

Incident: 224

At 1745 on 8 Dec 48, Spec Agents STAHL & NEEF, both rated pilots, took off from Kirtland AF Base in a T-7 type aircraft. At 1833 while flying at an indicated altitude of 11,500 feet, mean sea level, approximately 5,000 feet above terrain, a strange phenomenon was observed. Exact position of the aircraft at time of observation was 35° 31' N - 104° 51' W, approximately 20 miles east of Las Vegas, N. M., radio sonda station. Aircraft was on a compass course of 90°, indicated air-speed was 160 MPH and ground speed approx 190 mph. S/A STAHL was pilot and seated on the left side of cockpit. S/A NEEF first observed the object and a split second later S/A STAHL saw it. It was 2,000 ft higher than the plane or 13,500 ft above mean sea level and was approaching the plane at a rapid rate of speed from approximately 30° to the left of course, from 60° ENE, to 240° WSW. The object was similar in appearance to a burning green flare of common use in the Air Forces. However, the light was much more intense and the object appeared considerably larger than a normal flare. No estimate could be made of the distance or size of the object since no other object was visible upon which to base a comparison. It was definitely larger than a shooting star, meteor or flare. The trajectory of the object when first sighted was almost flat and parallel to the earth. The phenomenon lasted approximately 2 seconds at the end of which time the object seemed to burn out. The trajectory then dropped off rapidly and a trail of glowing fragments reddish orange in color was observed falling toward the ground. These fragments were visible for less than a second before disappearing. The phenomenon was of such intensity as to be visible from the very moment it ignited and was observed a split second later. It was not possible for the phenomenon to have been visible for longer than a split second before observation. (See "e" under "Significant Differences Between the Fireballs Observed in the Interval Dec 5-13 & Typical Meteors" - Incident 227)

See Incident 223