

SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs



*It's not what you see that is suspect, but
how you interpret what you see.*

Isaac Asimov

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No matter how long you live, you will never know any more about UFOs than you know today. You will never know any more about what UFOs really are, or where they come from. You will never know any more about what the U.S. Government really knows about UFOs than you know today. As you lie on your own death-bed you will be as mystified about UFOs as you are today. And you will remember this curse.



THE CURSE CONTINUES

Cover: One of my images from the 1991 solar eclipse from Baja, Mexico. That eclipse is famous in UFOlogy for all of the sightings from Mexico. Most of these were of the planet Venus. Will this year's eclipse contain a lot of UFOs?

Left: The Phil Klass curse was written in 1983 and continues to plague UFOlogy. Was Klass clairvoyant or did he recognize that the science of UFOlogy was flawed to the point that nobody would ever learn anything? Sketch by the late Matt Graeber.

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Recent comments by Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos has some in UFOlogy reflecting on the future of their "science". His comments suggest that UFOs are approaching a mythological status and there appears to be little future in resolving the matter. I also took note of this comment:

It is an unattainable goal to solve 100% of all circulating reports. There will always be unexplained events but it does not mean they are unexplainable. We will always have bad input data. There will always exist people willing to deceive us. There will always be wrong analysis or biased interpretation on such observations.

It is an interesting observation and reflects my opinion about many of the "unsolved" ufo cases in the various databases. In my continuing articles about the "The UFO evidence under review" and "The 701 club", I have noticed that many of these "unknowns" can be explained or do have potential solutions. This does not mean that all of these cases can be explained. However, with so many potential or good explanations, what does it say for the remaining "unknowns"? With a database populated with so many mistaken observations, can we really consider the remaining cases proof that UFOs are, as NICAP put it, "manifestations of extraterrestrial life".

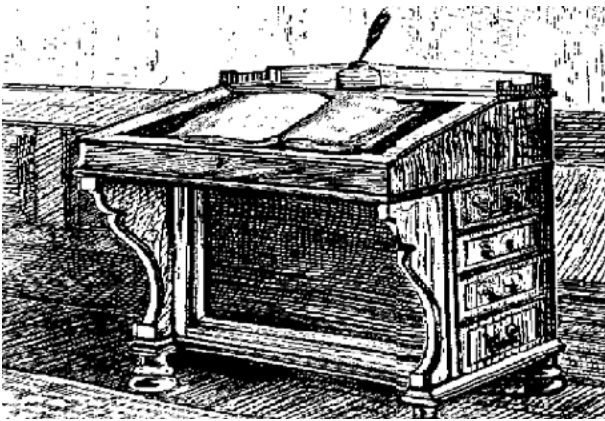
UFOlogy seems to be on the ropes these days. When new "smoking gun" cases are presented, they often are explained by an individual or some group of individuals. Even the older prize cases are being openly questioned. As each of these important cases are exposed to be not as solid as claimed, the more UFO proponents cite the older classic cases as proof that UFOs are exotic phenomena unknown to science.

A good example of the problems associated with how UFOlogists interpret reports appears on page 6. While some UFOlogists rely solely upon the witness reports, a bit of minor detective work revealed the true source of this "mass sighting". There is little doubt as to the actual source because of the data gathered by another organization that also specializes in gathering reports. However, their reports were more informative and their observers "knew what they saw".

As I have mentioned in the past issue, the upcoming solar eclipse will dominate a significant amount of my free time for the next few months. This issue, I have an article about "potential UFOs" being reported during the eclipse. I don't expect many UFO reports but, then again, I did not expect people to mistake Venus for a UFO in the 1991 eclipse. One never knows for sure. I want to encourage readers near the centerline to travel to the eclipse path and view totality. You will not be disappointed.

Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions



Paul Dean recently unearthed a document from the department of defense, which discusses photographs of UFOs. While I find Dean's interpretation interesting, I think too much is made of the term UFO. The document is unclassified and describes how military members are required to submit their photographs of various events. The subjects range from athletic events and ceremonies to combat and rocket launches. Included in this mix is one table, which states that it applies to "UFOs and other aerial phenomena not obviously identifiable as conventional aircraft or missiles". While Dean appears to think this means that UFOs have been identified as an important photographic target, I interpret this to be a catch-all category for images of objects/events in the sky that cannot be identified by the photographer. This might include things like atmospheric phenomena, aircraft seen from unusual angles, research balloons seen from a distance, space debris, meteors, etc. etc. Important to note is that the document does not tell them to

send these UFO photographs to a secretive organization. Instead, it tells the photographer to distribute copies of the images to the central collection agency for all images as well as local and major commands. This means if somebody photographs a UFO, they are being told to distribute it to everyone up the chain of command, without even bothering to classify it or place it on a "need to know" category. Does this mean UFOs are not considered classified information?

MUFON's Roger Marsh recently promoted a photograph/report of a UFO that has drawn criticism. The image, described as proof of a "triangular shaped object" seen by the witness is, more than likely, a balloon in the shape of the letter "A". The comments on the MUFON web site forced Marsh to edit the entry and admit it probably is a balloon. For some reason Marsh, or somebody else at MUFON, felt it was something other than a balloon or they never would have published such a story. The end result is MUFON continues to make themselves look silly promoting bad cases.

Speaking of MUFON, Jan Harzan was recently interviewed by Kevin Randle on his X-Zone program. When it came to Hanger One, Harzan felt the producers of the show were the reason the program distorted the subject. While producers can edit things down a bit to present a certain point of view, a lot of what was being described by MUFON's "best and brightest" was inaccurate and full of wild speculation. I documented a great deal of these problems in SUNlite. It was amusing to hear Harzan state that MUFON benefited financially from the series. It seems that Harzan is less interested about "scientific research" and more interested in financial gain. I have to wonder, how much of that money is being put towards actual research and how much of it is being used to line the pockets of the leaders of MUFON?

Another MUFON expert, Ben Moss, decided to declare that the Trent images were authentic because he has detected evidence of a "plasma vortex" in the photographs. Examination of Robert Sheaffer's high resolution scans indicate the "plasma vortex" appears to be discoloring of the print itself! When this was discussed on Face book, the IPACO report was also mentioned. That report indicated the prints state the object is less than 200 feet from the camera. Moss' response was this was "bad math" but he gave no detailed refutation of the "math" so it appears to be based more on belief than careful examination of the report. IPACO's report is clear as to how they determined their results. Meanwhile, Moss' evaluation of the prints are more of a "gut feel" based on what he believes. Various individuals tried to get Moss to elaborate on his claims but he left the discussion because we were not "open minded". This kind of research appears to be par for the course with MUFONites and should not surprise anybody.

More MUFON madness transpired, when sensationalist and conspiracy fanatic, John Ventre, decided to opine about some Netflix programs, he found objectionable. Was it a "debunker" UFO film? No, it was, instead, a program called "Dear White people". In his commentary, Ventre revealed that he had some rather unsavory opinions of people who were not Caucasian. MUFON's grand leader, Jan Harzan, responded by suggesting that Ventre was a "volunteer" and they have no responsibility for his public statements! This is quite amusing since Ventre ran the MUFON fiefdom of Pennsylvania and was a major actor in MUFON's "Hanger one". He is hardly a "volunteer" and is a figurehead in the organization. Failure to acknowledge the problems with Ventre's rant demonstrates that Harzan is more interested in the financial gain by having Ventre being part of MUFON and less interested in "doing the right thing". Battle lines in MUFON were drawn on face book, and elsewhere. Many comments I saw indicated that people were appalled by MUFON's lack of leadership. I have to wonder how many people shared Ventre's opinions on the subject but chose not to voice them publicly. As Lance Moody pointed out, Ventre is an excellent example of how conspiracy minded UFOlogists lose sight of reality and believe that there are conspiracies in every corner where their bias/prejudices blind them from rational thought.

Apparently, there was enough negative feedback to replace Ventre as Pennsylvania MUFON's grand Pooh-bah. However, Ventre can't be completely banished because, as Kevin Randle pointed out, Ventre had paid MUFON \$5,000 to be part of the "inner circle". This explains Harzan's reluctance to condemn Ventre. It might also explain why Ventre was so highly promoted in "Hanger one". Money, and not science, rules MUFON. (NOTE: The statements on MUFON's web site regarding these events appear to have been removed, the hyperlinks do not work anymore.)

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

Even more evidence of MUFON's interest in money over science comes from MUFON's plans for this years symposium. Their theme has to do with some sort of secret space program that the United States has. Their web site artwork displays a space battleship, which appears to come right out of the "Stargate SG-1" television series. I wonder if Teal'c will be there.

Robert Sheaffer gave us a sneak peak of one of the "secret space program" speakers chosen by MUFON. It is clear that MUFON's motto is not studying UFOs scientifically but feeding wild stories to its membership. While Harzan can complain about Hangar one distorting his UFOlogy, nothing can excuse him from promoting these wild stories as if it were science.

Moving away from MUFON, I noticed that Peter Robbins is cutting ties with Larry Warren. He now considers his Rendlesham story to be inaccurate, which prompted Warren to label him, and Nick Pope, liars. I never bought the Warren story and I know that some in the UFO community had similar doubts about his testimony.

The anticipation for Tom Delonge's revelations on UFOs appears to be waning. He has presented nothing as I am writing this. Maybe he just likes the publicity and worship he receives. Meanwhile, UFOlogists continue to cater to him because he pretends to have some super secret knowledge. "False prophets" are nothing new in UFOlogy.

A recent UFO video got some press. UFO of Interest blogger, Scott Brando, posted a video giving potential explanations. It appears that he was correct with his third explanation because it turned out to be a plane with pyrotechnics.

Speaking of explaining UFO cases, Gilles Fernandez pointed out an explanation for the Lubbock Lights photographs by Carl Hart. The source is an old Above Top Secret thread, where Nablator, of Roswell slides fame, demonstrated that two of the photographs have the lights in the same position in both photographs. Gilles demonstrated this with an animated GIF. While two of the images do match, the other two do not. However, the fact that two of the images showed the exact same configuration indicates the objects were stationary. To Nablator, and most skeptics, this suggests the photographs were a hoax. Nablator theorized that these "lights" were probably just holes poked into a cardboard box and then photographed by Hart.

Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos wrote a scathing analysis of modern UFOlogy on his Fotocat blog. I agree with a lot of what he wrote and have made similar comments here in SUNlite. Thomas Bullard added his comments and agreed with most of the observations of Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos. However, Bullard disagreed with the lack of a future in UFOlogy and states that there is hope. With the seventieth anniversary of Kenneth Arnold and Roswell now past, UFOlogists have to ask themselves, "Have we learned anything significant since 1947?". My opinion is that, with the exception of issues regarding perception, the answer is "no".

Mick West wrote an article about "crowd sourcing" when trying to investigate UFO cases/reports. His example is the debunking of the Chilean Helicopter video, which was mentioned in SUNlite 9-2. Mick and his group were very good at put together resources to help explain the case. The results/thought process reminded me of the Roswell slides research group's work of the months before and days after the BeWitness program. In both cases, a group of individuals banded together to bounce ideas, good and bad, about an event that was considered to be significant. As West points out, crowd sourcing has its limitations. Old UFO cases are usually too stale to unearth anything new and the same arguments are simply recycled with little or no resolution. However, I believe that this kind of interaction can work very well with new UFO events, where fresh information can be brought into the discussion.

It is hard to believe but MJ-12 is back in the news again. Kevin Randle took a look and has the opinion they are fraudulent. About every two or three years more MJ-12 documents appear magically out of thin air and some UFO proponents declare them authentic. The belief that there is a super secret cabal concealing all of the evidence of UFOs is one consistent theme in UFOlogy over the decades. The MJ-12 myth is the result of that belief.

After trumpeting the release of her book, which is nothing more than a collection of UFO reports without analysis, Cheryl Costa has revealed that she is a big Billy Meier fan. It appears she consider his photographs to be true "smoking gun" evidence that UFOs are alien spaceships. Much of the evidence indicates these photographs are fraudulent and there is no evidence to consider them authentic. If this is how Costa evaluates a case, one has to question her ability to evaluate other UFO evidence.

Jaimie Maussan has found another "alien body" to promote. I see that Dr. Zalce and Dr. Rios are involved. For some reason, these individuals have discarded the scientific process of submitting their research for examination by qualified experts in favor of Maussan's sensationalist presentations. Skeptics and Snopes have been debunking the "discovery" and Mick West appears to explain why there are only 3 fingers and 3 toes. Apparently, somebody either removed the outer toes and fingers or they had come off over the years.

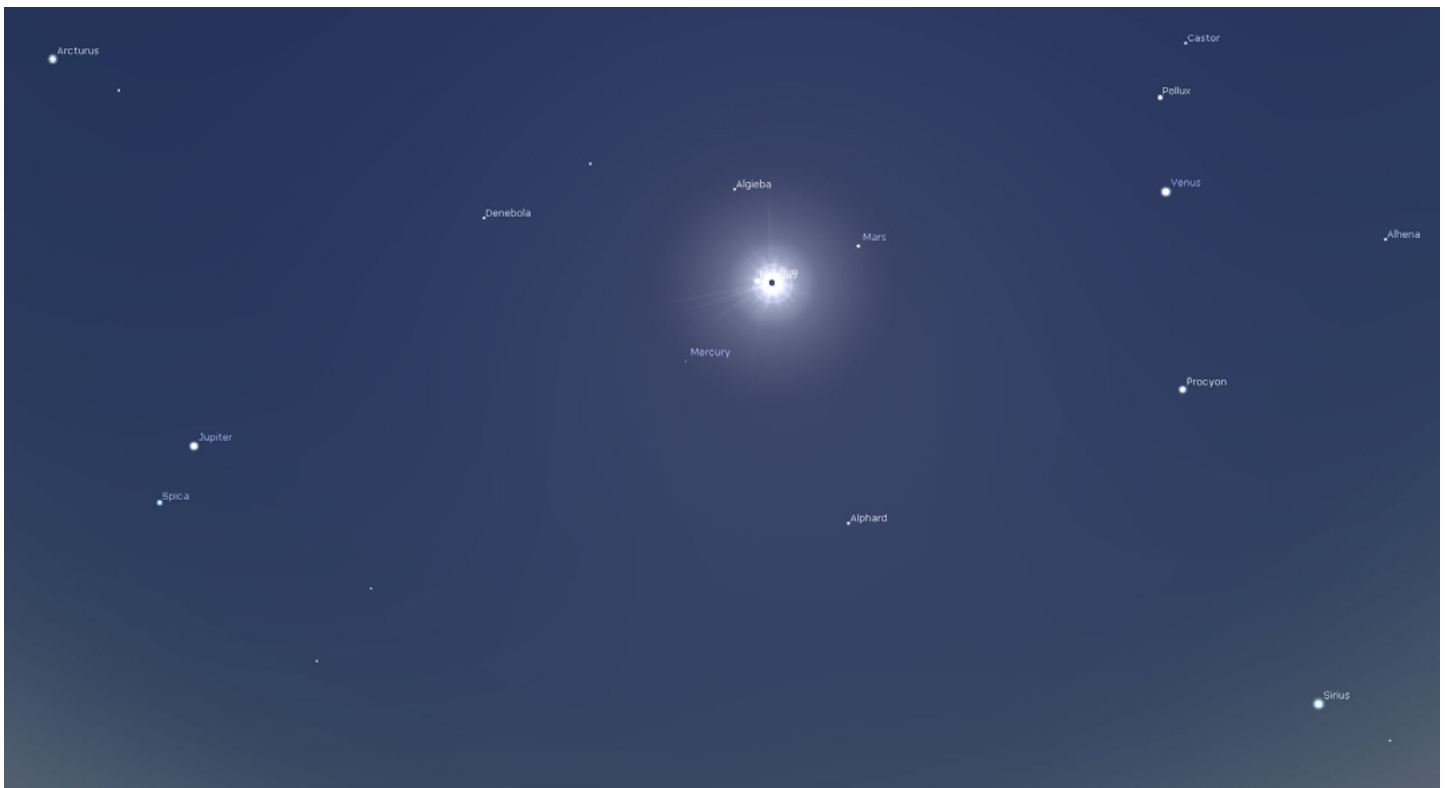
After two years, Tony Bragalia has ended his "sabbatical" from UFOlogy to establish his own web site which contains all of his writings. While he lists his final "apology" article from the Roswell slides fiasco, I noticed that none of the articles he wrote prior to the deblurring of the slides are listed. I have addressed many of his articles in the past, which inspired him to write a highly misleading and inaccurate article, where he accused me of "stalking" him (which I addressed in SUNlite 1-4). Let's hope Mr. Bragalia learned the lessons from the Roswell slides fiasco before writing any more articles involving wild and erroneous conclusions.

Potential UFOs on August 21, 2017

On August 21, 2017, the United States will experience a total solar eclipse that will be seen by millions of people. This is a very rare event and, assuming the sky is clear, people who are going to be in the path of totality are going to experience something really special. Photographs and videos will be shared throughout social media and many will record things that uninformed sky-watchers might consider to be UFOs. This will be a primer to help identify those objects.

The sky at totality

During totality, the sky will become dark enough to see bright stars. My only total eclipse was from Baja in 1991. I remember seeing Orion's belt during totality and the sky was like a deep twilight. Most important will be all the planets and bright stars that will be visible during totality. Next to the eclipsed sun, Venus and Jupiter will be the brightest objects in the sky. Being brighter than all the stars, people might consider them to be UFOs. Additionally, near the sun will be Mars, Mercury and Regulus. They will not be so bright but viewers might link their close proximity to the sun as meaning something significant.



Other unique events

The sun's corona can produce wonderful streamers and bright areas that might be interpreted as something abnormal or unusual. While it seems unlikely they will be referred to as UFOs, some might interpret them as something that is not part of the eclipse.

In addition to the outer corona, the limb of the sun will present unique objects that can be misinterpreted by overeager UFO fanatics trying to find something in the videos and photographs. Two significant objects will be solar prominences and Bailey's beads.

It is unlikely that a bright comet will be visible since none are predicted to be near the sun as of this writing. However, a new comet might be discovered a few days, or weeks, prior to August 21 that could put on a show during the eclipse. A good example of this happening, was the eclipse comet of 1948.

Don't forget the usual IFOs

One wonders how many high altitude aircraft might be airborne and produce contrails or objects that look funny under the conditions of an eclipse. A plane might be illuminated by the sun if it is outside the shadow but a person, in totality's shadow, would see a bright object moving across a twilight sky.

I have no idea if any balloons will be in use during the eclipse but it is possible that various amateur groups, or schools, might be launching weather balloons with payloads that could populate the skies prior to, and during, the eclipse. I have seen a lot of practice runs for the eclipse being mentioned by various groups. Do not be surprised if a balloon wanders into the path of totality.

In addition to physical objects, one has to also wonder how many UFO photographs will be submitted showing lens flares and other optical artifacts that will be presented as "smoking gun" evidence of UFOs.

Beware the flimflammer

The solar eclipse of 2017 is going to be a great celestial event for many Americans. It would be a shame to see a showman, like Jaimie Maussan, misrepresent the imagery as evidence that some alien spaceships decided to reveal themselves when everyone was looking up into the sky.

If you are near, are on the path of totality, you need to make an effort to reach the path. I have only seen one total solar eclipse in my life and it was spectacular. It truly is a "once in a lifetime" event and hope that my readers will enjoy the show.



Target for tonight

It was going to happen sooner or later. On June 24th, I saw a strange object in the sky that I could not readily identify when I first saw it. While I can consider this a UFO, at first glance, it did not take long to turn it into an IFO.

After setting up the telescope for the nights astrophotography session, my wife and I began chatting with a fellow astronomer. About this moment, I noticed a bright star in the sky about 30 degrees above the West Northwest horizon. At first I thought it was a plane but it was only a pinpoint and not moving. I then thought it might be a star but quickly dismissed it because there are no bright stars in that area of the sky. I then began to think that it might be a nova or supernova, and felt, just for a moment, that this could be a great astronomical discovery!

Excitedly, I quickly pointed the telescope at the light and, using a magnification of 50X, I noticed that it was a small sphere and not a star. When I increased the magnification to 100X, it was clear that it was a translucent sphere reflecting sunlight. It looked a lot like a weather balloon. I grabbed my camera and took a few shots afocally through the eyepiece. As I repositioned the scope to recenter the object, the balloon burst into a shower of fragments.

As I was operating the telescope, my wife reported that the object was fading. I estimated the original magnitude was about -1 or -2. My last visual of it in the sky with the naked eye was about 0 or +1. The instant it burst, the light disappeared to the naked eye.

After the fact, I figured this probably was a weather balloon launched somewhere to the west. The time was about 0100 UTC and many weather balloons are launched at 0000UTC. Being in southwest NH (Near the town of Hillsborough), I looked to the west. The closest launch point was from Albany, NY. The radiosonde data for that balloon indicated that most of the winds encountered during its ascent were coming from the direction of 270 and 225 degrees. That would have blown the balloon towards the North-east and my position. Looking at the wind speeds and ascent rates, it seems that the balloon would have been in the general area I was looking.

This is the first time I ever saw a balloon illuminated this way and I can add this to my list of unusual sky events I have observed. Of course, this also busts one of the astronomer UFO myths you hear UFOlogists circulating. As I have repeatedly pointed out, astronomers can, and do, see objects in the sky that they have difficulty identifying. I was not too busy looking through a narrow eyepiece field or sitting in a warming hut imaging objects from a computer. We were doing what we always do when coming out to the dark sky site. We were chatting about astronomy and looking up at the sky waiting for it to get dark. Careful observations, and the proper equipment, was all that was necessary to identify the light.

THE RETURN OF CHILES-WHITTED?

In late April, I had read a post on Face book made by a fellow amateur astronomer from Florida, where he remarked that he had just seen a space debris re-entry. Since I usually try and keep up with space re-entries, I looked at the re-entry predictions web site. I was surprised to see no prediction or report of debris re-entering the Earth's atmosphere. As a second check, I looked at the American Meteor Society's web site and discovered it was not space debris but a bright fireball. It was an unusual one because it lasted over twenty seconds (based on videos from all sky cameras). It also fragmented, which gave one the impression that it was space debris. After determining the source of the observation, I was satisfied that was the end of it.....until.....

Just like the "Phoenix lights"????

On May 3rd, Jon Austin published a news story about Florida having a mass sighting of UFOs. He compared the event to the Arizona sightings from March 13, 1997. His source was the National UFO reporting center's Peter Davenport, who described the events of April 25/26:

"Approximately a dozen high-quality sighting reports were submitted in rapid sequence by witnesses in multiple locations in Florida.

*"Three adult witnesses in Largo reported having had a disc-shaped object descend out of nearby clouds, and hover briefly near their residence in the night sky."*¹

"They report that the object suddenly darted back into the same area of the sky from which it had first come, disappearing again into the clouds."

As I read the witness' descriptions of the event they saw, I began to have a sneaking suspicion about what was the source of most of these sightings. The bulk of the sightings came between 11:45PM and midnight. Going back to the American Meteor Society's database, I confirmed that the night of the Florida fireball was near midnight on the 25th/26th. According to Sky Sentinel, the time of the event was at 11:52:10 PM EDT. It seems that this UFO probably had an explanation.

The NUFORC database

The NUFORC database is pretty good at accessing raw reports. However, the database could be better. Data that should be obtainable is missing (i.e. azimuth and elevation for start and stop of event). Still, one can at least read the description, location and time of the event.²

Time (EDT)	Location (Florida)	Duration	Description
2300	Jupiter	2-3 min	Walking dog approximately 11PM, looked up towards west and saw something traveling south to north leaving a trail of fire/sparks in a straight line, not getting higher, or lower. There was no noise. I had my phone and fumbled for a minute to try to find camera, and realized that the thing was moving so fast , and so I watched it continue north towards the Jupiter inlet, and at that time the fire/sparks ended. The thing was above the tree line from my view, but not high in the sky. I could not see a shape, and there was no noise. There were no headlights or flashing lights, like a plane, or helicopter would have made and there was no noise. I would venture a guess that it was about 1/2 mile to one mile west of my location
2345	Clearwater	20 sec	Bright green lights moving west to east. 2 or 3 bright green lights going from west to east. Faster than a plane. Like round moving colors. No sound or anything. Then suddenly gone.
2345	Plantation	3 Sec	UFO sighted over the Everglades in Broward County. My wife and I saw from the NW sky over the Everglades a weird object flying fast on an seemed elliptical curve going from west to north. Looked like a cross with 4 red light points. The object left behind a tail of fire as it accelerated. Also, its lights dimmed and the object vanished from the sky. Looked like it took off between the 3 seconds, or so, we spot it in the sky. Either the object was large, or it was not that far away, high in the sky as we were able to observe it clearly.
2345	Apollo Beach	30 sec	High speed circular object moving at high speed west to east just south of MacDill AFB. The craft flew West to east across the bottom part of Tampa bay, the flight path put it directly South of MacDill AFB, it was flying at incredible speed. The craft was just below cloud level and suddenly arced upward through the cloud cover, produced no engine noise of any kind. The object from my best guess was probably 20-30 feet in diameter and gave off a pale yellow light.

2350	Port Charlotte	~5 min	As looking at the sky it was clear full of stars then saw this white ball shape with red and orange flames flew accross the sky I was amazed my friend was sitting with me so I'm telling the truth it just disappeared vanished
2352	West Palm Beach	3 sec	Green flash/meteor like of objects breaking up, flash broke up and lights turned off, dark object still flying and not descending. West of Dixie highway over forest hill blvd.
2353	Seminole	10 sec	Went outside to smoke my pipe... saw the lights through the trees... the width was long... and moving fast... I ran to the driveway to get a clear view and seen the object... maybe about for 5 or 6 seconds of clear viewing... then it went into the clouds... the lights lit up the clouds for another few seconds... and then nothing... .. 2 things stood out to me... first how long the size of this was... and it was completely silent... now... if it was a low flying plane...i would of heard it... and i don't know how hi the clouds were... but the damn thing looked BIG... I took a video of the indecent... but did not capture anything in the sky...other than me babbling about what i just seen...
2353	Plant City	20	Very low-flying cylinder craft w/ mostly green (less red) lights that trailed behind it, Plant City. My cat (who is deaf btw) started staring off into the sky with ears up which is the only reason it made me look...it was very low flying, silent, almost shaped like a very narrow rectangle but there was no definite start/end to the structure I could see because it was night and there were lights on it that were more defined at the front but hazey towards the rear... green lights on the front, red and white on the back... not little dot lights, very large and bright. It moved almost gracefully from the moment I saw it, until it was blocked from view by a tree and no longer visible on a perfectly straight line, no altitude changes (maybe 35 mph??).... it almost didn't look real because it was so close and bright. How it was able to move without any sounds has my head spinning bc it was large and closer to me than any helicopter would ever be capable of flying... I don't know how large they make drones, but it would amaze me if someone in this small town had the ability and finances to acquire something like that...this is something I've never seen before. I'm still in shock.
0000	Largo	10-15 sec	Me my brother and best friend were walking down the street it was a side street off of Seminole Blvd in Largo, FL. The clouds were in some spots completely clear and in other areas cloudy. So as we are walking I notice what appears to look like a dark colored plane with all the windows lit like the lights were on in the plane as soon as I told everyone to look at how huge the plane was, it spun all the way from the clouds down right in front of us within seconds. When it came down, the ufo, or what ever you want to call it, made the loudest wooshing noise there wasn't even wind but was extremely loud hovering over the houses, but maybe a couple hundred feet away from us, it stopped in mid air, it appeared to be an extremely large saucer it was long not extremely tall but very wide and it had parallel red flashing short lights in what appeared to be the middle to me and long green lights out to the side as soon as I seen it for the little amount of time that It did it spun right back up the way it came it disappeared behind the cloud and didn't see it again, but it was extremely alarming I never believed in anything of the sort I always thought people were just having fun or being weird trying to become a sensation or something, but I'm a firm believer now and very terrified it came so close to us I thought we were goners when it happened ... Mind you the next day I had to ride a plane, I was so scared.
0020	Miami	20 sec	4/26/17. I saw reports today on a flying blueish, cloudy object. I can't say what I saw was a craft. What I did see around 12:15 AM in Miami Airport area were two "fire-work-looking" color objects, flying side by side, leaving a sparkling trail of different color lights behind (moved too quickly but it looked like red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple...). Almost like New Year's light decorations. It lasted 15-20 seconds before I lost it beyond some buildings.
0027	Pinellas Park	15 sec	Plane with red blinking light seemed to be pulling what looked like a sparkler. Went into a cloud and stayed stationary.

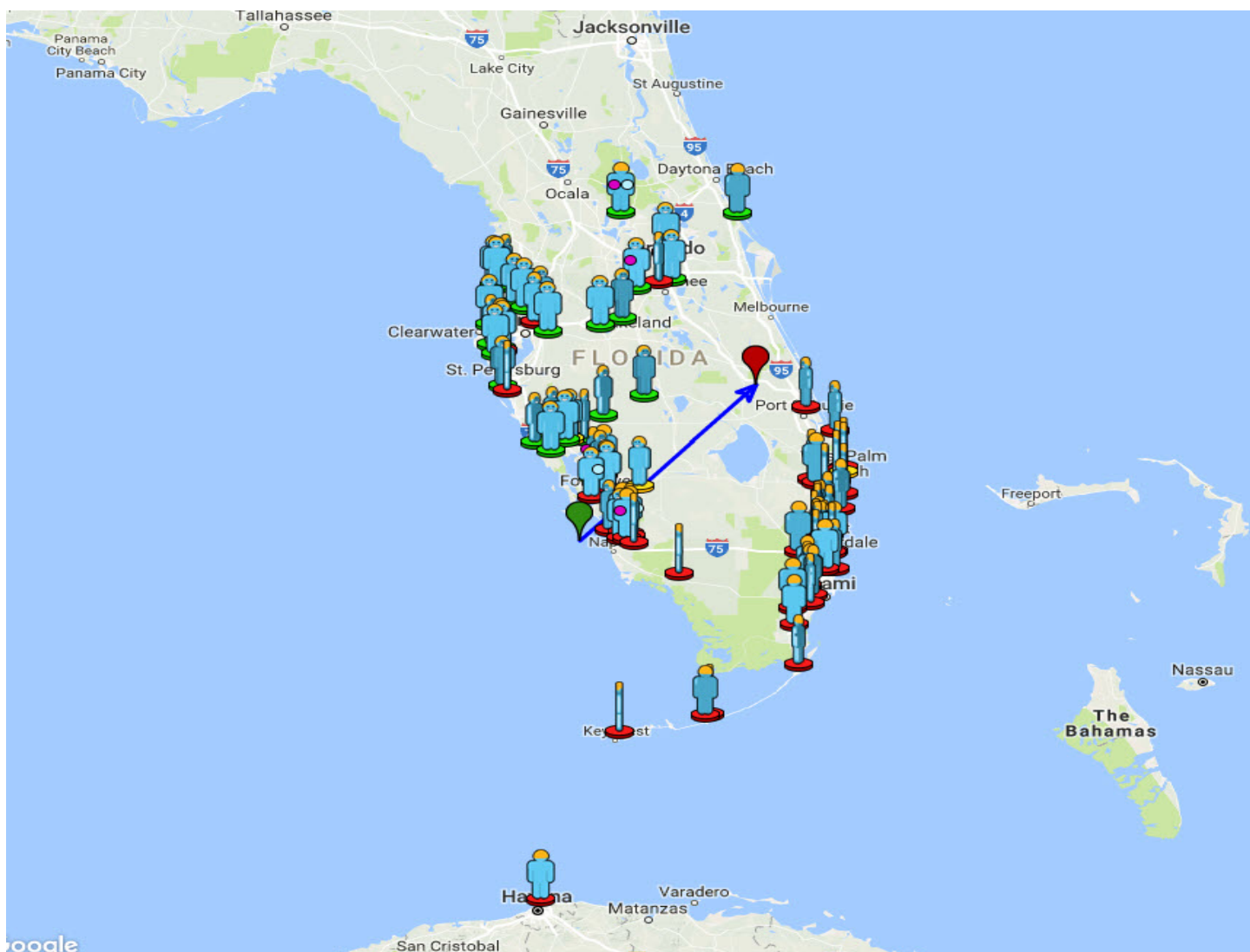
0200	Cape Coral	1 minute	Two of us sitting by the pool. Talking about the divine way in which we met! When instantly, something appears far out and slowly shoots across the sky! It was about 2:12 AM.. It didn't go up or down, it shot straight over head. But at a slow enough pace to see for a moment! It was huge! Unlike nothing ever seen b4! It had 5 circle bright white lights in the front! They were perfect white. One circle in the middle and 4 around it. Then a blue thin layer behind with what followed was a stream of orange light that was together at the end. So it starts as a circle of lights, followed by an orange tail that pointed. All together like an ice cream cone shape! Silent! It was beautiful and gave a warm fuzzy feeling! I instantly heard the verse, and the holy Spirit descended upon them and said, "this is my son with whom I am well pleased"! I haven't found it elsewhere online. Also a piece appeared to break off and for a sec there was two of it! Amazing! Usually, I feel fear when I've seen the weird stuff in the sky. Not this one! Plus the wierd trumpet noises I heard the next day... Doesn't take a genius!!!
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The last entry is interesting in that it supposedly happened two hours after the others. However, the report was made ten days after the sighting and one has to wonder if there might have been some memory recall issues.

I found it interesting that the Apollo Beach, Plant city, and Largo sightings sounded a lot like the reports filed by Chiles and Whitted. For those who think that Chiles-Whitted could not have been a meteor, I suggest they read this reports and thing again.

The American Meteor Society database

It is interesting to compare the database of the AMS with the NUFORC database. The AMS had 88 reports and contained useful information regarding azimuth, elevation, and brightness. The data is important to create plots like this one³:



Additionally, the AMS had three videos. Two of these came from Sky Sentinell.⁴ This is one of the systems I had mentioned last issue as a possible method to evaluate UFO reports for accuracy. They confirmed the time of the event and that it was a bright fireball.

There was also a video taken by a witness, who recorded the last few seconds of the fireball.⁵

It is interesting that the data also had some times that were not quite accurate. There were a few reports outside the time period of 2332-0012 (Event time +/-20 minutes). One of the witnesses admitted that they were not confident about their time estimate (they listed it as 0100).

Here are a few remarks that were made⁶:

Witness 1497 cj - Have seen orange fireballs before but this was brilliant green with pieces clearly coming off the back (single points of light). Was shocked by the color and the duration...+5 seconds

Witness 1497 p - First time i see a meteorite as close, big and in fire, my first impression was an airplane in fire

Witness 1497 ae - I have seen shooting stars that appear quickly and disappear as fast as they appeared, but this seemed very close and it looked like a stream of changing colors coming from the south and headed north. I thought I might have seen a UFO.

Witness 1497 am - This was a large bright light moving quickly across the sky. It had pieces break off that glowed orangish red. I saw pieces break off twice before it completely disappeared.

Witness 1497 ba - This appeared as if from nowhere. I was with my horse in her paddock when it appeared almost right over us. I have no lights out there and it was very dark till this appeared. It was so bright that it lit my entire area up almost as if it were daylight. The initial light that caused me to look up was so immediate I thought it was a flash of lightning about to strike me. It was beautiful, the biggest one I have ever seen.

Witness 1497 bq - Definitely the longest and most extreme object I have seen in my 57 years, including my 20 years as a pilot.

Witness 1497 bs - It caught my eye as I was outside smoking a cigarette. It was angled in a way when it was descending that it traveled from SW to NE. It was the brightest, most colorful asteroid/shooting star I've ever seen. It left an impression in my mind...and lasted a good 10-15 seconds from one end of the sky to the other and descended slowly. As the final image of it in my mind, it was just a solid piece of "rock"...not much left to the colors as it died. It was just so bright, fairly slow moving and the colors and trail...and when it broke up there were multiple flashes.

The most lengthy comment came from 1497 bg, who stated⁷:

Over many decades I've spent a lot of time looking up at the sky during meteor showers. I've also seen a lot of meteors that we're not associated with meteor showers. Some of these were very bright and long-lived and left a trail. During the Leonid meteor storm in 2001 I saw a fireball that was way off to the east, which I could tell was far away. On that when I was standing on the roof of on that when I was standing on the roof of a house in Philadelphia. And that time I definitely heard a buzzing noise at the exact time I saw Fireball. The buzzing got louder as the fireball got brighter and faded when the fireball faded. At the time I could not understand it at all because I knew that what I was seeing was far away probably hundreds of miles away out over the Atlantic Ocean and if there was any sound from it it would have been much later that the sound waves got to my ears. I know that the difference between the speed of light and the speed of sound in the atmosphere amounts to about 5 seconds per mile. This one was far brighter than that and went across a much larger arc of the sky, although that may have been due to the fact that it was straight over my head. This one was completely silent. I never heard a thing, although I ran inside right afterwards, to write down what I had seen. It did not occur to me that if there was a shock wave or sonic boom that it would not come for perhaps as long as a minute later or more, depending on how far away the object was when it entered the atmosphere or past over my head. So there may have been a sonic boom or shock wave but I didn't stick around to listen for it. I see it there other reports from the West Coast of Florida right around that same time. I'm sure this object was visible to a lot of people across a wide area. But I know for sure that that object went straight over my head nearly exactly vertical. I first saw it shining through the trees, large palm trees. I was walking around with a very bright flashlight checking on sprinklers and it was so bright it immediately caught my attention even though I was looking down at the time. For a second I thought it must be the headlights from a plane, but I was seeing it's shining through very dense palm trees, and so it must have been extremely bright. The brightest object I've ever seen in the sky except for the Sun. As I watched and realized what it was and it went straight over my head with fragments flying off of it I realized what an amazing sight I was seeing. It just kept going and going. I'm not sure how long it was in my field of view but it was quite a long time for a meteor. Many seconds. I only wish I'd been standing in a more open spot at the time although it was pure luck I saw it at all. It was in the sky long enough that if I had had my phone with me I could have pulled it out of my pocket and turned it on and got in a picture.

Zond IV and William Hartmann's observations

This brings me back to Dr. William Hartmann's observations regarding the Zond IV incident:

An effect important to the UFO problem is demonstrated by the records: the excited observers who thought they had witnessed a very strange phenomenon produced the most detailed, longest, and most misconceived reports, but those who by virtue of experience most nearly recognized the nature of the phenomenon became the least excited and produced the briefest reports. The "excitedness effect" has an important bearing on the UFO problem. It is a selection effect by which the least accurate reports are made more prominent (since the observer becomes highly motivated to make a report), while the most accurate reports may not be recorded....

In summary, we conclude that all of the following factors demonstrably confuse reports of unidentified phenomena and make subsequent investigation difficult:

1. *Objects are conceived of in terms of familiar concepts, such as aircraft. This produces misconceptions of distance, speed, shape, etc.*
2. *At least during the last decade conceptions have been heavily influenced by the "flying saucer" concept in movies, TV, and periodicals. Reports of "saucer-shape," "cigar-shape," and physiological reaction are probably a consequence.*
3. *Due to the nature of certain cases, certain questions on prepared questionnaires or report forms become ambiguous or meaningless.*
4. *The "excitedness effect" biases reports toward those containing more exotic conceptions.*
5. *The "airship effect" causes some observers to conceive of a shape surrounding light sources.⁸*

Looking at the NUFORC database, we find those same kinds of erroneous reports of seeing "Crosses", "Cylinders", or "Objects" one found in the Zond IV reports. Hartmann's "excitedness effect" is quite prominent in the reports made to NUFORC but is less so in those made to the AMS.

Perception and reality

If we look at the NUFORC reports without the AMS and sky sentinel data, we are left with a mystery. However, once we throw in the videos and reports made by the "less excited" observers, the mystery is resolved. How many UFO cases seen by a single observer, or isolated group of observers, are like these reports in the NUFORC database? This is the enigma of UFO reports and it is the reason that UFO reports, by themselves, carry little, if any, weight.

When skeptics/debunkers explain a case as a "possible" meteor or "possible" planet/star, they are not just making these explanations up hoping to explain a case. They are using that potential identification based on what we know of how witnesses misperceive such events. For the UFOlogists who ignore the IFO database, there will be plenty of UFOs and, plenty of embarrassment as skeptics/debunkers demonstrate their new prized case can be explained.

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August 13, 1960 Red bluff, California.

The chronology describes the event as follows:

August 13, 1960--Red Bluff, California. State Police reported highly maneuverable elliptical UFO. [VII]¹

Section VII presents us with the statment made by officer Charles Carson to his area commander via police teletype² and a sketch³ of the UFO.

Officer Scott and I were E/B on Hoag Road, east of Corning, looking for a speeding motorcycle when we saw what at first appeared to be a huge airliner dropping from the sky. The object was very low and directly in front of us. We stopped and leaped from the patrol vehicle in order to get a position on what we were sure was going to be an airplane crash. From our position outside the car, the first thing we noticed was an absolute silence. Still assuming it to be an aircraft with power off, we continued to watch until the object was probably within 100 feet to 200 feet off the ground, when it suddenly reversed completely, at high speed, and gained approximately 500 feet altitude. There the object stopped. At this time it was clearly visible to both of us. It was surrounded by a glow making the round or oblong object visible. At each end, or each side of the object, there were definite red lights. At times about five white lights were visible between the red lights. As we watched the object moved again and performed aerial feats that were actually unbelievable.

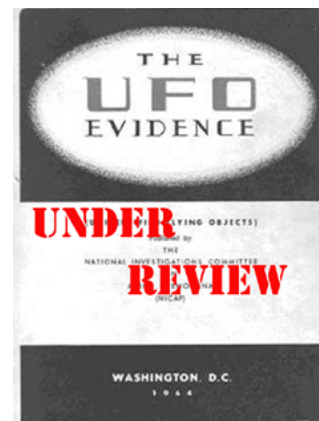
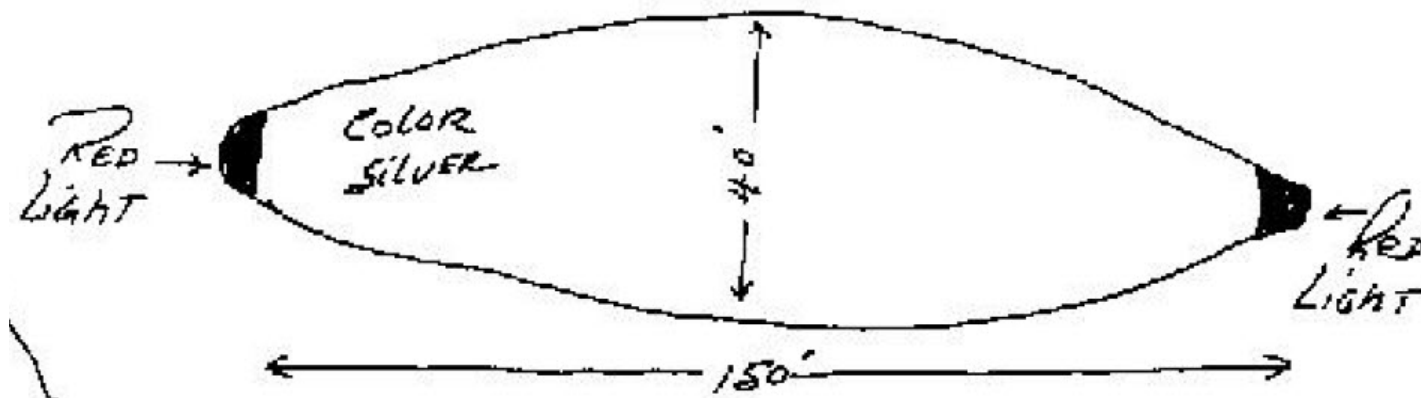
At this time we radioed Tehama County Sheriff's Office requesting they contact local radar base. The radar base confirmed the UFO - completely unidentified.

Officer Scott and myself, after our verification, continued to watch the object. On two occasions the object came directly towards the patrol vehicle; each time it approached, the object turned, swept the area with a huge red light. Officer Scott turned the red light on the patrol vehicle towards the object, and it immediately went away from us. We observed the object use the red beam approximately 6 or 7 times, sweeping the sky and ground areas. The object began moving slowly in an easterly direction and we followed. We proceeded to the Vina Plains Fire Station where it was approached by a similar object from the south. It moved near the first object and both stopped, remaining in that position for some time, occasionally emitting the red beam. Finally, both objects disappeared below the eastern horizon. We returned to the Tehama County Sheriff's Office and met Deputy Fry and Deputy Montgomery, who had gone to Los Molinos after contacting the radar base. Both had seen the UFO clearly, and described to us what we saw. The night jailer also was able to see the object for a short time; each described the object and its maneuvers exactly as we saw them. We first saw the object at 2350 hours and observed it for approximately two hours and 15 minutes. Each time the object neared us we experienced radio interference.

We submit this report in confidence for your information. We were calm after our initial shock, and decided to observe and record all we could of the object.

Carson also wrote a letter to NICAP's Walter Webb. Some of the extracts were⁴:

- We made several attempts to follow it, or I should say get closer to it, but the object seemed aware of us and we were more successful remaining motionless and allow it to approach us, which it did on several occasions.
- There were no clouds or aircraft visible. The object was shaped somewhat like a football, the edges (here I am confused as to what you mean by edges, referring to the outside visible edges of the object as opposed to a thin, sharp edge, no thin sharp edges were visible) or I should say outside of the object were clear to us . . . [the] glow was emitted by the object, was not a reflection of other lights. The object was solid, definitely not transparent. At no time did we hear any type of sound except radio interference.
- The object was capable of moving in any direction. Up and down, back and forth. At times the movement was very slow. At times it was completely motionless. It moved at high (extremely) speeds and several times we watched it change directions or reverse itself while moving at unbelievable speeds.
- When first observed the object was moving from north to south [patrol car moving almost due east]. Our pursuit led in an easterly direction and object disappeared on eastern horizon. It was approximately 500 feet above the horizon when first observed, seemingly falling at approximate 45 degree angle to the south.



- *As to the official explanation [See Section IX.], I have been told we saw Northern lights, a weather balloon, and now refractions.*
- *I served 4 years with the Air Force, I believe I am familiar with the Northern lights, also weather balloons. Officer Scott served as a paratrooper during the Korean Conflict. Both of us are aware of the tricks light can play on the eyes during darkness. We were aware of this at the time. Our observations and estimations of speed, size, etc. came from aligning the object with fixed objects on the horizon. I agree we find it difficult to believe what we were watching, but no one will ever convince us that we were witnessing a refraction of light.*

This sounds like a very interesting case and other sources needed to be checked to verify the story.

Other sources

Dr. James McDonald wrote about the case and stated the events started at 11:00 PM PDT and that they were close enough to consider shooting the object with their pistols.⁵ The rest of the story is similar. McDonald recounted that the local radar station was tracking the object and it behaved like the object they were observing. Of course, this is a bit more elaborate than the story told in his statement to the area commander. There was no mention of the radar contact behaving the same way their object was behaving. It was only a casual mention of the object being seen by the radar. McDonald also mentions that when Carson and Scott tried to talk to the Radar station the next day, the USAF personnel denied there ever was a radar contact being tracked.

Dr. Hynek briefly mentioned this in his book, *The Hynek UFO report*.⁶ He reproduced the written report and added that Blue Book had no record of a radar contact. Hynek's copy of the report indicates the time of the sighting was at 2330 PM PDT. After criticizing Blue Book's handling of this case, He offered little in the way of new information. I find it interesting that Hynek was critical of the investigation but never seems to have bothered to look into the matter in August/September of 1960, when he could have made a difference.

The Blue Book file

Finding all the documents in the Blue Book file is not that easy. While the case is located in one folder, parts of it are missing and can be found with another case folder from Littleton, Colorado.

In the file, there is a transcript of an interview conducted by KBLF radio with Officer Carson a few days after the event. From that transcript⁷, Carson states:

- The event started at 11:50 PM PDT.
- They were located 4 miles east of Corning, when they saw the object.
- They got no closer than a half-mile.
- The windows on the object were not easily visible. The object had to tilt at a certain angle so they could be seen.
- It was visible for two hours and fifteen minutes.
- They last saw the object on 99E.

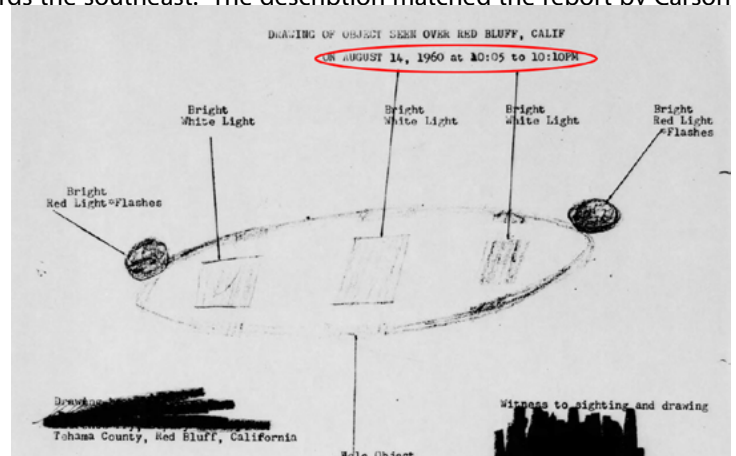
The report to the area commander was also in the folder.⁸ The time listed was 2350 (not the 2330 listed in Hynek's book) and dated August 13. Since the event happened around midnight on August 13/14, it was impossible for the report to have been written on that date. When was the report actually written? The 14th, the 15th, or, possibly, later?

The folder also contained a type-written report from another officer, who is, apparently, Clarence Fry.⁹ In this document, he stated that at 2330 PM, the police department was aware that Carson and Scott had been observing a UFO for about an hour. According to his account, he, and another officer (Deputy Montgomery), then went to Los Molinas near Blue Berry hill at 2400. They saw four objects to the west going from south to north. After this, they saw an object going from north to south. They did not report seeing the object reported by Carson and Scott. The observer then stated, that on August 14 around 2205-2210 PM, he observed an object from the Tehama County Jail come in from the west head towards the southeast. The description matched the report by Carson and Scott. His sketch also looked like Carson's. However, the dates and times on that sketch match the written report. This indicates that Fry's sketch¹⁰ is not of the object seen by Carson but some other event.

Another item in the file is an extract copy of the log from the 895th radar squadron.¹¹ The entries are for 14 August and are listed as local time:

0030 - XXXXX Red Bluff police officer called in to report a "UFOB". Obv flying north shape round red bright said state troopers also saw these.

0100 - Police officers saw 4 of these objects above. XXXXX called these in. All infer we read was passed to Maj Fredrick at PADS.



0230 - XXXX called said they received interference and jamming on all their radios.

0240 - Passed all back information to PADS.

The Operations log is also found in the file.¹² The time on this was Zulu, which was 7 hours ahead of local time (PDT).

0715Z - Received a call from XXXXX at this time. He reported he had received various calls from individuals in town reporting an object flying eastbound. The way he described the object and from my own observations. I told him it was satellite ECHO 1, that was supposed to be in view at this time. (RS) Relayed this info to PADS (KS).

0735Z - SSgt Day received a call from XXXXX of Red Bluff Police, He said he received a call from a Calif. Highway patrolman patrolling Hwy 99 and the Hyway patrolman reported seeing 3 (three) flying objects - traveling northbound. Patrolman then went outside and saw for himself 1 (one) object flying North. Patrolman XXXX then described it as being round, with a red glow and a white light directly behind and to the left. He reported that it was doing between 30-40 mph @ around 1000 feet no Noise was heard. SSgt Day then called Red Bluff airport and they said they had an aircraft take off @ approx this time and would check on any flights of threes. We saw nothing here on PPI. Patrolman XXXXX address is XXXX Red Bluff. Reported this info to PADS (KS).

1015Z - Received another call from XXXX. He reported seeing 4 (four) red flashing objects between 1200 Local - 0100 Local. Between 0100 Local - 0130 Local he saw 5 (five) red flashing objects. He said the whole RBPD and Calif Hyway Patrol on duty tonight had seen the objects. We observed nothing This info was passed to PADS (KS)

Another document in the file are handwritten notes from an interview that happened on 18 August.¹³ The document is very faded and it is hard to make out details. About the only thing that I could read was that the sighting was in the early morning hours of August 14.

The Air Intelligence report from McClellan AFB, dated 23 August, stated the sightings began at 2345 PST.¹⁴ The use of a standard time, vice Daylight savings time, was an error that would haunt Blue Book in their explanation for the sighting. Daylight savings time was not universal throughout the United States in 1960 and caused a lot of confusion. California was on PDT and not PST. Therefore, the celestial positions chosen by Blue Book for this sighting were off by an hour. The report outlined the investigation. It also mentioned that forest fires in the area had made the skies hazy near the horizon. The reporting officer mentioned watching a red light, reported as a UFO, move into the haze and disappear.¹⁵ It later would come out of the haze and reveal that it was nothing more than a star.

Blue Book also stated they had records that indicated there was a strong temperature inversion in the Northern California area during these events.¹⁶ I did a check with the radiosonde data available from ESRL database¹⁷ and found only the Oakland data. There was a temperature inversion in Oakland but I am not sure how it translates to the area near Red Bluff. While the temperature inversion theory is interesting, I doubt it played as significant role in light refraction as Blue Book states.

Blue Book eventually stated that the planet Mars had been seen through a temperature inversion that night and was the source of the patrolman's sighting.¹⁸ This is obviously wrong since Mars did not rise until about 12:45PDT. As a result, we can reject the explanation.

Reexamination of the information

There are several issues I have with some of the information in these reports. The first problem I have is the time of the sighting. One report had the sighting happening as early as 2230. Others reported 2330 and 2350. The radar station log seems to be the only record of the actual events as they transpired. They reported receiving the call at 0030. Considering that the patrolmen seemed to be intensely interested as to what the radar station had to say on the matter, it seems the initial sighting was between 2350 and 0030. Unless they waited 40 minutes to call the USAF, one has to wonder if the 2350 time was accurate. Is it possible that it might have been later?

Deputy Fry's account is perplexing. His account appears to be a mix of the events and the times are all confused. He describes events that sound like the events reported in the media, where he was at the jail. This supposedly happened at 1AM on the 14th. However, Fry states in his document and sketch that it was around 10PM on the night of the 14th! If he was at the jail at 1AM, it seems unlikely that Fry could have gone with Montgomery to Los Molinos at midnight. The travel time to and from Los Molinos was at least a half hour. The log at the radar squadron mentions being called by a police officer at Red Bluff between midnight and 1AM. This may have been officer Fry, which makes it unlikely he could have accompanied Officer Montgomery and then return in time at 1AM. A probable explanation is that Fry never was with Officer Montgomery and, instead, was always at the Jail. Another possibility is that his times regarding the events at the jail after midnight on the 14th, like many of the other items in his statement, were inaccurate.



Another item that seems to be overlooked was the sky conditions. While the sky conditions were clear, there are also indications that there was smoke and haze from forest fires in the region. If this is true, then the smoke would make any bright distant white light near the horizon appear red and, possibly, be blurred and distorted.

Finally, in some accounts, Carson and Scott claimed the object was close enough to shoot with their pistols. However, when pressed, they indicated they never got closer than a half-mile. Most police officers practice at 50-100 yards, which indicates this part of the story is probably an exaggeration. I also have to question the part of the story where they "chased" the UFO for over two hours. The distance between the location of their initial observations and location for final observation was less than a dozen miles! It was not much of a chase based on that information.

Items not mentioned or ignored

While Blue Book seemed to focus their attention on stars and planets, there were other items in the heavens that night that might have played a role.



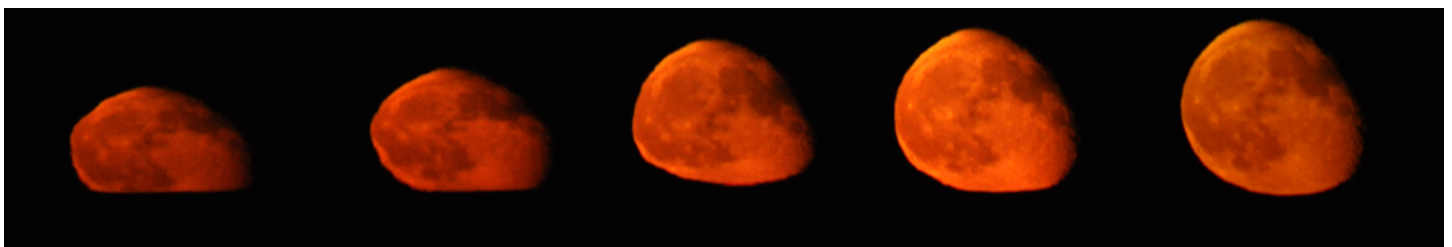
Rising in the east around 0015 PDT, was the waning last quarter moon. In most of the accounts, the moon was never mentioned. Only the APRO bulletin¹⁹ mentioned the moon rising and their time was listed as 1:20 AM, which is incorrect. It would have been in the same general location as the UFO and would have been a good comparison object for the UFOs size. It was never mentioned. Allan Hendry noted that the moon has been misperceived as a UFO. Even Police officers are not immune and he documents a case where the police chased the setting moon.

*In case 100 police officers in separate cars were convinced that the setting moon was moving away from them at fantastic speed "while setting on Main Street" at 3:25 A.M. The police sped up to 60 mph to chase it, but to no avail.*²⁰

Other cases he mentions sounds similar to what Carson described:

*Finally, in case 977, the witnesses perceived what they thought was a little white dot going "around" their UFO twice (as the moon set and flattened out). In a related case, the witnesses thought they saw red lights on the side of the moon shaped in a horizontal oblong shape. In some of the cases, the motion of the setting moon was described "like a pendulum" moving back and forth.*²¹

This photograph of the moon rising over the ocean shows how the atmosphere can distort the shape of the moon. If the atmosphere was not as clear as it was when I took these images, it would be more distorted and deceptive.

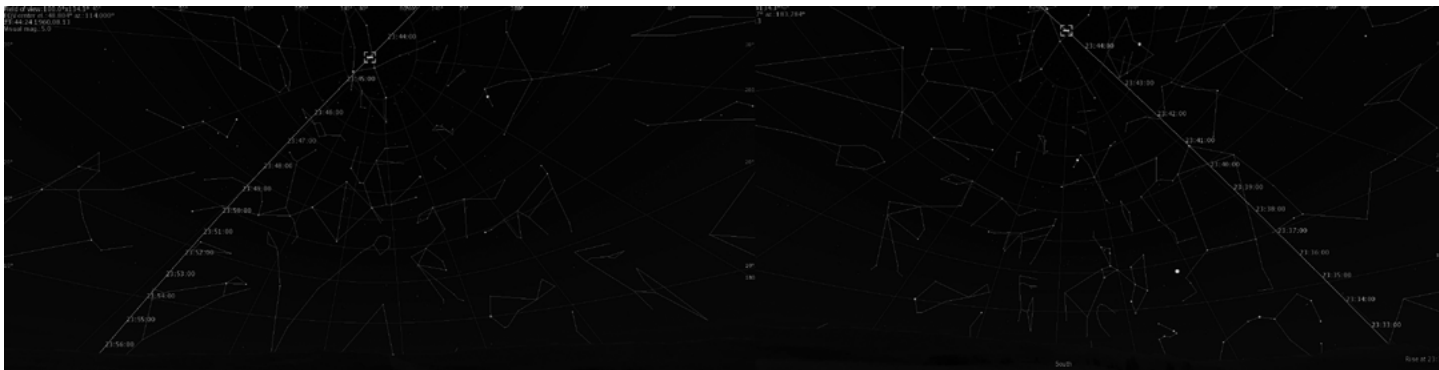


Another consideration is that Perseid meteor shower had just past its maximum and, on the night of August 13th, activity would still have been significant from this shower, and others. The Kappa Cygnid radiant, which peaks on August 17th, can also produce occasional fireballs. Of course, there is always the occasional random fireball that is not associated with any meteor shower. The possibility that a bright fireball might have been observed has to be considered. As Allan Hendry notes, bright fireballs can be misperceived as an airplane crash.

*Descriptions have included "downed planes," missiles, fireballs, half-moons, comets, teardrops, "swept-wing jets," cigars, spheres, saucers, sparklers, and sometimes formations of individual lights (as the meteor breaks into pieces in the earth's atmosphere).*²²

Recall that Carson thought they first saw a large plane was coming down.

Another possibility is that the Echo-1 satellite might have been a factor. It was causing a lot of excitement in the media because it had been launched a day before and was easily visible to the naked eye (estimates in the news media put it at first magnitude or brighter). Additionally, it was in a very high orbit (1000 miles) and took a good deal of time to transit the sky. Papers listed the times

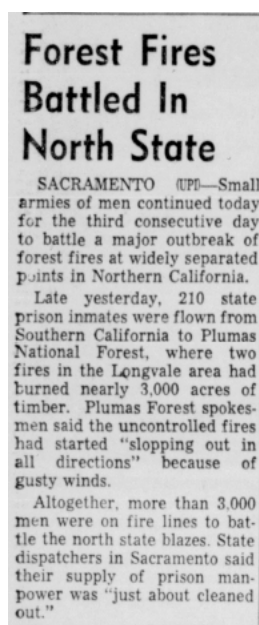


of the visible passes for their area (although some noticed that Echo was running about 15 minutes ahead of schedule). I ran the first TLEs²³ for Echo1 into Heavensat and discovered that Red Bluff had three passes that night.

- Between 2130 and 2150, Echo 1 went from southwest to northeast with a peak elevation of around 35 degrees.
- Between 2330 and 2400, Echo 1 went from southwest to northeast. It passed directly overhead (see image above showing track - Times are in one minute intervals with the last being 23:56:00).
- Between 0140 and 0200, Echo 1 went from northwest to northeast. it had a peak elevation of about 55 degrees.

Because of its high altitude and the time of year, the satellite was illuminated on all of these passes meaning it would have been visible. The 2330-2400 pass appears to have been mentioned in the USAF operations log, when local police reported receiving calls from people who saw an object pass across the sky.

Finally, I mentioned forest fires. About 50 miles to the east of the Red Bluff area is Longville, California. According to the August 16 edition of San Rafael Independent Journal, a large forest fire was present in the Longville area and firefighters had been battling it for the past three days.²⁴ One has to wonder if, on the night of the 13th, if this fire, or the smoke and haze from it, might have played a role.



Solution?

There is no single convincing solution for this case but, in my opinion, there is the possibility that this was a combination of events:

- A bright meteor, which left a persistent train, might have been the source of the initial sighting. After the train had disappeared, the officers noticed the moon rising as the UFO reversing course and coming back.
- The Echo satellite may also have been the source of the initial sighting. It went from Southwest to Northeast and might have appeared to be a bright object that was descending (like a plane silently dropping out of the sky). After its disappearance, the officers then noticed the moon rising as the UFO reversing course and coming back.
- The moon rising through the smoke and haze from regional forest fires, would have appeared reddish and changed shape as it rose through the layers of the atmosphere close to the horizon. The officers reported losing sight of the UFO at some point and then reacquired it before it disappeared. It is possible that they lost sight of the moon as they drove down a road, where trees, buildings, or hills obscured it. Once the moon was high enough in the sky, the officers noticed the moon and then determined that their UFO had "disappeared".

Conclusions

While some may find this potential explanation unlikely, one has to wonder why the officers never mentioned the moon and how a UFO could be visible at two locations 15-20 miles apart (assuming they observed the same object). Either the object was enormous and at extremely high altitude or the object was something celestial in nature. For those wishing the object to be some sort of craft, one has to question why the radar never recorded it. Perhaps it is because the object was not as close as the officers claimed.

In my opinion, this case has a potential explanation but requires some assumptions that many UFOlogists would consider unlikely to the point of impossible. Even if this explanation is wrong, I don't consider this case, by itself, proves UFOs are alien spaceships as the Best Evidence document implies. As Dr. Carl Sagan once stated:

*No anecdotal claim - no matter how sincere, no matter how deeply felt, no matter how exemplary the lives of the attesting citizens - carries much weight on so important a question. As in the older UFO cases, anecdotal accounts are subject to irreducible error.*²⁵

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701 CLUB: CASE 1397 JULY 6-12, 1952 GOVERNOR'S ISLAND, NEW YORK

Don Berliner describes the case as follows:

July 6-12, 1952; Elizabeth, New Jersey. 11:00 p.m. Witness: Charles Muhr. Four pictures taken of some indistinct light which was admittedly not seen visually, but which appeared on the negatives.¹

For those familiar with evaluating UFO photographs, one of the biggest red flags is when the photograph presents a photograph of a UFO but then states they did not see the UFO when the picture was taken.

The Blue Book file

The report in the Blue Book file is interesting and presents us with some very puzzling information. The information came to Blue Book's attention when the headquarters of the first army sent a report to them regarding the photographs. They were contacted, on 19 August, by an owner of a photograph store, who saw some unusual photographs one of their customers had turned in for developing.² The photographer took the photographs at 2300 local time but he did not remember the date. He only knew it was the week of 6-12 July and he was trying to photograph the moon. The exposure times for the photographs were:

#1 - Three spots trailing lines - ten minutes

#2 - Three spots - fifteen minutes

#3 - Moon - twenty minutes

#4 - Moon with spot/UFO - twenty-three to twenty-five minutes

All the pictures were taken over a one hour period.

The sky the week of 6-12 July

About the only information we have regarding the photographs was the photographer was point his camera towards the east on 6-12 July around 2300 EDT (evidence indicates DST was in effect for New York) and he was attempting to photograph the moon. The azimuth was anywhere between an eastern to southern direction.

Date	Moon Phase	Moon Azimuth	Moon Elevation
July 6 2300 EDT	Full	157	18
July 7 2300 EDT	Full	143	15
July 8 2300 EDT	Waning Gibbous	129	12
July 9 2300 EDT	Waning Gibbous	114	6
July 10 2300 EDT	Waning Gibbous	101	2
July 11 2300 EDT	Waning Gibbous	Moon rise 2310 EDT	Moon rise 2310 EDT
July 12 2300 EDT	Waning Gibbous	Moon rise 2334 EDT	Moon rise 2334 EDT

The Weather

The next question is the weather. Weather underground indicates that the nights of 8 and 9 July had light rain showers.³ Considering the moon rising late on 11 and 12 July, and based on the location of the moon in the photographs, it seems likely that it was probably the night of the 6th or 7th.

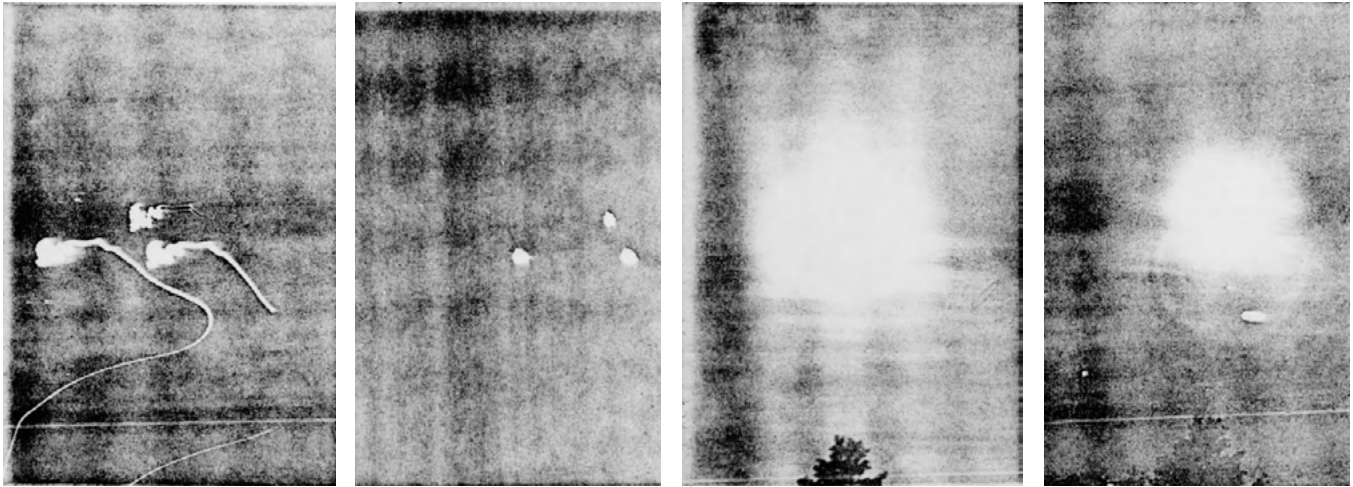
The equipment

We don't know too much about the equipment other than a Mercury 2 camera was used and the lens was set at F2.7.⁴ A check of the Mercury 2 camera indicates it produced "half-frames" on a roll of 35 mm film. This means a 36-exposure roll was capable of producing 72 photographs. According to this web site, the lens was a 35mm lens.⁵ We don't know the film but standard black and white films in 1952 had a speed of about ASA 50-100.



What do the images show?

There are actually two different targets in these photographs.⁶ The first appears to be three lights in a triangle that the photographer recorded. One of the photographs has the lights streaking around. This appears to be the photographer making a mistake on his first exposure. The tripod was probably unstable and, as a result, the lights trailed around when the camera moved. The second image is the same three lights that are stationary. We are told the exposure times were ten and fifteen minutes. I find this hard to accept. At F2.7, with an ISO of 50, the sky would have been illuminated by the nearby moon and the film would show this. The images are not that bright indicating they were not taken under the conditions state or the exposure times were wrong. Considering the fact that the source of the information appears to have come from the developer and not directly from the photographer, I consider it likely that the exposure time was in seconds and not minutes. This seems to be confirmed by the other two photographs,



which supposedly show the moon. A 20-25 minute exposure of the full moon would have been overexposed more than what is seen in the photographs. The full moon is a very bright object and would have washed out the film in 20-25 minutes.

As an experiment, I took two photographs of the full moon with my Nikon digital SLR camera, set at ISO 200 and a zoom lens set at 35mm. Exposure time was 25 seconds with the F-stop at F8 (equal to a 25 second exposure using a F2.7 lens and ISO 25 film). Note the internal reflection and the "ghost halo", which is very similar to what we see in photograph #4. I also took a 165.5 second exposure using the F4.5 (equal to 165.5 second exposure using a 2.7 lens and ISO 100 film) setting to demonstrate how bright the image can be as exposure time increases.



Conclusions

In my opinion, the object in the moon photographs are internal reflections in the camera. The other two photographs showing three lights are harder to evaluate. Measurements indicate the lights do not change position between the two photographs (the BB file rotates one of them 90 degrees). It is a good possibility that these were photographs of some stationary lights.

The most important fact to consider is that the photographer had no idea he had photographed something unusual until the film was developed. Additionally, it was the photo store owner, not the photographer, who decided to contact the Army about what was in them. Considering all the news media coverage about UFOs in the northeast in July, it is not surprising that somebody assumed the photographs showed something unusual. While the three lights can be considered "unknowns", there is nothing here to indicate these images show something "unknown to science". These should be reclassified as internal reflections for the moon images and "insufficient information" for the three lights since we have no idea what the photographer was taking a picture of and, apparently, neither did he.

Notes and references

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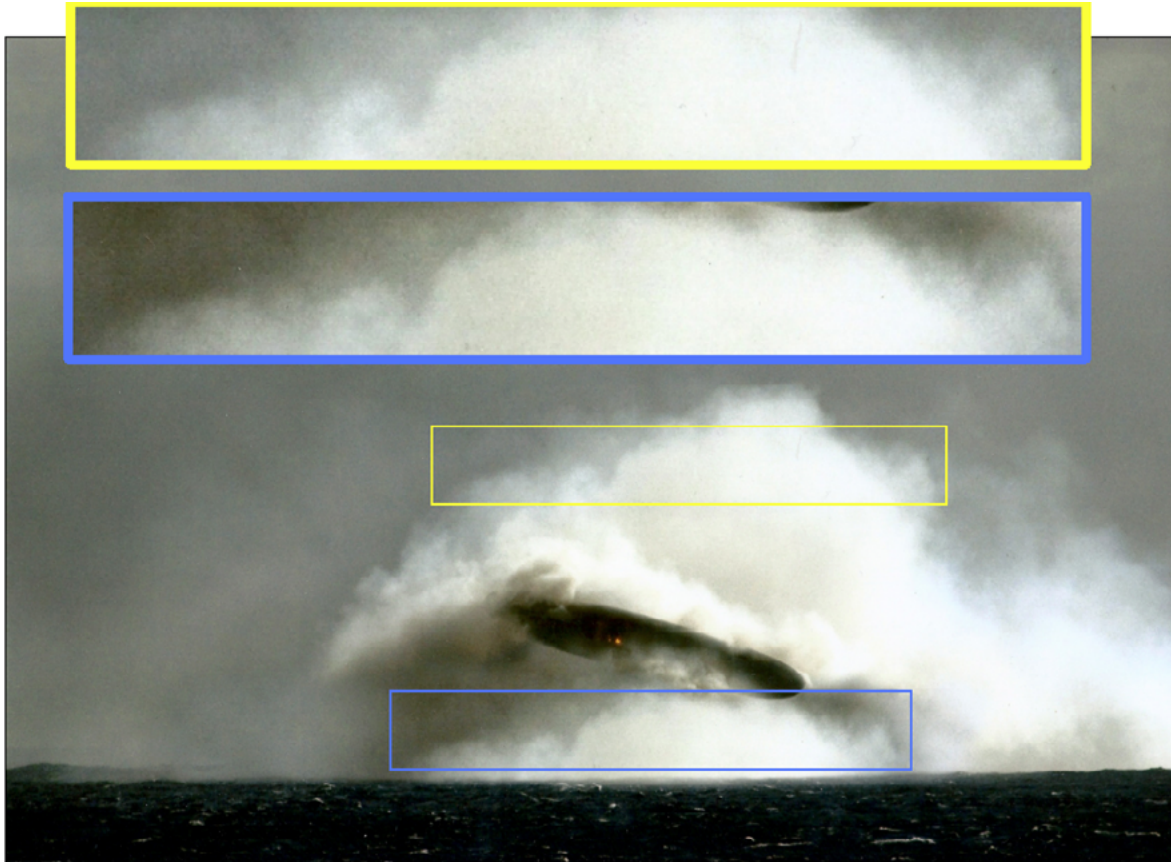


TREPANG UFO PHOTOGRAPHS SUNK

In mid-June, Wim van Utrecht circulated the news that he determined the Trepang UFO photographs were a hoax. His statement read:

I think I may have solved the riddle of those spectacular UFO photos that were supposedly taken from a USS navy submarine during a joint military/scientific mission NE of Iceland in March 1971. (See, for instance, <http://www.theblackvault.com/casefiles/arctic-ufo-photographs-uss-trepang-ssn-674-march-1971/>)

They are, indeed, "photoshopped"... The hoaxer made a glaring error which, if I'm not mistaken, went unnoticed till now: he used two identical cloud parts in one of the shots. I'm attaching a hastily crafted Word document that makes this clear.



I believe Wim's work speaks for itself but I want to repost my comments I made about these photographs in SUNlite 7-5:

Looking at the images and reading the story, I found a lot of things to question. The first thing has to do with the source of the images, which is not given. The second is the description. At one point they claim that an officer on the periscope was the first person to see the UFO. However, the name given is of an enlisted man, who was an Interior Communications Technician (IC). When at periscope depth, an officer (usually the Captain) manned the periscope. It is not the time for skylarking by an enlisted man. I was also unimpressed by the quality of the photographs. They look like something taken in 1941 and not 1971. While portions of the story sound credible, most of the story makes me wonder if it isn't just another hoax being presented to the UFO community. Most of the details about the Trepang's operations are readily available on the Internet. At one point it was suggested that an Admiral was on board. However, that was an incorrect assumption based on the career of the Trepang's commanding officer. Unlike "Voyage to the bottom of the sea", the commanding officer of submarines were usually Commanders and, sometimes, Captains (O-5 or O-6). Admirals rarely stayed aboard on submarines for long missions. My experience was they usually went out to sea for a day or two and then were dropped off. Like so many "UFOlogical smoking guns", without provenance, these photographs are just another campfire story.

It turns out the "admiral" was actually the Commanding Officer, who later became an admiral. This indicated the source was not familiar with submarines or navy ranks. As I pointed out in my comments, the rest of the story was questionable. If readers are interested in submarine operations during the cold war, I suggest they read the book "Blind man's bluff".

Many thanks to Wim van Utrecht's for his work on these photographs. We can now cross this case off of the "unexplained" list.