

Discrepancies and Omissions in the *Transcription of Recorded Conversations*, 24 October 1968.¹

The *Transcription* is a time-coded transcript of communications between Minot AFB, Radar Approach Control (RAPCON) controllers, and the B-52 (JAG 31) co-pilot, Capt. Bradford Runyon. The length of time it covers is about one hour, from 3:44-4:40. For North Dakota, Central Daylight Savings Time (CDT) offset from Greenwich Mean Time (Z) is -5 hours. CDT ended Sunday, 27 October. Central Standard Time (CST) offset is -6 hours.

1. Discrepancy with Initial Time References: 3:30-3:35 (0830-0835Z).

The first entry at 3:30: “Controllers received information on UFO 24 miles NW,” is presented as a *statement*, and not a communication with the B-52. Based on conversations beginning at 3:34, the B-52 is located over the runway at Minot AFB; and at 3:52, *nearing* the position of the initial air-radar observation. The actual position of the B-52 at the time of the initial “AIR-ELECTRONIC OBSERVATION: WAS 38 NAUTICAL MILES NW OF THE DEERING TACAN; 300 DEGREES RADIAL; FL200 [Flight Level 20,000 feet]; 280-230 IAS” ([Basic Reporting Data, 2-3](#); and [Werlich’s Overlay Map](#)). Based on our reconstruction of the B-52 flight track, when the pilots were notified by RAPCON of the weather radar position of the UFO at 3:52 (“should be your 1:00 position 3 miles now”), the B-52 would have been about 34 nmi. NW of the Deering TACAN (located adjacent to the runway). Given an average indicated air speed of 255 knots, this would require about 8 *minutes* of flight time. Therefore, the *Transcription*’s elapsed time of 18 *minutes* between 3:34-3:52 is clearly excessive. Consequently, I am noting a correction of +10 minutes to the initial time references from 3:30-3:35 [3:40-3:45].

2. Omissions in the *Transcription*: 4:04-4:21 (0904-0921Z).

After the radios returned to normal, the B-52 co-pilot Runyon and navigator Patrick McCaslin both recall a request not to land, but to fly back around the traffic pattern and over fly a UFO.² Runyon recalls that a General identified by name at the time, made the request. The specific request (or the request relayed by RAPCON) and Runyon’s response are clearly absent from the transcription.

¹ For comparison see the communications transcripts contained in the “[B-52H Aircraft Mishap Report, 4 October 1968](#)” (Headquarters, Air Force Safety Center, Judge Advocate Mishap Records Division [AFSC/JAR], Kirtland AFB, NM). This *Transcription of Recorded Conversations* begins when the B-52 (FOG 31) is approximately 600 miles east of Minot, under control of Minneapolis, and subsequently Great Falls Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCC). It covers a period of time from 0256-0852Z before passing to Minot approach control. The *Aircraft Accident Transcription-Minot Approach Control* covers the period from 0842-0907Z. The communications span a period of 6 hours, the jargon is accurate, and time references are precise to increments of seconds.

² [Runyon 2000, 11, 24](#). [Runyon 2005, 14](#). [McCaslin 2000, 7-8, 22](#). [McCaslin 2001, 22](#).

3. Omissions in the Transcription: 4:21-4:40 (0921-0940Z).

Following 4:21, the time code references are absent for the entire final traffic pattern and terminal landing at 4:40. The final entry of “0928 [4:28] JAG 31 on final for landing” is erroneous. In our reconstruction of the flight track, the B-52 is on the base leg at 4:28 and on final approach at 4:30:40-4:33:40 for a “full stop” (engines off) at 4:40. In addition, RAPCON’s vector directing the B-52 onto the 290-degree downwind leg is absent, when the B-52 pilots visually observed the UFO ahead of the aircraft over several minutes before coming alongside and turning over the UFO onto the base leg. The omissions evidently include pilot-RAPCON conversations during the downwind leg.

4. Discrepancies Concerning the B-52 Onboard Time and the Transcription.

Compared to the times in the communications transcript, it appears both the B-52 pilot chronometer and radarscope chronometer (B-52 onboard time) are *ahead in time* by 6-7 minutes. For example, in our reconstruction of the flight path of the B-52, we discovered the initial time of the pilot’s air-visual observation was approximately 4:24-4:28; a difference of 6-7 minutes compared to Partin’s time of 4:30-4:35, determined by the pilot chronometer (AF-117, 1). In addition, Claude Poher discovered that radarscope photo #783 (4:06:51 CDT by the B-52 radarscope chronometer) was exposed 18.8 nmi from the Deering TACAN.³ However, at 4:06 the *Transcription* indicates that the B-52 has passed the runway and is “going around” the turn onto the crosswind leg of the traffic pattern.⁴ At 4:06:51 this is a difference of 25.5 nmi, at an average speed of 217.5 knots (255-180 IAS); resolving a time difference of 7:02 minutes. Regarding the setting of the B-52 chronometers: during pre-flight planning, the navigator would obtain a GMT time “hack” from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) radio station WWV at Fort Collins, Colorado. Then he would simply say to the rest of the crew, “It will be [pick a time] in [x] seconds,” and count down to zero so the rest of the crew could set their watches to the same time. The crewmembers would then transfer that time to the onboard chronometers during preflight checklists.

³ See: Poher, “3.4. Refining the B-52 Position With Terrain Features.”

⁴ See: <http://www.minotb52ufo.com/maps/flight-track-tp1.php>.