

UFO INVESTIGATOR



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MYSTERIOUS LIGHT SIGHTED BY GUNBOATS IN GULF

BY TED PETERS

Ted Peters, a NICAP investigator and consultant, submitted the following detailed report which has been edited for publication.

"We ran to the other side of the bridge because we thought the Welch was in danger," reported YN. 1. Larry Tatman, Officer of the Day aboard the USS Tacoma. The Tacoma and the Welch are sister patrol gunboats of the United States Navy.

An encounter with an unidentified low-flying light took place during midwatch, about 3:45 AM, Thursday, February 17, 1977. The ships were sailing in tandem on a northwest course (312 degrees) in the Gulf of Mexico, 140 miles due west of Everglades City, Florida, at 83 degrees 50 minutes longitude and 25 degrees 45 minutes latitude. The water was very rough (sea state 4) and the gunboats were taking 30 degree rolls while drawing spray as high as the bridge windows.

Officer Tatman was standing on the starboard side of the bridge when he spotted an amber colored light in front on the port side about 40 degrees off the bow. "Is that a contact?", he quizzed, to which B.M.1. Larry Williams exclaimed, "It sure is." Williams was positioned near the radar scope, and the two of them immediately ran to the port side window. The light grew in intensity, getting brighter and brighter. Suddenly, the light blinked out. It did not sail away or fly off but just turned out like a light bulb. Williams quickly checked the radar but a blip did not appear in its direction.

Because the captain of the Tacoma, Lieutenant Commander G. R. Henry, is the senior officer, his ship is responsible for the activities of the Welch as

well. "We are responsible for every maneuver they make," Tatman told me. This explains the concern of the Tacoma crew. The light had appeared suddenly at a distance of 3 1/2 to 4 miles and was a possible threat to the Welch.

The Tacoma lookout at the time was George King who witnessed the event and corroborated the reports of Tatman and Williams. Tatman was puzzled and said to Williams, "Well, maybe we're crazy!" So they decided to call the other ship to double check. Five crew members of the Welch had also seen it: Lookout Brown, Lookout in training Kline, Petty Officer on Watch Legette, Executive Officer Lieutenant Junior Grade G. W. Hampson, and Junior Officer of the Day Ensign Mark Doernhoefer.

Ensign Doernhoefer was on the bridge of the Welch and spotted the light through binoculars five minutes before it was seen by the Tacoma crew. He told me: "We saw a light on the horizon. It appeared to be white at first. It was spotted by three members of the bridge crew at the time. We were disagreeing as to what it was. And we got no radar track. That was unusual. We had just had our radar worked on . . . it was peaked and working really well. We had tracked up to 30 miles away."

Doernhoefer estimated the range at approximately 10 miles; the light was right on the horizon. Eventually the color changed to amber. It grew in intensity until it disappeared. Doernhoefer compared it to a light-house light. When I asked if it could have been another ship or a submarine, he said "no." Ships have two lights, not one, and neither of them is this bright. Similarly, though sub-

marines have yellow lights, they are smaller and blink. No submarine or ships were reported in this area at this time.

The Officer of the Day considered calling the Tacoma to report, but he was still awaiting a radar track so as to get the object's course and speed. It was then that he was called by Tatman and Williams. Both crews concurred on the visual contact.

Doernhoefer then called the Captain of the Welch, Lieutenant John O'Neill. He told me this is standard procedure whenever there is "contact," i.e., "whenever another ship comes within five miles."

Now, some conflicts in interpretation arise. At one point Doernhoefer claimed that the light was on the surface, but at another point he said it was up high enough so as to avoid the radar. The gunboat's radar has a radius of 30 miles but is aimed at the water surface; it cannot track aircraft above 1,000 feet. He went on to say, however, that in his mind it was not an airplane. "What do you think it was, then?" I asked. "A star," he replied after much thought.

"It wasn't any star," Yeoman Tatman emphasized to me. "It was too close for that."

The Tacoma crew stressed how unusual it was for the radar to malfunction. Earlier that night they had established radar contact with other ships at distances of 15 or 20 miles and then later picked up the same vessels visually at a distance of 10 or 12 miles. Officer of the Day Tatman has 10 years of experience at sea and feels confident in his judgment that it was only 3 1/2 to 4 miles away. He chooses to remain baffled rather than accept the star explanation.

Suspected UFO Landing Near Mildura, Victoria, Australia

On September 25, 1976, at approximately 11:30 p.m., Mr. and Mrs. Bert White, aged about 65 and 55, Kim Williamson, a policeman's son and Joe Schiripa, a farmer's son, both 18 years of age were travelling along a graded back road toward Mildura from Karrowinna, a small town in Victoria.

As they rounded a turn in the road they saw on their left what at first they thought to be the rear and brake lights of a spot shooter's car (Kangaroo Hunters). The red lights then began to flash and the object began to rise above the ground.

Mr. White then stopped the car and rolled down the window. Three of the witnesses could hear no sound. Mrs. White said that she heard a low humming noise. The people estimated the object to be about 400 yards away from the road in a paddock which had previously been planted in wheat but had been laying at rest for about one year.

The object rose at about the speed of a helicopter. It hovered a few feet above the ground then began to rise again, crossed the road to their right while rising, hovered twice more in the process. At about a 75° angle the lights went out as if cut off by a switch. The estimated time of sighting was 5 minutes.

On September 28th, three of the witnesses, together with the property owner, Mr. Boulton, and six other people returned to the spot where the object had been seen on or near the ground and found a circle of depressed and discolored stubble. There were no car tracks in vicinity of the circle. The ground was hard baked at that time due to lack of rain.

The observers delayed to report the incident because of fear of ridicule until Mrs. White decided it should be reported. She then contacted Senior Constable Roy Fletcher at Warrimul, a small town in that area. The policeman who was acquainted with all four witnesses said that he realized the

people were not telling a false story and notified the press.

When the news appeared in the Melbourne Sun on Sept. 29, Judith Magee and Paul Norman drove to Mildura, after assurance of the people to cooperate. The surrounding area was panned with a super 8 movie camera and several photos of discolored circle were taken. The circle was found to be 71 feet in diameter. Samples were taken from center, perimeter and outside the circle. A scientist at a local university could not find any difference in the samples. No radiation was indicated. Ants at the site were noted a few days later to be avoiding the circle. When ants were disturbed, they scattered in all directions except the spot. They would not crawl over the patch.

The vicinity is sparsely settled with several miles to the nearest town or house. The residents of Mildura and surrounding towns were aroused by many sightings in north-west Victoria together with the RAAF explanation of space junk. People came as far as 90 miles away to attend a UFO lecture after which more sightings came to light including car pace cases. All took place at night with no physical evidence.

Since the heavy rains over the past several days the grass is now growing freely outside the patch but stunted inside the circle. Cattle are now in the paddock and it has been suggested that they be driven to the spot to check their reaction next time the witnesses visit the area.

This report was submitted by a NICAP member, Mr. Paul Norman of Victoria, Australia.

UFOs Behind The Iron Curtain

The Soviet Union has for the last few months been in the midst of a "flying saucer" craze. It all began as Soviet dissidents circulating clandestine typewritten statements opposing government actions, were joined by someone spreading a five page typed lecture covering UFOs. The lecture was attributed to F.Y. Zigel, Assistant Professor at the Moscow Aviation Institute.

It is not clear whether Zigel is actually the author of the lecture. He has said nothing publicly since the typed synopsis appeared. The typed papers, known in Russian as samizdat (unauthorized publications) claim over 300 recorded sightings of UFOs in the Soviet Union. Examples of such reports are: a UFO hovering over Nalechik, USSR for 36 hours in January 1976; a UFO trailing an airliner; a UFO hovering over a railroad crossing 28 miles west of Moscow for 45 minutes stalling auto motors until it disappeared. The samizdat also states that, "In the USSR there exists a ban on all kinds of publications about UFOs."

In a controlled society many people tend to disbelieve the official press, and the circulation of "Zigel's Lecture" has caused talk of UFOs to sweep across the USSR. Friends are sometimes divided into hostile camps of believers and non-believers. The official press, i.e., the government, has thrown cold water on the "rumors." In December, Y. Parnov, a Soviet science fiction writer followed the government and denounced the lecture in print.

It is a small world after all. For once the governments of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. are in agreement. If you debunk something long enough maybe it will go away. It didn't work here, but maybe it will in a more rigidly controlled society we doubt it.

Object's Light Illuminates Entire River Front

NICAP recently received the following report from a witness who resides in Brockville, Ontario, describing in detail an incident which occurred August 14, 1976. The witnesses, Mr. Robert Hazzard and his wife, were careful observers noting times, positions, weather conditions, etc. This type of observation and reporting is very important when attempting to analyze phenomena such as UFOs. Even though this report was received several months after the sighting occurred, it is our opinion that the case is mystifying and certainly would be of interest to our readers.

On August 14, 1976 at 10:15 PM, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hazzard noticed a brilliant white light out in front of their cottage over the St. Lawrence River. They turned off their cottage lights and Mr. Hazzard noted that the light was so bright that he could read the time on his watch. The light appeared to be the size of a full moon, but much brighter. At 10:20 PM, Hazzard set up his 20 x 65 binoculars on a camera tripod outside in the front yard. He examined the object in detail from 10:20 PM until 1:30 AM. The light had been observed by all of the cottage residents along the shoreline. There were a few thin clouds in the sky with a light wind from the west. A thunderstorm seen on the very low western horizon was moving toward the Hazzard's position.

When Hazzard first began watching, he could see the object in detail. At times when the object was sideways, the left and bottom platforms seemed to completely disappear. He also observed some slight movement just to the left of that. Later on, Hazzard was able to define that the movement was the top of a "weather vane" type protrusion.

There were two sources of light in a cage, the top of which was held up from the bottom by four evenly spaced bars. When the platform turned slightly, the bars of light came together and seemed to form one source of light, but only momentarily. The platform itself appeared to be a dull gray color

SIGHTING ADVISORY

Preliminary information on new reports. Details and evaluations will be published when available.

January 24, 1977—McLean, Va.

At approximately 7:30 PM two witnesses sighted a bright light 50 degrees in elevation to the west which remained stationary for about one minute. One of the witnesses is an amateur astronomer and because of his astronomical knowledge, he instinctively turned toward the east to locate familiar constellations and planets to establish if this object was something celestial. When the witness turned around to view the object once more, it had disappeared. He then assumed that he must have observed a helicopter or something of that nature and returned to his car. As he and his friend were discussing the incident, the object reappeared in the same position but about 10 degrees lower in altitude than before. The two men observed the light bobbing such as thermal intervention for 10 minutes.

February 11, 1977—Floria, Mississippi. While patrolling in Madison County, Deputy Ken Creek and constable James Luke reported seeing an unidentified flying object hovering over their car. The Sheriff Department received a flood of calls from other local witnesses who described the craft as being round, having portholes and giving off a soft light.

and slightly reflective.

While the sky was still clear, Hazzard raised the binoculars to see if there was anything above it, but nothing was visible and there was no sound. The light and the platform appeared to be approximately a mile out and about 1000 feet in the sky.

As the storm approached, the clouds became heavier and were moving quite fast, although there was still very little surface wind. Lightning became quite frequent, but the light was very steady and movement was very slight. When it moved at all, it appeared to be flat as though it were suspended from both ends.

As the storm progressed (there was no rain as yet), the wind suddenly changed to the northeast and was very strong. The platform very slowly swung around, and as it did, Hazzard could see the whole platform. When the object was facing his direction, the long legs appeared to be so thin that they seemed to disappear, and he could not see how close they came together at the top. At the slightest angle they appeared again, and he

could see some of the detail at the bottom of the legs.

As the platform continued to turn toward the wind direction, the witness could see on the top of the legs a very large "weather vane" whipping quite violently in the wind. It was a highly reflective silver color. As soon as the platform was facing the wind, the "weather vane" was again no longer visible.

At 1:30 AM it had started to rain so Hazzard moved his binoculars inside and watched without using the aid of the binoculars until 2:00 AM. During the last half hour of observation, Hazzard noticed a very large, light blue halo around the light source and on the outside of the halo's edge, a darker blue ring was evident.

At 2:00 AM the Hazzards retired. The object's light illuminated their bedroom. At 4:00 AM, Hazzard awakened to find that the object was still in the same position and the storm had passed. Hazzard commented, "It is the strangest thing I have ever seen in the sky, and its stability at that height, in that wind was amazing."

**NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON AERIAL PHENOMENA
COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1976 AND 1975**

	January 1, 1976 Through December 31, 1976	January 1, 1975 Through December 31, 1975
RECEIPTS		
New Members	\$ 3,852.79	\$ 6,666.00
Renewal Members	23,939.79	26,836.79
	\$27,792.58	\$33,502.79
NICAP Publications:		
Strange Effects	\$ 193.75	\$ 183.30
UFO Evidence	53.00	591.95
	246.75	775.25
Resale Books:		
Interplanetary Visitors	\$	\$ 197.50
Utah UFO Display		180.70
No Earthly Explanation		1,168.40
UFO Controversy	5.00	810.00
Maccabee Papers	18.00	27.00
Resta	45.72	
	68.72	2,383.60
UFO Photo Package	\$ 230.00	\$ 1,524.00
Postage	106.94	152.14
Sale of back issues	135.25	196.30
NICAP Pin	112.00	52.00
Donations	6,169.53	5,586.04
Loan Proceeds	6,000.00	5,000.00
Other	828.28	1,161.47
	13,582.00	13,671.95
Total Receipts	\$41,690.05	\$50,333.59
DISBURSEMENTS		
Newsletter Postage & Mailing	\$ 2,331.92	\$ 2,222.73
Newsletter Envelopes		111.03
Copyright Fees	210.00	
Computer Services	470.01	949.58
UFO Quarterly Review	535.00	820.03
Resale Books	1,057.07	1,395.91
Accounting Fees		550.00
Repairs	55.35	29.00
Office Supplies	134.95	438.51
Postage	845.55	600.00
Telephone	1,034.54	1,131.27
Travel	127.49	30.79
General Printing	1,445.49	999.70
Duplicating	30.70	156.08
Contracting Services	34,000.00	35,000.00
General Research	20.00	76.40
Insurance	212.00	127.00
Loan Repayment	3,000.00	2,044.28
Bank Charges	106.43	66.51
Other	781.70	738.43
Total Disbursements	(46,398.20)	(47,487.25)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH	(4,708.15)	2,846.34
CASH IN BANK - JANUARY 1,	5,090.82	2,244.48
CASH IN BANK - DECEMBER 31,	\$ 382.67	\$ 5,090.82