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Air Force Says Unidentified Flying Objects Are 'Serious'

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United Press International

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Air Force has sent its commands a new warning to treat sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFO's) as "serious business" directly related to the nation's defense, it was learned Saturday.

An Air Force spokesman confirmed issuance of the directive after portions of it were made public by a private "flying saucer" research group.

The new regulations were issued by the Air Force Inspector General last Dec. 24.

The regulations, updating similar ones issued in the past, outlined procedures and said that "investigations and analysis of UFO's are directly related to the Air Force's responsibility for the defense of the United States."

Existence of the document was revealed by the National Investigations Committee on aerial phenomena (NICAP).

The big name, privately-financed committee, accused the Air Force of deception in publicly describing Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) reports as delusions and hoaxes while sending the private admonition to its commands.

Vice-Adm. R. H. Hillenkoetter

(Ret.), a NICAP board member and former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said in a statement that a photo-copy of the inspector general's warning had been sent to the Senate Space Committee.

"It is time for the truth to be brought out in open congressional hearings," he said.

Explains Purpose

The Air Force confirmed that the document had been issued. A spokesman said it was put out by Maj. Gen. Richard E. O'Keefe, acting inspector general at the time, to call attention to revised Air Force regulations concerning UFO's.

The statement was included in an "Operations and Training" pamphlet, circulated at intervals to bring commands up to date.

Pentagon aides said the new regulations, covering seven printed pages, made no substantive change in policy but were rewritten as a matter of course.

The Air Force has investigated 6,312 reports of UFO's since 1947, including 183 during the last six months of 1959. The latest Air Force statement, issued a month ago, said "no physical or material evidence, not even a minute

fragment of a so-called flying saucer, has ever been found."

The inspector general's document, NICAP said, was headed "UFO's serious business."

NICAP quoted the inspector general as saying:

"Unidentified flying objects—sometimes treated lightly by the press and referred to as 'flying saucers'—must be rapidly and accurately identified as serious USAF business."

Says Three Concerns

"Air Force concern with these sightings is threefold. First of all, is the object a threat to the defense of the U.S.? Secondly, does it contribute to technical or scientific knowledge?"

The third point cited, NICAP said, was the question of how to explain the sightings to the public. NICAP said the inspector general "predicted that UFO sightings will increase, causing public apprehension."

Hillenkoetter said that "behind the scenes, high-ranking Air Force officers are soberly concerned about the UFO's."

"But through official secrecy and ridicule, many citizens are led to believe the unknown flying objects are nonsense," the retired admiral said. He added that "to hide the facts, the Air Force has silenced its personnel" through issuance of a regulation.