

NO SALE

By the time The News talked to Pfc. Viets at Quantico yesterday, the airplane navigation light theory already had been offered. The News asked Pfc. Viets about it, and he said:

"That was no airplane. I first thought it might be a weather balloon, but it wasn't. Either way, you could have seen the shape."

Pfc. Viets and Sergt. Salinder saw the light again at 10:15 the same night. Five minutes later they called in the roving guard from a nearby guard tower, but the light was gone.

CONFLICT

First reports had it that troops were sent into the area to look for the lights. Yesterday Maj. A. B. Ferguson, the base information officer, said that report was erroneous.

"We did at no time dispatch troops to fight off the invaders or capture them or welcome them aboard or anything else," he said.

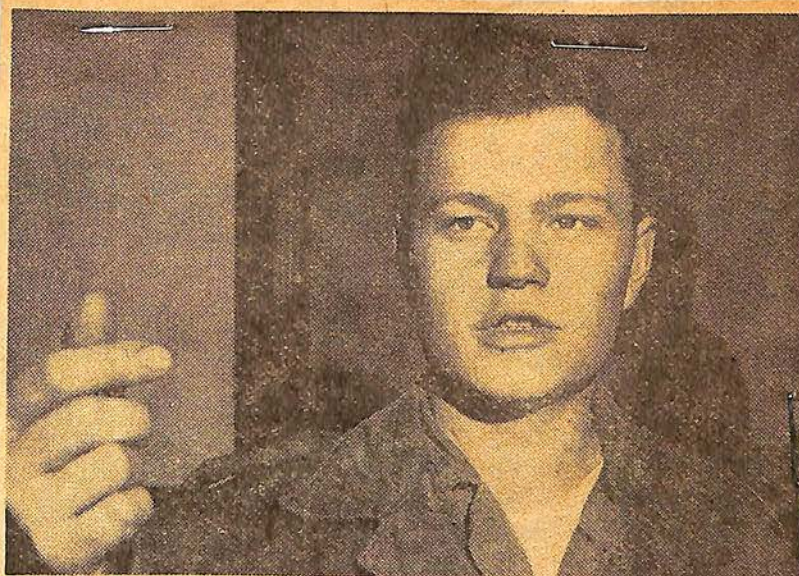
However, this is what the official record says:

"A 13-man detail arrived (at 11:15 p. m., Dec. 30) from Camp Barrett and made a search of the area in which the light was first seen. The search proved fruitless."

Fifty minutes later Pfc. Viets' relief "reported seeing the same red light." Sergt. Salinder saw nothing.

HOVERS

The next night the light was seen again, at 6:25 p. m., by a tank park sentry and the guard tower. At 7:10, it appeared again. This time the sergeant of the guard "came out and checked the area



Pfc. Bennett (top front) grabbed a butcher knife and said: "It's landing in the tank shed!" Maj. Pomerleau (middle photo) is skeptical, but still curious. Pfc. Viets (bottom photo) saw enough to convince him "that was no airplane."

—News Staff Photos by Gene Thomas

with troops," the official report says.

Thirty minutes later, the sergeant of the guard saw it again, and at 8:23 p. m. three lights were seen. (This was New Year's Eve.) At 9:01 it was seen again, and at 4:20 New Year's morning it moved northeast, then south, then north and remained "over the tank shed at an elevation of about 3500 feet."

That was the time Pfc. Viets said, "when they saw it come up there and lay under the moon until morning."

Pfc. Viets' relief of the night before got so excited he "grabbed a butcher knife and headed for the tank shed to help out his troops," his barracks mates said.

The light came back three times Friday night, once Saturday night, five times Sunday night and twice last night.

Maj. Pomerleau said the best pos-

sible way to describe the light's size, shape and intensity was to compare it to "the way a blinking red traffic light appears to a motorist as he pulls up to an intersection."

He heard no noise and saw no shape. He said the light was "sharply delineated."

"But I have friends and a professional reputation," he said, "and as far as I'm concerned just say it's an aircraft navigation light."

Several airlines that fly in and out of Washington say they began installing new lights atop the tails of planes six months ago. They blink on and off, are red, and can be seen much farther away than older types.

"Nobody in the barracks knows," Pfc. Viets said. "They're just talking flying saucers, that's all. They're talking about men from Mars and everything else you could name."