”FOO FIGHTERS” MYTH VS REALITY

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WHO AM I?

- Former Department of the Air Force civilian historian assigned to HQ Air Force Reserve, Robins AFB, and HQ Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles AFB (1995–1998).
- Received a classified briefing on a UAP incident in 1996.
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“FOO FIGHTERS"

“During the Second World War, many pilots—both Allied and Axis fighters, and above Europe and the Pacific—reported observations of unusual aerial phenomena.”

--Micah Hanks, “Red Lights and Flying Wings: An Unusual Foo Fighter Report Over the Pacific,” 2019

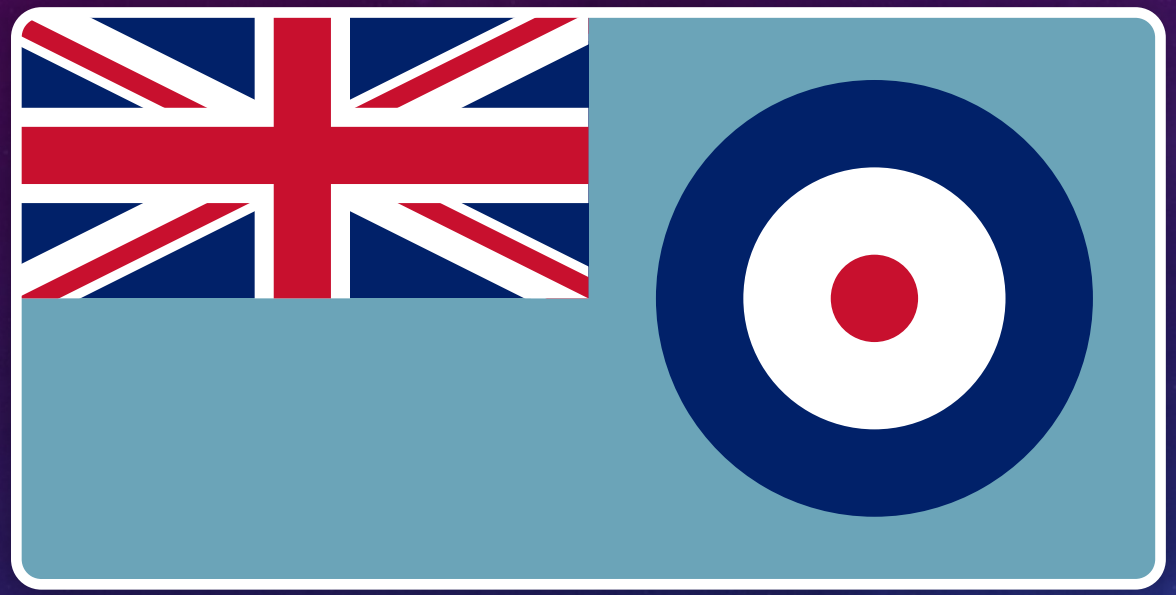
“FOO FIGHTERS”

- “Foo Fighters” is the name that aircrews of the U.S. Army Air Forces’ 415th Night Fighter Squadron dubbed unexplained aerial phenomena witnessed over Central Europe during World War II.
- The term comes from the American comic strip “Smokey Stover” by Bill Holman about a fireman who often said “Where there’s foo, there’s fire!”
- In the decades since the war, an entire embellished narrative has grown around “Foo Fighters” portraying them as balls of fire or light that pilots on both the Allied and Axis sides witnessed.
- Allegedly, each side believed them to be secret, new weapons of the other side.

“FOO FIGHTERS”

- Explanations for “Foo Fighters” range from misidentification of conventional objects, war nerves and battle fatigue, to ball lightning or St. Elmo’s fire.
- Some UFO researchers assert that “Foo Fighters” were a precursor to the post-1947 modern ”UFO” era; and that a form of non-human intelligence was monitoring humanity during its most destructive war to date.
- This presentation will demonstrate that “Foo Fighters” were a narrower phenomenon experienced by particular aircrews and will present a new hypothesis.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE RECORD



RAF REPORTS AND INVESTIGATIONS 1942–1945

- Beginning in 1942, the RAF collected reports of unusual nighttime aerial phenomena encountered during combat operations.
- Reports described luminous objects, balls of fire, and unidentified lights that sometimes appeared to accompany or pursue Allied aircraft.
- The Air Ministry's intelligence branches investigated these reports, initially considering German secret weapons and advanced aircraft as possible explanations.
- Reports were exchanged with American military intelligence, including Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF).
- In March 1945, the Air Ministry suggested that some sightings might involve Me 262 jet fighters or German antiaircraft rockets, but acknowledged that the phenomenon remained unexplained in its entirety.
- Surviving documentation includes Air Ministry intelligence correspondence, Bomber Command reports, and individual squadron operational records.
- The following four encounters illustrate the RAF and Commonwealth eyewitness accounts that could be traced through military records and other identifiable testimony.



TURIN, ITALY NOVEMBER 1942

- On the night of 28–29 November 1942, an RAF Lancaster bomber of No. 61 Squadron encountered an unidentified luminous object during a bombing operation against Turin, Italy.
- The aircraft was Lancaster W4767 (QR-J), operating from RAF Syerston.
- The aircraft commander was Warrant Officer Rennie Lever, DFC.
- The crew reported an enormous elongated object displaying four pairs of red lights.
- The crew observed the object twice, at 2240 near Turin and at 2245 while approaching the Alps.
- Lever also reported observing a similar object approximately three months earlier, near Amsterdam, although independent documentation of that earlier encounter has not been established.
- The incident was documented in contemporary RAF correspondence and forwarded through No. 5 Group in early December 1942.

ESSEN, GERMANY MAY 1943



- On the night of 27–28 May 1943, No. 77 Squadron RAF dispatched Halifax II JB911 (KN-X), commanded by Sgt Raymond Fraser Smith, RCAF, to bomb Essen, Germany.
- Sgt Gordon Newell Cockcroft, RAFVR, was aboard as a supernumerary second pilot, attached from No. 6 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit.
- Approximately two to three minutes before the bombing run, at about 18,700 feet, the crew reportedly observed a large silvery-gold cylindrical object ahead and slightly to port.
- The object appeared inclined approximately 45 degrees, with evenly spaced features resembling portholes along its length.
- Smith reportedly sighted it first; Cockcroft and four additional crew members also observed it.
- After approximately 20–30 seconds, the object reportedly accelerated steeply upward and disappeared without visible exhaust.
- Cockcroft stated that the observation was reported during the post-mission intelligence debriefing. The original report has not been located.
- RAF Forms 540 and 541 corroborate Cockcroft's attachment and the mission's crew, aircraft, target and timing, but do not mention the object.



NAPLES, ITALY DECEMBER 1943

- On 14 December 1943, an RAF Beaufighter Mk VIF of No. 255 Squadron encountered an unidentified luminous object during a night-fighter sortie over Italy.
- The aircraft was piloted by Squadron Leader Patrick Hardy Vesey Wells, accompanied by navigator Flight Sergeant N. J. Izowsky of the Royal Canadian Air Force.
- Operating over the Naples area, the crew encountered an unidentified bright light that reportedly maneuvered around the Beaufighter.
- Wells recorded the encounter in his personal flying logbook, describing it as a dogfight with an unidentified light.
- The encounter is also recorded in the No. 255 Squadron Operations Record Book for December 1943.



FRANCE AUGUST 1944

- On 10 August 1944, a No. 7 Squadron RAF Lancaster, PA964 (MG-K), departed RAF Oakington at 1956 to attack La Pallice, France, serving as Master Bomber.
- The eight-man crew included Squadron Leader Brian G. Frow, pilot, and Warrant Officer Ronald R. Claridge, wireless/radar operator.
- During the return flight, Claridge reported that his Fishpond radar display suddenly went blank and Frow alerted the crew to something outside the aircraft.
- Claridge observed a long formation of brilliant yellow-white circular lights approximately 1,000 yards to starboard, which he interpreted as part of an enormous disc-shaped object.
- According to Claridge, the entire crew observed the phenomenon for approximately three minutes before the object accelerated ahead and disappeared.
- Claridge reported that RAF intelligence personnel questioned the crew after their return and discouraged documentation of the encounter.
- The Lancaster landed at RAF Oakington at 0122 on 11 August 1944. The aircraft, mission, pilot, and Claridge's presence aboard are independently confirmed by the squadron operational record.

U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES EUROPEAN THEATER



USAAF EUROPEAN REPORTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

- Beginning in late 1944, USAAF night-fighter crews operating over eastern France and western Germany reported unusual luminous objects accompanying their aircraft.
- The 415th Night Fighter Squadron, operating radar-equipped Bristol Beaufighters, became the principal documented source of these reports.
- Aircrews described red, orange, amber, green, and white lights that approached their aircraft, maintained formation, followed turns, and disappeared abruptly.
- Ground-controlled interception stations generally reported no enemy aircraft corresponding to the sightings.
- On 16 January 1945, XII Tactical Air Command requested additional information concerning the unexplained nighttime phenomena.
- On 30 January 1945, Captain Fred B. Ringwald, the 415th's intelligence officer, submitted 14 reported observations from December 1944 through January 1945.
- The investigation involved XII Tactical Air Command, First Tactical Air Force, and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), with information exchanged with British Air Ministry intelligence.
- Explanations considered included German jet aircraft and antiaircraft rockets, but the surviving intelligence correspondence did not establish a satisfactory explanation for all reports.



BREISACH, GERMANY DECEMBER 1944

- During the night of 16–17 December 1944, a USAAF 415th Night Fighter Squadron crew encountered unusual lights approximately 20 miles north of Breisach, Germany.
- Flying at approximately 800 feet, the crew initially observed five or six flashing red and green lights arranged in a T-shaped formation.
- Believing the lights might be antiaircraft fire, the crew continued its patrol.
- Approximately ten minutes later, the same lights appeared much closer, behind the aircraft.
- The pilot turned both port and starboard, but the lights reportedly followed the aircraft's maneuvers.
- The lights approached to approximately 1,000 feet, at the aircraft's eight o'clock position.
- They remained in that position for several minutes before disappearing.



HAGUENAU, FRANCE DECEMBER 1944

- During the night of 22–23 December 1944, a USAAF 415th Night Fighter Squadron crew encountered two unusual orange lights near Haguenau, France.
- The crew was conducting a nighttime patrol in a Bristol Beaufighter at approximately 10,000 feet.
- At 0600, two large orange lights were observed rising toward the aircraft from below.
- Upon reaching the Beaufighter's altitude, the lights leveled off and positioned themselves behind the aircraft.
- The lights followed the Beaufighter for approximately two minutes.
- Both objects then peeled away, continued flying level for several minutes, and disappeared.
- The crew reported that the lights appeared to be under complete control throughout the encounter.



WORMS, GERMANY DECEMBER 1944

- During the night of 26–27 December 1944, a USAAF 415th Night Fighter Squadron crew encountered an unidentified light near Worms, Germany.
- The crew observed an unidentified light at approximately the aircraft's altitude; the original report does not identify the aircraft type.
- An observer reported that the light approached to within 100 feet of the aircraft.
- The pilot broke away and took evasive action, but the light reportedly continued following the aircraft for approximately five minutes.
- The light then climbed rapidly and disappeared from sight.
- The original report did not identify the crew, aircraft serial number, or the color and size of the light.

U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES PACIFIC THEATER



USAAF PACIFIC REPORTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

- By March 1945, B-29 Superfortress crews of XXI Bomber Command reported unusual luminous objects during bombing operations against the Japanese home islands.
- Aircrews described red, orange, yellow, and white balls of fire, sometimes appearing to follow their aircraft for several minutes.
- Some objects reportedly maintained their relative positions despite changes in the bombers' speed, altitude, and direction.
- The encounters were recorded in tactical mission reports and intelligence summaries submitted through the bomber groups, wings, and XXI Bomber Command.
- On 26 April 1945, XXI Bomber Command issued a classified intelligence assessment discussing the phenomenon and presenting 12 reported examples.
- Intelligence officers considered Japanese suicide aircraft, aerial bombs, and air- or ground-launched radar-controlled flying bombs as possible explanations.
- Reports continued through July 1945, including encounters in which objects reportedly approached B-29s at high speed without visible wings or fuselages.
- The surviving military records document repeated encounters but do not establish a common explanation for all reported objects.



TOKYO BAY APRIL 1945

- At approximately 0314 on 4 April 1945, a USAAF B-29 Superfortress encountered a luminous object while returning from a bombing mission over Japan.
- The B-29 was flying at approximately 7,000 feet when the crew observed a ball of fire at the four o'clock position.
- The object emitted a steady phosphorescent glow and appeared to follow the bomber.
- The pilot initiated evasive maneuvers, climbing and descending 500 feet, altering course by as much as 35 degrees, and varying airspeed between 205 and 250.
- The crew temporarily lost sight of the object on three occasions while passing through clouds.
- Each time the B-29 emerged from the clouds, the object was reportedly still following the aircraft.
- The encounter lasted approximately five minutes before the object disappeared as the bomber crossed Tokyo Bay.



TOKYO-KAWASAKI APRIL 1945

- During the night of 15–16 April 1945, B-29 crews of the 73rd, 313th, and 314th Bombardment Wings reported approximately 59 sightings of unusual luminous objects during incendiary bombing operations against Tokyo and Kawasaki.
- The objects were generally described as orange-red balls of fire, with estimated diameters ranging from six inches to half the diameter of a B-29 fuselage.
- In some instances, observers reported discernible aircraft outlines, suggesting that the reported lights might have had different explanations.
- Some objects reportedly rose from the ground to the bombers' altitude before pursuing or independently maneuvering around the aircraft.
- Several objects followed B-29s despite evasive maneuvers.
- One or more luminous objects reportedly followed B-29s for as long as 38 minutes after leaving the Japanese coast.
- The pursuing object was reportedly unable to close the distance when the B-29's calibrated airspeed exceeded 230 mph.
- B-29 gunners reported striking four balls of fire, with some apparently disintegrating and others descending in a controlled spin before exploding.
- One object reportedly passed through a searchlight beam, leaving a trail of white smoke or vapor.
- XXI Bomber Command documented the observations in its tactical mission report, but the accounts varied considerably in appearance and behavior.



JAPAN JUNE 1945

- During the night of 17–18 June 1945, B-29 Superfortress crews of XXI Bomber Command reported unusual luminous objects during incendiary bombing operations against Japanese cities.
- One crew observed a round, fluctuating light that alternated between bright red and dim orange.
- The light was first observed near the Japanese coastline, following the B-29 at an estimated distance exceeding one mile.
- The object continued following the bomber approximately 125 miles out to sea over a period of 42 minutes.
- The crew estimated that the object gained approximately half a mile during the encounter.
- No wings or fuselage were observed, and the light eventually faded from sight.
- Two other crews from the same bombardment group reported similar observations but subsequently concluded they had mistaken a star for an unidentified object.
- The crew involved in the prolonged encounter maintained that the object they observed was not a star.



NUMAZU JULY 1945

- During the night of 16–17 July 1945, B-29 Superfortresses of the 58th Bombardment Wing attacked Numazu, Japan, during Mission 271.
- During the bombing run, one crew observed an unidentified light while flying at approximately 10,800 feet.
- The light was initially observed approximately 500 feet above the B-29 and appeared to be gaining on the aircraft.
- When the light approached to an estimated distance of 500 feet, it extinguished, turned right, and disappeared.
- The intelligence interrogation officer concluded that the light's reported sharp maneuvers did not support the theory that it was a Japanese Baka rocket-powered suicide aircraft.
- Other crews reported a ball of fire following a B-29 and a red light maneuvering sharply behind another aircraft.
- The original report does not identify the crews or establish whether the observations involved the same phenomenon.
- This is the latest USAAF report of unexplained luminous aerial phenomena identified in the contemporary wartime records examined for this presentation.

THE REST OF THE EVIDENTIARY RECORD

”FOO FIGHTERS” THE LEGEND

- Popular books, documentaries, and Internet accounts portray Foo Fighters as a worldwide phenomenon observed by aircrews on all sides of the Second World War.
- Examination of these accounts frequently reveals conflicting dates, inconsistent descriptions, unidentified witnesses, and citations repeated through successive secondary sources.
- Some purported encounters cannot be reconciled with contemporary squadron operational records or documented military activity.
- Other accounts originate in postwar recollections for which no contemporary corroborating documentation has been located.
- The absence of surviving documentation does not establish that an encounter never occurred, particularly given the incomplete wartime archives of Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union.
- Nevertheless, the strongest traceable evidence examined in this investigation is concentrated among RAF and USAAF night fighters and heavy bombers.
- This narrower documentary pattern differs substantially from the worldwide, all-combatants narrative commonly presented in UFO literature.

“FOO FIGHTERS” THE REALITY

- Despite the global scale of the Second World War, the surviving documentation examined in this investigation reveals an apparent concentration of unexplained aerial phenomena among:
  - Two services—the Royal Air Force and United States Army Air Forces.
  - Two particular types of aircraft—heavy bombers and radar-equipped night fighters..
  - Two particular regions of the world—Europe and Japan.
- Even if one does not ascribe an anomalous nature to these sightings, this question has to be asked: why these concentrations? Why is there not a clearer documentary record of sightings beyond these categories?
- The RAF/USAAF heavy bombing campaigns were unprecedented in their scope and destructiveness—a realization of the ambitions put forth by pre-war military airpower thinkers such as Trenchard, Douhet, and Mitchell.
- Likewise, British and American night fighters were equipped with airborne radar—a cutting-edge technology in the 1940s.

“FOO FIGHTERS” A (REVISED) HYPOTHESIS

- In his 1950 book, *The Flying Saucers Are Real*, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Donald Keyhoe was among the earliest prominent writers to connect the postwar UFO phenomenon to the development of atomic weapons.
- This connection is now nearly a trope in the UFO research field.
- Even today, there are anecdotal connections made between UFO/UAP sightings and nuclear power or nuclear weapons facilities.
- If the “Foo Fighters” represented anomalous, even Non-Human Intelligence (NHI) activity, it has not been documented equally across the wartime theaters examined.
- The documented encounters were concentrated among aircraft equipped with advanced technology for their The documented encounters examined in this investigation were concentrated among advanced military aircraft, particularly radar-equipped night fighters and heavy bombers operating during major bombing campaigns.
- With that in mind, if at least some “Foo Fighters” represent NHI technology, perhaps their numbers or abilities were limited to selective observation of the most interesting (dangerous?) technologies on show.
- Then perhaps after Trinity, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, one or more non-human intelligences decided to pay much more attention?

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