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Further Discussion on Balloons

(From General Report #2 on Free Balloons and Related Incidents,
WD, MID G-2, Wash. D.C. 23 Feb 45)

Since 4 Nov. 44 there have been found in the United States, Canada, Alaska and Hawaii thirty balloons or balloon fragments of Japanese origin. Incendiary bombs were found with two of the balloons. Nine additional incidents of bomb recoveries or explosions have been reported. A number of other incidents and sightings, possibly related, have been reported.

GR #1 concluded that the balloons probably were launched from or near Japan. Since that report was published there have been additional reports of high altitude balloon sightings over Japan and Japanese-held territory. The XX and XXI Bomber Commands have reported a total of more than fifty free balloons of varying descriptions sighted on missions over Japan and Japanese-occupied China, commencing with the mission flown on 20 Aug. 44. Most of the descriptions of the balloons so far received have not been detailed. The reported altitudes at which the balloons were seen range from 16,000 to 36,000 feet--heights considered impracticable for barrage balloons.

Although the ballast-release devices do not show any pattern of variation such as the envelopes and valves exhibit, wide variations in the setting of the aneroid-bellows switches have been found. They have been adjusted to operate at altitudes ranging from 15,000 to over 25,000 feet. Such variations possibly are caused by attempts to utilize the most favorable wind currents at different periods. Because of these variations, the self-destructive device of the balloons may operate at different altitudes. Consequently, it cannot be assumed that at any given altitude the balloons can be closely approached by aircraft with safety.

The manner in which the cargo was attached to the balloon found on 2 Feb 45, differed significantly from previous recoveries. The balloon had incendiary bombs attached to the periphery of the ring of the ballast-release apparatus instead of to the center of the device. Incendiaries attached to the periphery can be scattered along the route of the balloon, and thus the incendiary effect can be widely dispersed.

One rubberized-silk balloon was recovered with a small radio transmitter, the signal characteristics of which have been carefully analyzed. No radio equipment has been recovered with any of the paper balloons. The only indication that the paper balloons may carry radio transmitters is the fact that a large number of signals have been received from the general direction of the Pacific Ocean. Most of these signals have been received by stations on the West Coast and the fixes obtained have been inaccurate.

In one instance a transmitter was tracked by a D/F net during a period of nine hours and over a distance of 1,600 miles. Without allowing for inaccuracies in D/F fixes, the estimated speed was 174 miles per hour. In another instance, two accurate fixes, spaced approximately 1,800 miles apart, were obtained on what appeared to be the same transmitter at an interval of ten hours, indicating that the transmitter had moved at the rate of approximately 180 miles per hour in the meantime. A D/F net in Hawaii has tracked a radio transmitter over a distance of approximately 1,440 miles in ten hours.

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FURTHER DISCUSSION ON BALLOONS (CONTD)

A first reference to balloons in Japanese propaganda was made on 17 Feb 45 in a Domei broadcast in English beamed to the US. The Japanese claimed that 500 casualties had been inflicted in the US and that numerous fires had been started. The broadcast also announced that the authorities in the US had found it necessary to issue general warnings against attacks by the Japanese balloons and thus had aggravated unrest among the people. It was emphasized that these occurrences had shattered the American feeling of security against attacks by the Japanese. Domei said that the Japanese military authorities had refused to comment on the subject.

The broadcast may be the first of a series designed to conduct a war of nerves against the US. Subsequent Japanese broadcasts beamed to Europe, SE Asia and China have repeated this theme and, in one instance, added that several million airborne troops could be landed in the US in the near future.

NOTE: On the opposite and following pages are reproduced a chart and photographs of objects believed to have originated from Jap balloons. Opposite is a chart, showing frequency of balloon incidents.

Fig 1. Incendiary bomb dropped by balloon.

Fig 2. Bomb dropped by balloon.

Fig 3. Two of four incendiary bombs found. Shows general appearance and "T" shaped objects which suspended the bombs from the periphery of the weight release mechanism.

Fig 4. Demolition block found. Shows tin container and 1 pound Picric Acid charge. Holes on side and end are for blasting cap.

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NUMBER
OF
BALLOONS

BALLOON INCIDENTS

22

20

18

16

14

12

10

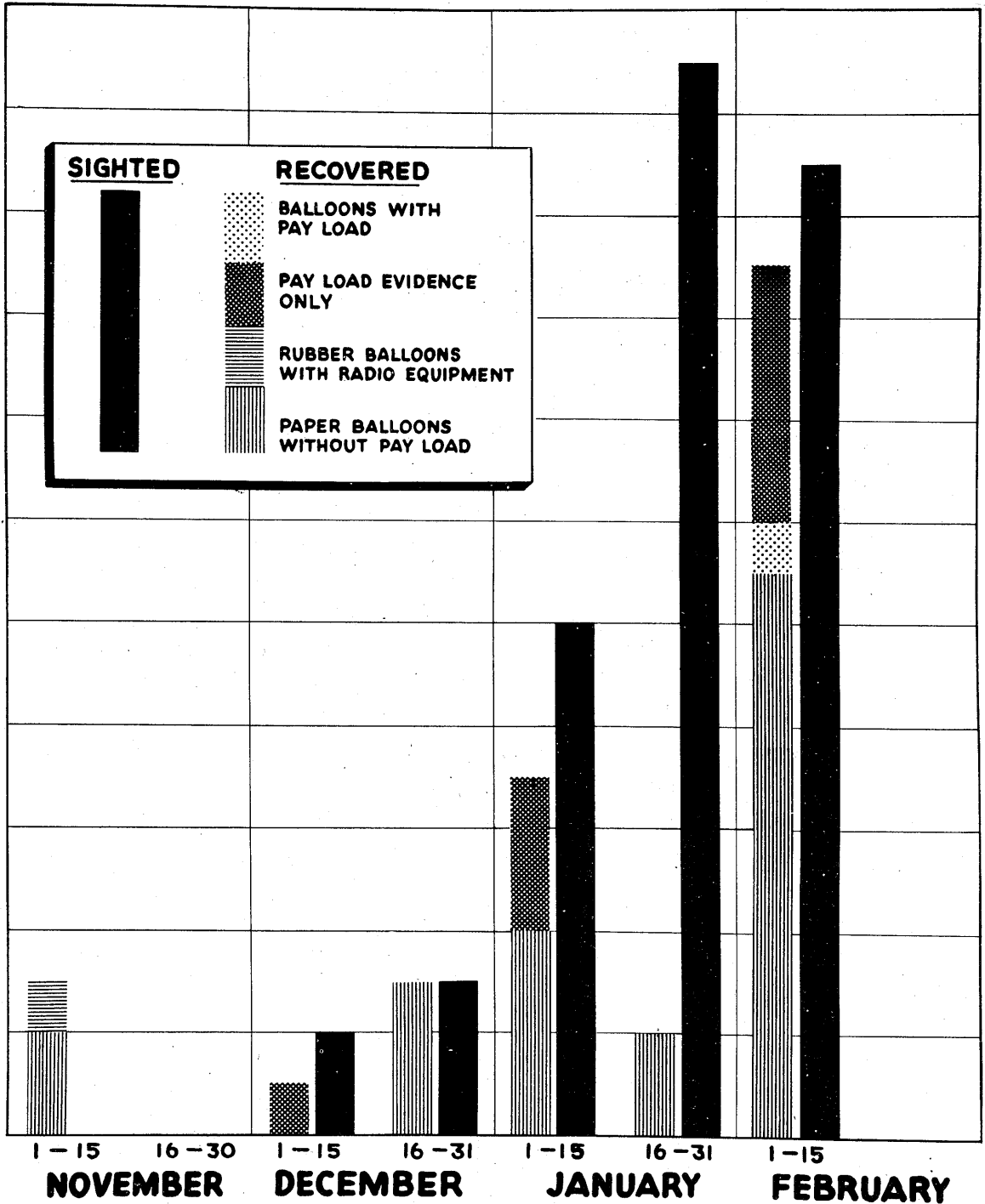
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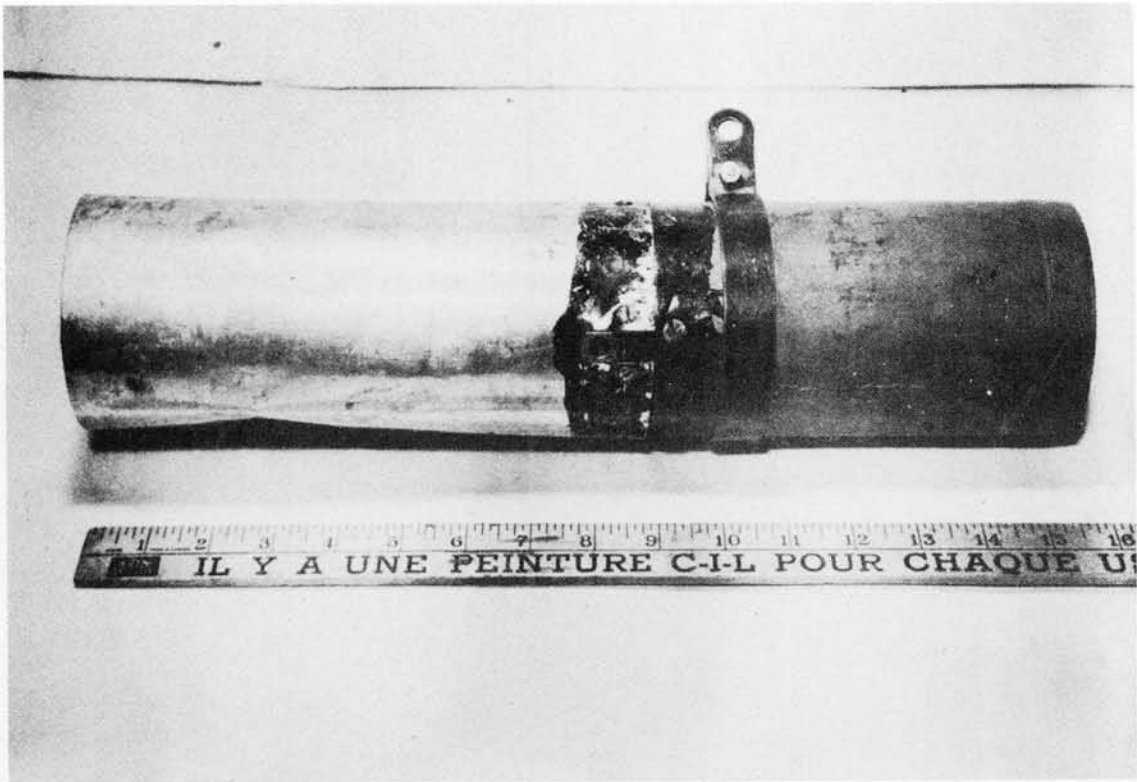


Fig. 1.

Incendiary bomb dropped by balloon.

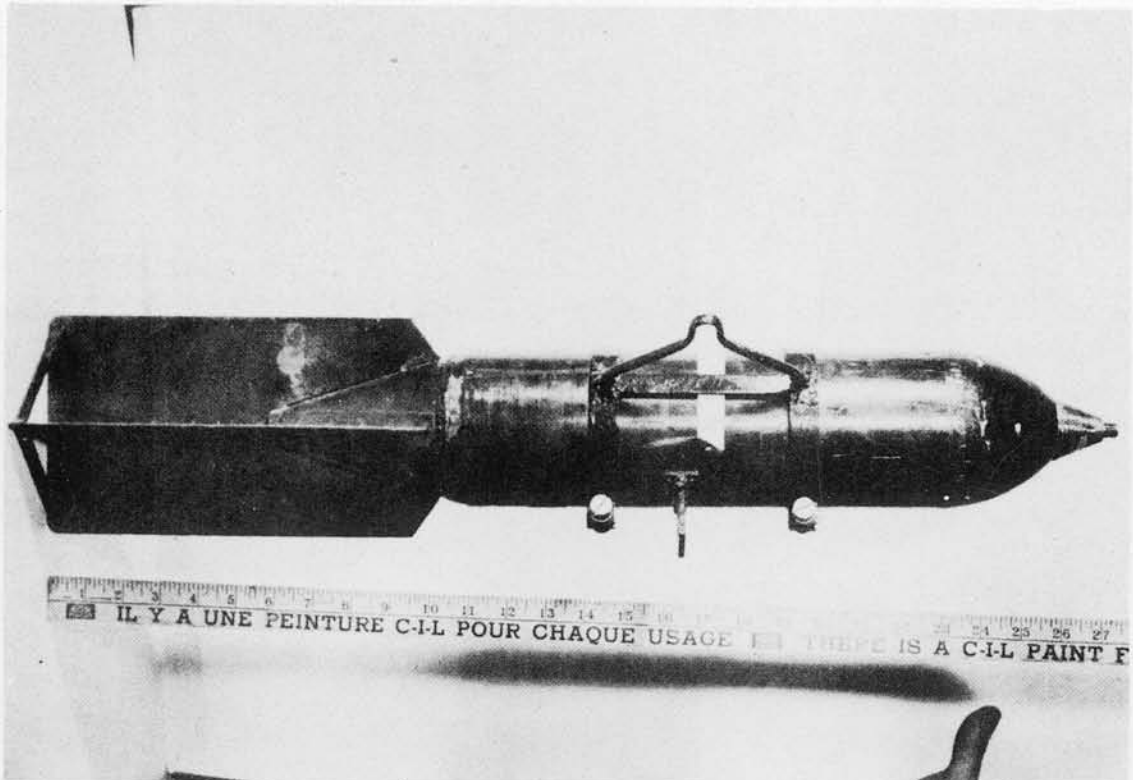


Fig. 2.

Bomb dropped by balloon.

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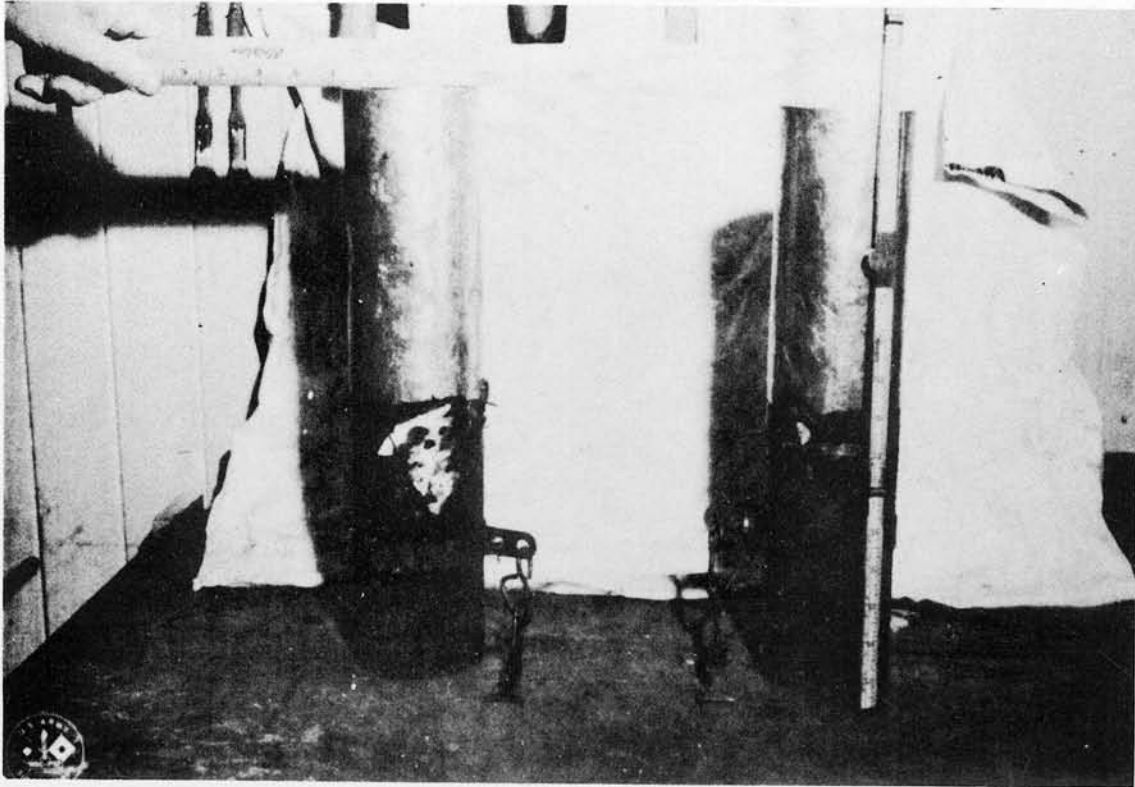


Fig. 3

Two incendiary bombs found in U.S.

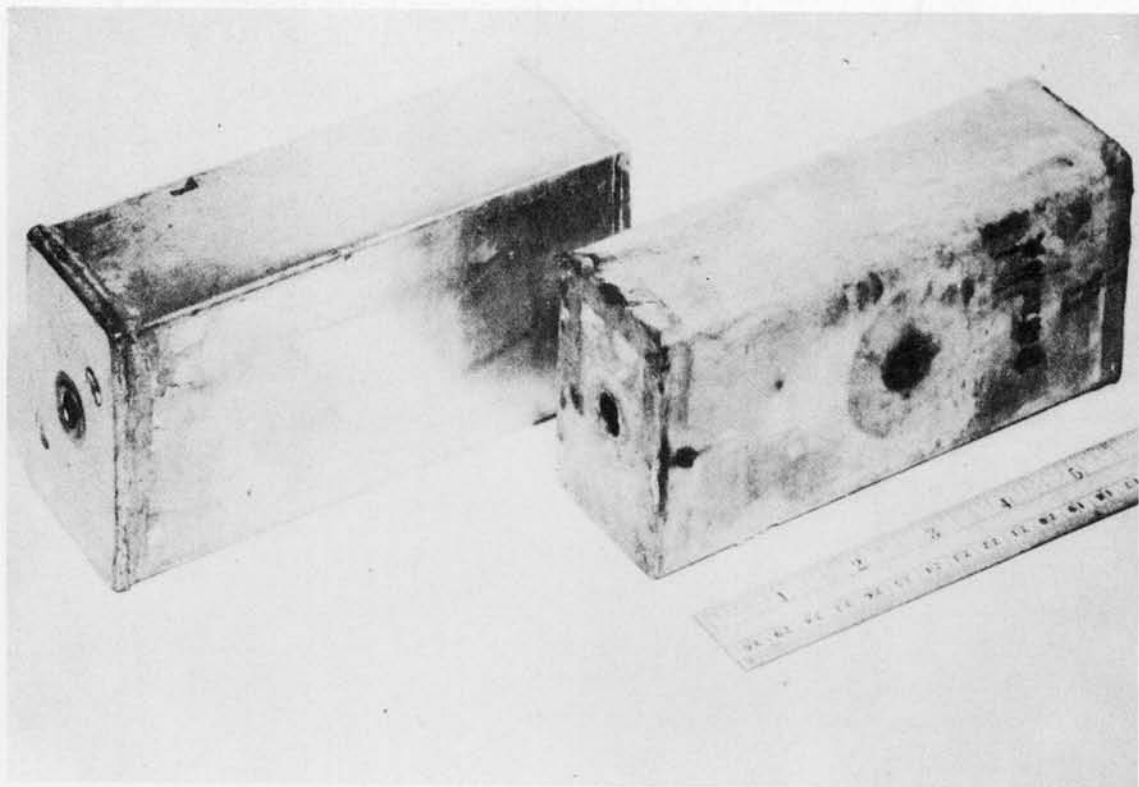


Fig. 4

Demolition block found near incendiaries.

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