

***The Fifth Horseman
of the Apocalypse***

***UFOs: A History
1956***

November - December

THE FIFTH HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE

UFOS: A HISTORY

1956: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

by

Loren E. Gross

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Both objects continued to rise until they faded from sight. Observer stated the jet aircraft appeared to roll slightly as the object neared the aircraft, the aircraft then straightened and continued on an easterly course " (104)

17 December Itazuke Air Base, Japan

Balloon, freak conditions, or a UFO? (See teletype message) (See news clipping, comment of Col Hoffman, and BLUE BOOK file card) (105)

NICAP examined the BLUE BOOK report on the Itazuke case in August 1957 and the civilian group noted with interest the pilot's estimate of the UFO's size which the flyer said was as big as a B-29 bomber. Was the size correct? NICAP used three figures to confirm the pilot's estimate

- 1) The thickness of a standard pencil eraser
- 2) The range of the UFO as determined by radar
- 3) The distance between the pilot's eye and the windscreen
(This distance was determined exactly by consulting with the aircraft company that designed and manufactured the F-86, North American Aviation)

NICAP computed the diameter of the UFO as 200 feet+. The largest type of weather balloon did not exceed 20 feet in diameter "at altitude" (Point of maximum expansion), so how could the UFO be a weather balloon? (106)

Aside from the question of the UFO's dimensions, it is impossible to ignore the apparent jamming of the F-86's radar. To jam the jet's radar, the UFO had to have a device to transmit a powerful signal on the same frequency, thus washing out any reflective echo. Once the F-86's radar was jammed, the pilot in this case pushed the anti-jamming button which triggered a change of frequency, restoring a clear screen. To maintain a jamming condition the UFO had to search the spectrum of radar frequencies until it found the one being used by the F-86, and then again transmit obscuring interference pulses. This search of the radar spectrum involves a slight delay, which is exactly what happened. It is also interesting to note that the second attempt at jamming was not completely effective, at which time the UFO pulled away as if the UFO was aware its jamming was not doing the job. The testimony of the pilot seeing an object, combined with the jamming, indicates that some sort of machine was involved. At least it makes for a better scenario than the proposed "freak atmospheric conditions "

Late 1956

Castle AFB, California

More puzzling radar effects

With the Itazuke case fresh in our minds, let us review a late 1956 (No exact date available) incident as related in Richard Hall's book Uninvited Guests

The incident involved a "cat and mouse" aerial encounter in the sky near the city of Modesto, California. The jets in this encounter were radar equipped F-86s, the same kind of aircraft as in the Itazuke case.

It seems civilians in the Modesto area alerted nearby Castle AFB to UFO activity. As a result two F-86 jets were scrambled. While searching the sky,



Castle field radioed that an unidentified object was visible to air controllers in the air traffic control tower. The jets raced back to the field and immediately spotted the UFO.

There was a cloud layer at about 11,000 feet and the UFO was just below it. The UFO appeared to be a luminous elliptical body that was apparently trying to use the thin cloud layer as cover, ducking into the vapor when one of the F-86s approached. At times the jets got within 500 yards of the object. To foil the UFO, one jet positioned itself above the cloud layer while the other interceptor remained below the cloud layer. Of course none of this maneuvering should have been necessary since the F-86s were equipped with airborne radar, and the "alien ship," if that is what it was, should have been aware of that fact. Hall tells us "Both pilots got transient returns from their airborne radars, but were puzzled by the curious way in which they lost the echo almost as soon as they picked it up." (107)

The game of "cat and mouse" continued until the two jets had to return to Castle field so they could refuel.

An Air Force debriefing team arrived at Castle field to interrogate the F-86 pilots. The debriefing officers were not connected with Castle AFB and they asked some odd questions according to the F-86 pilots. The questions asked were "seeking 'confirmation not information,' as if they knew just what they wanted to find out." (108) The pilots were told that "forget the incident and inquiries from the public were discouraged by insisting the F-86s had been chasing nothing more than large birds."

This case was investigated by Dr. James McDonald who was one of the best UFO detectives ever to tackle the mystery. All of the names and affiliations of those people involved in the case are in his files. (109)

How the Air Force assigned balloon explanations "

Among the BLUE BOOK paperwork on the Ita case, there is the following information from ATIC's "Balloon Data File." First of all there is some general data about weather balloon types: Radiosonde, Rawin, Rawinsonde, Robal, and Pibal, and then there is this surprising admission. (See below) (110)

Part I - Weather Balloons

1. In the analysis of Flyobrppts prior to 1 Jul 52 approximately 15% were classified as "possibly" or "probably" balloon. The basis for decision was generally little more than a form of guesswork; if the Flyobrppt did not do anything, and much leeway was allowed for observer's fallibility, that a balloon could not do in maneuvers, speed, etc., and if the description corresponded even roughly to that of a balloon, it was so classified. If there was no particular reason to believe a balloon was in the area, the report became a "possible." If the sighting occurred near a balloon launch-site or on or about the launch time, it became a "probable." It was obvious that the effort to obtain actual data to support such conclusions was in order.

THE FIFTH HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE

UFOS: A HISTORY

1956 September-October

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

By

Loren E. Gross

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"UFOS are the Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse."

--- Dr. Lincoln La Paz

"Supplemental Notes" consist of material under consideration for any revision of the original UFO history volume covering this time period.

Notes on sources:

The files of APRO, NICAP, CUFOs, and Murray Bott, provided many items of interest to the supplement covering this time period. The best source, however, has been Robert Gribble's collection. The newspaper clipping service subscribed to by Gribble's organization located detailed news stories about cases that were only briefly reported by other UFO groups and publications. Most fascinating were the many close, low altitude, UFO sightings from the American mid-West. This late 1956 wave seems to be a forerunner of the 1957 "Sputnik" flap.

The October 7, 1956, "Modesto, California/Alvin Akins jet chase" should receive special attention in regards to sources of material. Some explanation is needed as to why the case is not in BLUE BOOK files. The fact may, or may not, help prove there was a "cover-up" concerning "good" UFO reports. All we can say for sure, is that tracking down UFO information can be very complicated. In order to give Jan Aldrich the credit he is due, a discussion of official record keeping by Barry Greenwood is quoted below:

"Thousands of pages of UFO case files have been extracted from the National Archives recently, adding greatly to our knowledge of the UFO investigative activities of the Air Force's 4602nd Air Intelligence Service Squadron (AISS) during the mid-1950s. The 4602nd essentially served as an investigative arm for Project Blue Book using intelligence personnel stationed at various air force bases to check UFO sightings reports in their areas. This expedited Blue Book's ability to respond quickly to UFO events since prior to this time the small staff at Blue Book had to send someone from Wright-Patterson AFB at Dayton, Ohio to check stories of consequence. While the 4602nd's investigations were sent to Blue Book, their in-house records, including case not sent to Blue Book, were never made a part of the National Archives Blue Book holdings [!].

"The documents were surfaced as a result of a search at the archives by Project 1947 coordinator Jan Aldrich, and took place only a matter of months after a series of Air Force histories, including some on the 4602nd, had been unearthed at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. This information thus constitutes the raw material for the statistical information on the 4602nd's investigations during the 1954-56 time frame. Such a retrieval would have been quite difficult without an on-site search and would certainly have cost much more than it did. A debt of gratitude is owed Aldrich for his perseverance on this.

"Several important things are evident in this group of files. While much of the paperwork is in the Blue Book files, some wasn't. A portion of the sample examined so far reveals case write-ups that are completely new. At least two case files contained in the sample, Frederick, OK 3-3-56 and Oklahoma City, OK 5-29-56, are listed in Blue Book as 'Case Missing.' The Frederick sighting was noted as having no investigation authorized by the 4602nd. However two pages of specifics are included with the file, obviously never forwarded.

"We have a clearer understanding of why Blue Book had 'Case Missing' listings and what became of them. They are not actually suppressed files as one might infer from material said to be missing. They are records for which the 4602nd had detail and had forwarded a line listing to Blue Book for statistical purposes. And since an investigation was listed as 'not authorized' in some cases for whatever reason (time not available, report not compelling enough, etc.) nothing else was sent to Blue Book offices. The Blue Book indexers, finding nothing more than a summary card on these reports, had no choice but to indicate that the case was missing, perhaps for good.

"Due to Aldrich's work we can now account for a number of Blue Book's missing reports, an important historical development which will drop the paranoia index on this matter a few notches.

"Another important accounting evident in these records is the fact that we may be able to answer to another group of missing UFO files: those of the Ground Observer Corps. Even a superficial scan of early UFO case files shows that numerous reports were made by volunteers assigned to the Ground Observer Corps, a body designed to provide the military with insurance sky watching coverage in the event of an enemy aerial attack. The volunteer watches, most often average citizens trained to recognize airplane types, would relay any unusual observations to 'Filter Centers' which would in turn decide if the Air Force was to be alerted to respond to potential intruders with fighter aircraft.

"Previous efforts to locate the whereabouts of the Ground Observer Corps UFO files were fruitless as there seemed to be no central collection point for them. Scanning the 4602nd's records shows that many Ground Observer Corps sightings exist there but are identified as having come from 'housewives' or 'clerks' or similar civilian occupations. It is not at all clear that the reports were files while the observer was on duty as a skywatcher unless one reads the body of the report in detail. GOC sightings did not seem to be held apart as a separate body of reports by the Air Force."

—Greenwood, Barry. "Air Force Intelligence UFO Files Surface." *Just Cause*. #47. Published by Citizens Against UFO Secrecy. March-June 1996. pp.5,7.

7 October. Near Modesto, California. (10:45 p.m. – 11:40 p.m.)

Dr. McDonald learns of a UFO chase.

In a letter to Richard Hall, Dr. James McDonald happen to mention a “jet chase” that was supposed to have occurred in late 1956. McDonald wrote:

“Bob Runser of Chicago-NICAP attended my talk to the Chicago AIAA section on September 26 [1968]. Afterwards, while a half-dozen of us were talking on for an hour or so, he stayed with us, and, in the course of discussions, told us of a UFO-chase by Air Force pilots in California in the mid-1950s. The source of his information was one of the two pilots, now out of the Air Force and flying DC-8s for United, as Runser does. I got the phone number and interviewed the pilot, Al Akins, last week.

“Without trying to give a complete summary, I’ll mention that Akins was on alert duty, airborne in an F-86 near Modesto, out of Castle AFB. Estimated date: late in 1956. Civilian sighting reports of a light at a nearby town led the tower to vector him there, only to report suddenly to whip back to Castle because the light was visible from the tower. He began to close and was joined by a second of the three planes that Castle had on the hot-line. An overcast from 10,000-12,000 feet became a screen above and below which the UFO alternately took cover. The pilots soon stationed themselves one below and one above and took turns trying to chase it as it came to their side of the clouds. Akins said it appeared to be football-shaped in side view, but round in planform, and he said they got good looks at it from all sides, sometimes closing to an estimated few hundred yards before it whipped out of sight again. Ground radar at Madrea painted them, but never the unknown. They got fading, transient returns from their airborne nose radars, but were puzzled by the curious way in which they lost the echo almost as soon as they picked it up [alien ECM?]. He ran low on fuel and was letting down to refuel, when he looked back up and saw that the chase had reversed, and the UFO was pursuing the other plane. He elected to go back up, despite low fuel, and the object shot off and disappeared in the distance, terminating the sighting.

“They were on afterburner intermittently, so the noise was noticeable to a lot of ground observers in Modesto. Also, civilians had seen the luminous object itself. The ‘explanation’ released locally was that the pilots had been chasing ducks or geese.

“The interesting part of the whole story was that they were interrogated by several officers, who flew in from another base (not WPAFB) and who were very knowledgeable about UFOs and went right to the heart of all their questioning, as if they knew just what they wanted to find out. Akins put it that they seemed to be seeking confirmation rather information. They were told (he and Jerry Robinson, the other pilot) not to make any public statements or any other kind of statements about it. They were later approached by a Modesto newsman, who had ferreted out their names, but they made no statements. He never discussed it again with Robinson. When he left the Air Force in 1967, he had never again heard of the incident. He did not seem reluctant to discuss it, and I did not press him, lest I get a negative with respect to mentioning this case openly. I’m not just sure how or when it should be used, but I think it’s a good one. The date is, of course, significant with respect to the cover up question. Since it’s over 2 ½ years A.R. (After Robertson [the Robertson panel]) and since it implies existence of competent investigators [at odds, one notes, with McDonald’s precious “foul-up”

theory as opposed to “cover-up”] who hushed up intercept pilots after they’d had a good sighting, it strains my hypothesis, obviously. Runser said he doesn’t think NICAP has any record on this. Does it ring a bell with you? Akins thinks he has file materials giving the date and few more particulars and promised to get in touch with me if he locates them. He also says he gets back to Modesto from time to time and volunteered to search the newspapers, although that might be some time off. If you have anybody in Modesto who could pin this one down with a lead no firmer than late 1956, I think it would be worthwhile.” (xx.)

(xx.) Letter: To: Richard Hall. From Dr. James McDonald. Date: 16 October 68.
Dr. James McDonald papers. University of Arizona Library, Tucson, Arizona.
Special Collections Division. Photocopy in author’s files.

35 years later:

In 2003 the Modesto and Merced libraries were visited to search for a press account of the “Akins” case. One account was located on the front page of the October 9, 1956 issue of *The Modesto Bee*. The news story tells us very little:

“SEARCH FOR SKY LIGHT IS FUTILE.

“MERCED, Merced Co.—Jet planes from the 456th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at nearby Castle Air Force Base scrambled into the sky south of here after receiving reports of a mysterious light but failed to locate the mysterious glow.

“The report came into Castle officials late Sunday [October 7th] from Thomas Salazar of 833 West 11th Street, Merced. He told officials there and later the police here the light would brighten, then dim. Salazar reported whenever planes would approach the light it would black out.

“Lieutenant Colonel Lee Lambert, commander of the 456th, said he ordered some of his F-86 aircraft already in the air diverted to investigate but found nothing.

“ ‘We didn’t get anything on the radar scope, either,’ he declared.

“He offered the opinion possibly some migratory birds with phosphorescent glow reflected against the cloud formations might have been the cause of Salazar’s sighting and others reported into the base.”

(xx.) Modesto, California. *The Modesto Bee*. 9 October 56. p.1.

The Merced paper’s story was smaller and a bit different:

“A mysterious light in the southern sky over Merced was spotted at 10:45 p.m. Sunday by Thomas Salazar, 833 West 11th Street.

“Salazar notified the police department, and officers sighted the light too. It would brighten and then dim. Police notified Castle AFB and jet planes were sent into the air to investigate. The light could not be located, however.

“No one offered any explanation.” (xx.)

(xx.) Merced, California. *Merced Sun-Star*. 8 October 56. p.1.

The big break came when the official report on the case was discovered in files other than the National Archives BLUE BOOK holdings (See "Notes on Sources" at the front of this monograph. The "mysterious" Air Force investigators evidently were personnel from the 4602nd AISS, agents who conducted field investigations for BLUE BOOK). The pilots in this UFO case were Lt. Alvin A. Akins and Lt. Jerry O. Robinett [not "Robinson"].

"Something foreign to our culture?"

Lt. Akins: Answers taken from information form:

Lt. Akins confirms the date of the incident as October 7, 1956 and the time as: 2320-2340. He was piloting an F-86D (#981) out of Castle AFB. Lt. Robinett was flying in the same area and was in radio contact with Akins. The local ground radar station, "Shady Lady" (774th AC&W) was in constant contact with both Akins and Robinett.

Akins gives two compass headings: 330 and 280 degrees. Altitude: 8,000-21,000 feet. And speed: 300-350 knots. Asked if he was able to make radar contact, he said yes, but that he only picked up a small blip that faded simultaneously. He did not attempt an interception but tried to get close. No unusual disturbances were noted on the jet's compass and radio (this question was on the AISS information form). No turbulence was felt, and the UFO was seen by Akins for only 15 seconds. The sky was very dark (no moon) with no trace of sunlight. Asked about appearance, he said the UFO appeared to be a solid object. There was a slight breeze and an overcast at 11,000-21,000 feet.

The thing stood still at times, and other times sped up. It changed brightness and appeared to flicker or pulsate. It did not give off smoke, break up, or change shape. Asked if the UFO ever moved behind anything, Akins said the thing moved up into the clouds when a fighter got in the immediate area. He first spotted the UFO at 11,000 feet but it disappeared vertically into the overcast. Later it appeared again at 11,000 feet (Confirms the "peek-a-boo" story told to Dr. McDonald). Akins made a guess as to the UFO's size, suggesting its longest dimension as about 100-120 feet. He seems to be especially impressed by the object's appearance, which he said was "fuzzy," "very bright like burning phosphorous," and a "shimmering, changing, intensity." The UFO's movements were very fast. Akins gives an estimate of 1,000-1,200 mph, which is very high even if one makes an allowance for considerable error. When the UFO went vertically into the clouds, it did so at a great rate of speed, "nearly instantaneously," he wrote. At times the UFO seemed to be 4-6 miles away and looked to be the size and shape of a slightly squashed volleyball. Akins said he didn't know what the thing was and had never seen anything like it before. To him it showed evidence of intelligent control and construction—"something foreign to our culture possibly."

Akins' brief narrative account:

"I was in the GCA pattern at Castle when a strange lighted object was sighted over Los Banos, California 270 degrees at 20 miles. I broke out of the pattern and checked that area. There was an overcast from 10 [11],000-21,000 feet. I checked over and under it. No contact with anything. I had radio contact with Shady Lady (GCI). They were relaying information from tower and civilian police. I was over the clouds heading back to Castle when Castle sighted the object overhead. I penetrated the overcast and just as I came out I had a good look at the object. Tried to get in closer when it shot up into cloud. I sighted it several more times but was low

on fuel and could not go up to where it was, tried to vector other fighter in on it.”
(xx.)

(xx.) Airborne Observer's Data Sheet. Akins, Alvin A. 2/Lt. 24 West 19th Street, Merced, California. Date of questionnaire; 17 October 56. 4602nd AISS Photocopy in author's files.

“A planned and constructed object.”

Lt. Robinett. Answers taken from information form:

Robinett gives the same date, October 7th, and mentions the time of 11:20 PST. Robinett's circumstances were different than Akins and he gives his position when first spotting the UFO as 37 degrees 10' North, 120 degrees 30' West. Robinett was flying a F86D, # 515028, out of Castle AFB. His headings were 330 and 280 compass. Altitude 8,000 and 21,000 feet. Airspeed 250 to 390 knots. He attempted airborne radar contact but received no return at any time even when apparently within range and correct azimuth. No attempt was made to intercept. He just tried to get close. Shady Lady ground radar was controlling him and Akins and was relaying the position of the UFO as they received calls from ground observers (no apparent radar contact by Shady Lady). No unusual disturbances noted on compass or radio. No turbulence noticed. UFO spotted twice. First time: 3-4 seconds. Second time: 45-60 seconds. Sky dark with no trace of sunlight. UFO appeared to be a “block away.” Wind: very little.

The object appeared solid and when spotted the second time it was “embedded in the clouds.” Robinett never saw it stand still but did witness it suddenly speed up and change brightness. The thing was not seen to break up, give off smoke, or change shape. Like Akins, Robinett said the UFO appeared fuzzy or blurred and emitted a bright, white light. As for size, Robinett figured the UFO was about 100-120 feet high and 50-60 feet in diameter, like the “dome of an observatory.” [The reader is referred to Robinett's sketch] No speed estimate given. The first time it was sighted Robinett estimates it was about 2-3 miles away. On the second occasion maybe 7-10 miles. Azimuth of UFO from his position was 60 degrees. Similar to Akins, Robinett said the UFO appeared to be the size of a volleyball (or even a basketball) at arm's length. Requested to express an opinion as to what the object was, Robinett wrote:

“I have no idea of what this object could have been by our set of standards. It seemed to have great speed but I saw very little maneuverability. From the limited amount of observations I made I would say that it was a planned and constructed object.” (xx.)

(xx.) Airborne Observer's Data Sheet. Robinett, Jerry Owen. 220 West 21st Street, Merced, California. Date of questionnaire: 17 October 56. 4602nd AISS. Photocopy in author's files.

Robinett's brief narrative account:

“My flight [he and Akins] was on alert and I had...[not clear] man up shooting GCA's. At 2310 we started receiving calls concerning this object. I had GCI divert the aircraft [Akins] on GCA's. I went up in another aircraft and we set up a system-actice search pattern. The calls from the ground indicated the object was above me

so I climbed through the overcast (11,000 feet thick) and searched on top. It was as I breaking out on my descent that I spotted the object the first time. I made a hard turn starboard to get another look but was unable to find it.

"I left the No.2 man [Akins] down low over Merced as an observer and started for Los Banos (reports had come from there). About 15 miles out No. 2 called and said he had the object in sight so I came back and climbed on top the overcast again. It was at this time that I spotted the rapidly moving light embedded in the clouds and started trying to move in. It moved away very swiftly to the north and disappeared."
(xx.)

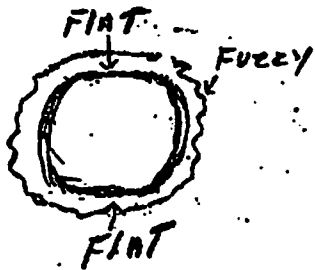
(xx.) Ibid, p.11.

Weather conditions:

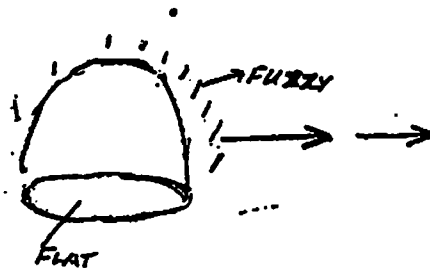
- 7. A. SCATTERED CLOUDS BELOW 11,000 FEET, VISIBILTY 7 MILES, OVERCAST FROM 11,000 TO 21,000 FEET.
- B. 6K NNW AT SURFACE.
- 46K 310DEGREE AT 6,000 FEET
- 27K 310DEGREE AT 16,000 FEET
- 25K 310DEGREE AT 20,000 FEET.
- 35K 300 DEGRAE AT 30,000 FEET.
- 25K 310DEGREE AT 50,000 FEET
- C. 10,000 FEET.
- D. SEVEN MILES.
- E. 10/10

AISS explanation:
"Probable balloon."

Drawings by Akins and Robinett. Note that Robinett depicts a "Structured object."



Akins' drawing.



Robinett's drawing

"Light was emitted from the periphery around the sides of the oval-shaped object not from the bottom or top."

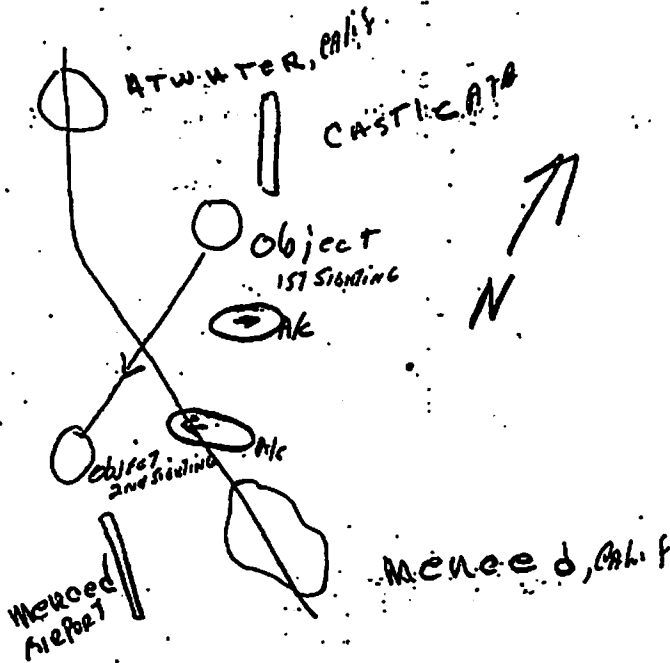
Drawing of jets' and UFO's flight path according to Lt. Akins. The line connecting the city of Atwater with the city of Merced is highway 99. Akins has the UFO going south.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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If practicable, attach to this page the section of a local area chart which shows the location of the sighting. On this chart plot the flight path of your aircraft and the flight path of the object.

If a local area chart is not available, roughly sketch in the area of the sighting showing latitude and longitude. Then plot the flight path of your aircraft and the flight path of the object. Put in prominent landmarks as necessary.



Classification exempted ()
by authority of Sec 37, 8 (2) AFMOS-1
9/24/6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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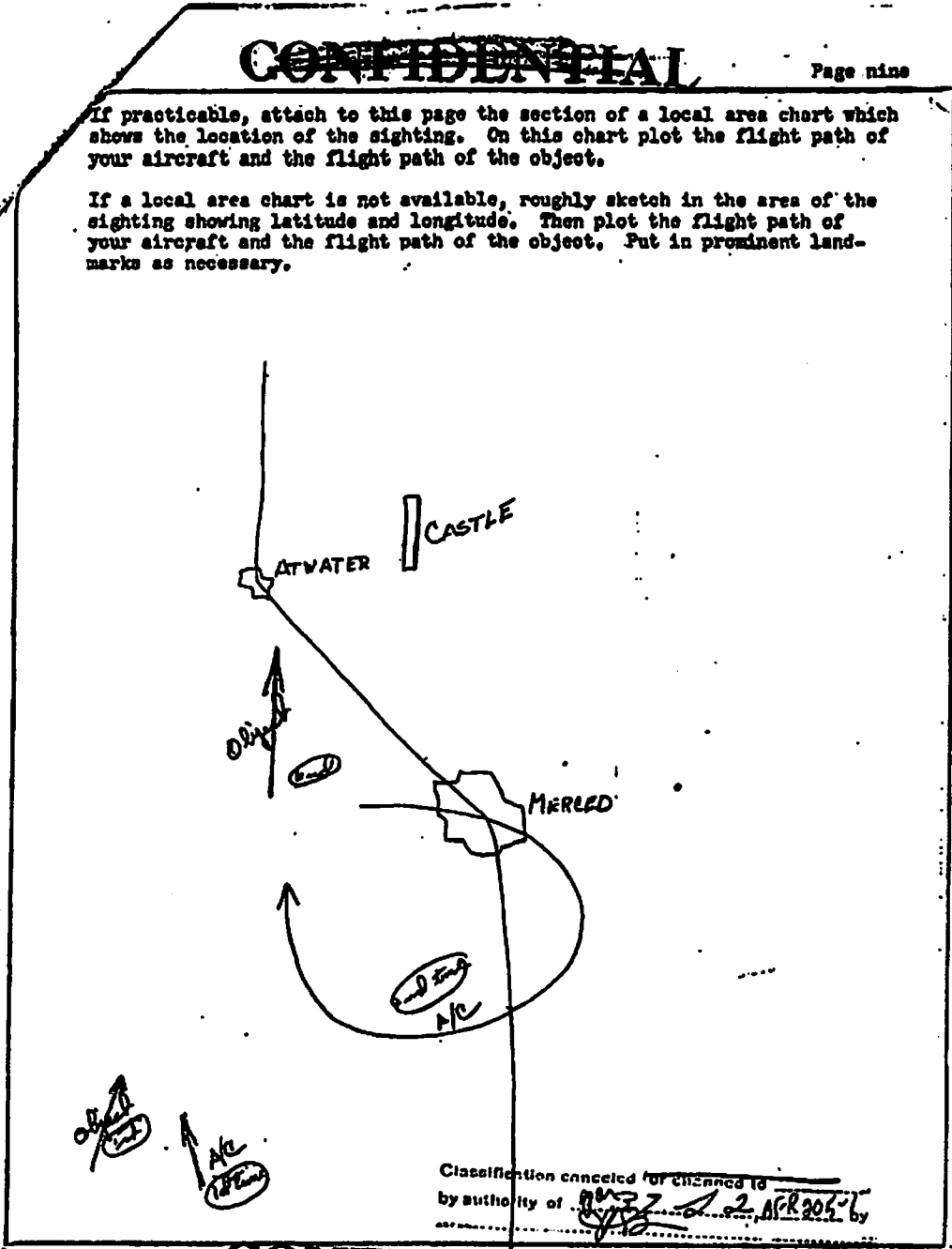
Drawing of jets' and UFO's flight path according to Lt. Robinett. Robinett has the UFO going north. The line connecting the city of Atwater with the city of Merced is highway 99. "Castle" is Castle AFB.

CONFIDENTIAL

Page nine

If practicable, attach to this page the section of a local area chart which shows the location of the sighting. On this chart plot the flight path of your aircraft and the flight path of the object.

If a local area chart is not available, roughly sketch in the area of the sighting showing latitude and longitude. Then plot the flight path of your aircraft and the flight path of the object. Put in prominent landmarks as necessary.



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