

# It came from Ohio

Anyone who's watched more than a few episodes of the X-Files knows that not all UFOs are flown by aliens. In the show's first season, FBI agents discovered that the air force had its own fleet of aircraft that can hover silently and perform otherworldly maneuvers. Documents declassified in May 1999 reveal that this fiction may not have been too far from air force plans.

In July 1997 *Popular Mechanics* revealed two air force saucer projects—Operations Silver Bug and Pye Wacket—that, shortly after World War II, attempted to build flying discs based on Nazi research. But hidden away as a Pentagon “black budget” item was a third project, declassified after 32 years in a mandatory review of old documents.



As told in *Popular Mechanics*'s October 2000 issue, North American Aviation designed a 40-foot “flying saucer,” designated the Lenticular Reentry Vehicle (LRV), which the air force classified secret in

1962. The project was based at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, where German engineers familiar with flying disc technology had resettled.

The LRV, flying in a low orbit of 300 miles, would have carried four “winged” weapons (which could be launched from space or parked in orbit) during a six-week mission. A four-person crew would ride in a capsule at the front of the disc. In an emergency, the rocket- and parachute-equipped capsule would become a “lifeboat” for a return descent to earth. A separate area of the saucer was set aside for living and work areas.

Although no launch system was specified in the design study, a separate engineering study suggests that a nuclear engine, then under development by the air force and the Atomic Energy Agency, would have been used.

In 1997, while attempting to explain UFO phenomena reported to have occurred near Roswell, New Mexico, the air force acknowledged that during the Cold War the military used balloons to lift unusually shaped airframes to high altitudes for aerodynamic tests. Had such tests been conducted on an unpowered LRV saucer, it would have appeared to onlookers as if the craft had hovered silently and then shot upwards in an instant—a textbook description of a UFO sighting.

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