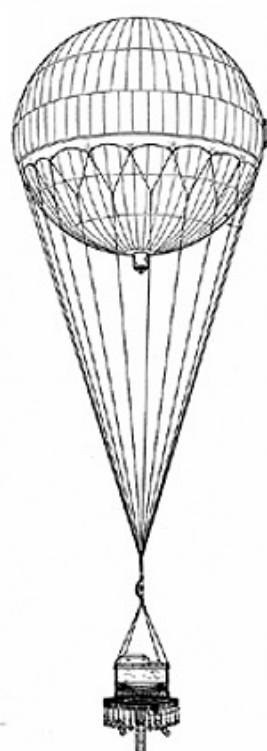


Balloon Mystery



Montana has an unexpected visit from a Japanese balloon

Kalispell, Mont., hugged the secret to its bosom for nine whole days. Then, on Dec. 18, a Federal Bureau of Investigation announcement gave the news to the rest of the country: In a snow-covered, heavily forested area southwest of the Montana town, two woodchoppers had found a balloon with Japanese markings on it. Made of processed paper, the 33½-foot bag bore on its side a small incendiary bomb, apparently designed to explode and prevent seizure of the balloon intact. Also attached were 45-foot rope cables, roughly hacked as if to show that the balloon's gondola had been purposely severed.



A number of unanswered questions remained last week for Kalispell, the FBI, and the nation. Had the balloon carried any passengers? If so, where were they? Where were the parachutes or the gondola by which they might have descended earthward? Had the big bag come from an enemy sub operating off the west coast, or had it been flown all the way from the Jap homeland?