



Fo-Gus Over South Dakota



Fo-Gus Over South Dakota: Japanese Incendiary Balloons

By

Maj. Todd Epp

Historian

South Dakota Civil Air Patrol

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What's a Fo-Gu (or Fu-Gu)?

- Japanese incendiary balloons launched in late 1944/early 1945
- Rode the jet stream at high altitude to Canada and USA.
- First ICBMS
- Cause fires in fields and forests, death



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- Constructed of heavy rice or mulberry paper glued by Japanese teenage girls.
- 70 feet tall, 30 feet in diameter, 19,000 cubic feet of hydrogen
- Flew at ~30,000 feet
- Barometric sensors controlled altitude.
- +9000 launched, Japanese figured only 10% would make it to North America.



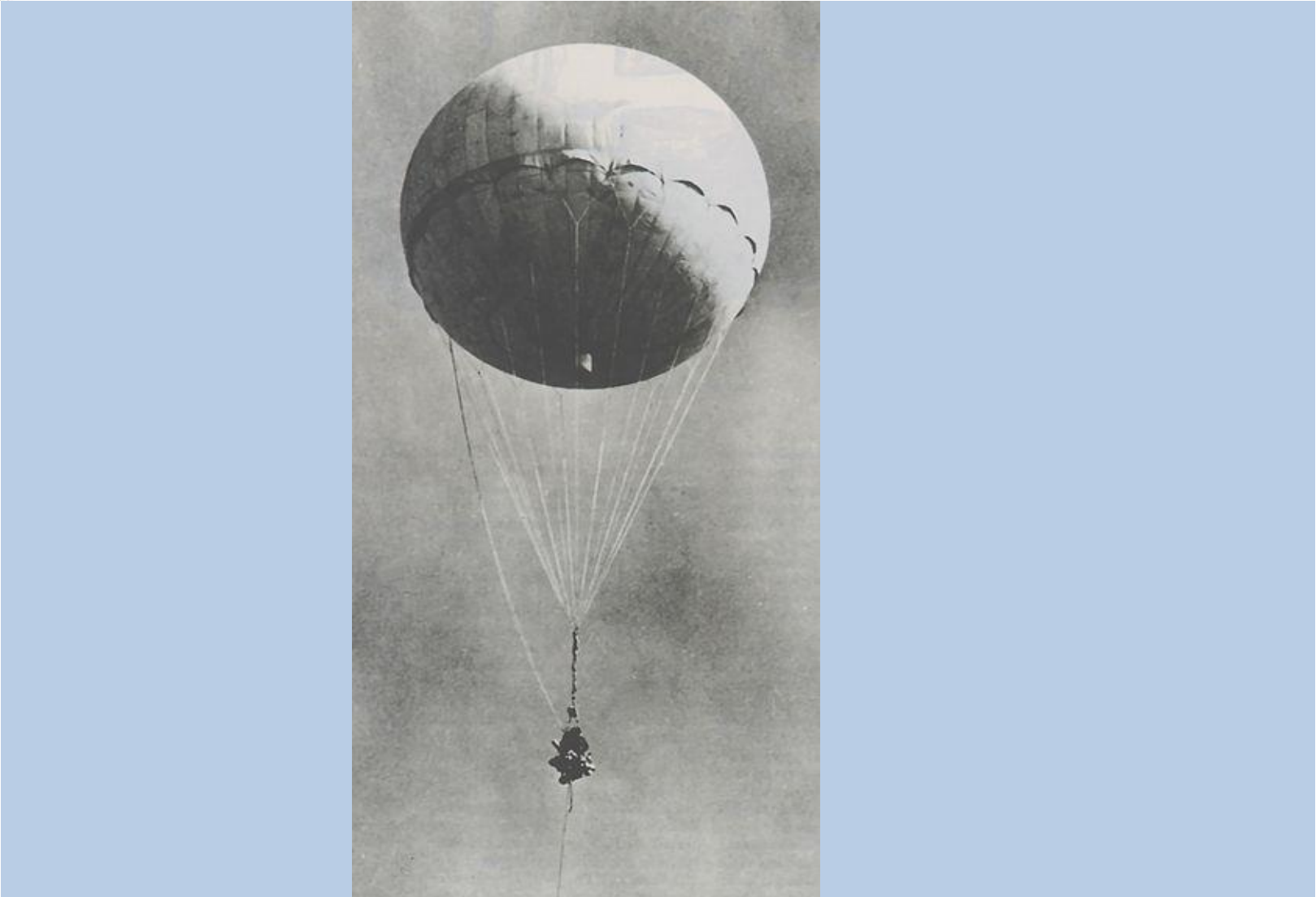
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- Only ~342 found in the USA
- After ~3 days, Japanese figured the balloons would be over North America.
- When altitude dipped below 30,000 feet, 5 kg to 15 kg incendiary devices would drop; balloon would also explode.

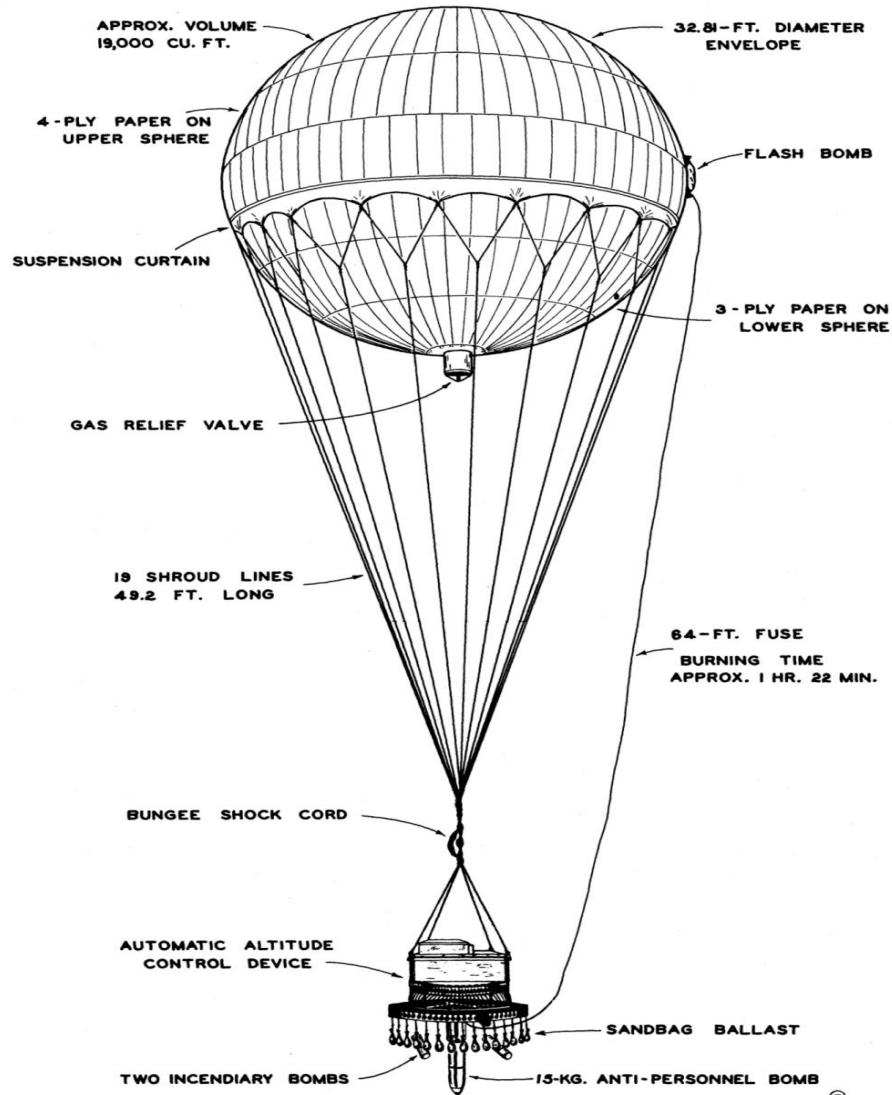


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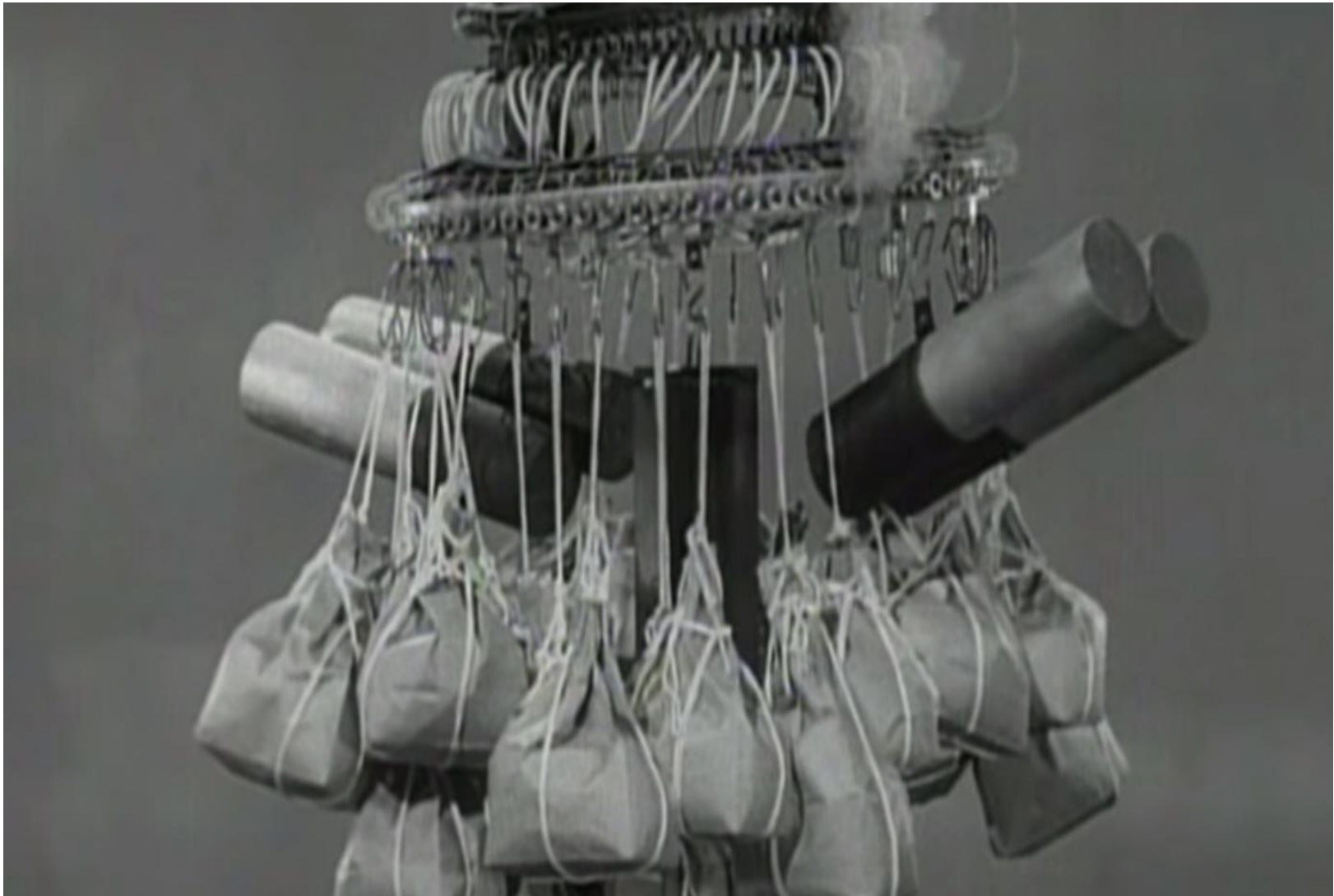


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Civil Air Patrol Response CAP NHQ, 15 June 1945

"...it can be reported that CAP units in the areas concerned have been on the alert for these presents from Hirohito. Members were eager to shoot them down in planes and shoot them down with shotguns..."



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Civil Air Patrol Response CAP NHQ, 15 June 1945

*“...In view of the danger of explosives, they were instructed to merely report the balloons to Army authorities. **How and where they did so is another of the CAP stories that can’t be told till later.**”*



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Civil Air Patrol Response

Idaho Falls Squadron, 9 Feb. 1945

"...You are assigned to fly the Army L 2 M 43-26408 to Pocatello Mun Air Port and receive search instructions from Wallace Mosely F B I for search for enemy balloon basket believed to have been lost off that vicinity."



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South Dakota's Response

- Per research from Lt. Col. Bruce Kipp, SDWVG assistant historian, SDWVG aircrews did attempt to intercept and shoot down with shotguns some balloons over the state.



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Where Did They Land/Spotted in SD?

- Belle Fourche
- Cheyenne River Indian Reservation
- Rapid City
- Ree Heights/Wolsey
- Red Elm
- Marcus
- Buffalo
- Big Stone City
- Also spotted in Omaha and elsewhere in Nebraska



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SD News Reports of Sightings

“...The John Black family, living in Big Stone City, saw an object suspended over the water near the diversion channel. The white object finally deflated and sank....”

--Lead Daily Call, 22 Sept. 1945



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SD News Reports of Sightings

“...another Japanese paper balloon came down in the vicinity of Philip, S.D. It was seen to settle on the Ernest Neuman farm, southwest of Phillip on June 3rd (1945). The remains of the balloon consisted of only the paper bag and some shroud lines....”

--Deadwood Pioneer Times, 1 Sept. 1945



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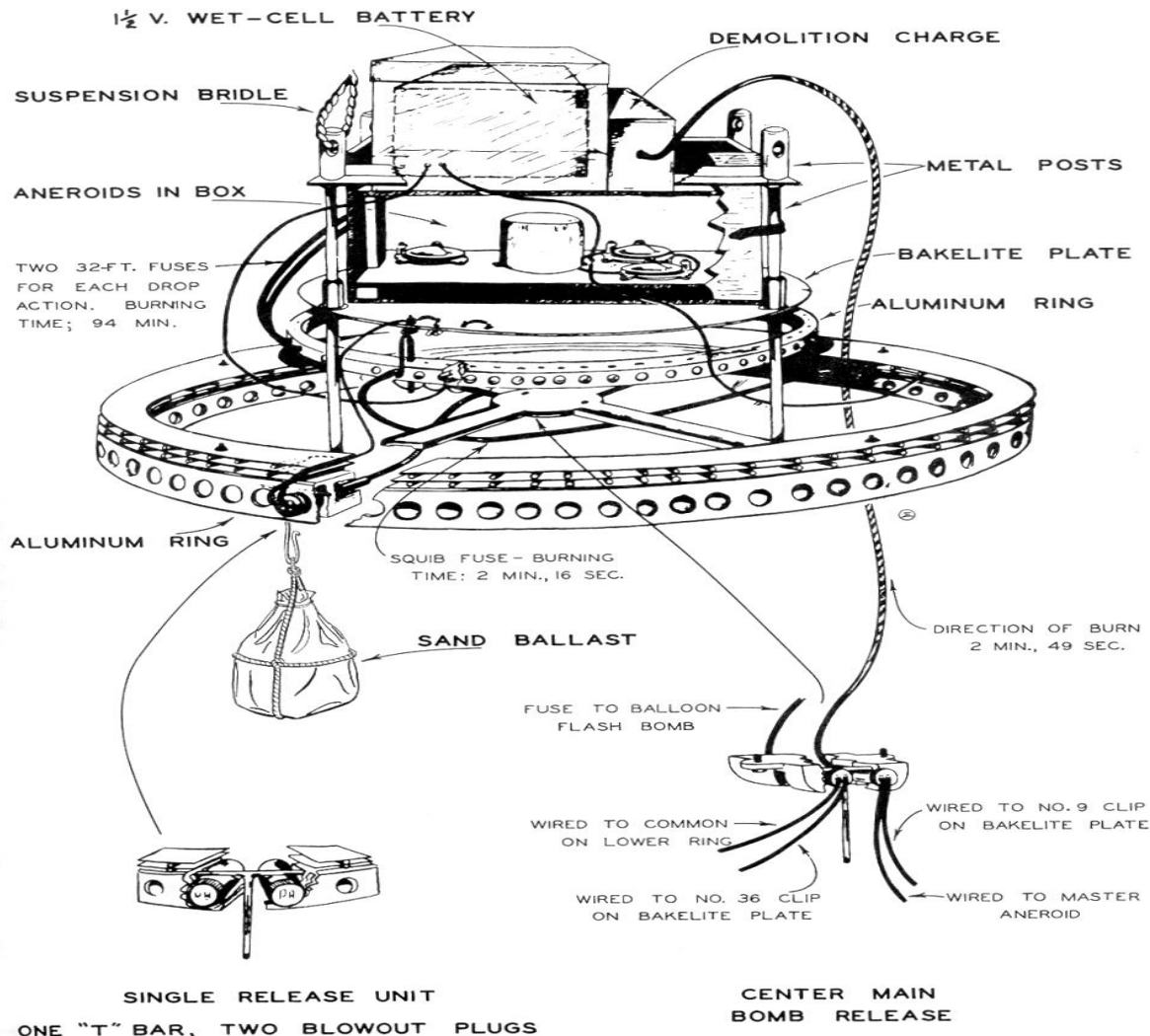


Balloons' Aftermath

- Only killed six people though five were children in Oregon and a mother. Came upon a balloon and it detonated.
- Caused minimal property damage.
- Could have caused more damaged had they launched in spring and summer instead of winter.
- Discontinued in May 1945 and Japanese war resources redirected.
- SD State Historical Society has one.



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Automatic altitude-control device.



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Sources

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