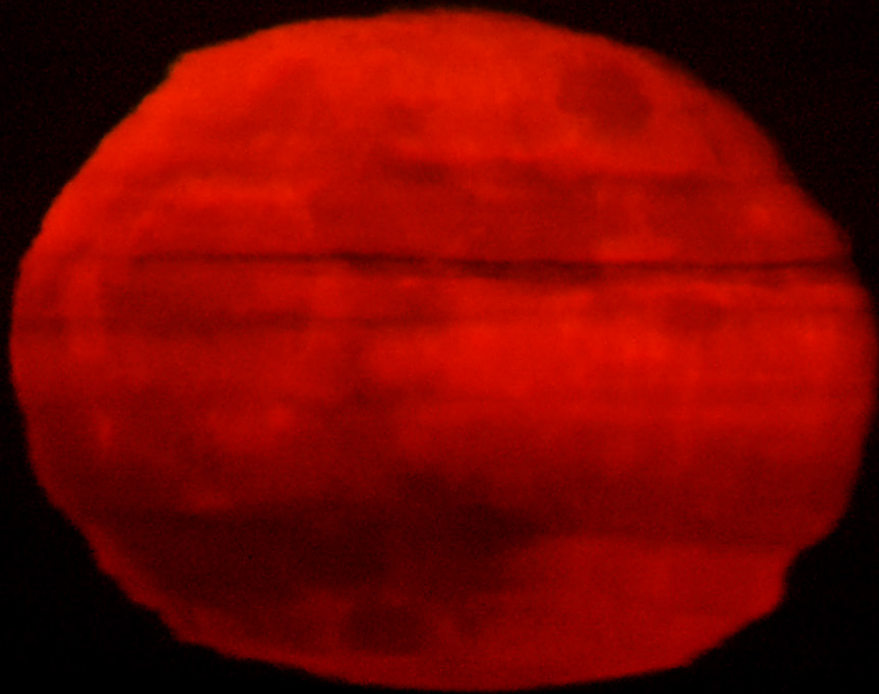


SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs



Are you surprised to find the moon occupying the number-six position among the reported NL IFOs? I was, too, but this is another IFO which is easy to "solve" with confidence.

Allan Hendry

Volume 12 Number 2

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Moon Madness

Cover: Moon rise over the ocean. The moon can produce UFO reports. I keep stumbling across them in the BB files. Wim Van Utrecht presented me an article from a Polish UFO case that was definitely the moon. One can start reading about this on page 16.

Left: March and April's full moons will be "super moons". That means the moon will be at perigee and close to the earth at the time of the full moon. This image shows that there is a difference between the moon's appearance at perigee compared to apogee. However, it really is not that noticeable to the casual observer.

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Lunar terror in Poland by Wim van Utrecht	16-26

In this issue, I have the pleasure of publishing an article by Wim van Utrecht, which describes a sighting of a UFO that appeared to block the path of an ambulance in Poland. Wim's research indicates that the UFO was actually the setting moon.

It may come as a surprise to some that the moon can cause UFO reports. The quote from Hendry on the front cover demonstrates, that he was surprised when he had reports that turned out to be the moon. In one instance, he reports having police officers chasing the setting moon! The Blue Book files also contain quite a few reports that were the moon. Probably the biggest indicator that the moon was involved usually has to do with the described appearance and behavior of the UFO. Confirmation that it probably was the moon is given when the witnesses state they were looking in the general direction of the moon but only saw the UFO.

Two of the biggest contributing factors to the moon being reported as a UFO is the moon illusion and atmospheric conditions. The moon illusion gives the observer the impression that the moon looks much larger when close to the horizon. Atmospheric conditions can make the moon appear distorted and reddish-orange. Both effects can confuse people into thinking they are seeing something other than the moon.

I have been trying to keep up with the whole "To the stars academy" (TTSA)/Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP) story but, like most of UFOlogy, it has become boring. We still have no idea what role Luis Elizondo played at the Department of Defense (DOD)/AATIP. The more I see, the more I am convinced that the program seemed to be a way for Robert Bigelow, and other UFO promoters, to be paid by the US government to write about UFOs. I applaud the efforts of people, like John Greenwald, who are trying to discover everything they can about the details but it seems like this will always be clouded in secrecy.

[Popular Mechanics published an article by Tim McMillan](#), who summarized what is currently known about the AATIP. Probably the most interesting thing that was revealed was a document that Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Space Studies (BAASS) produced and gave to the DOD as part of their contract. McMillan states that he reviewed the document. However, it has some sort of classification that prevents anyone from revealing the details. I suspect this classification has more to do with BAASS and less to do with the DOD. While he lists a lot of things that are included in the report, he did display page 17, which is part of the "northern tier sightings" in 1975. We also see a table where BAASS decided to demonstrate all of the UFO reports around the bases. BAASS chose to select ALL UFO reports within 300 miles of the base and between July and November (the northern tier sightings happened between October and November) in an apparent attempt to pad their statistics! To demonstrate how absurd the 300 mile radius is, just look at a map. It is like saying a sighting over Philadelphia had something to do with a sighting over Boston. The writing on page 17 sources the book "Clear Intent". It describes the events that transpired on November 7, 1975 around the Malmstrom missile sites. The only message traffic that was released described the visual sightings but there is no evidence of any nuclear weapon failure, which was highlighted in the report. According to "Clear Intent", the source of this information appears to be Linda Moulton Howe and is probably based on rumor/speculation. See SUNlite 8-5 for my discussion about the northern tier sightings. The rest of the BAASS report did not impress me very much. Some of it sounded a lot like the usual collection of UFO reports collected by MUFON. The one thing I learned about MUFON's investigations is that they often fail to properly investigate the sightings. I suspect the reason BAASS does not want all the report published is because skeptics would have a field day picking it apart.

I want to thank Barry Greenwood for providing me information about a Weinstein catalogue entry that was actually a submarine launching multiple Trident missiles off of the Florida Coast in the pre-dawn sky. It must have been quite spectacular to see and quite a few pilots speculated that they were seeing UFOs.

WEEDING OUT THE WEINSTEIN CATALOGUE

March 17, 1982¹

82.03.17	10:40 ZT	USA	125 mi. South of Jacksonville, Florida	A	Air Canada flight 087 pilot	three objects with three highly illuminated vapor-trails.	NR			03 31
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Case file

The source of this information comes from CUFOS and Project 1947, which means that the files are not readily available. Fortunately, Barry Greenwood provided me with what he had from CUFOS files. It included a letter from Robert Klinn to Dr. Hynek. The letter mentions that eight aircraft saw the objects. It also describes a tape transcript but only gives excerpts. These are the following sections that were part of the letter:

THERE'S THREE OF THEM RIGHT NOW!

THEY'RE STILL CLIMBING AND GOING!

Federal Express 256, are those things still flying?

Yeah, they're still trekkin' right on. You can see the contrails on 'em. There's three of 'em. They're still gaining altitude in there, they're WAY up THERE.

You still see them out there?

Yeah.

No, we don't get anything up there at all....

That's absolutely fantastic, because they're very much here.

Is there a rocket-launching area up there?

Chariots of fire

submarine-launched rockets/missiles at Cape Canaveral

WE'VE GOT UFOS OUT THERE!

...We've got a maniac's down in the Atlantic out there. NATO forces -- THEY probably let it go.

crazy people

military warning area

Maybe it was the Navy playing around...

quite a spectacular sight...We've never seen anything like THAT before

sure wasn't something normal

that phenomenon

pretty weird

crazy people

either submarine-launched missiles-- or UFOs

They came far over the ocean as you can see

CLOSE TO US IN A MATTER OF SECONDS...then they did a severe turn, ALL HEADED BACK, and climbed up at a, almost straight-up angle...²

Barry also sent me the transcript that was in their file. The information in the transcripts is similar to that above but it does list some directions for the sighting and how widespread it was. According to the transcript, the sighting by the Air Canada flight was towards the east. They asked the en route controller if they had radar that went out that far. The controller replied in the affirmative that they went out to the east air routes that ran from the Bahamas towards the Carolinas.

Even more interesting was that it was observed from South Carolina and Wilmington, North Carolina. These aircraft were looking south. The Fed Ex 256 flight appears to have been somewhere in the panhandle of Florida. As best I can determine, the flight was going from Memphis (A Fed Ex hub) towards Florida. They originally thought it was something from Cape Canaveral but the controller stated there was no planned rocket launches from there. The Fed Ex flight gave two different directions of their sighting. They originally stated it was at the 10 O'clock position from their aircraft. However, they also mentioned an easterly direction, which the controller informed them would be towards Brunswick. The pilots added that the sighting was in the direction of Eglin or Tyndall AFB (the transcript refers to them as "England" and "Tendil"). They also suggested it was near the Ocala Forest Bombing range. These directions indicated they were probably looking towards the Southeast and not Eastward.

1982 March 17 - Launch Site: Cape Canaveral, Launch Complex: Cape Canaveral ETR, Launch Platform: SSBN 658, LV Family: Trident, Launch Vehicle: Trident C-4.

- OT-8 Operational missile test - Nation: USA, Agency: USN, Apogee: 1,000 km (600 mi).

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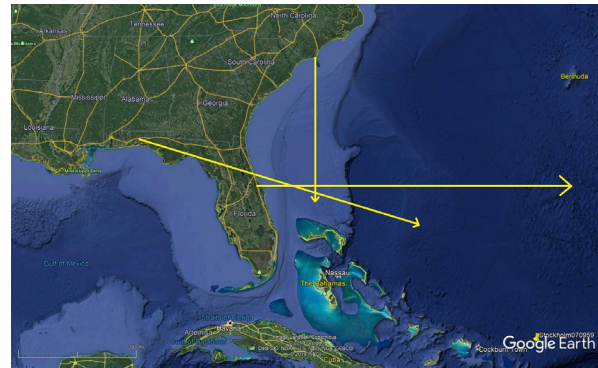
- OT-8 Operational missile test - Nation: USA, Agency: USN, Apogee: 1,000 km (600 mi).

1982 March 17 - 10:30 GMT - Launch Site: Plesetsk, LV Family: R-7, Launch Vehicle: Soyuz-U.

- Cosmos 1343 - Mass: 6,300 kg (13,800 lb), Nation: Russia, Agency: MOM, Class: Surveillance, Type: Military surveillance satellite, Spacecraft Bus: Vostok, Spacecraft: Zenit-6U, Duration: 14,00 days, Decay Date: 1982-03-31 - USAF Sat Cat: 13999, COSPAR: 1982-021A, Apogee: 284 km (176 mi), Perigee: 194 km (120 mi), Inclination: 72.80 deg, Period: 89.30 min, Photo surveillance; returned film capsule; maneuverable.

1982 March 17 - 10:34 GMT - Launch Site: Cape Canaveral, Launch Complex: Cape Canaveral ETR, Launch Platform: SSBN 658, LV Family: Trident, Launch Vehicle: Trident C-4.

- OT-8 Operational missile test - Nation: USA, Agency: USN, Apogee: 1,000 km (600 mi).



Analysis

All of the directions listed indicate that what was seen was towards the ocean off of the east coast of Florida. While Cape Canaveral had no launches on that date there was another source of rocket launches that operated off of the coast of Florida. Ballistic missile submarines (SSBN) often test their systems out on the Eastern Test Range (ETR). These missiles were usually launched in the direction of the south Atlantic, towards the coast off of South Africa. That location puts the missiles on an Eastward to Southeastward track.

The space chronology index lists a launch of four Trident missiles from SSBN 658 (USS Mariano G. Vallejo) at 1034Z.³ This is very close to the time listed of 1040Z in the Weinstein catalogue. While there is only mention of three trails by the pilots, it could have been the fourth had not been seen or was launched at a time slightly after the first three. This launch happened about an hour before sunrise and would have been quite spectacular from the air as the missile plumes at high altitude would have been illuminated by the sun.

I saw a submarine launched missile test once from just south of Orlando, Florida in August of 1986. My fellow astronomers and I were caught off guard when we saw a bright object appear in the East and the proceed upward and southward. We knew that there were no land-based rocket launches planned so it was easy to determine that it was a submarine launched missile. It was quite spectacular. In this case, it was just a Polaris A3 missile launched by a British SSBN (August 2, 1986 0135 UTC)⁴. This photograph I took of the event shows the bright star Enif and the missile's trajectory. I would expect a Trident missile test, which is a more powerful rocket, would have been more spectacular. Even more spectacular would have been multiple missiles being launched shortly after each other.



As an ex-submariner I was familiar with the test range for the SSBNs out of Port Canaveral. In 1983, I was on board USS Lafayette (SSBN 616), where we ran pre-launch missile tests for a Poseidon missile launch (the other crew got to launch the missile). While I had no idea how far we were off the coast, it was not very far. We left in the morning and came back the next day. I recall us operating at ahead flank on the surface for about an entire watch rotation (6 hours). This means we were probably 100-200 nm off the coast. Therefore, everything appears to line up with what the transcript describes.

It is interesting that there was mention of a "warning area" on the transcript and that several comments about the navy and submarine launched missiles. I am sure there were NOTAM's issued for this but the pilots were either unaware of them or ignored them. It seems that some of the pilots had identified the source but the more exaggerated reports were the ones that were accepted as evidence.

Conclusion

This case could easily have been explained by any UFOlogist interested in examining the case. This sighting time and location match that of the Trident missile test on that date. This can be classified as a missile launch and the sighting needs to be removed from the list.

Notes and references

1. Aldrich, Jan. Aircraft UFO encounters summaries from Project 1947 research. Available WWW: <http://www.project1947.com/47cats/acupdt.htm>
2. "Letter from Robert Klinn to J. Allen Hynek dtd December 2, 1984" CUFOS Case files courtesy of Barry Greenwood.
3. "Space History Chronology 1982". Astronautix. Available WWW: <http://www.astronautix.com/1/1982chronology.html>
4. "Space History Chronology 1986". Astronautix. Available WWW: <http://www.astronautix.com/1/1986chronology.html>

April 12, 1959: Montreal, Canada

April 12, 1959--Montreal, Canada. St. Hubert Air Base Control Tower Operators, others saw red light which hovered over base, then darted away. [X]'

Section X is not very informative:

April 12, 1959: Control tower operators at St. Hubert Air Base, Montreal, and many others about 8 p.m. watched a reddish UFO which hovered over the base for several minutes, then darted away to the north. An RCAF spokesman stated: "It was a genuine UFO as far as we are concerned." [5] About the same time residents of north Montreal saw a red UFO, alternately described as round and cigar-shaped, which hovered low over a field, then climbed rapidly emitting "fiery sparks" from the underside.²

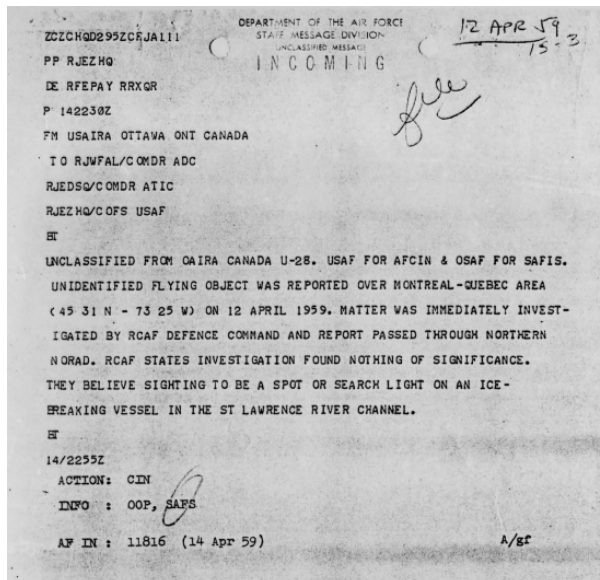
The source of this information came from a UPI story.

The Blue Book file

Blue Book has a case file for this event. The summary reads:

Red light, seemed to hang in the sky for a few mins, then darted North at a very high speed. Description of object varied w/witnesses.³

The case file has the UPI teletype story and a message stating that the RCAF investigated the sighting.⁴ That message states it did not appear on radar and they felt it was a spot light from an ice breaker that was in the St. Lawrence River channel. There is nothing more than this.



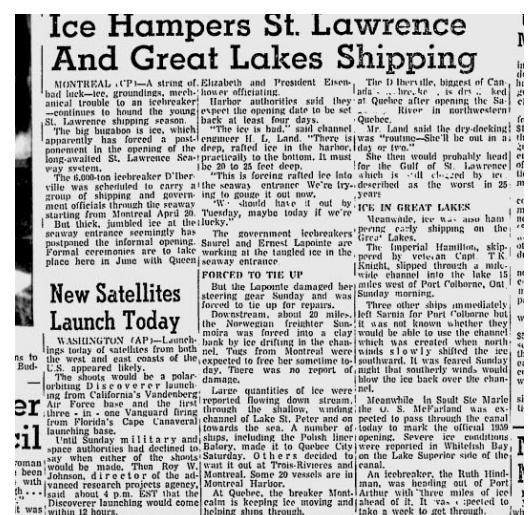
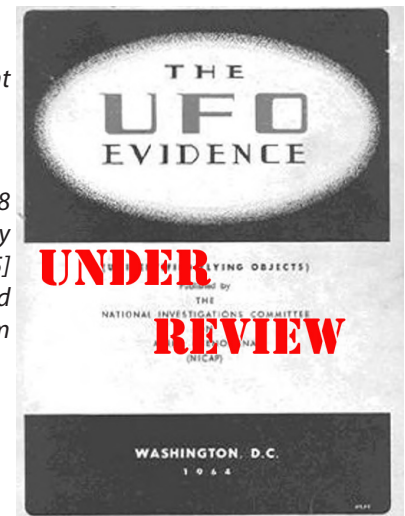
A later news report had the following statement:

The spokesman at St. Hubert said no unidentified object showed up on base radar and the object was not seen by the control tower operator.⁵

Analysis

There really isn't anything additional that could be found about the story. The media reports seem to conflict in regard to the matter about the control tower operator(s). We don't know if they did or did not see anything.

As far as the suggested explanation, there is evidence that there was an urgent need for ice breakers. On April 13, 1959, the Quebec Chronicle telegraph reported on page 1 that the opening of the seaway system had postponed by ice that was 20 to 25 feet deep.⁶ The first ships passed through the seaway less than two weeks later on April 25. This probably meant that ice breakers were working at night, which would probably have involved the use of searchlights. The direction the UFO departed was from above the air base towards the north, which was towards the river. This information about the sighting is consistent with a spotlight being operated by an ice breaker.





The Ice Breaker CGS D'iberville. It was the first ship to pass through the St. Lawrence Seaway on April 25, 1959.⁷

Conclusion

The investigation by the RCAF indicated they felt the ice breaker spotlight explanation was satisfactory to them. The description does suggest that this might be a plausible source but we can't be a 100% sure without more information. That being said, based on the information we do have, it is my opinion that this can be evaluated as "possible spotlight operations". The lack of additional information about the sighting and the possibility that there is an explanation means this case should be removed from the "Best Evidence" list.

Notes and references

1. Hall, Richard M. (Ed.) The UFO evidence. The National Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). New York: Barnes and Noble. 1997. P. 137
2. *ibid.* P. 118
3. "Project 10073 record card 12 Apr 59" Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <https://www.fold3.com/image/9080127>
4. "MSG from USAIRA ONI Ottawa Air Canada to CDR ADC DTG 142230Z." Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <https://www.fold3.com/image/9080129>
5. "Object sighting subject of report." Quebec Chronicle Telegraph. 14 April 1959. P. 3
6. "Ice hampers St. Lawrence and Great Lakes shipping." Quebec Chronicle Telegraph. 13 April 1959. P. 1
7. "CCGS D'iberville - IMO 5083734". Shipspotting.com. Available WWW: <http://www.shipspotting.com/gallery/photo.php?lid=852230>

THE 701 CLUB: CASE 7851 APRIL 4, 1962 WURLTAND, KENTUCKY

Don Berliner lists the case as follows:

*Wurtland, Kentucky. 0150Z. Witnesses: G.R. Wells and J. Lewis, using 117x telescope. One small object changing brightness, gave off smoke but remained stationary like a comet for 6 minutes. Case missing from official files.*¹

The description by Sparks is essentially the same and he also states the case is missing.²

The Blue Book file

Despite what Berliner and Sparks state, there is a case file for this event.³ It is not very big but most of the unknowns usually have small case files. The file consists of the report made by the witnesses and it is better than the usual report. While the witnesses appear to have been teenagers, they provided pertinent information from their astronomical observations. When a witness identifies the location of the object in relation to stars like Gamma Virginis, you know that they had some knowledge of the night sky and that their description would be fairly accurate.

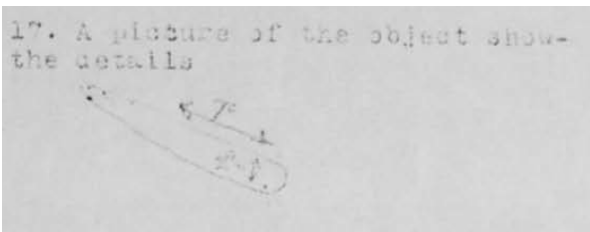
Analysis

There are several possibilities to consider in this case. The first might be a rocket booster venting gases. The position of being near Gamma Virginis puts it only 1-2 degrees south of the celestial equator and this might be a geostationary object. However, the first satellites of this type were not launched until 1963. Since there could not be such vehicles in orbit, the stationary nature of the object indicates it was not anything launched into space.

This brings us to the another possibility - that it was a balloon. The balloon theory could explain this because the sighting was during late twilight and could have reflected the sunlight for a brief period of time to peak around magnitude -2. The location of the target was about 176 degrees from the sun's right ascension (towards the Southeast). This means the sun was probably the source of illumination.



It would also explain this was observed from one general location. Wurtland, Kentucky is near the Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio border region. It is not very populated and any balloon probably would have been visible only over a limited region..



The description of the shape also tends to indicate it could have been a research balloon. The StratoCat website, while not complete, lists an Ash Can balloon being launched from Minnesota on April 2.⁴ There are no details regarding that balloon's flight or duration. However, it was not unheard of for these balloons to be aloft for more than one day. Boeing magazine reports they had their H-21s chasing a project Ash Can balloon, launched from Goodfellow AFB, for two days until it came down over Georgia.⁵

Radiosonde data from the region does support an eastward track.⁶ Upper level winds (40-50,000 feet) were all from the West, Northwest, or Southwest in the central US during this time period. Assuming the balloon was in the stratosphere, it would have gone along the standard west to east track commonly seen in the month of April (a balloon launched from Texas, on March 26, went eastward and landed in Mississippi).⁷

Conclusion

This report is an interesting one and it is too bad, we don't have observations from another location. As a result, we cannot come up with a solid conclusion as to what the source of the report was. The description of the shape, stationary nature of the object, and the fact that it was apparently



illuminated by the sun, supports that this could have been a research balloon. However, since we can't identify where the balloon came from, we have to consider this as only possibly a research balloon.

Notes and references

1. Berliner, Don. "The Bluebook unknowns". NICAP. Available WWW: <http://www.nicap.org/bluebook/unknowns.htm>
2. Sparks, Brad. Comprehensive Catalog of 1,700 Project Blue Book UFO Unknowns: Database Catalog Not a Best Evidence List-NEW: List of Projects & Blue Book Chiefs Work in Progress Version 1.26. Jan. 31, 2016. P. 251.
3. "Project 10073 record card 4 Apr 62" Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <https://www.fold3.com/image/8649099>
4. "Stratospheric balloons launched worldwide in 1962" StratoCat. Available WWW: <http://stratocat.com.ar/globos/1962e.htm>
5. "Project ash can". Boeing Magazine. April 1961. P. 13
6. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA/ESRL Radiosonde Database. Available WWW: <https://ruc.noaa.gov/raobs/>
7. Belmont, A. D. "The stratospheric monsoon". Office of Naval Research. Washington D.C. August 3, 1962.

SCIENCE AND UFOS

Billy Cox wrote an article about a [recent video showing Alexander Wendt complaining about how science does not investigate/study UFO reports](#). I find it amusing that a political scientist, who is not an expert in any physical science, can be considered an expert on the process to scientifically study UFOs. One would think he would have talked to scientists to get their reasons why they choose not to study the subject. Instead, Wendt spent twelve minutes rehashing most of the same old UFOlogical arguments.

His main argument is that UFOs are a "taboo" for scientists. This is not entirely true if one actually reads what scientists have said about the subject. When writing about UFOs in the Condon report, Condon stated that he felt that nothing had been learned from studying the subject BUT if a scientist felt they could study the subject, with the hope of learning something, then they should proceed to do so. In 1997, the Sturrock panel, after being fed some one-sided presentation by UFO proponents, concluded that Condon was correct in that nothing had yet been learned by studying UFOs. Like Condon, they still encouraged scientists to find methods to study UFOs. They also warned UFOlogists about their objectivity in evaluating UFO cases.

When scientists are asked about UFOs, most seem to state essentially the same thing. They are not going to waste their time on the subject because their appears to be nothing there to learn. Scientists consider their time valuable and do not want to waste it chasing "will-o'-the-wisps". It is up to UFOlogists to demonstrate that there is something more than "ghost stories" and that there is data that offers promising results.

If UFOlogy really wanted science to study the subject, they need to present data that can be quantified and analyzed. I agree with Wendt in that UFOlogists should establish a network of cameras and scientific equipment to record UFOs. However, Wendt incorrectly stated that scientists/the government are not doing this. While there are no "UFO networks" run by scientists or the government, there are multiple fireball networks, with all sky cameras, which are monitoring the night sky. One is even run by NASA. Unfortunately for UFOlogists, these systems record a lot of fireballs but do not record any UFOs that cannot be explained. The same can be said for all the security systems, dash cameras, traffic cameras, weather cameras, and every day cell phone users. People are able to record car/airplane crashes, space debris re-entries, meteors, and other brief events but are unable to adequately record UFOs, which, by most statistics, are usually visible for several minutes! Wendt, like many in UFOlogy, seems to ignore all of this potential data being available. The lack of any convincing evidence from these sources makes one question if UFOs are worth a scientist's valuable time.

The Sturrock panel pointed out that those gathering UFO data need to do so by establishing proper scientific standards and to be objective when evaluating the information. A perfect example of how SOME UFOlogists can't be trusted to do this properly was described in SUNlite 10-1. In that case, Rob Freeman and Marcus McNabb created a very sophisticated video recording system for recording UFOs. Their prize evidence was a video of an "orb" they recorded in British Columbia. Scott Brando determined they had recorded the International Space Station (ISS) and I agreed with this conclusion. Freeman and McNabb tried to debunk this explanation. However, they used the Two-line elements (TLEs) for the ISS from over a month after the event, which resulted in an incorrect trajectory, and improperly used a theodolite app on their smart phone, which resulted in improper azimuth values! In my article, I demonstrated how their methodology was flawed and proved the object was the ISS. Even the star fields matched up correctly. What Freeman and McNabb were doing was sensationalizing their video for their own personal reasons instead of actually performing proper scientific research. [What was even more astounding was this ended up on MUFON's top cases for 2017!](#) If I am correct (and nobody has proven me/Brando incorrect), that means the second check by an organization, which is supposedly dedicated to scientifically study UFOs, was unable to properly analyze the case! Is this what Wendt wants to present to scientists?

The ball still remains in UFOlogy's side of the court. It is up to them to present real data that scientists can examine that indicates there is some sort of signal in the noise of all these UFO reports. As the Sturrock panel noted in 1997, UFO promoters need to "up their game" if they want to get scientists interested in UFOs.

Project Blue Book case review: January-June 1959

This is the latest edition of the Project Blue Book case review covering January through June of 1959. Like the previous evaluations, I tried to examine each case to see if the conclusion had merit. I added comments to help clarify the explanation or if I felt it was not correct or adequate.

January 1958

Date	Location	BB explanation	My evaluation
1959	Weldon Springs, MO	Insufficient data	Agreed. Reported 3 years after event with no date.
Jan	Montivideo, Uruguay	Insufficient data	Agreed. Missing date, duration.
1	Kilburn, South Australia	Meteor	Agreed
2	Pacific	Meteor	Agreed
2	Anniston Ord Depot, AL	Insufficient data	Aircraft
3	Dodge City, KS	Aircraft	Agreed
4	Albuquerque, NM	Spica	Object seen in the west. Mars
4	Vance AB, OK	Fomalhaut	Venus
4	Taft, CA	Meteor	Agreed
5	Grand Rapids, MI	Meteor	Agreed
6	Omaha, NE	Betelgeuse	Agreed (position was for Betelgeuse but could have been Rigel as well).
8	Brookville, PA/Indianapolis, IN	Meteor	Agreed
9	Golden Valley, MN	Reflection	Possible aircraft
9	Oklahoma City, OK	Sunspot	Agreed
9	New Mexico area & TX	Meteor	Agreed
10	Eagle Springs/Plymouth, NC	Meteor	Agreed
10	Baltimore, MD	Insufficient data	Aircraft
11	Farewell, AK	Mars	Betelgeuse
12	Taiwan	Fomalhaut	Venus
12	Dryden, WA	Unreliable report	Aircraft
12	Taiwan	Insufficient data	Agreed. No positional data.
13	Greenland	Meteor	Agreed
13	Norristown, PA	Parahelia	Agreed
14	Greenland	Aircraft	Agreed
16	Litachau, Czechoslovakia	Missile	Aircraft (object did not move in a straight line)
16	Deadwood, Custer Park, SD	Fomalhaut	Venus
18	LaCrosse, WI	Meteor	Agreed
19	Rice/Goleville, WA	Meteor	Agreed
22	Richmond, VA	Refuel Op	Aircraft
23	Herschel Island, Canada	Moon	Agreed
24	Brooklyn, NY	Reflection	Agreed (reflection of aircraft)
26	50 Mi SE Patrick AFB, FL	Missile debris	Agreed. Navajo missile test failure
27	SC, FL, Bermuda	Missile	Agreed
28	1000 mi WSW Azores	Venus	Agreed

February 1959

Date	Location	BB explanation	My evaluation
Feb/Apr	Coburn, VA	Misinterpretation	Agreed. Multiple sightings over two months with misinterpretation of various light sources and debris found.
2	S. of Sandusky, OH	Aircraft	Agreed (probably contrail lit by rising sun)
4	Balboa, Canal Zone	Meteor	Agreed
4	Washington, DC	Aircraft	Possible reflection of light from inside of bus or possible aircraft. Hard to tell from photograph.
6	Dinwiddle, VA	Insufficient data	Agreed. Seen from moving car. Very little information to evaluate.
6	Mitchell AFB, NY	Reflection	Venus
6	Boulder, CO	Reflection	Agreed
6	Ann Arbor, MI	Mars	Agreed
7	Jackson, TN	Balloon	Agreed
9	Miami, FL	Refuel op	Agreed
11	SC	Meteor	Agreed
11	Philipsburg, PA	Para flare	Agreed
11	Rockingham, NC	Meteor	Agreed
12	Mansfield, OH	Vapor trails	Agreed
12	Tanana, AK	Balloon	Agreed
13	Whidby & Oak Harbor, WA	Meteor	Agreed
14	W of Noshironinato, Japan	Mars	Venus
16	Palacios, TX	Arcturus	Agreed
16	Banghazi, Libya	Insufficient data	Possible balloon
17	Whidby Island, WA	Meteor	Agreed
18	Dayton, OH	Sirius	Agreed
18	Dayton, OH	Meteor	Agreed
20	Hall lake NWT, Canada	Meteor	Agreed
20	Cincinnati, OH	Aircraft	UNIDENTIFIED. It could have been Venus but the time listed was 0200Z. Venus was setting around 0115Z. All descriptions match Venus except for time.
22	60 Mi. E of Puerto Rico	Missile	Insufficient data. Location is about 600 mi E of Puerto Rico. Report made one month after event. BB unable to obtain additional information when requested. Time matches failed Atlas launch on 20 Feb but no recorded launches on 22 Feb. Possible incorrect date.
23	Madisonville, KY	Aircraft	Agreed
24	Rapid City, MI	Meteor	Agreed
24	Over PA	Refuel Op	Agreed (see SUNlite 9-1)
24	Victorville, CA	Psychological Cause	Possible aircraft activity
26	Kansas City, MO	Aircraft	Two sightings. One visual was probably aircraft. Later observation with telescope (20 minutes later) was possibly Sirius.
27	29 Mi. W. Oceanside, CA	Balloon	Agreed
28	Colorado Springs, CO	Aircraft	Agreed
28	Belaire, NY	Insufficient data	Possible meteor

March 1959

Date	Location	BB explanation	My evaluation
Mar-Apr	China	Insufficient data	NO CASE FILE
1	NE of White Rock lake, Dallas, TX	Aircraft	Agreed
2	East coast USA	Meteor	Agreed
2	Lowry AFB, CO	Equipment Malfunction	Agreed
2	Bloomington, IL	Aircraft	Agreed
3	Stockton, CA	Balloon	Agreed
5	Freiburgh, Germany	Insufficient data	Agreed. Reports conflicting.
7	S. of Dublin, OH	Meteor	Agreed
7	Hicksville, NY	Mars	Capella
8	W. of Augustine Island, AK	Meteor	Agreed
10	Grand Bahama Island	Insufficient data	Agreed. Recorded on radar during Snark missile test. Interesting case but nothing was visually seen. According to media accounts, the test was successful. This has all the appearances of an aircraft that was monitoring the flight but BB states there were no such designated aircraft in the area. Possible naval aircraft from CVS carrier operations (S2F or AD3W).
10	Oro Grande, CA	Meteor	Agreed
10	25 Mi W of Galena, AK	Meteor	Agreed
10-16	Baltic Sea	Insufficient data	Agreed. No specific information on "multiple fireballs" that were observed during this time period.
12	Hampton, VA	Light reflection	Agreed. Witness saw streak of light reflecting on cloud bank. Probably from one of the vessels in Chesapeake bay area
12	30 Mi S of Oceanside, CA	Meteor	Agreed
13	Duluth, MN	1. Venus 2. WX interference	Agreed
15	Cheshire, OH	Insufficient data	Agreed. Witness was sole source of sighting a craft hovering over a road/house. There is just enough information to evaluate the sighting.
15-18	Worthington, PA	Insufficient data	Agreed. Report made one year later in letter. Witness did not provide requested sighting form.
16,23,24	Norfolk, VA	Photo Flashbomb	Agreed
17 or 18	Centerville, OH	Mars	Agreed
18	Max, ND	Meteor	Agreed
18	Dayton, OH	Capella	Agreed
18	Caldwell, NJ	Aircraft	Agreed
18	Danville, NJ	Static Electricity	Agreed. Objects were not seen during photograph. They only appeared after development.
22	Ann Arbor, MI	Reflection	Agreed
23-5	San Antonio, TX	Inconsistent data	Possibly Arcturus
24	Dayton, OH	Meteor	Agreed
24	Vandalia, OH	Meteor	Agreed
25	Montana	Aircraft	UNIDENTIFIED
26 or 27	Corsica, PA	UNIDENTIFIED	UNIDENTIFIED

28	W. of Los Angeles, CA	Meteor	Agreed
28	Albuquerque, NM	Reflection	Possible birds

April 1959

Date	Location	BB explanation	My evaluation
1	Albuquerque, NM	Aircraft	Agreed
2	Batesville, AR	Balloons	Agreed
5	Big Springs, TX	Meteor	Agreed
5	Dallas, TX	Mars	Balloon
6	Travis AFB, CA	Meteor	Agreed
9	Approx 525 Mi SE of Newfoundland	Insufficient data	Meteor
9	Ft. McMurray, Alberta, Canada	Balloon	Agreed
10	Yuma, AZ	Venus	Possible research balloon. Azimuth indicated NW to N, which does not agree with Venus, which was in the western sky.
11	Herford, Germany	Meteor	Agreed
12	Lemoore, CA	Insufficient data	Agreed. Witness did not provide additional information requested.
12	Montreal, Canada	Searchlight	Agreed
13	Antigo & Madison, WI	1. Aurora 2. Anomalous Prop	Agreed
15	Detroit, MI	Meteor	Agreed
16	Kunsan AB, Korea	Reflection	Agreed. Sounds like searchlight activity on clouds.
16	Over Tuba City, AZ	Aircraft	Agreed
17	San Antonio, TX	Aircraft	Agreed
19	Greenville, ME	Balloon	Agreed
21	Big Springs, TX	Aircraft	Agreed
22	Between Portugal & Morocco	Meteor	Agreed
22	Bitburg, Germany	Meteor	Agreed
22	Mitchell AFB, NY	Venus	Agreed
22	Niles, IL	Insufficient data	Aircraft
24	Teheran, Iran	Meteor	Agreed
27	Kirtland AFB, NM	Insufficient data	Aircraft
30	Approx 30 Mi. S of Puerto Rico	Meteor	Agreed

May 1959

Date	Location	BB explanation	My evaluation
2	NY	Balloon	Agreed
2	Pease AB, NH	False Target	Agreed
2	Vanderhoof BC, Canada	Meteor	Agreed
3	Dayton, OH	Insufficient data	Agreed. Witness description was "bright light over Wayne ave". Nothing more.
5	Richey, MT	Chaff	Agreed
5	Dayton, OH	Balloon	Agreed

6	Waxahachie, TX	Aircraft	Agreed
8	Wilmington, DE	Aircraft	Agreed
8	12 Mi NE of Austin, TX	Aircraft	Agreed
8	Neshanic, NJ	Altair	Aircraft
13	Offutt AFB, NE	Insufficient data	Agreed. Confusing report. Appears that a meteor was seen and primary witness associated this with aircraft in the area.
13	Miami, FL	Meteor	Agreed
14	Elsinore, CA	Insufficient data	Agreed. No UFO on film. Report made 9 months after event.
14	Philadelphia, PA	Flares	Agreed
17	O'Hare AFB, IL	Development flaw	Agreed
18	4 Mi. W of Greenbush, KS	Ball lightning	Waxing gibbous moon setting in west.
19-20	New Madison, OH	1. Meteor 2. Searchlight	1. Venus 2. Agreed
20	Alexandria, VA	Meteor	Agreed
21	8 Mi. E of Rapid City, SD	Balloon	Possible daylight meteor sighting
25	West Bloomfield, MI	Insufficient data	Agreed. Observation was nothing more than a "glimpse" of something.
26	Burlington, WV	Meteor	Agreed
27	Dallas, TX	Insufficient data	Agreed. Witness was young individual watching out his window at night. While he states the objects were moving at a great rate of speed. He could see them out his window for about two hours. I suspect he was looking at stars but there isn't enough information to determine which.
29	E. of Valladolid, Spain	Meteor	Agreed
29	Japan	Meteors	Agreed
30	Hawaiian Islands	Meteor	Agreed
30	Prime Hook Beach, DE	Meteor	Agreed
30	Hawaiian Islands	Meteor	Agreed

June 1959

Date	Location	BB explanation	My evaluation
Jun/Jul	New Guinea	Astronomical Bodies	Father Gill case. Agreed with conclusion that this was possibly astronomical in nature. Venus is prime candidate for main UFO and Jupiter/Saturn for later UFOs. See Hendry IUR #2 Vol. 12 for discussion of astronomical objects.
2	SE of Labrador	Meteor	Agreed
3	Genoa, Italy	Meteor	Agreed
3	Hempstead, NY	Aircraft	Agreed
3	Washington DC	Meteor	Agreed
7	Rossville, GA	Aircraft	Agreed
8	Oakhurst, NJ	Aircraft	Agreed
8	Rockville, MD	Aircraft	Agreed
9	Manassas, Roanoke, VA	Aircraft	Agreed. Object(s) tracked moving at 200 kts at 65-70K feet (plot of positions indicate speed was more like 280 knots for Roanoke and 400 knots for Manassas). Tracked from West Virginia to Northern PA on NE track. Possibility this was a high altitude recon aircraft (i.e. RB-57D).
10	Reno, NV	Balloon	Agreed

11	Ventura, CA	Insufficient data	Agreed. Case file consists of letter from NICAP about a sighting that the US Navy was investigating. Project BB never received the information from the Navy.
11	Los Angeles, CA	Aircraft	Agreed
13	Minot, ND	Meteor	Agreed
13	Novinger, MO	Insufficient data	Agreed. Report is confusing. One azimuth given was 110 degrees West. No elevation angles.
15	Enon, OH	Aircraft	Agreed
16	Camp Lucas, MI	Regulus	Venus
16	Henderson, NV	Aircraft	Agreed
16	WSW of Meridan, MS	Aircraft	Stationary bright light seen for a few minutes by two aircraft in same direction. Possible illumination flare activity in MOA
18	Waikiki, Honolulu, HI	Sunglare of lens	Agreed
18	Pacific	Meteor	Agreed
18	Lyons, CO	Meteor	Tumbling pyramid shaped object with noise. One witness. Possible aircraft.
18	Enon, OH	Aircraft	Agreed
18	Stephenson, Sault St. Marie, MI	Meteor	Agreed
18	Forest Park, IL	Meteor	Agreed
18	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	UNIDENTIFIED	UNIDENTIFIED
19	Ecrose, MI	Meteor	Agreed
20	6 Mi. SE of Alexandria, LA	Balloon	Agreed
21	Chesterfield, OH	Insufficient data	Possible meteor
21	Macao, China	Surface Vessel	Agreed. Dark objects in line behind surface vessel. Possible balloons in tow or line of smaller vessels interpreted as being above surface seen from high altitude. Objects moving at slow speed (15 knots).
24	SE Ohio	Insufficient data	Meteor
24	Dayton, OH	Unreliable report	Meteor (see on same date as SE Ohio where aircraft reported balls of fire around same time)
25	20 MI S. of Taegu, Korea	Inconsistent data	Agreed. Various azimuths and elevations given but duration not listed. Only one time given. Very possible this was a daylight sighting of Venus with theodolite.
27	Danville, VA	Haze	Possible aircraft
30	Patuxent River, MD	UNIDENTIFIED	UNIDENTIFIED

Reclassification

I evaluated 185 cases in the Blue Book files from January to June 1959. In my opinion, 40 were improperly classified (about 22%). Nine (about 5% of the total number of cases/22% of the reclassifications) of these were listed as "insufficient information". This table describes these cases and how I felt they should have been reclassified. Some of the sightings really did not have enough information for evaluation and other cases that had been listed as "insufficient information" had potential explanations.

Date	Location	Reclassification	Reason
1/4	Albuquerque, NM	Spica	Object seen in the west. Mars
1/4	Vance AB, OK	Fomalhaut	Venus
1/9	Golden Valley, MN	Reflection	Possible aircraft
1/10	Baltimore, MD	Insufficient data	Aircraft
1/11	Farewell, AK	Mars	Betelgeuse
1/12	Taiwan	Fomalhaut	Venus

1/12	Dryden, WA	Unreliable report	Aircraft
1/16	Litachau, Czechoslovakia	Missile	Aircraft (object did not move in a straight line)
1/16	Deadwood, Custer Park, SD	Fomalhaut	Venus
1/22	Richmond, VA	Refuel Op	Aircraft
2/4	Washington, DC	Aircraft	Possible reflection of light from inside of bus or possible aircraft. Hard to tell from photograph.
2/6	Mitchell AFB, NY	Reflection	Venus
2/16	Banghazi, Libya	Insufficient data	Possible balloon
2/20	Cincinnati, OH	Aircraft	UNIDENTIFIED. It could have been Venus but the time listed was 0200Z. Venus was setting around 0115Z. All descriptions match Venus except for time.
2/22	60 Mi. E of Puerto Rico	Missile	Insufficient data. Location is about 600 mi E of Puerto Rico. Report made one month after event. BB unable to obtain additional information when requested. Time matches failed Atlas launch on 20 Feb but no recorded launches on 22 Feb. Possible incorrect date.
2/24	Victorville, CA	Psychological Cause	Possible aircraft activity
2/26	Kansas City, MO	Aircraft	Two sightings. One visual was probably aircraft. Later observation with telescope (20 minutes later) was possibly Sirius.
2/28	Belaire, NY	Insufficient data	Possible meteor
3/7	Hicksville, NY	Mars	Capella
3/23-5	San Antonio, TX	Inconsistent data	Possibly Arcturus
3/25	Montana	Aircraft	UNIDENTIFIED
3/28	Albuquerque, NM	Reflection	Possible birds
4/9	Approx 525 Mi SE of Newfoundland	Insufficient data	Meteor
4/10	Yuma, AZ	Venus	Possible research balloon. Azimuth indicated NW to N, which does not agree with Venus, which was in the western sky.
4/22	Niles, IL	Insufficient data	Aircraft
4/27	Kirtland AFB, NM	Insufficient data	Aircraft
5/18	4 Mi. W of Greenbush, KS	Ball lightning	Waxing gibbous moon setting in west.
5/19-20	New Madison, OH	1. Meteor 2. Searchlight	1. Venus 2. Agreed
5/21	8 Mi. E of Rapid City, SD	Balloon	Possible daylight meteor sighting
6/16	Camp Lucas, MI	Regulus	Venus
6/16	WSW of Meridan, MS	Aircraft	Stationary bright light seen for a few minutes by two aircraft in same direction. Possible illumination flare activity in MOA
6/18	Lyons, CO	Meteor	Tumbling pyramid shaped object with noise. One witness. Possible aircraft.
6/21	Chesterfield, OH	Insufficient data	Possible meteor
6/24	SE Ohio	Insufficient data	Meteor
6/24	Dayton, OH	Unreliable report	Meteor (seen on same date as SE Ohio where aircraft reported balls of fire around same time)
6/27	Danville, VA	Haze	Possible aircraft

Summary

The cases during this time period, while minimal in number, contained some challenging events. The Father Gill and Killian cases were the two major events and I tend to agree with Blue Book's conclusions on both. Father Gill has been a highly disputed case but I it is hard to dismiss that Gill was looking in the direction of Venus and that the UFO was no longer visible once Venus had set. He also seems to have confused other celestial objects as UFOs, which gives credence to the theory that he mistook Venus as a

UFO. As for seeing beings on the floating platform, I can only suggest that this was some form of optical illusion. Marty Kottmeyer has suggested that they might have been fishing boats and that the witnesses mistook where the horizon was located. This might explain the observation of individuals on top of the craft but this makes some assumptions with which I am not totally comfortable.

Some of the more interesting cases involved aircraft chasing UFOs. The USAF indicated that the UFOs were probably high performance aircraft. I find that difficult to accept since the AF should know if there were their own aircraft in the vicinity. Instead, I believe that the pilots probably chased astronomical objects. Unfortunately, the cases for Cincinnati, Ohio (2/20) and Montana (3/25), there weren't any good astronomical objects that could explain the case. The Cincinnati, Ohio case could have been Venus but Venus had set before the time given. In the case of Montana, the only possible star would be Deneb, which could have been the source but it is hard to explain what happened prior to the chase. As a result, I listed both of these cases as "UNIDENTIFIED".

I also considered classifying the June 9th Manassas/Roanoke, Virginia case as "UNIDENTIFIED" when I saw the speed listed as 200 knots. However, I looked at the radar data in the message traffic and I think there was an error in computing the speed of the objects. The Roanoke site tracked the targets for 102nm in 22 minutes. This computes to be 278 knots. The Manassas site tracked the targets for 100 nm in 15 minutes (it followed a curved track). This computes to about 400 knots. Both stations appeared to be tracking the same target(s) since the track went from West Virginia towards northern Pennsylvania with the object increasing altitude and speed. It seems plausible what was tracked was one, or more, high altitude reconnaissance aircraft that were gaining altitude. The RB-57D is a possibility (its cruise speed was 420 knots at 65,000 feet). It may have been the case that the various parts of the aircraft gave the impression of three separate targets flying abreast (the wingspan was over 100 feet). During this time period the RB-57D was used for fallout sample missions and testing continental air defense. It seems plausible this was one of those types of flights. As a result, I decided to agree with the Blue Book conclusion even though Blue Book should have done a more thorough follow-up to identify the aircraft.

It is a bit disappointing to have two cases moved into the "UNIDENTIFIED" category but I have to call it as I see it. If anybody has an interest in looking at these cases for possible solutions, I would be willing to discuss it with them.

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Lunar Terror in Poland

A Doctor's Dilemma

Wim van Utrecht

The subtitle of the present article is borrowed from a caption that accompanied a drawing on the cover of the March 1981 issue of *Flying Saucer Review* (Fig. 1). The drawing is an artist's rendering of a UFO incident that is detailed in an article on pages 2-4 of the journal. Its author: the well-known Polish ufologist and sci-fi & fantasy writer Emma Popik¹. Popik's report describes a scary encounter between the occupants of an ambulance car and an unidentified object "hovering centimetres above a road" near a railway crossing in Northern Poland. We give you the highlights below, cited directly from Mrs Popik's contribution to what was once considered to be the world's leading UFO publication.

The encounter

"On September 5, 1980 at 3.15 a.m., the telephone rang in the first-aid department of the hospital at Sztum. An ambulance set off quickly in response to the call. Its destination, the village of Zulawka, where a confined woman, Mrs. Elzbieta Pluta, aged 25, was waiting. Aboard the ambulance were Dr. Barbara Piazza, Grzegorz Skoczynski the driver, and stretcher bearer Andrzej Olejuik. (...) At about 3.30 a.m. they were on their way back to [the] hospital. Elzbieta Pluta was comfortable, sitting, not lying —which means that there was still a little time. She had pains every ten minutes.

Suddenly Dr. Piazza noticed a big red ball in the sky, some distance from them. She asked: *What would that be?* (...) At that point the time was about 3.35 a.m., and the ambulance was near the village of Tropy. The red ball was well in view. Indeed, as they passed through Tropy, the object was as large as the moon to look at, dark crimson in colour, and coming closer all the time. The driver could also see it when he was able to take quick glances, and they all became very interested when the ball approached within a measurable distance —about 500 metres [1,640 feet]— and moved on an oblique course to the road, from N.E. to S.W. over gently sloping hills. It did not appear to be at any great height, the angle of elevation being between 15° and 20°.

Said Barbara Piazza a few days later: *I was always aware that it was never exactly in the sky; it was not very high over the ground any of the time.*

Soon the ball was at the level of the tree tops and at a distance of about 200 metres [656 feet] from the ambulance. All the passengers were watching it in silence.

At about 3.40 a.m. the moon had waned [set? —Ed. *FSR*] and the ball was swinging past the trees in gentle curves as they left the village of Kalwa behind them. By now the ball was about 150 metres [492 feet] to the left of the ambulance.

Wishing suddenly to escape from the object, the driver accelerated. Whether at 130 km/h or at 90 km/h, it was just as if the ball were linked to them by cord; it never changed its distance from them. Later, while I was interviewing the doctor, she said: *It seemed obvious to me that that object was under intelligent control. We just could not lose it. It was pacing after us!*

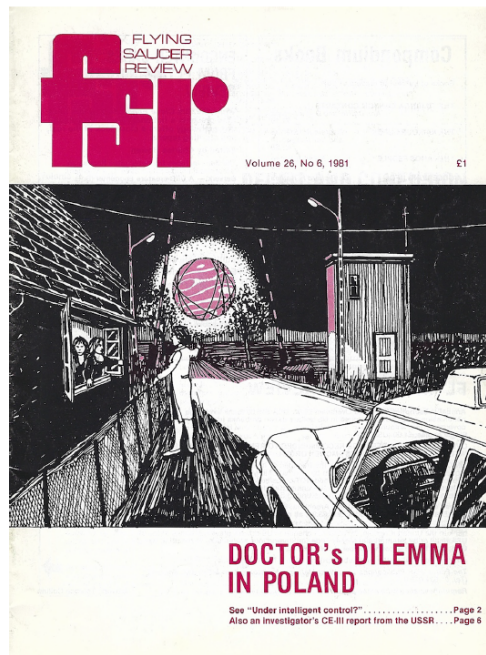


Fig. 1. : The cover of *Flying Saucer Review* Vol. 26, No. 6, with artist Terrence Collins' impression of the scene at the railway crossing.



Fig. 2. General map of the area. In orange the route followed by the ambulance from Żuławka to Sztum. The black line represents the railway. Times are approximate and gleaned from Emma Popik's report. (© Google Maps, with graphics added by the author.)

Soon the ambulance was approaching the railway level crossing between Kalwa and Sztum. The driver continued a few metres, but then stopped: the red ball had suddenly appeared about 200 metres, or less, ahead of them in the road. They hadn't seen it dash ahead of them, but it stopped (...) between two trees. The carriageway is 6 metres wide at that point, but the edges of the UFO overlapped the road on either side, between the trees, by about 50 cm.

The surface of the UFO displayed curved bands and stripes, with a lot of black lines going up and down irregularly in each direction. One of the eyewitnesses compared these clear-cut markings with veins inside a human body, while another compared them to a net. Only the doctor couldn't see the veins, for she is short-sighted, and wears spectacles. But she could see how parts of the surface changed colour. There appeared to be yellow-orange patches on its deep crimson surface, and all four of them could see that.

Dr. Piazza mentioned something about the possibility of radiation, and she instructed the driver to move the vehicle away behind the level crossing, and when that was done she examined her patient, whom she found to be not too bad, but with not a lot of time left.

I had seen the ball, said Mrs. Elzbieta Pluta when I spoke to her later, and I also noticed the 'veins', but I didn't pay much attention to the thing. Let UFOs be UFOs, I thought; my problem was how not to bear my baby in an ambulance, for by then I was having pains every five minutes.

Dr. Piazza got out of the ambulance and approached the house where two crossing keepers were on duty. They were Józefa Kamińska and Gabriela Ludorf, and they were leaning out of the window.

Can you see what I can see? Asked the doctor.

We were looking at it for a while, one of them answered.

We can ask them for anything, interrupted the driver, Skoczynski, the girls are trembling with fear.

Turning back to the ambulance the doctor picked up the radiophone, and got in touch with the police. *There's an obstacle in our way, she reported. Come, please.*

What obstacle?

A UFO. (...)

The object hovered a few centimetres over the road, all the while changing colours, getting brighter, then less bright, but always with a dull finish. Suddenly it moved slowly to the right and stopped behind the tree. Its yellowish light shone through the leaves; momentarily the tree was on fire. The object then moved up the slight hill, hovered at the summit, then returned after a few seconds. The watchers could see a strong white light underneath the ball, and the light stretched left and right. There seemed to be a flood of white light beyond the horizon, but, said the doctor, *undoubtedly the horizon was behind the object. (...)*

Minute by minute the doctor checked the time because of her patient. The situation was now urgent, and she called the police

station again.

Meanwhile the object was changing back to its original colour. The orange patches disappeared, and the whole thing became deep crimson.

The doctor looked at the patient and knew they could wait no longer. Her thoughts raced . . . surely it would know we have no time if we give it a signal? She turned to the driver: *Flash the headlights*, she said, and he did so, twice. Then, one second they could see the crimson UFO as they began to move forwards, the next second it vanished . . . *like a TV set when switched off*.

That was at about 4.15 a.m., and 10 minutes later the ambulance is in the hospital. At 6.10 a.m. Mrs. Elzbieta Pluta bore a daughter, Aneta, 2,600 grammes, her fourth child."

So far the events as recounted by Emma Popik in her report for *FSR*. In addition, British researcher Martin Shough came across a 28 minutes-long audio file² containing fragments of Emma Popik's interview with ambulance driver Grzegorz Skoczyński, stretcher-bearer Andrzej Olejnik and crossing keeper Gabriela Ludorf. A friend of the author translated the interview from Polish to Dutch. It tells us that, eventually, police officers did arrive at the level crossing. In fact, the driver found them talking to the crossing keepers when being sent out by the hospital for a second call later that morning³.

So what was this ball with "yellow-orange patches on its deep crimson surface", pacing four people in an ambulance car as if it "were linked to them by cord" before blocking the road in front of them? To experienced investigators of weird sky phenomena, these descriptive elements immediately ring a bell: a reddish ball of light pacing a vehicle reminds strongly of the moon, sitting close to the horizon and seemingly copying the movements of the vehicle due to what is known as the *parallax effect*⁴. But can the moon fool six people to such an extent that an urgent ambulance ride is interrupted and police assistance sought? To answer that question we need to find out if there was a full or near-full moon in the right part of the sky that September morning.

The stop at the railway crossing

There's one phase during the incident for which the line of sight to the unidentified object can be determined with precision, namely when the ambulance was stopped "a few metres" beyond the railway crossing, then drove approximately 200m (656 feet) backwards to a point just before the barrier. The report is precise as to the location where this happened: the level crossing between Kalwa and Sztum. Using Google Street View it was not too hard to find this location (see Fig. 3). Its geographical coordinates are 53°56'27"N and 19°07'18"E. Looking in the direction where the red ball was observed, namely hovering directly over the road in front of the witnesses, we found that the azimuth of the red ball would have been exactly 244° during that phase.

Next we checked if the moon was anywhere near that spot in the early hours of September 5, 1980. It wasn't... When the witnesses were at the crossing (at about 4:00 CEST or 2:00 GMT), the moon would have been in the East (azimuth 85.5°; elevation 19.5°). In other words, the moon was nowhere near the Western horizon and too high in the sky for it to have appeared reddish in colour due to atmospheric scattering of the shorter wavelengths. Moreover, only 17% of the lunar disc was illuminated that morning, giving it the shape of a thin crescent, not a ball.



Fig. 3. Top: "Photo 2" from *FSR* showing the crossing and looking in the direction of where the red ball was seen. Bottom: Google Street View image from August 2013 taken from almost the same spot. The cabin on the right is gone, but the house on the left is still there.

End of story? We must admit that these negative findings came somewhat as a surprise. After all, everything in Emma Popik's report pointed to the moon as the obvious culprit. So we decided to enter a few other dates in our sky map program. Perhaps there was a moment not too far away in time when the moon was in the right position. We struck gold when typing "1979" instead of "1980." Indeed, if the incident were to have occurred exactly one year earlier the match would be perfect! That day, September 5, 1979, at 4:00 a.m. the moon was 97% illuminated and sitting close to the horizon at azimuth 245°.

Could it be that Popik got the year wrong? That seemed very unlikely, because Popik stated she had interviewed the witnesses two days after the event. More plausible, perhaps, was that she hadn't mentioned the year in her report, and that it was the late Gordon Creighton, then acting editor of *FSR*, who added "1980," thinking the event would most likely have occurred not too long before he had received the report. In a first attempt to find out if the year could be in error, we checked the internet hoping to find the date of birth for Mrs Aneta PLUTA, the daughter to whom witness Elżbieta Pluta was about to give birth less than three hours after the sighting. That would tell us in which year the incident occurred. Alas, the search proved fruitless.

We then started looking for Polish references to the case by typing terms like "Sztum," "UFO," "5 września 1979," and "5 września 1980" in Google Search ("wrzesień" being Polish for "September"). That quickly took us to an online article at a website called UFO Relacje. Its title: "UFO nad miejscowością Tropy Sztumskie 5 września 1979." In English: "UFO over the village of Tropy Sztumskie on September 5, 1979."⁵ The account we found there clearly concerned the incident we were interested in. An added footnote further reassured us that the summary was based on "press articles from 1979." And if that weren't enough, the link that directed us to the interview also mentioned: "obserwacji czerwonego świetlistego obiektu UFO - Sztum 5 września 1979 (observation of a red luminous object – Sztum September 5, 1979). So there we have it: the Tropy Sztumskie encounter occurred not in 1980, but in 1979!

Besides a case summary, the UFO Relacje article also featured this photographic rendering:

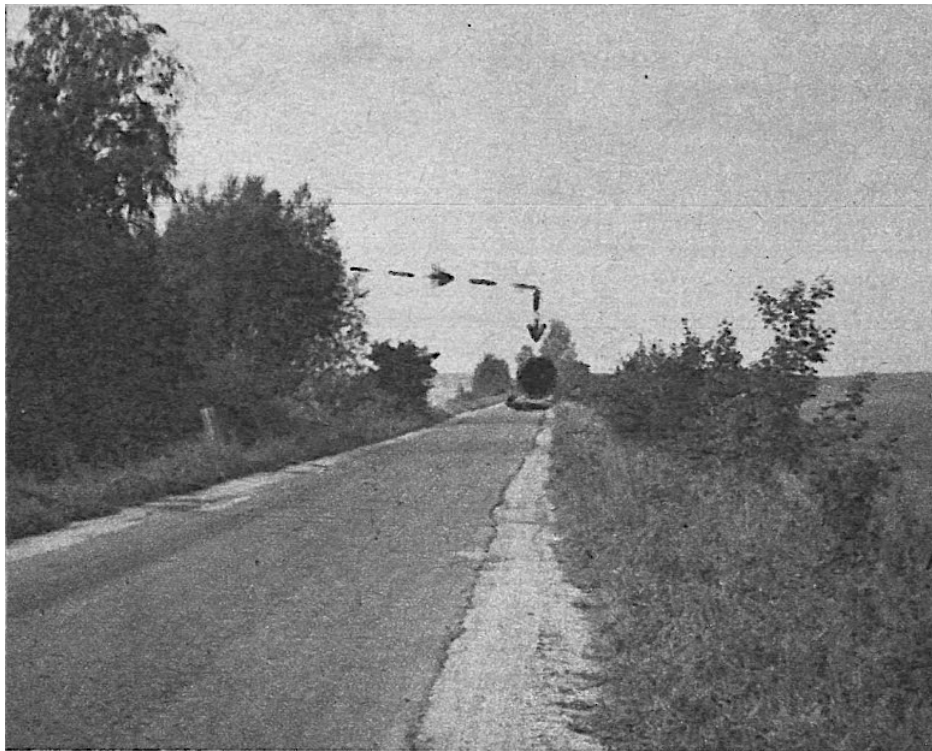


Fig. 4. Illustration borrowed from ufo-replacje.pl showing the ball over the road as seen from the spot where the ambulance car was first stopped after it had passed the level crossing. The red ball and its presumed movement are sketched into the picture. We are not being told by who executed this rendering.

Now that the exact date and time were established, it was time to check the moon position again. The sky map in Fig. 5 shows how the night sky would have appeared to someone standing at the crossing and looking towards the WSW on September 5, 1979, at 4:00 a.m. Some five minutes earlier, from that spot, the moon would have been seen exactly in the middle of the road, at azimuth 244°. It suggests that the party arrived at the crossing at 3.55 a.m., which is in perfect agreement with the reported chronology of events.

97% of the lunar disc was illuminated, with full moon occurring on the 6th. The natural displacement of the moon would have made it move slowly from the left side of the road to the right, which is consistent with Dr Piazza's statement that "it moved slowly to the right." According to the driver, the ball was lost from sight when it "began to shrink and disappeared without a trace in 2-3 seconds" (*UFO Relacje*). It was then "about 4.15 a.m." (*FSR*), or in the taped interview: "it remained there till ten past four or a quarter past four", which again can be considered a perfect match for the time of the setting moon, namely 4:13 a.m. (and not "at about 3:40 a.m.," as Popik stated⁶). The moon was then at azimuth 248°.

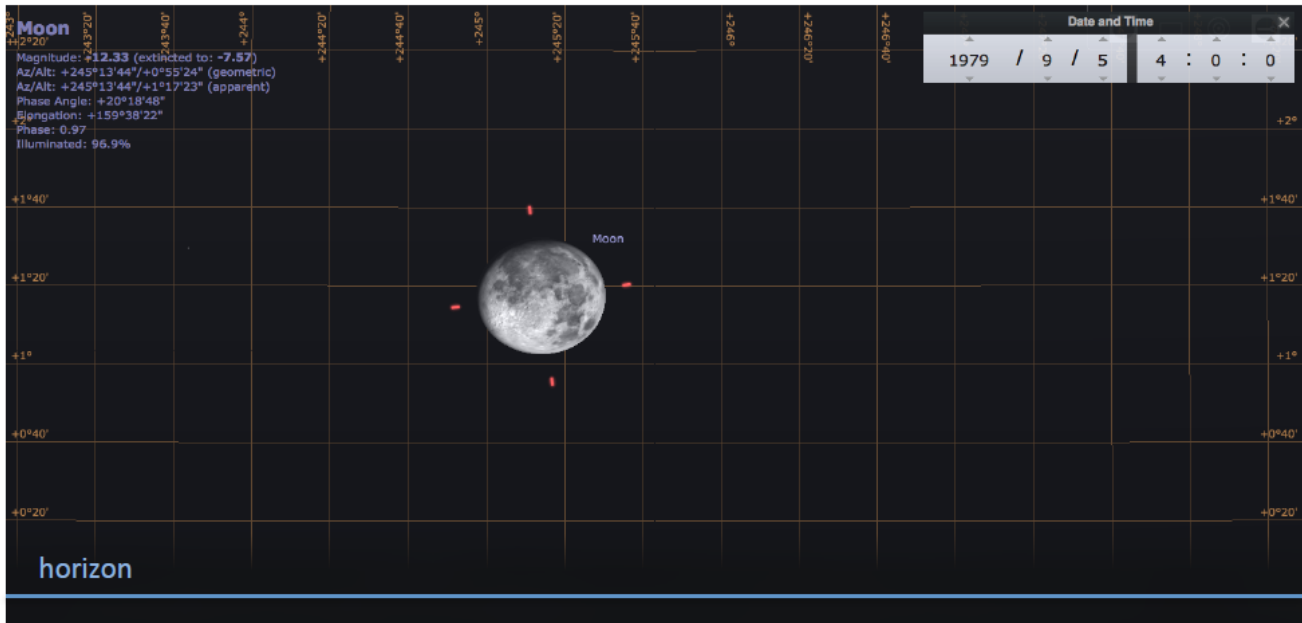


Fig. 5. Stellarium rendering of the WSW sky as seen from the railway crossing on September 5, 1979 at 4:00 a.m. (2:00 a.m. UTC)

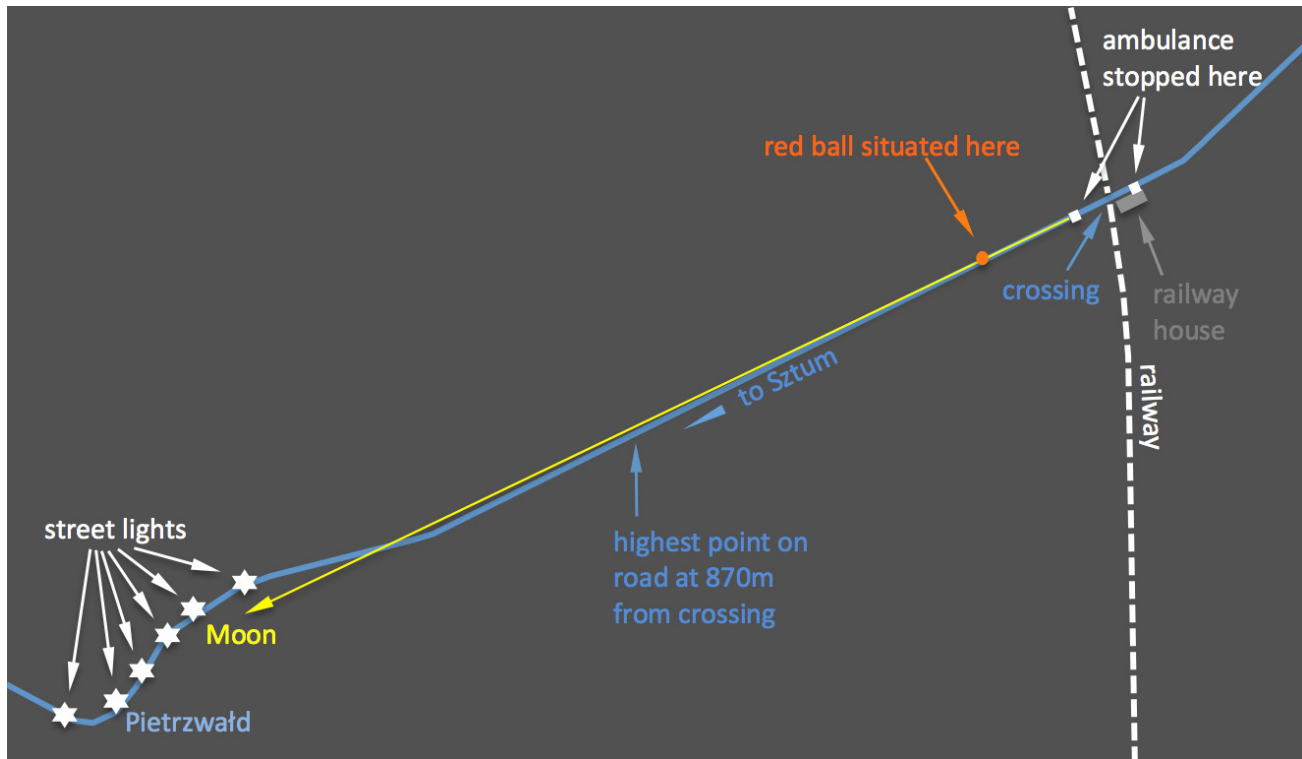


Fig. 6. Map of the sighting location with yellow arrow indicating the azimuth for the moon at 4:00 a.m. on September 5, 1979. White square dots represent the locations where the ambulance was stopped: first West then, after having driven backwards, East of the crossing. Blue arrow indicates the highest point on the road, namely 44m ASL (the crossing is at 37m ASL). White stars represent streetlights near the hamlet of Pietrzwałd.

But six witnesses watching the moon for about half an hour and not recognizing it for what it is. Is that possible? Well, that representation of the facts is not entirely correct. When interviewed by Mrs Popik at the railway house two days after the incident, crossing keeper Gabriela Ludorf stated as follows:

"We had been looking at the ball for a while. Over the hill that you can see over there [we assume that at this moment during the interview the witness is pointing towards the hill in question]. We had already raised the barriers before the ambulance arrived because a motorbike wanted to cross over. We closed the barrier again and after that we saw the ambulance. I told my colleague to raise it again. The ambulance crossed the barrier, then quickly reversed to park itself just in front of the railroad. Oh my, perhaps they want to ask something. Something may have happened! So the barrier went up again. I told my colleague Józia [short for Józefa] "What is that ball?" Józia said: "That's the moon" [laughter]. Then someone [Dr Piazza] came out of the ambulance and asked if we saw that ball too. She then started talking about possible radiation. That's when my hairs stood up. We had been looking at the ball for some time before the ambulance arrived, but hadn't given it much thought because we figured it was the moon. I don't know exactly when the ball had appeared, but when I saw it, it was over a small hill in the field about 2m above a pole. Dark red and bigger when compared to the moon. Not twice as big but about one and a half times the moon."

In summary: it seems that the anxiety among the two girls was largely due to the arrival of the ambulance car, it driving backwards over the rail, the doctor stepping out, approaching them and starting to ask questions about the ball while hinting at possible radiation. Not a *folie à deux*, but a *folie à trois* so to speak. But Gabriela's account also raises another question: how could the two crossing keepers have been looking at the red ball "for some time before the ambulance arrived" if that same ball was believed to have chased the ambulance over a distance of 5.3km from the village of Tropy to the level crossing?!

The chase

Popik gives no precise indications about the direction in which the object was seen for the episode it was witnessed from the driving ambulance, only that "as they left the village of Kalwa behind them (...) the ball was about 150 metres to the left." The UFO Relacje web article confirms this: "At 03:45 the ambulance was approaching the Sztum Trail, and when it reached the intersection, driver G.S. noticed, on the left, a dark red matte ball." The vehicle was then on Route 515 approaching the turn off onto the "Sztum Trail", which involves negotiating two consecutive junctions or "intersections" (Fig. 7). It is when the vehicle is approaching the first junction that the red ball is first seen "on the left." The witnesses were then heading NW (Fig. 8). This is found to be in accordance with the position of the moon at that moment (3:40 a.m., according to FSR), namely SW (azimuth 241°).

The next actions are accelerations and decelerations by the ambulance, matched by the "pacing" object. Plausibly this is when they were turning south between the two nearby junctions at Kalwa, and when the object was "swinging past the trees in gentle curves" (FSR). This would have been the moon "pacing" them (FSR) on their left as they initially headed towards the junctions near Kalwa, then after "swinging" about during the turns, it would have "dashed ahead" and remained roughly ahead or slightly to the right as they headed SW towards the crossing. *UFO Relacje*: "when they passed Kalwa, the ball suddenly accelerated and overtook the ambulance to hang over the road." Just before the crossing, the road takes a weak turn to the right. As a result of this, the moon would have appeared to 'swing' right in front of them before it stopped. That all generally fits the map and the likely relative motions of the moon.

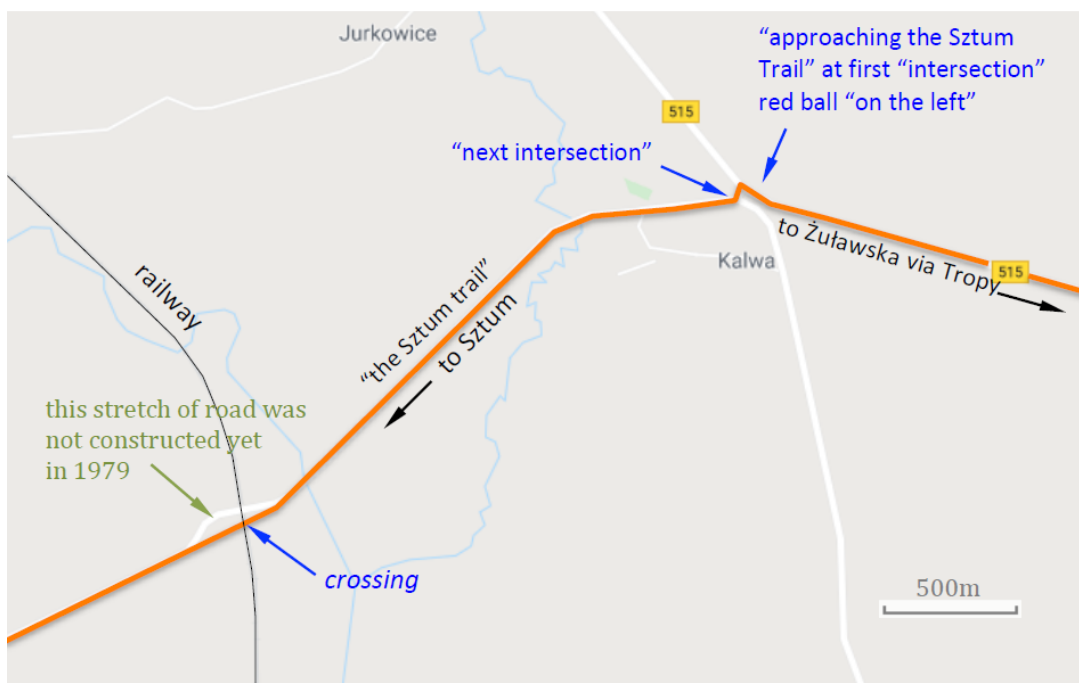


Fig. 7. Zooming in on the sighting location. (©Google maps, with added graphics by the author)

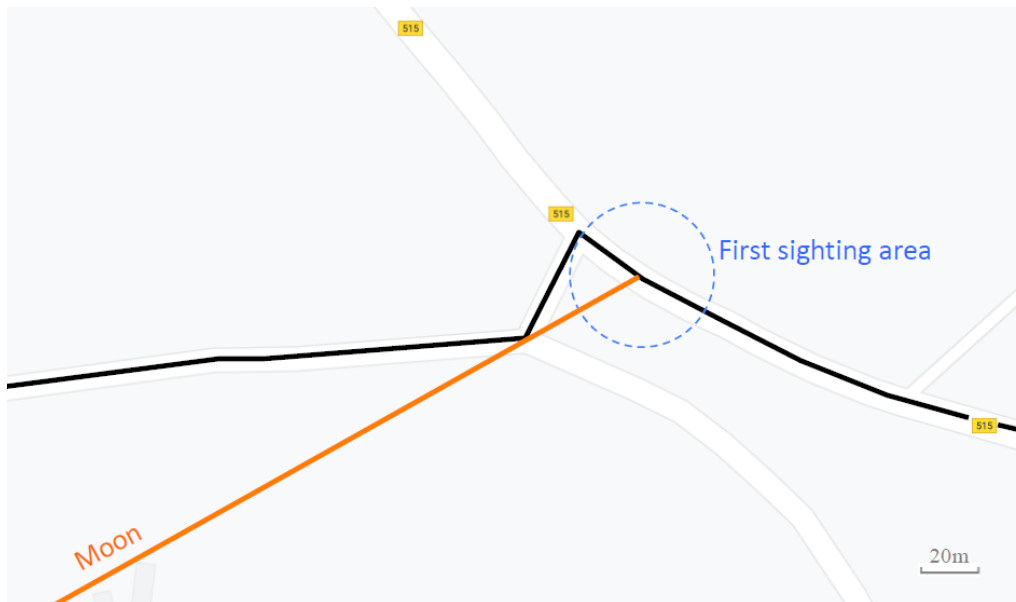


Fig. 8. Map focusing on the two intersections near Kalwa with orange line indicating the azimuth of the moon. (©Google maps, with graphics added by the author)

Shape, colours and size

We already pointed out that there was a near-full moon on the night of the encounter with 97% of the lunar disc illuminated. That phase of the moon is consistent with the description of a luminous, ball-shaped object. Telling in this regard is that, when during the interview Popik asks the driver to draw the object, Skoczyński replies: “Not sure how to do that”, upon which the stretcher bearer tells him: “Just draw the moon, that’s as close as you can get.”

Tree branches in front of the lunar disc would have created the effect of “a lot of black lines going up and down irregularly in each direction” (see Fig. 8). Popik’s article states: “Its yellowish light shone through the leaves” (our emphasis), while in the interview the driver stipulates that the luminous ball “had no influence on the trees”. Both statements suggest that the object was not in front of but behind the trees that can be seen behind the end of the road in Figs 3, 4 and 11. Semi transparent clouds, together with the typical darker and lighter areas on the lunar surface, can further account for the “yellow-orange patches”, the overall red colour being due to the big amount of atmosphere between the observer and the low moon (and hence more scattering of blue light).



Fig. 8. A near full moon rising behind distant trees in an otherwise pitch-dark landscape produced this eerie sight. The photo was taken by the author during a holiday in Friesland, the Netherlands, on Christmas Day 2018.

But there’s a problem. According to Popik, when the ambulance was approaching the double junction at Kalwa, the witnesses situated the object at an angle of elevation “between 15° and 20°”. From the recorded interview it transpires that in order to estimate the elevation, Popik had asked driver Skoczyński to imagine a line leading from the eyes to the object then estimate the angle that line made with the horizon. Using this method, an angle of 35° was retained for the moment the car was at the intersection of Route 515 and the Sztum Trail. It is not clear why that angle is almost twice as big as the angle mentioned in *FSR*. The ambulance arrived at the intersection between 3:35 and 3:40 a.m. At that time the moon’s was only between 3°37’ and 4°12’ above the horizon, not 15 or

20°, let alone 35°. Moreover, at angles larger than 10° the amount of atmosphere between observer and moon is not dense enough to create a striking reddish tinge.

The question is to know how reliable the figures given by Popik are. Experienced investigators know that estimates of elevations are almost always off, and not by just a few degrees. In fact, an (unpublished) study carried out by the author on 132 Belgian cases in which reported UFOs could be attributed to astronomical bodies, confirmed rather spectacularly that the elevation of an object in the sky is almost always grotesquely overestimated. In 29 cases we studied, the witnesses had estimated that the elevation of the object they had sighted was between 15° and 25°. In 3 of these, the reported phenomenon could be attributed to a celestial object only 3° above the horizon. In 9 out of 29 cases, the mistaken celestial bodies were found to have been at altitudes between 4° and 8°. In 46 cases the elevation angle was estimated to have been between 25° and 40°. 18 of these (i.e. 39.1%) were triggered by an astronomical source lower than or equal to 10° (7 of these with elevations lower or equal to 5°).

In fact, an angle of 15 to 20°, as mentioned in Popik's report, is perceived as quite high in the sky, and would never be described as "never exactly in the sky" or "not very high over the ground any of the time" (*FSR*). Parts of the landscape bordering the road between Tropy and Kalwa offer wide views over low hills and fields (Fig. 9). In these circumstances, situating an object "at the level of the tree tops" (*FSR*) and "passing trees and farms" (taped interview) would also suggest that the objects were close to the horizon.



Fig. 9. Typical view of the landscape from a point halfway between Tropy and Kalwa. (© Google Earth)

Confirmation of the low altitude of the sighted red ball during the first phase of the event came when our long-time Spanish correspondent Manuel Borraz Aymerich called our attention to an article written by Stanislaw Barski and published on a Polish blog called Paranormal.PL.⁷ We had missed that source when we set out to reexamine the case. Yet, it contains an interesting quote. Barski doesn't mention his source, but he cites driver Skoczyński as follows: "It was 3.45. I just turned from Żuławka Sztumska to the Malbork road [Route 515]. That's when we noticed a dark red ball far ahead the size of the moon floating in the sky quite low above the horizon." This conclusively confirms our initial suspicion: the phenomenon was never observed at an altitude between 15 and 20°, let alone 35°.

The elevation is not in dispute when it comes to the final and longest phase of the incident. By this time, the object had descended to "a few centimetres over the road" (*FSR*), or, according to the driver's account in Barski's article: "to a height of about 1m, 1.5m at most," or still according to UFO Replacje: "to a height of about 2 m." Any which way, it is clear that the object was very low in the sky during this phase.

There are several bizarre details in the descriptions given during the interviews Popik conducted. One relates to the driver clearly seeing —besides the "grid of black irregular lines"— "two dark horizontal stripes" or "shelves," "bottom and top." According to the UFO Replacje article these "shelves" were "visible only when the ball hung over the road." Thick mother branches or stacked clouds near the horizon (the latter illustrated in Fig. 10) might account for these two dark stripes. More difficult to explain is Mrs Pluta's claim that she also noticed "something like an antenna" on top of the ball, making it look "like an inflated balloon on a wire" (Barski). Oddly, none of the other witnesses reported this detail. Could this have been a streetlight reflecting off of a telephone wire near Pietrzwałd?



Fig. 10. Two pictures by the author showing how thin horizontal cloud layers may create the effect of “shelves”

With regard to the size of the ball, the witnesses are unanimous: “the object was as large as the moon to look at (...) and coming closer all the time” (*FSR*). In Barski’s article there’s an interesting quote from Dr Piazza who, we are told, tape-recorded her story after returning home that morning. The quote refers to the moment when the phenomenon was first seen. It goes as follows: “On the way back, a few kilometres after Żuławka, a red cloud appeared on the driver’s side over the horizon. It was strange; it looked like the setting sun. I joked to the driver: ‘Tell me what it could be: sun or moon? Surely it can’t be a UFO!’ The driver said it was the moon!” It is only a few minutes later that the moon explanation is abandoned because the object “became bigger, orange-red and clearly outlined.”

It is important to note here that most people are convinced that the moon increases in size as it nears the horizon⁸. Likewise, witnesses who mistook the setting or rising moon for an unidentified craft typically estimate the size of the UFO as bigger than the moon. Gabriela Ludorf described the object’s apparent size as “not twice as big, but about one and a half times the moon,” which is precisely how other mistaken witnesses have described the setting or rising moon⁹.

In the Tropy-Sztumskie case we have precise numbers to work with. When at the crossing, the size of the ball was compared to the width of the carriageway, which Popik asserts was “6 metres [26 feet] wide at that point”. “At that point” refers to the spot on the road where the witnesses believed the ball was, namely “200 metres [656 feet] or less” from the ambulance car after it had crossed the railway. Popik also informs: “the edges of the UFO overlapped the road on either side (...) by about 50 cm [1.6 feet].” At 200m, a 6-metre wide road has an angular width of 1.7°. With the moon diameter covering only about 0.5° of the sky, that would mean the moon took up only about 1/3 of the road. But, like with elevations, estimates of distances at night cannot be trusted. Interestingly, the road behind the barriers goes upward from the crossing (angle of inclination approximately 0.5°), then down again towards the hamlet of Pietrzwald. According to Google Earth, the highest point on the road is at a distance of 870m from the level crossing (see Fig. 5). Having driven past the railway for “several meters” (*FSR*), we can round that down to 800m (2,625 feet). Beyond that point the road goes downhill again and is no longer visible from a point near the crossing (see Fig. 11).

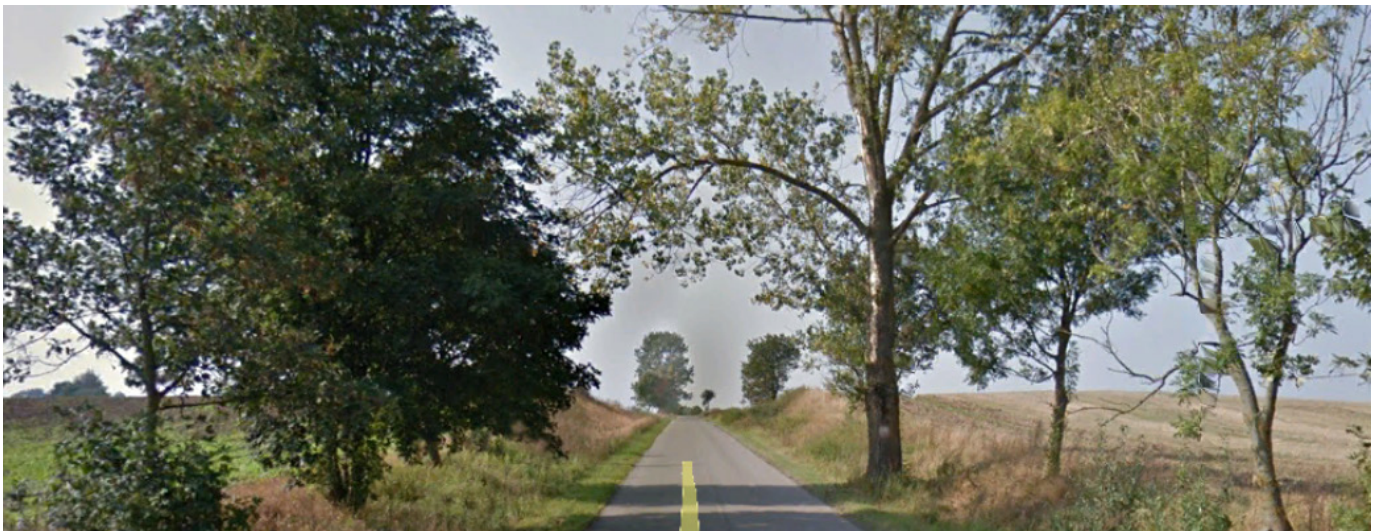


Fig. 11. Driving closer to the highest point of the road we see that the parallel lines that mark the sides of the road do not meet in a point on the horizon, but that the road is cut off horizontally. This atypical situation may have added to the illusion that the moon appeared to be hovering directly over the road. Note also the tree branches in this Google Street View image. It is easy to see how these would have created an effect of the lunardisc being covered with “black lines going up and down irregularly in each direction.”

If the moon was mistaken for an object hovering over the road, it would logically have been this visible 'end' of the road that was believed to be directly underneath the object. Now, at 800m, a 6m-wide road would subtend a horizontal angle of 0.43° . In other words, to someone standing near the crossing, the moon being 0.50° in diameter would indeed have appeared somewhat bigger than the width of the carriageway.

Reported movements

During the interview with Popik, one of the crossing keepers mentioned that the object they presumed to be the moon was "rocking up and down". The driver further stipulates that it "lowered step by step," whilst the doctor asserts that after she returned to the car "the ball was still hovering", but that after 15 minutes "it glided over the tree and continued to hover slightly" (Barski). Popik herself writes in her report that the ball "moved up the slight hill, hovered at the summit, then returned after a few seconds," whilst the sketched path in Fig. 4 shows a downward movement followed by a steep vertical chute.

If reported accurately, these motions are difficult to reconcile with the moon's steady downward movement to the right. It is remarkable, however, that each witness seems to be describing a different type of motion. This makes us wonder if the reported movements cannot be attributed to movements executed by the witnesses themselves. Walking up or down a small step, driving up or down a hill, or taking a few steps to the left or to the right or to the front or the back, all these displacements could have caused the moon to shift positions with regard to fixed objects like a pole, a tree or a hill. With the witnesses believing that the object was never more than 500m away —while it was actually hundreds of thousands of km away— every change of position of the lunar disc in the visual field coupled to their own movements, would have been different from their expectations.

The white light

Popik also mentions that there was a "white light underneath the ball," stretching "left and right" and a "flood of white light beyond the horizon." In the interview, it is specified that the lights (plural!) shone downward and resembled the white lights of a car. The article from UFO Relacje has the white light "illuminating the ground beneath it." With varying descriptions, it is difficult to imagine what exactly was observed during this phase. Using Google Street View we noticed that there are several old-model street-lights near Pietrzwałd, about 1.5 km from the crossing (see Fig. 5). We cannot be sure if these street lights were already there in 1979, but it is not far-fetched to suggest that the glare of lamp posts near this small village may have just reached out above the highest point of the road and in that way added to the strangeness of the scene. Another possibility is that the lights were effectively coming from a vehicle. Perhaps the motorbike that had crossed the railway a bit earlier was still driving around in the area.

Conclusion

Despite these and other minor uncertainties, the moon explanation appears solid. Apparently, Popik did verify if the moon was visible in the early hours of September 5 (possibly because not only the driver, but also the crossing keepers and the stretcher bearer initially believed they were looking at the moon), but she seems to be keen to get it out of the way as soon as possible by stating (erroneously) that "the moon had waned" (sic) at 3:40 a.m. Nothing could be further from the truth: even at 4:10 a.m., half an hour later, the near full moon was still visible and positioned exactly where the UFO was situated. In fact, moon set was at 4:13, the exact time that the mysterious red ball disappeared, namely between 4:10 and 4:15. Yet, none of the witnesses mentioned seeing the moon in close proximity to the red ball.

We consider the Tropy Sztumskie UFO incident, as it is referred to in Poland, as one of the finest examples of a moon/IFO report. It's not unique, though. Already in the 1980s, French UFO skeptics documented dozens of similar cases in which the moon turned out to be the cause of —often spectacular— UFO encounters¹⁰. More recently, U.S. researcher Herb Taylor and the author collected many more such reports¹¹, notably from the Low Countries and from the U.S. Air Force Blue Book files. We hope to publish more about this research in a not-too-distant future.

Postscript

The author found out a little late that he was not the first to attribute this scary UFO encounter to a misinterpretation of the setting moon. Already in 2011, upon information provided by Manuel Borraz Aymerich, Juan Carlos Victorio published a short article on the Tropy-Sztumskie case on his excellent blog Misterios del Aire¹². It is good to find that the conclusions of that article are in perfect agreement with our own.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Martin Shough for proofreading this article and for helping us map the location and line of sight for the early phase of the sighting. We are further indebted to Manuel Borraz Aymerich for directing us to Stanislaw Barski's article, and to Herb Taylor for initiating the reopening of this cold case from the UFO archives. A final word of thanks goes to Monika Zielinska for a verbal translation of Emma Popik's taped interview from 1979, and to Mieke Tiebos for her help in conducting the study on estimated vs real elevation angles in Belgian UFO reports.

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Notes and references

1. Born in 1949 in Skepe, Emma Popik graduated in Polish philology at the University of Gdańsk. In 2000, after a long stay in London, she returned to Poland and became founding editor-in-chief of *Nowy Kurier Nadbałtycki*, a monthly magazine that focuses on the educational institutions in Gdańsk. A list of selected publications by Popik can be viewed at: http://www.emmaPopik.pl/index.php?title=Strona_g%C5%82%C3%B3wna
2. http://www.emmaPopik.pl/images/3/3b/Ufo_w_Sztumie_-_wywiad_przeprowadza_Emma_Popik.mp3
3. From the interview it transpires that the doctor had asked the telephone receptionist to contact not only the police but also the army, hoping that one of the two would clear the road for the ambulance.
4. When looking out of the window of a moving vehicle, a distant object will remain in the line of sight much longer than objects closer by. A tree or a lamppost bordering the road, for instance, is quickly lost from sight, whilst obstacles further away will remain longer in view. This effect explains why astronomical bodies like the moon appear to keep pace with a moving vehicle, apparently gliding over trees and hills and slowing down or going faster when the driver reduces or increases its speed.
5. The article is at <https://ufo-relacje.pl/2018/12/29/ufo-nad-miejscowoscia-tropy-sztumskie-5-wrzesnia-1979/>
6. It is assumed that Popik's statement that "the moon had waned" —actually it was waxing— should be interpreted as "the moon had set".
7. Stanislaw Barski's article is at <https://paranormalpl.wordpress.com/2010/04/22/incydent-sztumski/>.
8. This optical effect is known as "The Moon Illusion". It has been explained in numerous ways but the most important influences that create the illusion are believed to be the presence of reference points close to the horizon (small silhouettes of distant houses and trees make the moon look big) and a compensation by the brain that expects objects that are high in the sky and move towards the horizon (like an airplane or a balloon) to become smaller, not maintain the same angular size like the moon does.
9. See for instance the author's assessment of the Faymonville sighting of July 19, 1972, in which the principal witness similarly described the size of the object as "approximately 1 1/2 times that of the full moon" (Vicente- Juan BALLESTER OLMOS & Wim VAN UTRECHT, *Belgium in UFO Photographs Vol. 1*, UPIAR, Turin, 2017, p. 101.)
10. See for instance: Opération SAROS, CNEGU, 1994; *Les influences de la lune sur la casuistique & l'ufologie*, SERPAN, 1993; as well as: Thibaut ALEXANDRE with Eric MAILLOT, *Des OVNI au clair de lune*, Les dossier de S.O. n° 6, 2015. A lengthy French article by Maillot on moon misinterpretations can be read at: http://www.unice.fr/zetetique/articles/meprises_lune.html (in French).
11. Two of these moon/IFO cases have been published in: Vicente-Juan BALLESTER OLMOS & Wim VAN UTRECHT, *Belgium in UFO Photographs Vol. 1*, UPIAR, Turin, 2017, notably on pages 99-113 and 140-151. For more Moon/IFO reports see also: <http://www.astronomyufo.com/UFO/MoonUFO.htm>
12. <http://misteriosdelaire.blogspot.com/2011/03/un-ovni-persigue-y-obstruye-el-paso-de.html> (in Spanish).