Astronomer gathering data on mysterious 'ball of fire'

Red pins denote persons who saw a fireball spurting thru the sky, and yellow pins denote those who heard a loud explosion at what might have been the end of a meteoric sky-ride, on a map of Nebraska being maintained by O. C. Collins, professor of astronomy at the University of Nebraska. Letters coming into his office almost daily are reporting on the phenomenon of the airlines, which was sighted over the state at about the same time an earth tremor was felt in Omaha and the area northeast of there, last Saturday afternoon about 5 p. m.

Seven letters have come to Collins to date, four reporting on the "ball of fire" and three telling of hearing explosions. If further evidence can be attained, the astronomer thinks that possibly enough data can be brought together to form a real picture of what was happening in the Nebraska skies about that hour.

The whole thing started when Walter Carlson, Holdrege, wrote Collins that Wilbur Baker had seen a large, turnip-shaped "ball of fire" from the Carlson farm Saturday at about the same time the explosion had been reported in Omaha and Council Bluffs. After newspapers had publicized the phenomenon, Professor Collins received letters from Mrs. Grace Fite, Logan, Ia., and F. J. Kulhanek, Omaha, confirming certain facts.

Four More Reports.

Saturday four more letters came to Collins—from Henry M. Peterson, St. Edward, Neb.; Bob Bergt, Wayne, Neb.; Julius Belew, Amelia, Neb., and Paul L. McKinney, Woodbine, Ia. All place the occurrence at about the same time.

Wrote Peterson: "I was in a field just west of St. Edward. I noticed a peculiar light to the east. Stopping the tractor I watched, thinking it to be the sun reflecting on an airplane. On closer observation it appeared to be a ball of light, very bright and about the size and brilliance of the sun when seen thru a thin mist. It had a tail which was very red and seemingly between 25 or 30 feet long. I watched it until it vanished in midair while still quite high in the sky. It was traveling from south toward the north at a very rapid pace."

Bergt's letter said: "Surveying the clouds, I suddenly was attracted by this 'ball of fire.' It appeared to be about 9 to 12 inches in diameter, or width, with a trailing tail of about 30 to 40 feet in length, seemingly headed in the general direction of Omaha. While its flight was visible, there seemed to be fragments breaking off of the larger portion of the fireball."

Headed Toward Omaha.

Belew testified: "I saw something coming out of the sky at a terrific speed about the same time of the day (as Baker), but to me it looked silvery color, and it glistened in the sun. It looked about three feet long and was shaped like a turnip with a tail. It was headed in the direction of Omaha from here. I live 13 miles south of Chambers."

McKinney wrote: "I was at the George Douglas farm five miles southeast of Woodbine at the time. We both heard the explosion—or rather the series of explosions — which seemed to come from the sky from the southeast. The later explosions in the series seemed to come from farther west. This I notice seems to contradict the man from Holdrege. We saw nothing out of the ordinary. However, the clouds were quite heavy. Several other people from this vicinity reported hearing the same."

Last One Charted in 1939.

Collins explained that the seeming discrepancy wouldn't necessarily indicate a variance of facts, in event the explosion did come from the meteorite. At the slow rate at which sound travels it would take longer for the sound of the first explosion to reach him than for the sound of the explosions which, altho later, were closer.

The professor is especially interested in hearing from anyone south of the reported points who might have spotted the fireball.

Altho there have probably been many fireballs over Nebraska which have not been noticed or publicized, according to Collins, the last one which the astronomy department was able to chart was in March, 1939. At that time reports came to him from Nebraska and Iowa, helping make up a rather complete report on its course. The current fireball marks one of the first times that a meteoric body and an explosion which might indicate the end of its course have been linked, he said.

Nebraska State Journal (Lincoln)
January 14, 1945

Publication: The Oklahoman; Date:1945 Jan 02; Section:Front Page; Page 1

Fire Balls Pursue Fliers Over Reich

A. U. S. FIGHTER BASE, France, Jan. 1.—(AP)—The Nazis have thrown something new into the night skies over Germany—the weird, mysterious "Foo-fighter," balls of fire which race alongside the wings of American Beaufighters flying intruder missions over the Reich.

U. S. pilots have been encountering the eerie "foo-fighter" for more than a month in their night flights. No one apparently knows exactly what this sky weapon is.

Lieut. Thomas Thomas, 833 NE 15, Oklahoma City, said he had seen them over Karlsruhe.

The balls of fire appear suddenly and accompany the planes for miles. They appear to be radio-controlled from the ground and manage to keep up with planes flying 300 miles an hour.

"There are three kinds of these lights we call "foo-fighters," said Lieut. Donald Meiers of Chicago. "One is red balls of fire which appear off our wing tips and fly along with us; the second is a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of us, and the third is a group of about 15 lights which appear off in the distance—like a Christmas tree up in the air—and flicker on and off."

The pilots of this night fighter squadron find these fiery balls the weirdest thing they have as yet encountered. They are convinced that the "foo-fighter" is designed to be a psychological weapon.

"A 'foo-fighter' picked me up recently at 700 feet and chased me 20 miles down the Rhine valley," Meiers said. "I turned and two balls of fire turned with me. I turned the other way and they turned with me.

"On another occasion when a 'foo-fighter' picked us up, I dove at 360 miles per hour. It kept right off our wing tips for awhile and then zoomed up into the sky.

"When I first saw the things off my wing tips I had the horrible thought that a German on the ground was ready to press a button and explode them. But they don't explode or attack us."

(An Associated Press report from Paris December 13 said the Germans had thrown silvery balls into the air against day raiders.)

Winnipeg Man.
Free Press
Jan. 2, 1945

wallis. org

FIRE BALLS FLOAT IN GERMAN SKIES

A U.S. Night Fighter Base, France, Jan. 2. (AP) — The enemy has thrown something new into the night skies over Germany — the weird, mysterious Foo-Fighter, balls of fire which race alongside the wings of Allied Beaufighters flying intruder missions over Germany.

Allied pilots have been encountering the eerie Foo-Fighter for more than a month in their night flight. No one apparently knows exactly what this sky weapon is.

The balls of fire appear suddenly and accompany the planes for miles. They appear to be radio-controlled from the ground and manage to keep up with planes flying 300 miles an hour, official intelligence reports reveal.

"There are three kinds of these lights we call Foo-Fighters, said Lieut. Donald Meiers, of Chicago. One is a red ball of fire which appears off our wing tips and flies along with us, the second is a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of us and the third is a group of about 15 lights which appear off in the distance—like a Christmas tree up in the air—and flicker on and off.

The pilots of this night fighter squadron are convinced that the Foo-Fighter is designed to be a psychological weapon as well as military although the fire balls have not attacked planes.

"A Foo-Fighter picked me up recently at 700 feet and chased me 20 miles down the Rhine valley," Meiers said. "I turned to starboard and two balls of fire turned with me. I turned to the port side and they turned with me. We were going 260 miles an hour and the balls were keeping right up with us.

"They don't explode or attack us. They just seem to follow us like will-o-the-wisps."

New German 'Balls Of Fire' Follow U. S. Fighters At Night

A UNITED STATES NIGHT FIGHTER BASE, FRANCE, Jan. 2. —(AP)—American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—mysterious "balls of fire" which race along beside their planes for miles like will o' the wisps.

Yank pilots have dubbed them "foo fighters," and at first thought they might explode, but so far there is no indication that any planes have been damaged by them.

Some pilots have expressed belief the Foo Fighter was designed strictly as a psychological weapon. Intelligence reports seem to indicate it is radio controlled from the ground and can keep pace with planes flying 300 miles per hour.

Lieutenant Donald Meiers of Chicago, Ill., said there are three types of Foo Fighters—red balls of fire that fly along at wing tip; a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of the planes, and a group of about 15 lights which follow the plane at a distance, flickering on and off.

Floating and plane following balls in fire like color, added to the silver globes encountered over the German lines by American airmen, might not be as mysterious as would seem in cabled dispatches, C. E. Butterfield, AP radio editor, says.

This is just a guess, but on the little information available, the colored and glowing globes might well be added elements in attempts to interfere with radio signals and radar detection.

While dispatches hint they are radio controlled, the fact they travel along with a plane or stay a certain distance ahead would tend toward the belief they instead are magnetic. Thus, the metal of a plane would attract them, at the same time holding them at a distance. Radio control from the ground or another plane would not permit such apparent accuracy in control.

The glow, coupled with the possible magnetic action, might come from the type of gas they contain to aid in their electrical qualities and to add to their buoyancy.

San Mateo, Ca
Times
Jan. 13, 1945

Fireballs in War

Though it apparently doesn't maim or kill, ıe newest Nazi secret weapon is a lot pleasıter to write about than to meet up with in a ght sky over the Reich.

The fiery will-o'-the-wisps whose red flame ıces alongside American night pilots, or stands usive at the very nose of a plane traveling 0 miles an hour, first pulled a surprised pilot ıd his crew up out of their seats several weeks ;o. Expecting the radio-controlled balls of re to explode, they ducked and dived and ıced to get out of the way of the blast. But ıe weird lights followed along, reportedly ırmless, assuring our flyers that this newest rinkle in German psychological warfare is intended just to scare them to death.

"Foo-fighters" our boys call the fire balls, and after the first startling encounter they insist they're about as horrifying as a comic strip.

We wish this Nazi "terror" move was real evidence of depleted materials for live ammunition. But the bitter, heavy fighting our men are facing on the German borders proves that a vain hope. Meanwhile, the super-scientists of the Reich may be wasting a lot of valuable time and effort in the clouds. Our lads weren't reared with Dick Tracy and Flash Gordon only to be frightened out of their wits by a Nazi nerve-twanger.

Moberly Mo
Monitor-Index
January 2, 1945

Mysterious Balls of Fire, New Nazi Secret Weapon, May Be Magnetic Device

A U. S. Night Fighter Base, France, Jan. 2 (AP) — American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon" — mysterious "balls of fire," which race along beside their planes for miles like will o' the wisps.

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The glow, coupled with the possible magnetic action, might come from the type of gas they contain to aid in their electrical qualities and to add to their buoyancy.

Council Bluffs Ia
Nonpareil
January 11 1945

Mysterious Light Seen in Eastern Iowa Causing Much Speculation

GREEN ISLAND, (AP)—A mysterious light has been seen floating in the sky in this section of east central Iowa four nights recently.

As many as a dozen persons have reported seeing the light the same night, but what it is and what causes it to float lightly is a mystery

Caravans of residents and officials have attempted to follow the light, but report they can keep trace of it for only several miles and then lose it when it disappears over high hills. They report the light sometimes appears to move with the wind and sometimes against it

William Marberger of Green Island saw the light for the first time a week ago. Among Green Island residents who reported seeing it were Mr. and Mrs. Delbert Roe, Emil Tait, Mrs. Lawrence Rickert and Marvin Meyer and family.

The light reportedly has a glow similar to a candle or flame.

—Save Waste Paper—

Mason City Ia
Globe Gazette
January 10 1945

Mysterious Light Seen in Iowa Sky

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The light reportedly has a glow similar to a candle or flame.

Williamsport Pa
Gazette + Bulletin
January 3, 1945

GIVES EXPLANATION OF GERMAN FOO-FIGHTERS

By HOWARD W. BLAKESLEE
Associated Press Science Editor

NEW YORK--The descriptions of the new German foo-fighters, or balls of fire, fit into several well-known electrical phenomena.

These are induction, ball lightning and have some, though not all the aspects of St. Elmo's Fire. If they are electrical, they are something created in the air close to the planes, rather than anything shot like artillery shells or anything floating in the air in wait for planes.

Induction

Induction is suggested by the reports that the foo-fires keep up with the plane, at fixed distances, regardless of plane speed, changes in speed or changes in direction.

Electrical induction of some sort would explain such marvelous synchronization. Nothing else that is well known would explain such perfect timing. Radio control from the ground does not explain the timing, unless radio control is meant to describe a beam which is part of the automatic induction.

Induction, however, fails completely to describe what happens when a fire-ball zooms upward leaving its plane. Apparently the balls fly paths of thousands of feet away from the planes.

Ball Lightning

The common experience that resembles this trick is ball lightning. How anybody could produce ball lightning is unknown. Exactly what ball lightning may be is also unknown. But it is a quite harmless thing, even as the German foo-balls are reported to be. A lightning ball can explode in your front yard, making a loud bang but doing little or no damage.

St. Elmo's Fire

St. Elmos Fire is a brush discharge of static electricity, which streams off some solid object with a brilliant intensity. Aviators are familiar with brush discharges and would recognize them, so that the foo-balls are probably not ordinary St. Elmo's Fire.

The deep purple color of brush discharge static would explain the reports that the foo-balls are red. The shade of red has not been reported. Ball lightnings has been reported in slightly red shades.

Ridge Fortress Pilot Tells of Encounter with Nazi Jet Plane

An Eighth Air Force Bomber Station, England—Second Lieutenand Edward M. Karl, 22, Park Ridge, pilot of an Eighth Air Force B-17 Flying Fortress, saw his first Nazi jet-propelled fighter on the mission attacking marshalling yards at Kassel, Germany, and still can't give much of a description of it even though it came within 500 yards of his plane at one time.

It was his navigator, Second Lieutenant Robert M. Faver, of Sweetwater, Texas, who first spotted the strange craft.

"They're firing rocket projectiles at us," he yelled over the interphone; but this didn't seem quite right, for the Fortress formation was then not quite across the English channel, churning along over friendly territory toward Germany.

Closer observation showed that the smoke trail behind the "projectile" would suddenly cut off for periods, and then spurt out again, which convinced Lt. Karl that they were seeing a jet-propelled plane at a distance, for it is the habit of these craft to accumulate speed and then glide for several miles, conserving fuel.

The plane disappeared, and was not seen again until something leaving a trail like a comet and screaming like a runaway express train suddenly "whooshed" past the Fort's tail, going straight up: no one got a good look at it until is was a tiny dark speck miles above, trailing a cloud of white smoke. The enemy plane made no attempt to attack the bomber formation.

JAN 19 1945

Lt. Karl flies with the 96th Bomb. the President cited for its success-Group, veteran combat unit which fol bombing of Focke Wulf fighter plane factories at Posen, Poland. It is a unit of Third Bomb. Division, which also has been cited by the President. This Division was so honored for its England-Africa shuttle mission attacking Messerschmitt airplane factories at Regensburg, Germany.

Lt. Karl is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Elva M. Karl, 214 Columbia avenue. He was a student at the University of Illinois before entering the Army at Chicago, July, 1942. He received his pilot's wings at Marfa, Texas, in April, 1944. His brother, Aviation Cadet Eugene R. Karl, is now undergoing training at San Marcos, Texas.

Park Ridge Ill
Times-Herald (or Advocate)

Albert Lea, Minn
Evening Tribune
Jan. 2, 1945

Yank Fighters Report German "Secret Weapon"

A U. S. Night Fighter Base, France, Jan. 2.—(AP)—American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—mysterious "balls of fire."

Yank pilots have dubbed them "foo fighters," and at first thought they might explode, but so far there is no indication that any planes have been damaged by them.

Some pilots have expressed that the "foo fighter" was designed strictly as a psychological weapon. Intelligence reports seem to indicate it is radio-controlled from the ground and can keep pace with planes flying 300 miles per hour.

Lt. Donald Meiers of Chicago, Ill., said there are three types of "foo fighters" red balls of fire that fly along at wing tip; a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of the planes, and a group of about 15 lights which follow the plane at a distance, flickering on and off.

Lethbridge Alta
Herald
January 2 1945

tion in every province shown be

"Foo-Fighter" Is New German Aerial Weapon—Balls of Fire

By ROBERT WILSON
Associated Press War Correspondent

A U.S. NIGHT FIGHTER BASE, France, Jan. 2—(AP)—The enemy has thrown something new into the night skies over Germany—the weird, mysterious "foo-fighter," balls of fire which race alongside the wings of Allied Beaufighters flying intruder missions over Germany.

Allied pilots have been encountering the eerie "foo-fighter" for more than a month in their night flights. No one apparently knows exactly what this sky weapon is.

The balls of fire appear suddenly and accompany the planes for miles. They appear to be radio-controlled from the ground and manage to keep up with planes flying 300 miles an hour, official intelligence reports reveal.

"There are three kinds of these lights we call 'foo-fighters'," said Lieut. Donald Meiers of Chicago. Zone is red balls of fire which appear off our wing tips and fly along with us, their second is vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of us and the third is a group of about 15 lights which appear off in the distance—like a Christmas tree up in the air—and flicker on and off."

The pilots of this night fighter squadron—in operation since September, 1943—find these fiery balls the weirdest thing they have as yet encountered. They are convinced that the "foo-fighter" is designed to be a psychological weapon as well as military although the fire balls have not attacked planes.

"A 'foo-fighter' picked me up recently at 700 feet and chased me 20 miles down the Rhine valley," Meiers said. "I turned to starboard and two balls of fire turned with me. I turned to the port side and they turned with me. We were going 260 miles an hour and the balls were keeping right up with us.

"They don't explode or attack us. They just seem to follow us like Will-o-the-wisps."

Kansas City Mo.
Star
January 10 1945

tive.

"Foo-Fighter" Action Studied

By HOWARD W. BLAKESLEE.
(Associated Press Science Editor.)

NEW YORK — Germany's new "foo-fighters," the mysterious, glowing balls that appear alongside American planes over Germany, and accompany the fliers for long distances, have a counterpart in recently discovered action of microscopic particles of rubber latex and other small objects.

The "foo-fighters" appear in three formations, a fireball near the tip of a wing, a chain of balls riding along just in front of the plane, and a group of a dozen at a distance, with an appearance of a Christmas tree. No commonly known electrical phenomenon explains this diversity. But all these patterns are shown in the new microscopic work. They are described in industrial and engineering chemistry, in an article by Francis F. Lucas of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc., New York City.

The particles appear in pairs, chains and groups. They are in rapid motion, due apparently to electrical forces inherent in the liquid in which they are photographed. In all cases one larger particle, whose bulk might be likened to an airplane, dominates one or more smaller particles. Both attraction and repulsion are present. Usually the particles, attracted so strongly to a larger one that they are bound within a close distance, never touch the big particle.

These little "foo-particles" do not glow. They do possess electrical charges, which conceivably under the right conditions could cause them to glow with the kind of light described for the "foo-fighters." If the Germans have found a way to produce electrical forces over a large area, corresponding to those which exist naturally in the latex solutions, then it is conceivable that their "foo-fighters" are small balloons.

How such a huge electrical field could be produced is not described in the scientific reports available before the war. But in such a field, the static electricity on a moving balloon and on a moving plane, might account both for the bright glow and the queer attraction, which brings the "foo-fighters" close to a plane without, so far as reported, ever touching it.

In the microscopic latex particles the force developed is tremendous, and apparently enough, if amplified, to account for an attraction that would drag a small balloon along at high speed as a captive of an airplane. These latex particles have the consistency of jelly beans. Yet the forces of attraction are great enough so that when one of them touches another, the big one sucks the little one inside its own body. This actual contact and coalescence occurs only occasionally.

Dixon Ill
Evening Telegraph
January 2 1945

"Balls of Fire" New Nazi Secret Weapons of Sky?

A U. S. Night Fighter Base, France, Jan. 2—(AP)—American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—weapon. Intelligence reports seem race along beside their planes for miles like will o' the wisps.

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Some pilots have expressed belief that the "foo fighter" was designed strictly as a psychological mysterious "balls of fire" which to indicate it is radio-controlled from the ground and can keep pace with planes flying 300 miles per hour.

Lt. Donald Meiers of Chicago said there are three types of "foo fighters"—red balls of fire that fly along at wing tip; a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of the planes, and a group of about 15 lights which follow the plane at a distance, flickering on and off.

Others at this base who have encountered a "foo fighter" include Anderson Henshaw, Carrier Mills, Ill., and Capt. Fritz Ringwald, staff officer from East St. Louis, Ill., who went along on a flight after hearing the numerous reports of the "foo fighter."

"I saw lights off the right and told the pilot, who said, 'Oh, those are lights on a hill,'" Ringwald reported. He added: "I looked in that direction a few minutes later and then told him, 'Well, that hill is considerably closer to us now'."

Floating and plane-following balls in fire-like color, added to the silver globes encountered over the German lines by American airmen, might not be as mysterious as would seem in cable dispatches, C. E. Butterfield, AP radio editor says.

This is just a guess, but on the little information available, the colored and glowing globes might well be added elements in attempts to interfere with radio signals and radar detection.

While dispatches hint that they are radio controlled, the fact that they travel along with a plane or stay a certain distance ahead would tend toward the belief that they instead are magnetic. Thus, the metal of a plane would attract them, at the same time holding them at a distance. Radio control from the ground or another plane would not permit such apparent accuracy in control.

The glow, coupled with the possible magnetic action, might come from the type of gas they contain to aid in their electrical qualities and to add to their buoyancy.

Reno Nv
Evening Gazette
January 2 1945

'Balls of Fire' Mystify Aviators

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Waterloo Ia
Daily Courier
January 2 1945

Nazi Balls of Fire Flying Along with American Planes

A U. S. Night Fighter Base, France — (AP) — American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—mysterious "balls of fire" which race along beside their planes for miles like will o' the wisps.

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Annapolis Md
Capital
January 2 1945

Secret Weapon

American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon" — mysterious "balls of fire" which race along beside their planes for miles. Intelligence reports seem to indicate they are radio-controlled from the ground and can keep pace with planes flying 300 mile per hour. Yank pilots dubbed them "foo fighters."

Marion Oh
Daily Star
January 2 1945

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE, NAZI SECRET WEAPON

By The Associated Press

A U. S. FIGHTER BASE, FRANCE, Jan. 2 — American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—mysterious "balls of fire" which race along beside their planes for miles.

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Billings Mt
Gazette
January 6, 1945

Aerial

Adolf's Fireballs

American pilots dubbed them "foo-fighters"—Hitler's latest surprise. The exact purpose of the foo-fighters could not be immediately determined, and airmen were too busy blasting Von Rundstedt's communication lines to pay them much attention.

This secret weapon—which apparently did no harm—came in three types, said a Yank: "One is red balls of fire which appear off our wing tips and fly along with us; the second is a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of us, and the third is a group of about 15 lights which appear off in the distance—like a Christmas tree up in the air—and flicker on and off."

But, more potently, the Germans trotted out the Luftwaffe for a smashing offensive at American airbases in Holland and Belgium.

The result: they lost close to 500 planes while more than 11,000 Allied aircraft continued a record pasting of German roads and cities. Good weather permitted an Allied offensive longer than any ever maintained without interruption in winter.

Tuesday, January 2, 1945
Journal-Every Evening, Wilmington, Delaware,

'Balls of Fire' New Nazi Weapon

Fly Parallel to Enemy Planes; Apparently Under Radio Control

A U. S. NIGHT FIGHTER BASE, France, Jan. 2 (AP).—American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—mysterious "balls of fire" which race along beside their planes for miles like will o' the wisps.

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Galveston, Tx
Daily News
January 8 1945

'Foo-Fighters' Have Counterpart In U. S. Discovery

BY HOWARD W. BLAKESLEE
Associated Press Science Editor

New York, Jan. 7. Germany's new "foo-fighters," the mysterious, glowing balls that appear alongside American planes over Germany; and accompany the flyers for long distances, have a counterpart in recently discovered action of microscopic particles of rubber latex and other small objects.

The "foo-fighters" appear in three formations, a fireball near the tip of a wing, a chain of balls riding along just in front of the plane, and a group of a dozen at a distance, with an appearance of a Christmas tree.

No commonly known electrical phenomenon explains this diversity. But all these patterns are shown in the new microscopic work. They are described in Industrial and Engineering Chemistry, in an article by Francis F. Lucas, of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc., New York City.

The particles appear in pairs, chains and groups. They are in rapid motion, due apparently to electrical forces inherent in the liquid in which they are photographed.

In all cases one larger particle, whose bulk might be likened to an airplane, dominates one or more smaller particles. Both attraction and repulsion are present. Usually the particles, attracted so strongly to a larger one that they are bound within a close distance, never touch the big particle.

These little "foo-particles" do not glow. They do possess electrical charges, which conceivably under the right conditions could cause them to glow with the kind of light described for the "foo-fighters."

If the Germans have found a way to produce electrical forces over a large area, corresponding to those which exist naturally in the latex solutions, then it is conceivable that their "foo-fighters" are small balloons.

How such a huge electrical field could be produced is *not* described in the scientific reports available before the war.

But in such a field, the static electricity on a moving balloon and on a moving plane, might account both for the bright glow and the queer attraction, which brings the "foo-fighters" close to a plane, without, so far as reported, ever touching it.

In the microscopic latex particles the force developed is tremendous, and apparently enough, if amplified, to account for an attraction that would drag a small balloon along at high speed as a captive of an airplane.

These latex particles have the consistency of jelly beans. Yet the forces of attraction are great enough so that when one of them touches another, the big one sucks the little one inside its own body. This actual contact and coalescence occurs only occasionally.

Fitchburg Ma
Sentinel
January 2 1945

Yanks Describe Secret Weapon As Foo Fighter

A U. S. NIGHT FIGHTER BASE, France, Jan. 2 (AP)—American fighter pilots engaged in flying night intruder missions over Germany report the Nazis have come up with a new "secret weapon"—mysterious "balls of fire" which race along beside their planes for miles like will o' the wisps.

Yank pilots have dubbed them "Foo Fighters," and at first thought they might explode, but so far there is no indication that any planes have been damaged by them.

Some pilots have expressed belief that the "Foo Fighter" was designed strictly as a psychological weapon. Intelligence reports seem to indicate it is radio-controlled from the ground and can keep pace with planes flying 300 miles per hour.

Lt. Donald Meiers of Chicago, Ill., said there are three types of "Foo Fighters"—red balls of fire that fly along at wing tip; a vertical row of three balls of fire which fly in front of the planes, and a group of about 15 lights which follow the plane at a distance, flickering on an off.

Foo Fighters
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Foo Fighters

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Floating and plane-following balls in fire-like color, added to the silver globes encountered over the German lines by America airmen, might not be as mysterious as would seem in cabled dispatches, C. E. Butterfield, AP radio editor, says.

This is just a guess, but on the little information available, the colored and glowing globes might well be added elements in attempts to interfere with radio signals and radar detection.

While dispatches hint that they are radio controlled, the fact that they travel along with a plane or stay a certain distance ahead would tend toward the belief that they instead are magnetic. Thus, the metal of a plane would attract them, at the same time holding them at a distance. Radio control from the ground or another plane would not permit such apparent accuracy in control.

The glow, coupled with the possible magnetic action, might come from the type of gas they contain to aid in their electrical qualities and to add to their buoyancy.