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THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS
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(Summary of a talk given October 19, 1966, to the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Meteorological Society, Washington, D. C. To meet a number of requests for a brief summation of the above talk, this summary has been prepared as an extension and revision of a short digest of which a limited number of copies were available at the time of the AMS meeting.)

ABSTRACT. Conclusions drawn from a continuing, intensive study of the problem of the UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) were summarized. Although atmospheric phenomena (ball lightning, mirages, scintillation, parhelia, anomalous radar propagation, etc.) have been invoked to account for many UFO reports, such explanations have been seriously misapplied. Specific examples were discussed.

Careful scrutiny of hundreds of the better UFO reports from quite credible observers during the past twenty years (and longer) reveals that not only does it seem impossible to explain them away in terms of atmospheric physics, but also the other officially proposed categories of geophysical, astronomical, technological, and psychological hypotheses fail to encompass the UFO phenomena. Reasons were given for regarding as probably the least unsatisfactory hypothesis that of the extraterrestrial nature of the UFOs. Serious shortcomings in the past official investigations of the UFO problem were discussed, and a radical change in the level of scientific study of the problem was urged.

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One might group past and current explanations of the unidentified flying objects (UFOs) into eight broad categories comprising the following spectrum of UFO hypotheses:

1. Hoaxes, fabrications, and frauds;
2. Hallucinations, mass hysteria, rumor phenomena;
3. Lay misinterpretations of well-known physical phenomena (meteorological, astronomical, optical, etc.);
4. Advanced technologies (test vehicles, satellites, re-entry effects);
5. Poorly understood physical phenomena (rare atmospheric-electrical effects, cloud phenomena, plasmas of natural or technological origin, etc.);

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