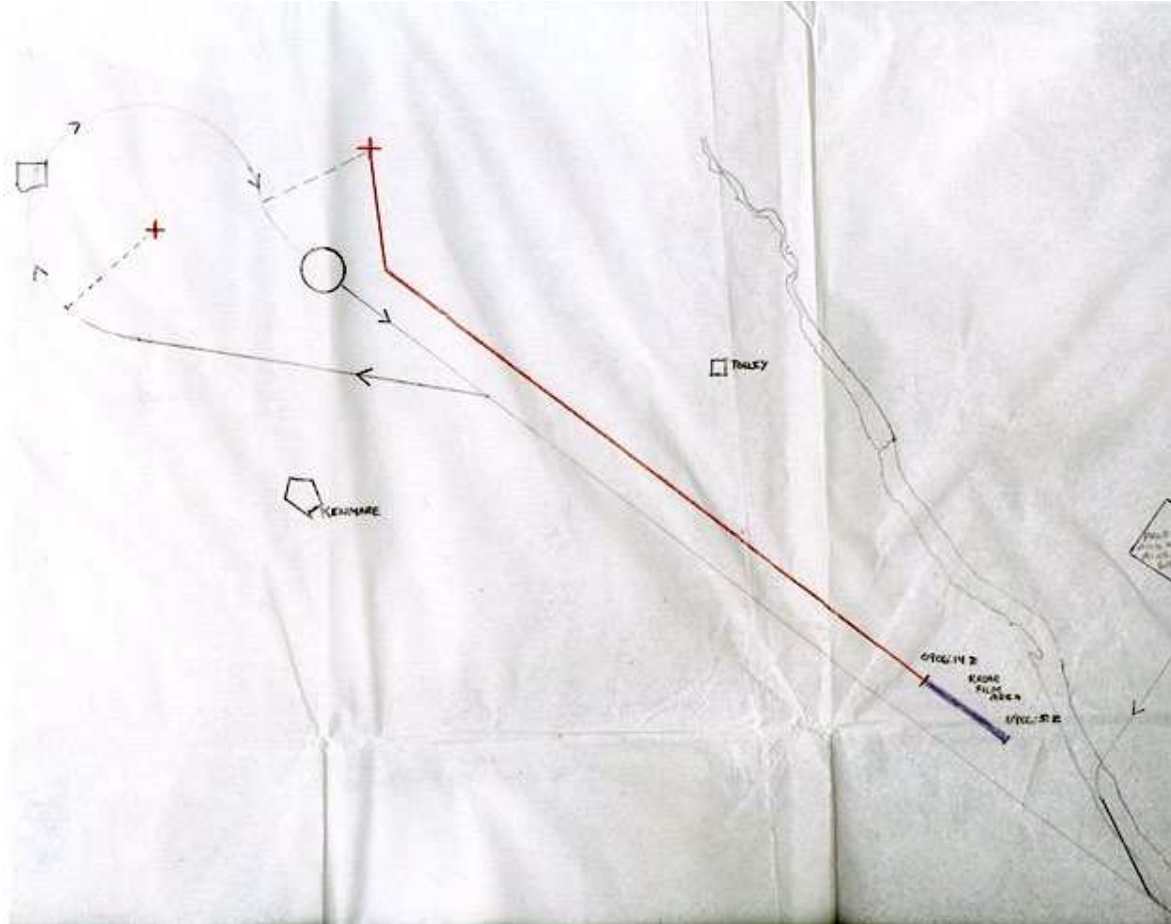
INTERVIEWER: You're implying intelligence there, aren't you?

McCASLIN: Yeah, I guess I am.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think at the time this thing was?

⁹³ [McCaslin 2001, 44](#). McCaslin recalls, "At that point where I saw something out there, I asked him to turn on the cameras" ([2000, 9](#)); and the duration of filming was "10-15 minutes' worth of stuff" ([2001, 36](#)).

McCASLIN: I really didn't—I don't know that I thought it was anything. I mean my first concern was that it was an aircraft of some kind. I was worried about hitting an aircraft.^[94]



Partial scan of Col. Werlich's Overlay Map showing the B-52 flight track and 180-degree turnaround back over the WT fix (black circle). The UFO positions (X's) and flight track are in red, while the blue section is Werlich's estimate of where the radarscope photographs were exposed. Actually, the 14 photos reveal the UFO spiraling around behind the B-52, from a position front-right of the aircraft to a position 1 nmi off the left wing before disappearing from the radarscope. Werlich also indicated six lat./long. coordinates to accurately align the overlay onto a master chart ([Werlich Overlay Map](#)).

At 03:56, the B-52 requested routine approach procedures, acknowledging “wilco” to RAPCON’s request to “report leaving [FL]200 on this approach.” Shortly after, the aircraft would pass over the WT fix and depart FL200 to begin its penetration and descent back to Minot AFB. At this time, the object’s return on the radarscope remained as bright as it had been, indicating to McCaslin the UFO was remaining at co-altitude and a distance of 3 miles. It was now clear to the

⁹⁴ [McCaslin, 2001, 16-17](#); and, [McCaslin, 2000, 7](#).

crew that a large unidentified object was keeping pace with them, although there was little they could do except keep a watchful eye on the situation.

McCASLIN: It seemed to me that the pilots were getting a lot more interested in it. There seemed to be a lot of talk on the intercom, “Do you see it? I still don’t see it,” that kind of thing. It’s clear now that whatever this [was] is staying with us, and that’s cause for concern, since—I think there were calls to the tower, although I may not have heard those—I think there were calls about, “Do you have traffic?”—and no one was owning up to any traffic in the area. . . . As we descended on the approach, it stayed as bright as it had been, which for a [radar] navigator means it is remaining co-altitude. ^[95]

At 3:58, the B-52 abruptly lost two-way communications with RAPCON, at the same time that the UFO suddenly reduced its distance from three miles to one. The seemingly instantaneous change of position occurred in *less than* a three-second sweep of the radar antenna. Runyon recalls that the object’s movement occurred so unexpectedly that it startled Radar Navigator Chuck Ritchey and by the shrill tone of his voice over the interphone—for a second, Runyon imagined that a collision was imminent.^[96] McCaslin recalls:

McCASLIN: So, at some point in the descent, with this thing still shining out there, I saw it at 3 miles on the left, and then the next scan it was at one mile. I mean it was just—there was no sense of it closing. There was no time for that. It was at 3 miles at one point, and the next scan it was one mile off our left wing. I was on the intercom immediately and called the pilots and said, “Hey, this thing’s one mile off our left wing now,” and, well I knew whatever it was, in my own mind, at that point I knew there was something there that I’d never seen on radar. The ability to close 2 miles and stop instantaneously was—although I wasn’t a pilot yet, I went to pilot training 2 months after that and I did a lot of flying, and I don’t know of

⁹⁵ [McCaslin 2001, 17-18.](#)

⁹⁶ [Runyon, 2005, 10-11](#); and, [Runyon, 2000, 6-8](#). Also: [Partin, James 2001. Transcript of interview by Jim Klotz, 20 January \(Sign Oral History Project\), 2-3.](#)

anything—been a lot of R&D since I got out—but certainly at that time, and during [my] career when I was flying as a pilot, I didn't know of anything that could go laterally in 3 seconds, 2 miles, and just stop.

INTERVIEWER: And maintain your airspeed.

McCASLIN: Right. It was maintaining our descent rate, and then just laterally into one mile—perfect formation. So, the pilots were telling me they were looking. They still didn't see anything. No one claimed to see anything at that point. And it was about that time that the tower, and I don't remember exactly how the loss happened, but the tower either lost our transmission to them, or we lost contact with the tower, but we did not have two-way communications with the tower anymore.

INTERVIEWER: And at what point did you realize that was the case?

McCASLIN: That happened as soon as I called up—right about the time I called up and said, “This thing's a mile off our left wing.”

INTERVIEWER: When you start to do your descent for approach, that's when your radios go down?

McCASLIN: No. We started the descent; it stayed 3 miles off our left wing. At some point during the descent it moved in to a mile. And just from one scan to the next—at that point, we lost two-way communications with the tower.^[97]

Capt. Runyon, from his position on the flight-deck, recalls the abrupt change of position of the UFO and loss of radio transmission occurring at the WT fix, prior to the start of descent. The Transcription indicates this occurred following 3:58. Due to the sudden loss of radio transmissions, he was concerned about his inability to report leaving FL200.

RUNYON: The Navigator told me that we had something off our right wing at 3 o'clock and of course I am looking there too, and I really can't see it.

INTERVIEWER: At that point you are in what direction in relation to the base?

⁹⁷ [McCaslin, 2001, 19-20](#); and [McCaslin, 2000, 7](#). See also: [Memo for the Record, 24 October 1968](#), *Subject: UFO Observation*, 1; and, [Basic Reporting Data](#), 6.

RUNYON: We're still flying away from the base and we still haven't reached our TACAN penetration point. So, we're flying out through there with the object showing on radar, and I don't know whether it blended in with the night and the clouds, haze, or whatever we had. I don't know why I couldn't see it.... And so we reached our penetration point and our radios had quit working when the object got in close to us. I'm not sure just at what point I realized that we couldn't talk to the ground, but we made our turn and penetration back towards the base and departed our altitude without receiving permission, which bothered me at the time because it was basically illegal to change your altitude without approval beforehand.^[98]

Runyon's recall is consistent with his later communications in the transcription at 4:04, when the controller asked, "I was wondering how far out did you see that UFO?" "At 35 miles when we started in," Runyon replied. "I wonder if that could have been your radio troubles," queried the controller. "I don't know," Runyon said, "but that's exactly when they started."^[99]

After the B-52's radio transmission abruptly broke off in mid-sentence, they could still hear the controller, but RAPCON could not hear the B-52, and were apparently unaware of the UFO pacing the aircraft. The controller requested them to "squawk ident," which meant to use the aircraft's SIF/IFF transponder to paint a bright blip on RAPCON's radarscope, signaling that the pilots could hear the controller's transmission.^[100] Satisfied the B-52 could hear them, the controller then contacted the Minot AFB Control Tower to clear the runway for the approaching B-52:

03:58	ac	Approach control 31
	ct	31 go ahead.... 31 go.... JAG 31 Minot go ahead....
03:59	ct	JAG 31 Minot approach go ahead....
		JAG 31 if you hear me squawk ident.... 31 Minot
04:00	ct	JAG 31 if you hear me squawk indent....

⁹⁸ [Runyon, 2005, 10](#); and [Runyon, 2000, 6-8](#). For a discussion of the B-52's radios: [Goduto, 2001, 11-12](#).

⁹⁹ [Transcription](#), 0903-0904.

¹⁰⁰ SIF/IFF is an acronym for Selective Identification Feature/Identification-Friend-or-Foe, which refers to onboard radio equipment with electronic coders and decoders. In conjunction with similar ground-based equipment it can be interrogated and respond automatically to identify aircraft.

JAG 31 ident observed cleared for the approach attempt
 contact on frequency 271.3 and you're cleared for the low
 approach

ct to tw Tower this is on JAG 31, disregard, he's about 24 miles out
 but can I have clearance on him now for a low approach, he
 might be having radio problems

tw Cleared for low approach wind 15002

ct JAG 31 you're cleared for low approach wind 15002, if you
 hear me squawk ident

ct JAG 31 if you're having any other difficulties besides radio
 transmitter squawk mayday.... (no mayday squawk was
 received). ^[101]

The B-52 attempted to communicate with RAPCON on two different UHF radios but neither would transmit during this time.^[102] However, they were able to signal RAPCON they were in no immediate danger, which was a grave concern since three weeks earlier a B-52 experiencing technical problems on approach had crashed, killing four crewmembers.^[103]

The B-52 continued its descent, still unable to visually observe the pacing UFO through the haze. According to the Basic Reporting Data compiled by Minot AFB investigating officer Col. Werlich, the "RADAR ECHO ACCOMPANIED AIRCRAFT TO APPROXIMATELY 14 NAUTICAL MILES, 296 RADIAL, APPROXIMATELY 9,000 FEET MSL" at which point it departed.^[104] As the object left his radarscope, McCaslin's impression was it descended, dropping out of the radar energy, so he noted the precise ground coordinates in the bomb navigation system.^[105] At the same time, the B-52's radio transmission with RAPCON was suddenly restored:

^[101] [Transcription](#), 0858-0900.

¹⁰² [Runyon 2005, 11](#); and, [Runyon 2000, 11](#). "When target was close to the B-52 neither of the two transmitters in the B-52 would operate properly but when it broke off both returned to normal" ([Memo, 24 Oct. 68](#), 1). Also: [Goduto 2001, 11-12, 15](#).

¹⁰³ [Runyon 2005, 12](#). Releasable portions of the "[B-52H Aircraft Mishap Report, 4 October 1968](#)" (HQ AFSC/JAR), include a Transcription of Recorded Conversations with Minneapolis and Great Falls Air Route Traffic Control Centers, covering a period of time from 0256-0852Z; and Aircraft Accident Transcription-Minot Approach Control, covering a period from 0842-0907Z.

¹⁰⁴ [Basic Reporting Data](#), 3. Claude Poher's analysis resolves the location of the last radarscope photo at 18.8 nmi from the Deering TACAN, 8865 feet MSL: [3.4. Refining the B-52 Position With Terrain Features](#). Resolving the B-52 altitude in photo 783: [4.7. Discussion 1: The B-52 Altitude and the Tilt-up Angle of the Radar Antenna](#).

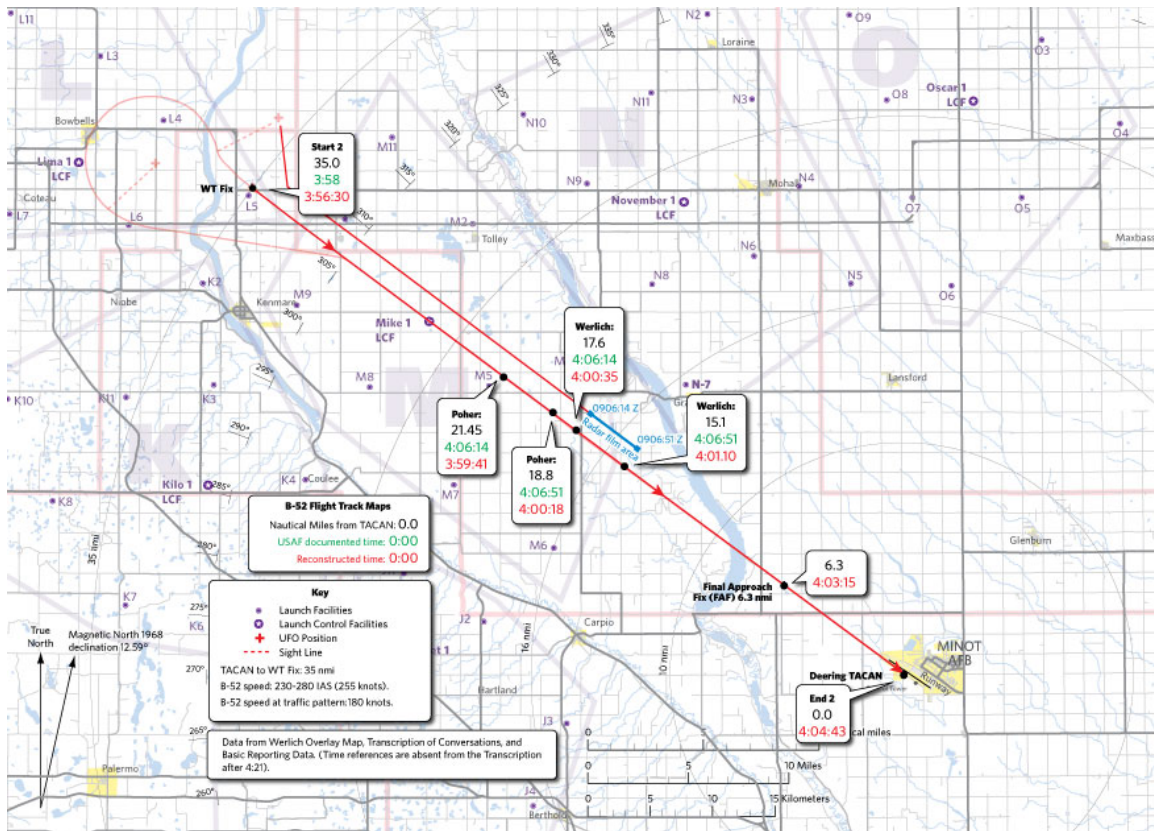
¹⁰⁵ [McCaslin, 2001, 21-24](#); and, [McCaslin, 2000, 7-8](#). Also, [Goduto, 2001, 16](#).

04:02 ac Minot approach control JAG 31 how do you hear
ct You're loud and clear how me
ac Roger you're loud and clear
ct Remain this frequency
ac Our UFO was off to our left there when we started
penetration
ct Roger understand you did see something on your left side
ac We had a radar return at about a mile and a quarter nine
o'clock position for about the time we left 200 to about 14
ct 31 roger request radio check on 271.3 then return this
frequency again

04:03 ct JAG 31 how do you hear this transmitter?
ac You're loud and clear how me
ct You're loud and clear also
ac OK. I'll stay on this frequency?
ct Affirmative I was wondering how far out did you see that
UFO?

04:04 ac He was about 1½ miles off our left wing at 35 miles when
we started in and he stayed with us 'til about 10
ct I wonder if that could have been your radio troubles
ac I don't know.... but that's exactly when they started
ct Roger
ct 31 Cleared for low approach report missed approach
ac 31 roger.^[106]

¹⁰⁶ [Transcription](#), 0902-0904.



Clearing the WT fix, the UFO rapidly closed distance to one mile and the B-52 radio transmission failed. Werlich notes in the [Basic Reporting Data](#) that the “RADAR ECHO ACCOMPANIED THE AIRCRAFT TO APPROXIMATELY 14 NAUTICAL MILES, 296 RADIAL, APPROXIMATELY 9,000 FEET MSL” before disappearing from the scope (3). Based on an analysis of radarscope photo 783, Dr. Claude Poher locates the B-52 18.8 nmi with an altitude of 8865 feet at 4:00:18. It is noteworthy the UFO disappeared from the radar shortly before emerging in to view below the overcast at 9,000 feet. The radarscope photo time, which is also the B-52 onboard time (4:06:14-4:06:51), is ahead by more than 6 minutes.

During the B-52 radar encounter, the missile Wing Security Control communication network was patched-in to RAPCON, and the underground capsule crews were closely following the progress of the B-52. The Oscar-capsule crew allowed Flight Security Controller SSgt. Smith to listen-in to the communications between the B-52 and RAPCON, though the radio transmission was sometimes patchy and difficult to hear:

SMITH: Matter of fact, we had an officer I think on the phone with the capsule crew, and of course I was patched in, they were asking me



questions, and then said, "Well OK, we'll have a diversion of this B-52 crew coming in" and gave a time when it would be coming.... The radio transmissions were sort of difficult to hear through all that. But they did say they saw something. It was large, a very large light and that it was following them.... it followed them back for a certain time, and my understanding was that they lost them on radar, and we were able to hear that, they said, "We don't have them on radar right now." And so, the conversation was "My gosh what may have happened?" People were thinking about crashes or that kind of thing. So, then when it got within so many miles of the base they were able to pick them up on radar again. Matter of fact, I remember they kept calling them trying to get them on radio and there was no radio transmission either, and everybody was concerned at that time because they hoped they didn't crash.^[107]

FSC SSgt. Bond also recalls his November-capsule crew informing him of the B-52 encounter:



BOND: The combat crew did tell me that there was a B-52 being rerouted to the area and they were going to check on it. They also told me that they had been talking to the B-52 crew by radio from the capsule and about seeing the thing, it following them, also about losing all communications in their airplane when it got close to them, and for how many minutes they had no contact with the support base

¹⁰⁷ [Smith 2001b, 17-20, 12-13.](#)

or anything else. Yeah, that was real strange. . . . Not much more than that they were pretty tight lipped about it. They wanted to know what I was seeing.^[108]

3. B-52 and the Ground Observers at N-7

As the B-52 continued its descent to Minot AFB, the remote observers at N-7 were unaware a UFO was closely pacing the aircraft high in the northwest, and the pilots had lost two-way communications with RAPCON. Prior to this, the Base Operations Dispatcher had informed them that a B-52 had been diverted to area, and he directed them to the precise time and location of the incoming aircraft. O'Connor noted that, "a B-52 was sent to the area to check out the sighting and was seen west of the object at first."^[109] Jablonski compared the bright illumination of the UFO to the landing lights of the approaching B-52:

As to the alternating illumination, particularly the white, it appeared as two or three automobile headlights. When the B-52 had flown in its search it had been using its landing lights which were quite similar in nature. As to avoid confusion between the plane and the object Base Ops had pointed out where and when we saw the B-52. Must add that the B-52's engines could be easily heard while the UFO made no sounds to be heard at about the same distance. ^[110]

The N-7 personnel had been observing the UFO in the southeast, but when the B-52 appeared high in the west-southwest, the UFO had descended to the horizon and was no longer observed in the area. According to Jablonski:

Just prior to our sighting the diverted B-52 in the WSW the object had descended gradually and for 1 minute or 2 had appeared to be obstructed by trees. . . . When the B-52 flew in the vicinity (SSE) it was no longer seen in that location.^[111]

¹⁰⁸ [Bond 2005, 14-15, 17-18.](#)

¹⁰⁹ [O'Connor, AF-117](#), 3. Isley, "A B-52 was in the same area as the object, just before the object left our view" ([AF-117](#), 3). Adams, "B-52 bomber heard approximately 45 minutes after seeing UFO [at 3:08]. B-52 west and much higher than UFO" ([AF-117](#), 3). Also, [O'Connor, 2005, 11-13](#); [Isley, 2001, 12-13](#); and, [Jablonski, 2005, 13](#).

¹¹⁰ [Jablonski, AF-117](#), 7. Also, "B-52 diverted to general area...Object [UFO] basically stayed in the southeast, while the B-52 was in the southwesterly position" (3). According to Poher's analysis, the B-52 would be about 6.5 miles west-southwest of N-7 at 8865 feet altitude at the time of the last photo (4:00:18). See, [3.4. Refining the B-52 Position With Terrain Features](#).

¹¹¹ [Jablonski, AF-117](#), 5, 9. Adams: "Right before the B-52 was seen the UFO descended gradually behind what could have been trees. Hard to say about trees it was so dark" ([AF-117](#), 5). Isley: "It [UFO] went low and out of sight in the southeast" ([AF-117](#), 5).

It is intriguing to note, about the same time the UFO disappeared from view southeast of N-7, another UFO, which had been pacing the B-52 high in the northwest also disappeared from the B-52 radarscope, just prior to emerging into view below the overcast and haze above 9,000 feet. The visibility at lower altitudes was 25 miles and clear.^[112] Dr. Claude Poher's recent photogrammetric analysis of the B-52 radarscope photographs proposes that the aircraft was at an altitude of 8865 feet, while 18.8 nautical miles from the runway at the time of the last radarscope photo. This position is west-southwest of N-7, and suggests that the UFO broke off just before the observers at N-7 first observed the B-52. In fact, the ground observers could clearly see and hear the incoming B-52 but did not observe the UFO pacing the aircraft.



November-7 Launch Facility looking southeast in the direction of Minot AFB.

¹¹² “(B) 0355 CDT—RADAR 9,000 FEET OVERCAST, VISIBILITY 25 STATUTE MILES” ([Basic Reporting Data](#), 4).



N-7 looking south from the front gate.



N-7 looking southwest from the front gate, with Lake Darling, the [Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge](#), and Grano Crossing in the distance. An aerial view of November-Flight (zoom-in to view N-7 and surrounding area) is available from [Wikimapia](#).

4. B-52 Air-visual UFO Observations (4:24-4:28)^[113]

As the B-52 passed by on its way to the base, the personnel at N-7 were no longer observing the UFO and returned to their assigned duties.^[114] RAPCON cleared the incoming B-52 for low approach to the runway. By 4:06 they had completed a missed approach, and were given a vector to turn left onto the crosswind leg of the traffic pattern bearing 335 degrees, at a standard altitude of 3200 feet MSL (roughly 1500 feet above the local terrain). The controller then provided clearance for the B-52 to visually land if communications were interrupted.

04:06 ac 31 going around
ct 31 roger
04:09 ac Steady 335 3200
ct JAG 31 roger, radar contact this will be a vector to the precision final approach course rw 11
ac JAG 31 roger
ct Jag 31 if no transmissions received for one minute in the pattern take over visually if unable cleared for approach
ac Roger 31 understand
ct Jag 31 turn left heading 290 maintain 3200 downwind leg
ac 290 3200 JAG 31

RAPCON vectored the B-52 to turn left bearing 290 degrees onto the downwind leg, which would ultimately take them out in the vicinity of N-7. After routine instructions from RAPCON, for the completion of the landing and altimeter checks in preparation for landing, the B-52 was approaching the turn to the base leg when the controller queried:

04:13 ct JAG 31 are you observing any more UFO's
ac Negative on radar, we can't see anything visually
ct JAG 31 roger

¹¹³ "4:24-4:28" is based on our reconstruction of the B-52 flight track. In his [AF-117](#), Partin noted 4:30-4:35 as the time of the air visual observation, based on the pilot's chronometer.

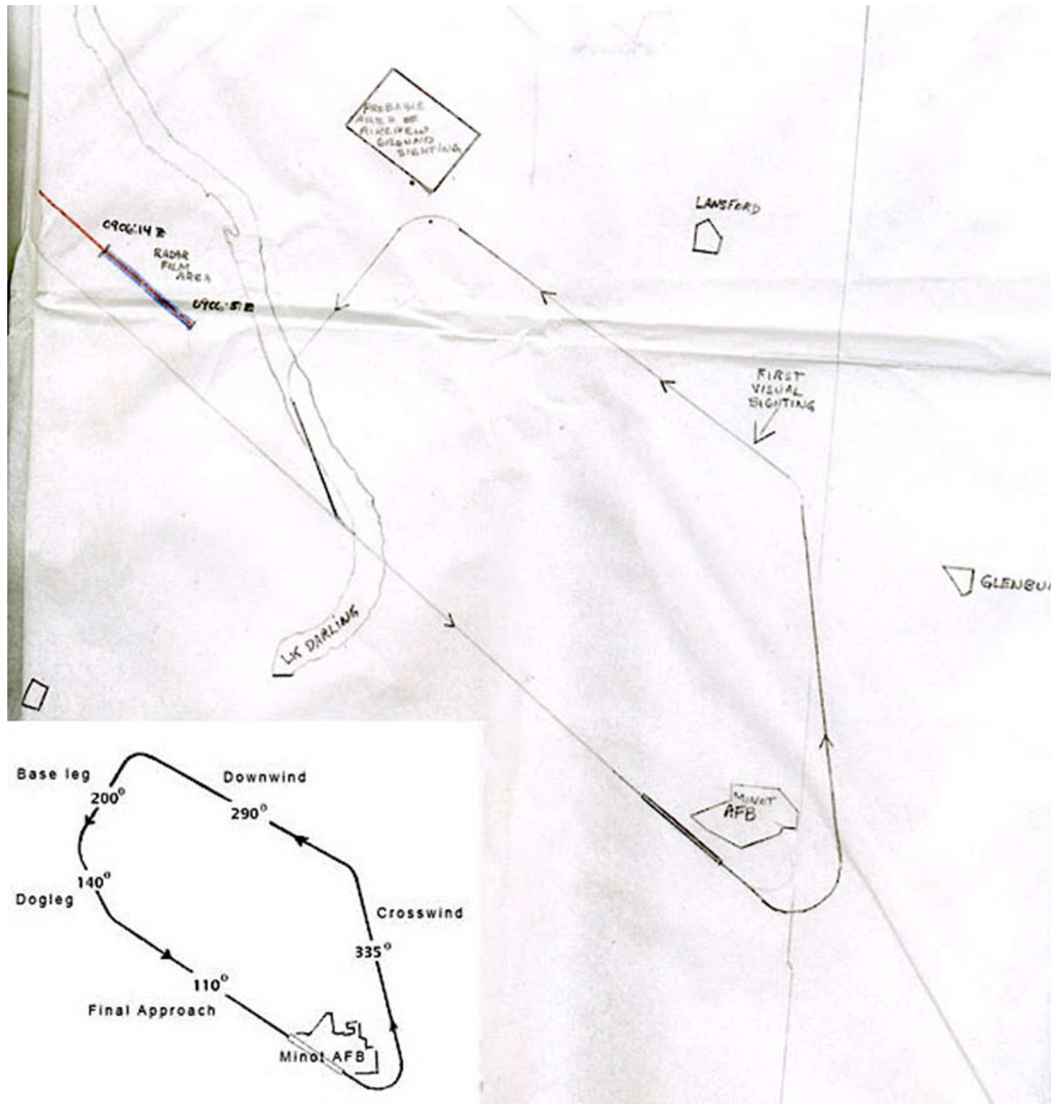
¹¹⁴ [Jablonski, 2005, 15](#); [O'Connor, 2005, 13-14](#); and, [Isley, 2001, 12](#).

ct JAG 31 roger the personnel from the missile site advise they don't see anything anymore either

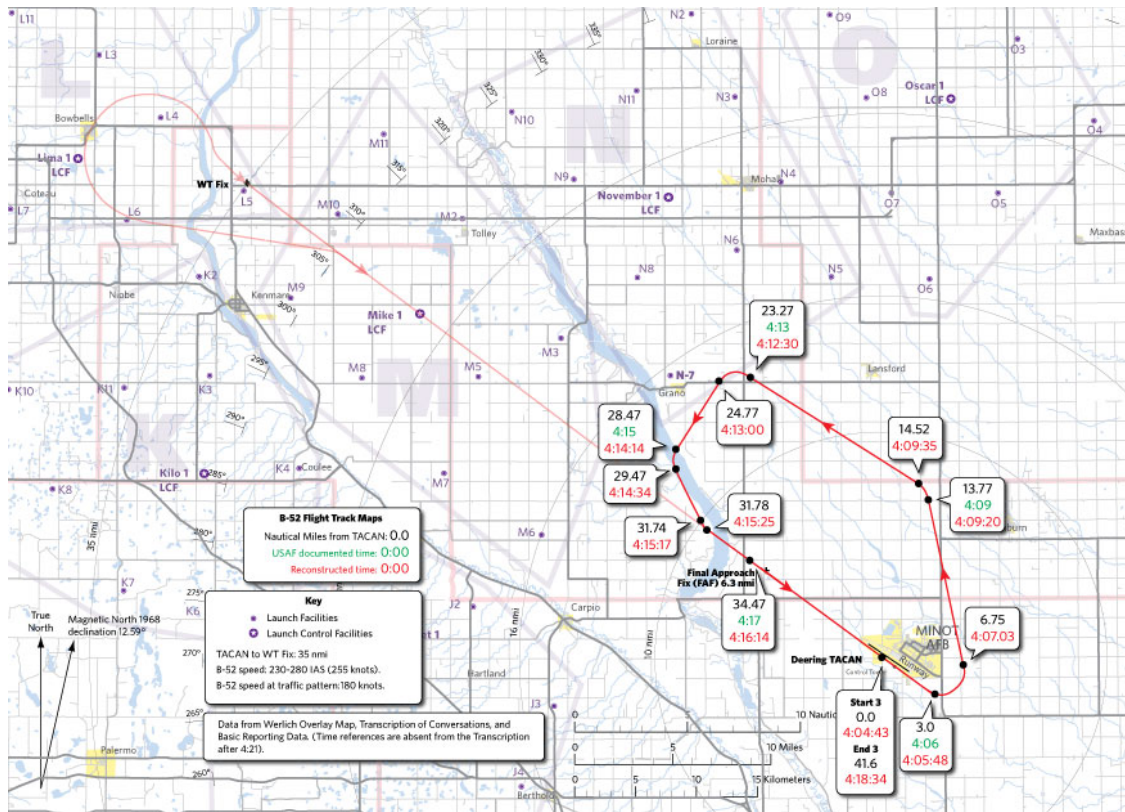
ac Roger

ct JAG 31 turn left heading 200 maintain 3200 base leg

ac Roger 200 3200



Partial scan of Werlich's Overlay Map showing the first circuit around the traffic pattern. Werlich did not plot the subsequent second circuit of the traffic pattern, when the pilots observed and over flew the UFO on or near the ground. Our reconstruction of the B-52 flight track indicates that the B-52 flew further out to the northwest during the second go-around ([Werlich Overlay Map](#)).



First circuit around the traffic pattern following a low approach to the runway. At 4:13, during the turn onto the base leg, RAPCON queried the pilots whether they were observing any more UFOs. Total flight time for the first go-around is 13:51 minutes.

RAPCON continued to provide vectors, and by 4:17 the B-52 was back in line with the runway on final approach. Although preparing to land the B-52, the pilots received an order from a General officer not to land, but rather, to fly back around the traffic pattern a second time in order to overfly and photograph the UFO.^[115] The specific request by the General, or the request relayed by RAPCON and Runyon’s response, are clearly absent in the communications transcript. Although the crewmembers were fatigued and anxious to land the aircraft, Runyon reluctantly conceded:

RUNYON: The request was made after our radios came back in and before we made our low approach, which, like I said, I thought we wanted to land—but maybe even before we could tell the ground people we wanted to land someone came over the

¹¹⁵ Runyon does not recall the name of the General. The only exterior photographic capability was the Bombay camera, however, it would only be loaded with film during combat missions. Runyon: “He told us to go back and fly over the object and I don’t remember whether we had film in our Bombay cameras, but we were supposed to over fly the thing and observe it and take pictures if we could. I never discussed with the nav team whether they were able to take Bombay pictures or not” (2000. 11, 24-25). Regarding the Bombay camera, see: [Judd 2001, 18-19](#).

radios. He didn't say "This is General such-and-such," he just said, they said, "General such-and-such wants you to go back around and overfly the object."

INTERVIEWER: But, did he come over the radio?

RUNYON: It's possible I don't know, he could have—they could have patched him in—he could have been at SAC Headquarters, or it could have been Tom Goduto on the HF radio, because he would have been in contact with higher headquarters through that radio. But basically, someone told us to go back around and the ground controllers knew that—well, I don't know they could hear—but they knew we were supposed to go back and overfly the thing. ^[116]

McCAslin also recalls the conversation over the intercom:

McCASLIN: There was a request for us to go around one more time visually, and see if we could see something. I do not remember the exact words but the pilots were not keen to do that, but agreed to do it on the condition that they were going to come around one time visually and then were putting it on the ground and full stop.

Frankly, McCAslin was hoping that the pilots would decline the request:

McCASLIN: I can remember that conversation. They wanted us to go around and do a visual and our pilot was reluctant to do that, but he agreed to go around and take a look. That to me was the tensest part of it, going over this thing at low altitude, basically on a search mission at a low altitude, and I remember that being a pretty tense time. I even remember him saying "We'll go around one time and then we're putting this thing on the ground," because everybody had had about enough of it.^[117]

¹¹⁶ [Runyon 2005, 14-15](#). At the time, the only General stationed at Minot AFB was Brig. General Ralph Holland. In a recent interview it was determined he did not order the B-52 to over fly the UFO: [Holland, Ralph T., 2005. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tulien and Jim Klotz, 20 February \(Sign Oral History Project\)](#). A reasonable guess would be Holland's superior, Maj. General Edward M. Nichols, Jr., Vice Commander of the Fifteenth Air Force. Runyon recalls the request came from a two-star general and Nichols is referred to in the documents ([Memo, 24 Oct. 68](#), 1).

¹¹⁷ [McCAslin, 2000, 22-23](#); and, [McCAslin, 2001, 22-24](#).

Thus, it appears a General was in contact with somebody at Minot AFB and concurrently monitoring the events. Further, it is clear the General and RAPCON knew the precise location of the UFO at rest, on or near the ground. None of the ground observers reported the UFO in this general location, and the source of this information is not evident in the documentation; excepting a notation by the Wing Security controller stating, “the approximate grid coordinate of the apparent landing was at AA-43.”^[118] This location is just over 2 miles north of N-7; adjacent to the “probable area of aircrew ground sighting” indicated on Werlich’s overlay map.^[119]

At 4:21, Runyon requested vectors back around the traffic pattern for an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) surveillance approach, which would take them around the traffic pattern a second time to a terminal landing (full stop) at 4:40.

04:21 ac Approach control this is JAG 31
 ct JAG 31 this is Minot approach control go ahead
 ac I’d like to get a vector around for an IFR, surveillance approach like
 to touch down at 40 past
 ct Roger you want full stop at 40
 ac Affirm be termination

After executing another missed approach to the runway, the B-52 pilots were provided the first vector for the 335-degree crosswind leg of the traffic pattern.

04:21+ ac Jag 31 roger turn left heading 335 maintain 3200 this will be a
 vector to the surveillance final approach course rw 11 usable length
 31,200, descent to minimum descent altitude will be authorized 5
 miles from rw
 ac 31 roger

¹¹⁸ [Wing Security Controller summary](#), 1. 862nd CES, Minot AFB. [Off-Base Disaster Control Grid Map](#) [map]. 1:250,000. Minot AFB, ND: 9 Nov. 1965. This [MAP](#) shows the location of AA-43 north of N-7 and adjacent to the “probable area of aircrew ground sighting.” This notation by the Wing Security controller suggests they were aware of the location of the UFO on the ground, or were privy to communications with RAPCON at the time.

¹¹⁹ Werlich notes in the [Basic Reporting Data](#): “Visual sighting data: “Position of aircraft during visual sighting: 14 nautical miles 320 radial of the Deering TACAN at 3200 feet MSL” (3).

ct Lost communication remain the same do you wish any portion repeated

ac Negative 31

ct 31 roger

ct (garbled)

ac 31 roger

ct JAG 31 (garbled) requests that somebody from your aircraft stop in at baseops after you land

ac Roger 31 we'll give them a call¹²⁰

After 4:21, the time-code references for all the remaining entries in the communications transcript are absent. Furthermore, the next vector for the 290-degree turn is missing, as well as, any communications during the downwind leg. RAPCON should have provided the 290-degree vector just prior to the pilot's initial air-visual observation of the UFO on or near the ground ahead of the aircraft. Runyon recalls:

RUNYON: [The RAPCON controllers] gave us a heading to fly back over the object, and when we made our go-around over the runway, made our turn and headed back, just as soon as we rolled out at wings level there was an orange glow sitting out there, almost off our nose about 11:30 position, just a little bit to the left side of the airplane, so we were heading towards it, straight to it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember talking about it with Partin?

RUNYON: No, I just don't remember. I got busy with checklists and fuels and things like that. And you know, just as soon as I got everything caught up, I looked up and we were on top of it.^[121]

During the official investigation, none of the regular B-52 crewmembers were interviewed, including Runyon or Aircraft Commander Cagle. The only air-visual description of the UFO on or near the ground is provided by the non-crew pilot Major Partin in his AF-117, from the initial

¹²⁰ [Transcription](#), 0921.

¹²¹ [Runyon, 2005, 14-15](#); and, [Runyon, 2000, 12](#).

position of observation (first visual sighting) “northeast [north] of Minot AFB, N.D., 10 miles at an altitude of 3200 feet MSL.” He noted the time and duration from 4:30 to 4:35 as determined by the pilot chronometer. As seen through the windshield, he described an “unusually bright light I had never seen at night in this area,” which was below the horizon in the west-northwest (292 degrees), and looked like “a miniature sun placed on the ground below the aircraft.”

As I turned on to [the] downwind leg in the traffic pattern, I saw a bright orange ball of light at my one o’clock position. It appeared to be about 15 miles away and either on the ground or slightly above the ground. The light remained stationary as we flew toward it. I turned onto the base leg about one mile to the south of the light and was above it. The light did not move during this time.^[122]

Partin neglects to recount the earlier air-radar encounter in his AF-117, and the descriptions of the air-visual observation seem rather perfunctory. In a January 2001 interview he recalled additional details:

PARTIN: We were on a crew mission and back in the local area at Minot. We were about ready to make our penetration and low approach, and I guess we were in the neighborhood of 20,000 feet probably [when] the radar called and said he had a return off the left wing and did I see anything? I looked up there and didn’t see anything. . . . All of a sudden, he said “God Almighty!” and I said “What’s wrong?” He was alarmed, you know, and he said that whatever that was took off to our left at a tremendous rate of speed, he couldn’t even measure it.

INTERVIEWER: Is he seeing this on the radarscope?

PARTIN: Yeah, he watched it go. So, we forgot it and went on down and were shooting low approaches in the traffic pattern. Somewhere in the process, I changed seats got into the co-pilot’s seat. I don’t remember doing that but I remember looking off to my right probably about the 2 o’clock position as they

¹²² [Partin, AF-117](#), 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7. Partin completed the AF-117 on 30 October, after Werlich had already finalized his investigation and submitted the Basic Reporting Data to Blue Book (8).

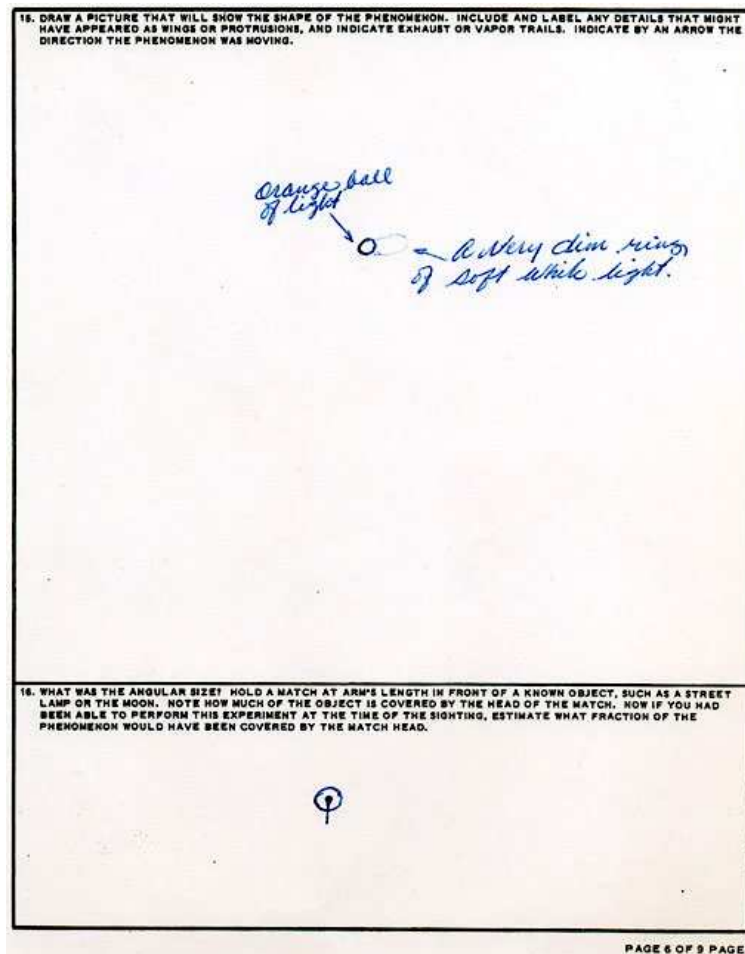
used to say, and low, and I saw a—it was sort of oblong, there were, looked like windows around it that were lit and it was just hovering there. . . .

INTERVIEWER: This was a visual pass, the last one?

PARTIN: Yeah, I don't know if it was—you could see houses on the ground from that altitude, and they looked like, you know, about the size of dice—a die.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe like a Monopoly house?

PARTIN: Yeah, right and this was much larger than that. ^[123]



Maj. Partin's drawings from his *AF-117, Sighting of Unidentified Phenomena Questionnaire (6)*. He noted his position of observation (first visual sighting) "northeast [north] of Minot AFB, N.D., 10 miles at an altitude of 3200 feet MSL," as he turned on to the downwind leg of the traffic pattern. It appeared to be about 15 miles away.

¹²³ Partin 2001, 2-3. Partin's recall of changing seats is incongruous. It is improbable that he would unstrap and change positions with the co-pilot, particularly while piloting the B-52 at low altitude. Runyon also rejects the possibility insisting that he remained in the right seat during the entire flight.

During the final go-around of the traffic pattern, the conversations in the communications transcript lack any reference whatsoever to the pilot's air-visual observations and overflight of the UFO, suggesting that the completion of the flight was routine and uneventful. This was definitely not the case according to Runyon and his fellow crewmembers.

In fact, immediately after the B-52 turned onto the 290-degree downwind leg, both pilots observed the large, bright orange ball of light ahead in the distance. Over the next few minutes, Runyon had his head down in the cockpit occupied with routine tasks, running the numerous checklists, and checking fuel settings in preparation for landing. Eventually, out of the corner of his eye, his attention was drawn to something on the left side of the aircraft.



RUNYON: When I first looked up we were already beside it, and so I didn't look straight ahead out my window, but I looked out the pilot's window, and there was something that to me—. Well, the first thing I saw was a dark square, a rectangle and then this red, a dull red around it. I mean, it wasn't well lit, it would blend in with the ground pretty well, or the night sky, but this one part—one shadow was completely black and my eyes were drawn to it. I was thinking "Well that's a barn loft and the doors open where they put hay in the thing," but I wasn't thinking that a barn was not going to be that high, because I'm really not looking down, I'm looking out, maybe down some to the side. My concentration was on that dark spot at first. So, we're flying beside the object and I take my eye away from that—there

was really nothing to see just this dull-reddish and I didn't see the bottom, and I didn't see the top. I'm just looking along the side and it might be my field of view was limited looking across the airplane.

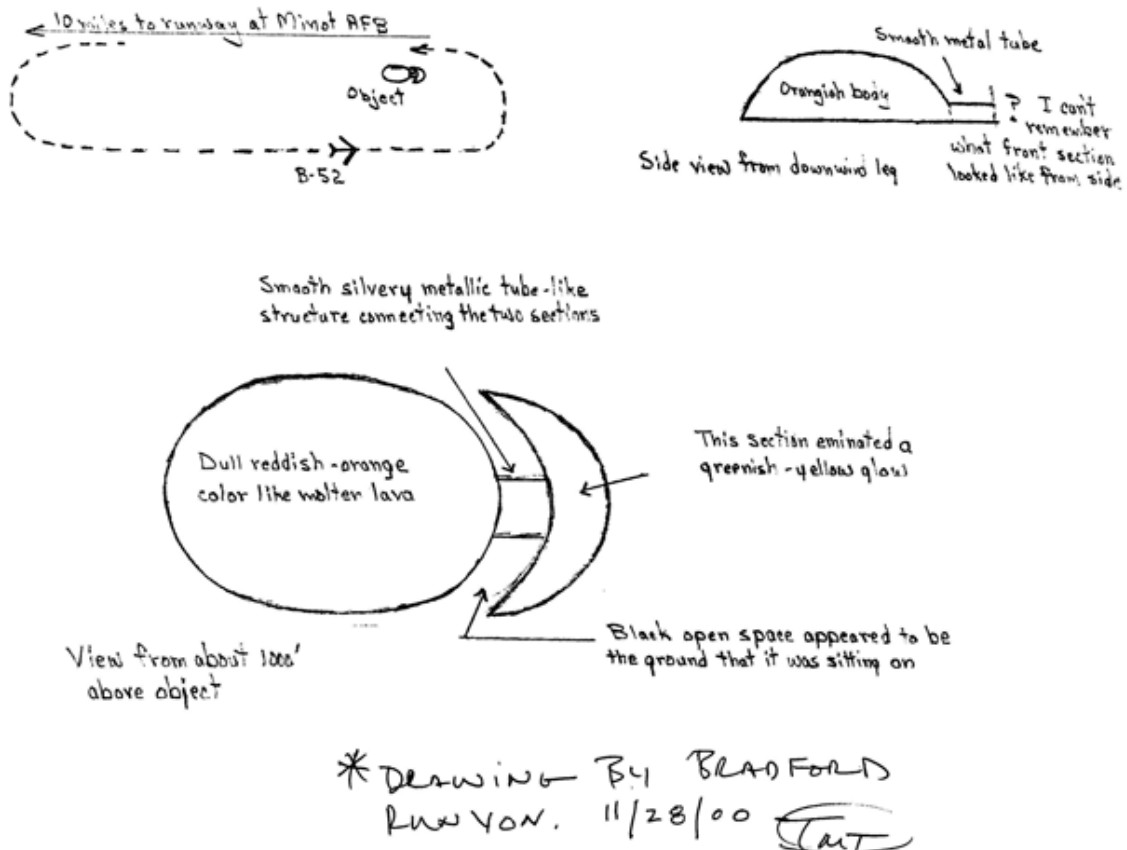
So then, we come to a metallic cylinder, sort of like stainless steel or shiny aluminum protruding from the end of this thing, and it's on the ground and the ground is just well lighted here. I could see maybe trees, bushes, or breaks in the ground; I could see different things on the ground. And as we are going past this, I looked back and I thought that this thing might be pretty close to the first big part of the object, but it appeared to be attached, and it was coming out of the end of it, and that end was well-lit, and well, it was sort of barn red but it was lighter—a whole lot brighter than it was down the sides from the glow of the next section, which was like a crescent moon—a crescent-shaped object attached to the other end of the cylinder. The light illuminating from it had the cylinder completely illuminated just about as if it was daylight, really. The crescent-shaped part appeared to be solid but [also] appeared to be translucent, like you could almost see through it, it was solid, the lines were distinct on it, and it was higher than the tube section was—not a whole lot higher, but it wasn't nearly as high as the main body of the thing was.

As we banked over it to make our crosswind, I guess we were told to turn about that time, and our radios went out again because I did transmit something and they did not receive. And as we went by, it was pretty good size because that is all that really showed up—or maybe I was just concentrating on it and didn't see anything else—but at one point I could see it and the tubular section and the front part of the main body together.^[124]

Runyon estimates that he viewed the object for approximately 10 seconds, as they flew alongside and banked over the end of the object.

¹²⁴ [Runyon, 2000, 12-14](#); and, [Runyon, 2005, 15-16](#).

RUNYON: We are level and we don't bank until we get right to the end of it. Major Partin started his turn just as we got abreast of the end of it, and turned almost over the top of the thing. I'm sure we were told to turn by the ground controllers, so they knew exactly where we were in relation to it.^[125]



Capt. Bradford Runyon's drawing of the UFO following our initial interview. He cautiously estimated the size as 200 feet in length; 100 feet in width; and 50 feet in height. At 3200 MSL, their altitude would have been around 1500 feet above the local terrain.

His attention was ultimately drawn to the source of the bright lights emanating from the backside of the crescent-shaped section, attached to the end of the main body by a shiny cylinder.

¹²⁵ [Runyon, 2005, 16.](#)

RUNYON: And the object we saw on the ground, it wasn't—well, it was different types of material. It wasn't just a big ball of glowing anything; it had different features to it.

INTERVIEWER: Any other colors?

RUNYON: The part I thought was the cabin, the control center, so forth—now it had colors inside it. I mean the colors I saw really weren't on the outside; they were back inside. . . . I tried looking in there, but I could not—I could see some lights, and it seems to me like I can remember green and yellow, but I just don't know. I thought I should be able to see objects in there, [but] we went over real fast and I really could not distinguish anything inside.

INTERVIEWER: You assumed there was something inside?

RUNYON: Well, I just assumed there was something in there because I could see lights, and it looked like I could see back inside for part of the front view of it.^[126]

Once again, when the B-52 was in close proximity to the UFO the radios lost the ability to transmit to the ground controllers.

RUNYON: Well, anyway our radios went out again and I was talking to the ground controllers, and they said—of course every time the radios went out they thought we had a problem, or something—they mentioned that our radios went dead in mid-word, not mid-sentence, just the word broke off. . . . The controllers were asking me if we had it and so forth. I'm talking to them. After we went back and turned towards the runway again the radios came back in. Of course, they had me change and try different frequencies, but there wasn't anything wrong with the radios. So, we were instructed to send one of the crewmembers to tell someone about what we had observed. Since Major Partin [was] a little bit more senior than I was, he went in to tell what he had seen and I have no idea what he said. We never discussed it afterwards.^[127]

¹²⁶ [Runyon, 2000, 13-14, 20.](#)

¹²⁷ [Runyon, 2000, 12, 14;](#) and, [Runyon, 2005, 18.](#)

Though navigator McCaslin was down in the belly of the aircraft during this time, he recalls the pilot's amazement on viewing the object close up.

McCASLIN: The first time I was aware that the pilots saw anything was after that low approach, when we came back and were basically bombing the position, and when they—there was an expletive from the top, they started describing this thing and asking if I wanted to come up and see it. After the



fact, when we were talking in the debriefing, and as we were taxiing in and all that, everybody agreed it was pretty spectacular.

INTERVIEWER: Did he describe it to you?

McCASLIN: I don't remember if it was Brad or one of the other pilots. The description to me was this: that it was an elliptical shape, kind of a cough drop-shaped thing, glowing orange with a boomerang exhaust, or boomerang-shaped exhaust, or whatever—a fluorescence off one end the same color, and that's all I remember of the description.^[128]

Apprehensive, McCaslin declined an invitation to come upstairs to view the object.

McCASLIN: I tried to put myself in the position of whatever this thing was; and now you're going to have an eight-engine bomber fly over you at a very low altitude. I mean these guys that were asking me to come up and take a look were in ejection seats.

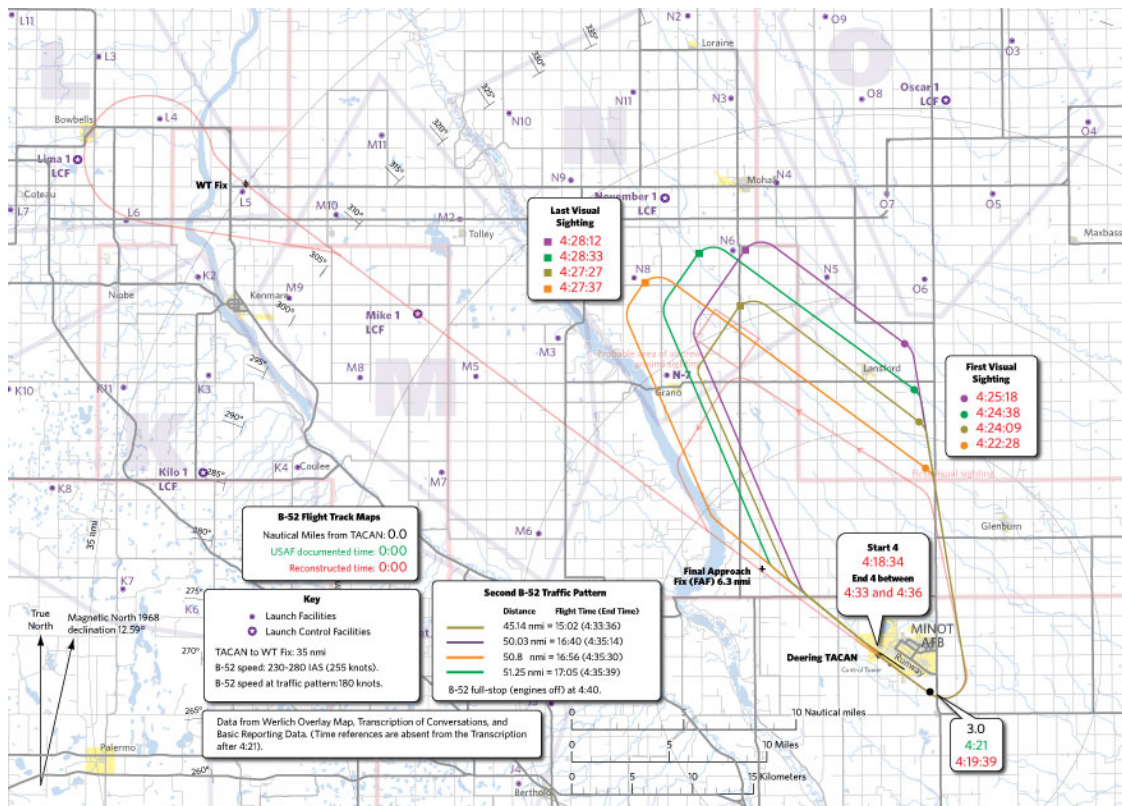
INTERVIEWER: You were scared?

¹²⁸ McCaslin, 2000, 12-13; and, [McCaslin, 2001, 30](#). Goduto recalls, "Brad's description that came over intercom was it was kind of a reddish, orangish football shape" ([2001, 19-22](#)).

McCASLIN: Let's say prudent. Now, I've been very afraid in airplanes, and I don't remember being afraid. I knew there was something going on that wasn't normal, and I knew that in situations like that you want to give yourself every chance to survive in it. You know, in retrospect I wish I'd seen the thing visually.

INTERVIEWER: Anything stopping you?

McCASLIN: No, I was being invited up to take a look, which I would have had to unstrap, climb up the stairs, go up front, stand there between the pilots to look—completely unstrapped to anything, no parachute, nothing. To quote our former 41st President, “Didn't seem prudent.” So I stayed where I was.^[129]



Second circuit around the traffic pattern. Since time references are missing in the communications transcript following 4:21, we have plotted several possible patterns that would bring the B-52 to a full stop, with engines off at 4:40. Total flight time is between 15:02 and 17:05 minutes, which is an additional 1-3 minutes more than the first go-around, indicating that the B-52 flew further out to the northwest during the second go-around. At 4:26, at the same time the B-52 pilots were observing the stationary UFO ahead of the aircraft, the Base Operations Dispatcher noted another object evidently reported by Bond “direct S/W of N-1 moving north then lights went out” (0926).

129 [McCaslin, 2001, 23-24](#). Partin recalls: “When I described to the crew over the interphone what I was seeing, the Navigator, the Radar-Navigator, and everybody tried to get up in our lap in the cockpit and—(laughs)” (2001, 4).

According to Runyon, controllers provided the vector for the B-52 to turn around and over the top of the UFO onto the base leg. Following this, the pilots were no longer observing the UFO, eventually arriving at final approach to the runway on an extended final of 115 degrees.^[122] The B-52 terminally landed and came to a full stop at 4:40. RAPCON had earlier requested that “somebody stop in at baseops,” and since Partin was senior officer he attended the debriefing at Base Operations, while the crew proceeded to the routine post-flight mechanical debriefing.^[123] Along the way, someone was sent over to meet McCaslin and appropriate the radarscope film packets.^[124]

At some point, the crewmembers were instructed to return to base later that morning for a debriefing in the office of Brig. General Ralph Holland, commander of the 810th Strategic Aerospace Division. But in the meantime, while Cagle hurried off to Atlanta, the rest of the crewmembers headed home to bed. McCaslin reminisced:

McCASLIN: All of us were tired. We were beat. We’d been at it all day and we were ready to go home, and I remember going home and telling my wife—Sammy, she still tells me this—I woke her up and said, “You’re never going to believe what I saw tonight,” and I told her all about it, what I remembered of it, and then I went to sleep. I was bushed, and she was up the rest of the night looking out, wondering what’s out there and everything.^[130]

5. Oscar-7 Launch Facility Break-in (4:49)

After the B-52 passed by N-7 on its way to the base, Jablonski and Adams went on patrol, while Isley and O’Connor completed their maintenance tasks in the Launch Support Building, securing the site and headed back to base. At around 5:00 a.m., as they were driving east past the Oscar-7 Launch Facility, O’Connor noticed the overhead security lights were turned on with nobody present on the site.

¹³⁰ [McCaslin, 2001, 29.](#)



Oscar-7 Launch Facility located 24 miles north of Minot AFB, to the south of ND Highway 5W; and (inset) the personnel access hatch's weather cover flipped open with the vault door removed, providing access to the controls to open the primary door. In this instance, somebody had entered the facility triggering the outer-zone alarm, opened the weather cover, and turned the combination dial off its setting triggering the inner-zone alarm.

As they approached, he also noticed that the navy-style hatch (weather cover) protecting the controls for the personnel access to the missile silo was standing open.

O'Connor recalls,

O'CONNOR: They all left and then I remember getting in the truck and we were going out the gate, the site was all secured again, we were going back and we came up the road by Oscar-7. I saw the light on the missile site, which they can turn on from the capsule, they'll do that



for you. . . . But anyway, then the support building cover was open, the hatch that opened over the top of the combinations for the access—

INTERVIEWER: Silo access?

O'CONNOR: Yeah, for the B-Plug— that was open and I thought it very strange and—

INTERVIEWER: The big one?

O'CONNOR: No, the small one, that was open and the SAT team was just arriving at the site, coming up the road as we were going by, so that looked very out of place to me, and I didn't stop or anything because we had already been through a lot of stuff. But I don't know why that had happened. I kind of assumed that somebody went in there that wasn't authorized and that's why they were coming to check it. ^[131]

At 4:49, shortly after the B-52 had landed, both Outer-zone (OZ) and Inner-zone (IZ) security alarms at O-7 sounded in the Oscar-Launch Control Center. It was common for the sensitive OZ perimeter alarm system to be activated by animal activity, and even snow accumulations altering the topography. However, the triggering mechanisms for the IZ alarms were protected from the local environment, and both alarm zones activating at the same time was an exceptional situation. Oscar-Flight Security Controller, SSgt. Smith, immediately dispatched his Security Alert Team of A1C Donald Bajgiar and A1C Vennedall to secure the site. By coincidence, the team arrived at O-7 just as O'Connor and Isley were driving past on their way back to the base.

Smith recalls,

SMITH: The key thing if I remember correctly was that the lock was undone on the gate.... And, from what I understand they could see that it was open, and so we went to heightened alert at that point, now we know somebody was on the site. We assume that somebody is there, and we get our weapons charged and ready to go, now our level of security goes up.... But I remember the standard procedures: you

¹³¹ O'Connor 2005, 13-14; Isley 2001, 12. In order to access the missile silo, maintenance crews had to pass through "formidable mechanical barriers" in a process that often took up to an hour. First, a weather cover was opened, a combination entered and the vault door removed. This allowed the retraction of the locking shaft, and operation of the hydraulic controls used to slowly raise the steel and concrete primary door. The crew could then descend a few feet down the cylindrical shaft and enter another combination into the secondary door (the B-plug) and retract the locking bolts. Following a timed interval, the large steel B-plug would slowly lower to the level of the upper equipment room. The crews could then climb down into the room surrounding the missile silo and begin maintenance tasks. An image in the lower equipment room and the retracted B-plug is available from: <https://nonplused.org/panos/minuteman/index.html>.



just go through the checklist, and try to find if there are people there, and we searched that thing for a long time because we knew this was out of the ordinary.... So we reported, they do their whole process and of course don't find anything.... We were

pretty sure Stanboard wasn't out. With all the things going on we doubted [they] would try to pull something like that. So we were pretty sure that if in fact somebody was on that site, they were dangerous and we had to be very careful, or it was something happening related to what we saw that was going on.^[132]

Col. Werlich reported in the comment section of the Basic Reporting Data:

AT 0949 ZULU (0449CDT) OSCAR 7 SITE'S INNER AND OUTER ALARMS SOUNDED AT WING SECURITY CONTROL. OSCAR 7 IS 10 MILES NORTH AND ELEVEN AND ONE HALF MILES EAST OF NOVEMBER 7. A SECURITY ALERT TEAM WAS DISPATCHED AND FOUND THE PADLOCK TO THE CHAINLINK FENCE OPEN AND THE FENCE GATE STANDING OPEN. THIS SET OFF THE OUTER ALARM. INSIDE THE COMPLEX, A HORIZONTAL DOOR HAD BEEN UNSECURED AND LEFT OPEN AND THE COMBINATION LOCK DIAL HAD BEEN TURNED OFF ITS SETTING THUS TRIGGERING THE INNER ALARM. NO TRACKS, PRINTS OR IMPRESSIONS WERE FOUND.^[130]

While Bajgiar and Vennedall found no additional evidence of intruders, later that day Smith met another team sent out by the missile Wing Security Control to conduct a further investigation of the O-7 break-in.

¹³² [Smith, 2001, 14](#). Regarding LF access, alarm systems, and Standardization (Stanboard) teams, see: [Smith 2001, 6-10](#), 21.

SMITH: [I] went out and met an officer on one of the sites. I remember he was a Lieutenant and he was investigating the incident and wanted to find out what happened and how—of course I was aware of what had gone down as far as the site being open and that kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: The same site that had the alarms?

SMITH: Yes, the team had gone to check it out. And he indicated that he had found a low-level type of radiation on the site, and so I was concerned about that because it was not where the missile was, but was off to the support part of the site—it's a graveled area.

INTERVIEWER: Within the perimeter fence?

SMITH: Yes. It was inside the perimeter fence and was somewhat elevated on the actual sites for drainage, a huge area for parking. And that's where he said he found the radiation. He said it was a large circular pattern of radiation. He did indicate that.^[133]

In recent interviews, a couple of the witnesses seem to recall being informed that as many as three different Launch Facilities experienced intrusion alarms, yet no evidence of a physical entry was found. 5th Bomb Wing intelligence officer Richard Clark recalls:

CLARK: I don't know how accurate it is, and I can't remember who I heard it from, but it had to be somebody in the wing. I heard that they sent a crew out to one of the missile silos after the alarms went off and something happened to the crew, the motor stopped, the lights went off—I cannot remember. I don't even remember which three silos went off.



¹³³ [Smith 2001, 22-23, 13.](#)

INTERVIEWER: Three silos?

CLARK: Three separate silos went off and they ended up, what I did hear was that they could not find anything.

INTERVIEWER: Exterior, interior alarms?

CLARK: Yes, interior alarms. But they didn't find anything. Nobody could have been in there.^[134]

B-52 Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) Lt. Thomas Goduto also recalled talk of several alarms:



GODUTO: It could have been a discussion later where they said that there were possibly three intrusion alarms that had gone off on the missile sites, the unmanned sites where the silos are. But this would have been right at this time when things were occurring. And of course, my thinking is they're

after nuclear material. What I understood was that the intrusion alarms went off and security reaction teams responded but they found no locks, or no entries there.^[135]

Another curious event that is unsupported by other documentation or testimony was noted by the missile Wing Security Controller in his summary of events:

¹³⁴ [Clark, Richard, 2003. Transcript of interview by Thomas Tullen, 11 July \(Sign Oral History Project\), 14.](#) Also, during the B-52 crew debriefing, McCaslin and Runyon recall that General Holland discussed an incident at one of the missile sites, in which a UFO was hovering over a security alert team in a vehicle. McCaslin: I don't think he gave us a great bunch of detail. I mean he talked in terms of, "Well, a couple of security policemen were—had this thing hovering right over them." Scared 'em to death. A couple of young guys. [Hovering over their vehicle?] Over their vehicle, and that—my memory is it's at that briefing where I learned that when they saw that thing leave them, they—my memory is that he said that it went dark—it was hovering over them—that it went dark and lifted up" (2001, 29). And: [Runyon, 2005, 20-21.](#)

¹³⁵ Goduto, Thomas, 2000. Transcript of interview by Jim Klotz, 22 November (Sign Oral History Project), 5. In addition, see Endnote #135 from: <http://www.minotb52ufo.com/narrative/section-5.php#Endnote%20135>

SSgt Bond the FSC at Nov Flt stated that the object which looked to him as the sun, came near the hundred [hardened] antenna at N-1. It then moved to the right and he sent the SAT out to check and see what it was. The object then moved about one mile away with the SAT following. They came within ½ mile from where it appeared to be landing. When it reached surface the lights became dimmer and finally went out. After this they could see nothing.^[136]

There is no express time for this occurrence, and neither Bond or his Security Alert Team reported anything at all comparable to this, nor have any memory of this particular event. In reference to the quote, Bond recently asserted:

BOND: It was not anywhere near November-1. I was at November-1. It might have been at another site that they were talking about. In fact, if it had been that close to my LCF my combat crew would have been going bananas! It wasn't anywhere near the antenna, didn't come near my site, my LCF. Just didn't happen."^[137]

6. Final Ground-visual UFO Observations (4:26-5:34)

At the time when the B-52 was still flying around the second traffic pattern and observing the stationary UFO on or near the ground ahead of the aircraft (a location to the south southeast of N-1), the Base Operations Dispatcher noted an object ostensibly reported by Bond southwest of N-1, moving north:

4:26. Object direct S/W of N 1 moving north then lights went out. A B-52 went out to location of sighting and saw object and had on radar 20,000 feet. Object followed B-52 to fifteen miles from base. During this time B-52 lost radio contact on all frequencies. At this time N-7 lost sight of object. B-52 went around again and negative contact.

¹³⁶ [Wing Security Controller summary](#), 1.

¹³⁷ [Bond, 2005, 20-23](#).

4:40. B-52 landed.^[138]

The dispatcher was obviously privy to the pilot-RAPCON communications during the air-radar encounter with the UFO, and subsequent first go-around of the traffic pattern, but, apparently not privy to the second go-around when the B-52 pilots visually observed and overflew the UFO on or near the ground. He did, however, continue to monitor November-Flight Security Controller, Bond and the Security Alert Team of Jablonski and Adams until their final entry at 5:10 am.

After the B-52 passed by on the way to the base, O'Connor and Isley completed their maintenance tasks at N-7, and headed back to base. Jablonski and Adams also started back to N-1 on patrol, periodically observing the UFO in the west. Jablonski recalls that by this time Adams was feeling unnerved by the events, so he attempted to make light of the situation by jokingly referring to the then-popular TV show *The Invaders*.^[139]

At the time the B-52 completed its terminal landing, the dispatcher noted:

4:40. N-7 picked up object again 3 miles west of site. Stationary — seems to be on the ground — lights bright orange then illuminated to white then white disappeared and green came on.

4:44. Disappeared.

4:45. In sight — stationary position.

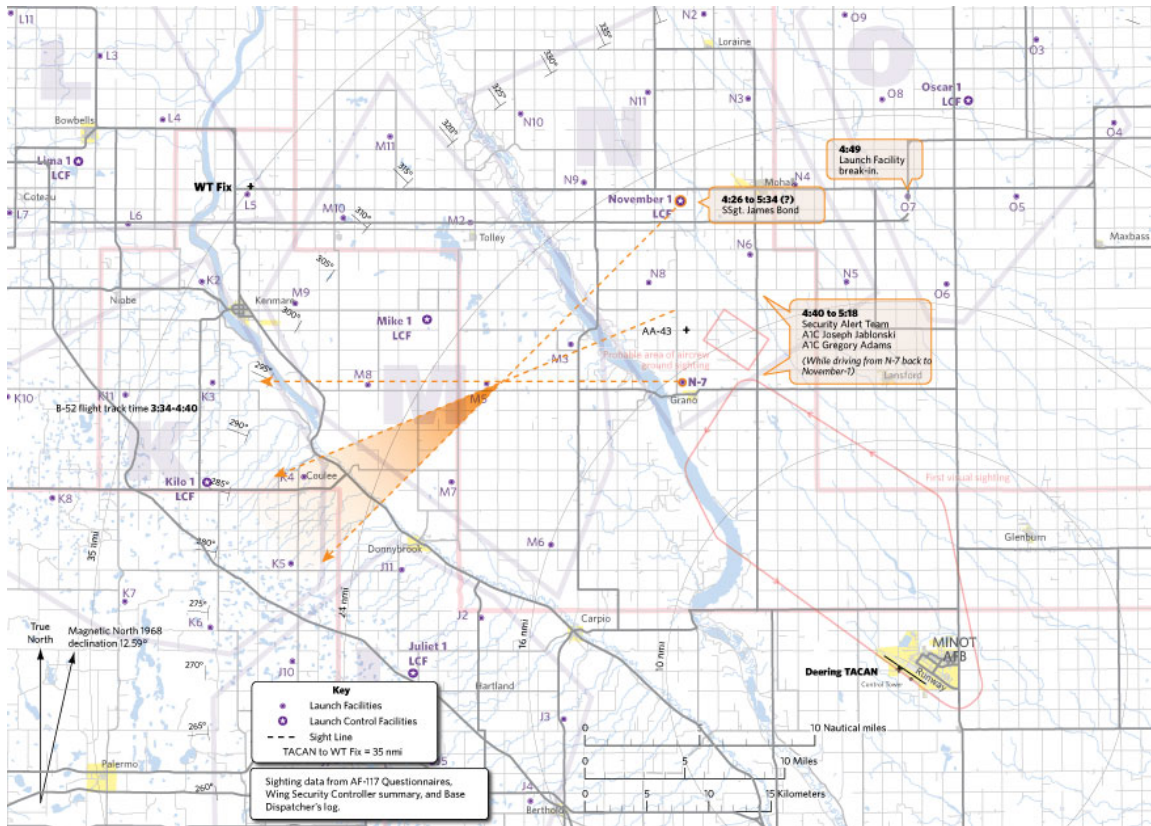
5:04. Object has moved — still west of N-7, now stationary once more.

5:10. 2 miles east of N-7 — object still 5 miles west of him approximately 50 feet off the ground stationary green lights.^[140]

¹³⁸ [Base Operations dispatcher](#), 0926-0940.

¹³⁹ [Jablonski, 2005, 16-17, 18.](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Base Operations dispatcher](#), 0940-1010.



While driving back to N-1 on patrol, Jablonski and Adams continued observing a UFO in the west until their final observation in the west-southwest at 5:18. From N-1, Bond was also reporting a UFO in the southwest that appeared to land and gradually disappear. In his AF-117, he noted that he observed the UFO for a period of 2 hours and 26 minutes (3:08-5:34).

In his AF-117 report, Jablonski noted:

Prior to our return to N-1 it caught our attention again, this time WSW in location. It had appeared as before starting bright orange-red, to white and finally green. The object was stationary at the time and appeared approx. 1,000 FT above ground. The green light started to diminish slowly till no longer seen.

And,

The object appeared to move more westerly each time but never could be seen in the westerly direction until the last and final illuminations at 05:10 lasting until approx. 05:18 when it no longer could be seen. ^[141]

¹⁴¹ [Jablonski, AF-117](#), 5, 6.

Bond appears to confirm this last observation in the southwest, from his position at N-1: “Appeared to land and slowly changed to a dim green, after about 15 minutes it disappeared (gradually).”^[142] He also recalled:

When they [Jablonski and Adams] got back to the LCF, we didn’t talk about it that much because everybody had already been talked out. In fact, I think when they came back in, they got out of the vehicle and secured it, came in, I don’t even think they got anything to eat. I think they sat and read, watched the tube, or whatever. They were awful quiet. ^[143]

¹⁴² [Bond, AF-117](#), 5, 6. Bond reported his observations from 3:08-5:34, for a length of time of 2 hours 26 minutes (3). [Jablonski](#) and [Adams](#) both noted the time of their last observation at 5:18 for a length of time of 2 hours 10 minutes (AF-117s, 1, 3). The camper team reported the initial observation to Oscar-FSC Smith at 2:15, for a total reporting time of 3 hours and 19 minutes.