

Virginia 1965 Flap

By Donald B. Hanlon

IN January 1965 the eastern States of the U.S.A. experienced a UFO wave, the significance of which has seemingly been eclipsed by the remarkable renewal of activity that took place only a few months later. The very peculiar character of the January observations appears clearly on Figure 1, where it will be seen that the number of unexplained reports has been plotted against time over a two-year period¹.

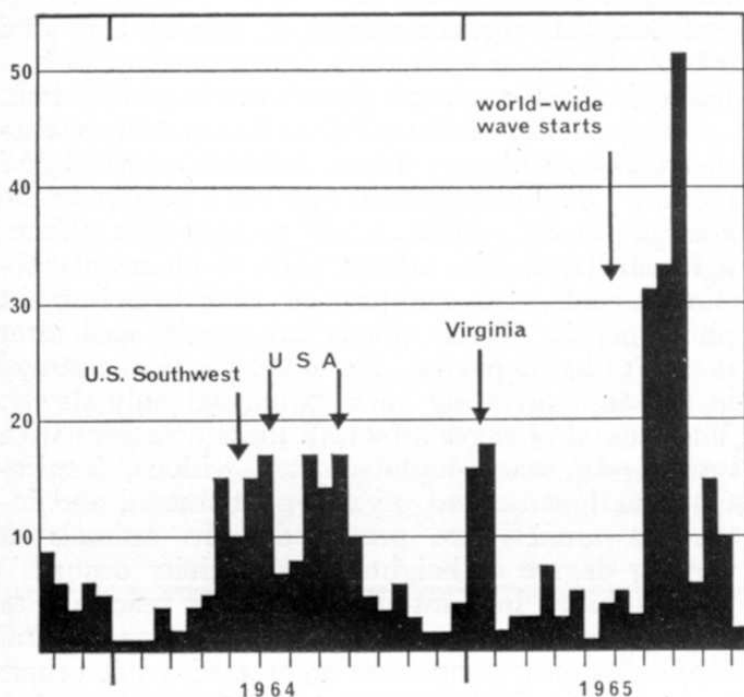


FIG. 1

Frequency of observations (unidentified sightings only) in 1964-5.

Details for this graph have been compiled from world-wide reports after stringent examinations.

The January observations have already been the object of fragmentary studies^{2,8}. Some of the most interesting reports, however, have come to light only recently. A new examination of the events of that period is therefore in order. In this investigation, Virginia emerges as the area of highest concentration (figure 2). We must also turn to the State of Virginia for the most significant observations.

Significant Observations

I have compiled a list of reports which appear to be directly related to the phenomenon under study:

1. About November 20, 1964, Kenneth Norton saw a beehive-shaped object at Staunton, Virginia.²
2. On November 26, 1964, Mrs. F. Rosenberg

saw a bright ball of light close to the ground near Grand Valley, Pennsylvania. Increase in radioactivity was allegedly noted. An independent witness reports seeing the light, preceded by a dark object.³

3. On December 14, 1964 a spinning silvery disc was seen manoeuvring over Needham, Massachusetts, for five minutes.⁴

4. On December 19, 1964 at 3.30 a.m. the Patuxent Naval Air Station in Maryland spotted three objects in rapid succession.²

5. On December 21, 1964 at 5.0 p.m. Mr. Burns saw a huge beehive-shaped object come very close to the ground as his car stopped without apparent reason, in the vicinity of Harrisonburg, Virginia. Radioactivity was allegedly noted by Prof. Gehman, of Eastern Mennonite College.⁵

6. Early in January, 1965, at dusk, State Pathologist Dr. Richard Woodruff and a Vermont State trooper saw three orange objects cross the sky in succession. They were also seen by four persons living in Randolph.⁴

7. On January 5, 1965 at 6.00 p.m., M. Dempsey Bruton, head of the Wallops Island (Virginia) tracking station, saw a bright, orange glowing object coming from the southwest. Several other witnesses.²

8. On January 11, 1965 at 4.20 p.m., at least twelve persons, including six engineers of the Army Signal Corps, saw a dozen oval objects cross the sky, apparently followed by jets from Andrews Air Force Base. Among the witnesses were Messrs. Paul M. Dickey, Jr. and Edward Shad. The Defense Department denied the incident. The witnesses have publicly maintained their story.^{4,2}

9. On January 12, at 6.30 p.m., a bright yellow object was seen for two minutes by Mr. and Mrs. Milliner, NASA public relations employees, on Wallops Island, Virginia.²

10. On January 14, 1965 at 4.45 p.m., an object was seen over Staunton, Virginia, by Carl Billings and Jody Smith.²

11. The same day, a stationary light was seen over Dooms at 6.00 p.m. by seven students and a bus driver.²

12. The same day, Mr. James Myers, Virginia, saw a circular object rise from the ground at 12.00 p.m.²

13. On January 15, at 10.00 p.m. Mr. Charles Knee Jr. of Concord lost control of his car between Enfield and Wilmot (New Hampshire) as the engine

stalled and light went off. Coming out of his car after it had stopped, the witness heard a high-pitched sound and saw a bright light cross the sky.⁶

14. On January 19, 1965 at 6.15 p.m. an industrial worker observed two circular flying objects hovering at low altitude over an archery range at Brands Flat, Virginia. The smaller object (diameter 20 feet) landed 15 to 18 yards from the witness. Three beings about three feet tall emerged, uttered unintelligible noises, and returned to the object, which then took off.^{4,2}

15. On January 20, 1965 at 9.40 a.m. a slow-flying object was seen over Long Beach, Mississippi. Two figures, one of which seemed to be operating a 'camera-like device', were allegedly visible from the ground.⁴

16. On January 23, 1965 at 8.43 p.m. two businessmen driving on highway U.S. 60 in opposite directions were stopped in the vicinity of Toano as their cars approached a huge cone-shaped object which was hovering over a nearby field. Two Army helicopters were allegedly dispatched from Fort Lee to investigate.^{2,5}

17. On January 24, 1965 a radio newsman and his wife saw an orange ball of light streak across the sky and "blink out" over Richmond.⁵

18. On January 24, 1965 five college students reported that an oval object kept pace with their car on a darkened highway near Salem, Virginia. The object, at an altitude of about 400 feet, was observed to have three yellow lights and one green.⁷

19. Again on January 24, a couple in Verona, Virginia, reported seeing a bright yellow light that hovered overhead for about five minutes before heading for Staunton.⁷

20. On January 25, 1965, a Marion, Virginia, policeman and several other witnesses observed an object which took off from a wooded area on a hill. Traces were allegedly found.²

21. The same night, approximately twenty minutes after observation No. 20, nine persons saw a top-shaped object emitting sparks which moved up the Rappahannock Valley at a low altitude. This observation was witnessed from Fredericksburg, Virginia.²

22. Also on the 25th, at 10.55 a.m., a person situated three miles north of Bedford, Virginia saw an aluminum-coloured object of large dimensions fly slowly westward. Five minutes later, two persons at Moneta (10 miles southwest of Bedford) saw a bright cigar flying south to north.⁴

23. Also on January 25, at 12.45 p.m. five Stodert School students in Glover Park, near Washington D.C. saw an object resembling 'an airplane without wings'. First described as silver in colour, it became luminous and changed from orange to red, then green.¹²

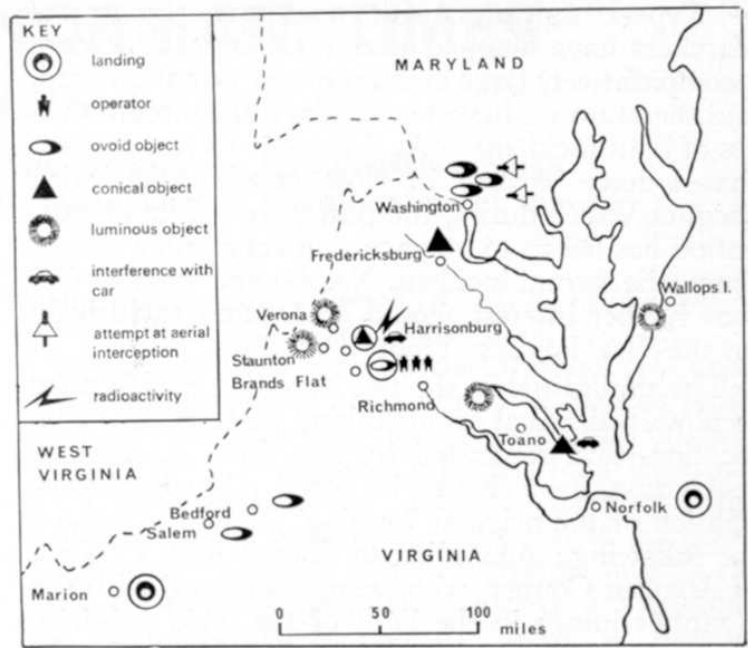


FIG. 2

(Based on author's sketch)

24. On January 26, 1965 at nightfall, seven young people were driving near Brands Flat, Virginia (see observation No. 14) when they allegedly spotted a strange looking individual of small height. They pursued him, and two others that appeared, to a wooded area where all sight of beings was lost. Police investigators explored the area but could find no trace of the supposed 'creatures'. Later one of the witnesses and a photographer resumed the search and said they found an aluminum-coloured object, when the photographer received a mysterious blow on the head. The two men fled the scene after an attempt to photograph the object. This photo was reportedly "confiscated" by Government agents who are also said to have "silenced" the witness.⁸

25. On January 26, 1965 in the evening, the Marion police received numerous telephone calls concerning a stationary object described by Rev. Preston H. Robinson as circular and showing several lights. It flew away at high speed.²

The value and reliability of the twenty-five accounts is, of course, extremely variable. For some of them, a conventional explanation is clearly in order. It was established, for instance, that in case No. 6 the witnesses had simply observed tracer bullets fired across the road from a nearby hill by a group of young people who had decided to scare the motorists.* Other cases call for further investigation. Whatever their individual worth, these observations have unusual features in common and appear highly correlated geographically. But it is for the reader to decide how this correlation should be interpreted.

The list of observations contains two accounts