
THE FLYING TRIANGLE PHENOMENON

BY DON LEDGER

When Helen M. took her arthritic Labrador retriever outside with her and settled into a comfortable lawn chair to watch the Perseid meteor shower in the early morning hours of Tuesday, August 13, 2002, the last thing she expected to do was to see a UFO.

I received an excited e-mail from her that same evening, first via the AUFORN in Alberta, and then directly from her when she discovered my name and Web site. Helen is an amateur astronomer and an experienced yachtswoman who runs her own Internet business from her home in an area called Cow Bay, about five miles (8.2 kilometers) southeast of the center of the cities of Halifax and Dartmouth in Nova Scotia (see maps on cover).

Because of the detail and subject matter of the report, I immediately made contact with Helen and set up an interview with her. Initially, however, I sent her my online UFO report form and had her provide as much detail as possible so that I wouldn't be going into the interview blind.

The Perseid meteor shower was to peak in North America sometime in the afternoon on August 12, but viewing conditions were predicted to be excellent right up until dawn of the morning of August 13. The Perseid meteors come from comet Swift-Tuttle. The comet swoops in from deep space every 134 years from the Oort Cloud, well beyond Pluto, penetrating the plane of the solar system not far from Earth's orbit.

Helen was fully aware, as an ardent sailor, that on the coast her best bet was to wait until early on the morning of the 13th for optimum viewing conditions. Experience told her that the possibility of coastal fog and cloud at that time of the year was then at a minimum. The local forecast was for a perfect evening, in any event.

The night sky was indeed clear, the stars distinct, and the Milky Way was, according to Helen, extremely clear.

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The moon had set and a very hot day of 32°C. (about 90°F.) was cooling off. By 2:15 a.m. the temperature had dropped to 27°C. (or 81°F.). Her house is located about 100 meters from the coast of Cow Bay in a relatively secluded area.

Helen was rewarded immediately by the appearance of several meteors streaking down through the atmosphere. The sky was clear and steady, and viewing conditions were excellent. She had been watching for only a couple of minutes when one meteor, several times larger than most, appeared out of the constellation Ursa Major. It had a long tail and rather than winking out immediately, it arched across the sky and over her head to the southeast. Helen watched it, waiting for it to fade as most meteors do. However, in this case its progress across the sky was suddenly terminated, as if it had passed behind something.

Helen thought this odd. She examined the sky and noticed that there seemed to be a black curtain drawn across it from slightly behind her, from the southeast. She shifted in her chair and was surprised to discover a straight black line was crossing the sky and blanking out the stars.

Quickly trying to find a cause, she thought at first it could be a cloud or fog of some description. However, she discounted these as unlikely based upon her own experience with the sky and weather conditions.

Besides, she could now make out a straight, black line advancing very slowly across the sky. Intermittently, she could see what she described as ludicrous, tiny white lights at the outer extremities of this black line as they passed over the canopy of trees surrounding her property.

Shifting completely around in her chair, Helen noticed that one light was trailing the other two and she realized that she was seeing "a perfect black triangle of gargantuan proportions." It was in the process of crossing directly over the clearing around her house.

Helen stated, "If there had of been a full moon I wouldn't have been able to see it. This thing blocked out the entire area of sky above me—we're talking football fields in length and breadth. This thing was enormous! Too big to be in the air, you would think. It was pitch black, very black. It moved very slowly—10 mph? There was absolutely no sound at all." It took the object about 5 minutes to pass from the southeast, move over her house, and then disappear over the trees to the northwest. Figure 1 shows a view from above

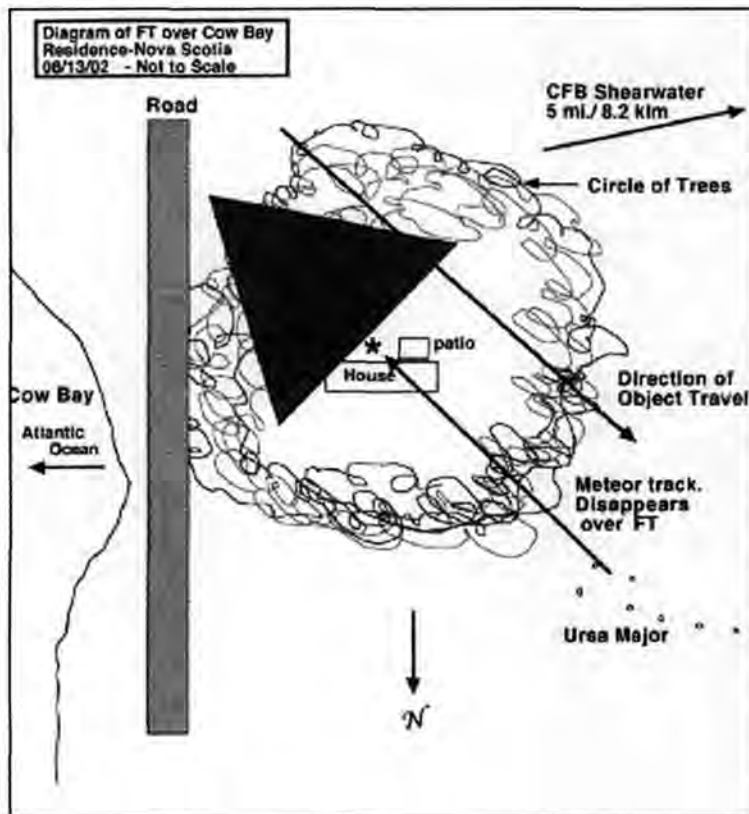


Fig. 1. Ground plan, Cow Bay, showing UFO flying above house.

Helen's yard of the triangle passing overhead.

Seeming to soak up light, it blanked out the sky, the stars, and the backscatter from the capital city's lights.

"Everything became very still," Helen remembered, "And I felt . . . tingly . . . like when you get pins and needles. I know 'tingly' isn't much of a word, but it's the best word to describe it—the feeling left when the triangle was out of sight."

Her neighbor next door keeps pheasants in a cage, and they would normally be making "the usual bird noises." However, she noticed that they too were quite still. Her Labrador walked inside the house through the open patio door leaving her alone, which in itself, she informed me, was strange.

During one of our three interviews, I asked her if she noticed any physical effects after the event. She related, "When I got up the next morning [actually August 13], I had a headache which remained with me all day and I felt nauseous and dizzy once in the afternoon. I laid down for a couple of hours and it passed, but I still had the headache. I still had it this morning, but by this afternoon [August 14], it's gone. I feel great, except for the heat!"

The sighting deeply affected Helen. She had never seen a UFO before and had overcome a strong, natural reticence to report it. She was really so overwhelmed that it was there above her and wondered, "What the hell is it? . . . and the sheer enormous size of it. . . . I have to tell you I still feel a little weird about it; it's hard to wrap my mind around the

reality of what I saw. But see it I did, whatever it was. That's all there is to tell about it, except of course the obvious."

Helen was trying at the time to quit smoking and had cut down to a small pack a week. But after the sighting, she sat down in her living room and smoked five cigarettes in an hour. She remarked to me that her everyday terms of reference had been thrown completely out of whack and that now she could not trust the skies to be a familiar place anymore.

I took some measurements in her yard because it had occurred to me that knowing the size of the open area above the house and the height of the trees might give me an indication of the object's size. At one point the whole object had been in sight, but only for a few seconds as the ring of the trees around the clearing obscured the two forward lights and corners of the triangle, while the trailing "point" made its way further across the opening.

I measured the clearing at 80 feet across and almost perfectly circular. As for the height, the trees in Atlantic Canada, hardwoods particularly, usually mature at 40–50 feet in height. But I caught a break. A power pole was situated on one side of the property, feeding a house behind it.

As an ex-lineman who had planted his fair share of power poles in the mid-1960s, I knew for a fact that the poles were 45 feet in length and usually buried five feet in the ground. I found the datum spike on the pole and determined that this pole's top was 41 feet above ground level and at the same height as the trees surrounding the lot. Therefore, I used 40 feet as the height for the trees. The patio is centered in the middle of the clearing, fortunately, so that gave me a distance of 40 feet from the center to the edge of the circle. And that, in turn, gives an angle of 45° from the patio to the tree tops.

The patio is only one foot above ground. Helen assumed a height of about 2,000 feet for the object. Because Helen is in the flight pattern for CFB (Canadian Forces Base) Shearwater and the approaches to Halifax International Airport, she was accustomed to seeing aircraft flying over her house on a regular basis. This could be as frequently as every five minutes for Halifax International during peak traffic times.

Using Helen's impression of 2,000 feet as the approximate height of aircraft setting up for the approach pattern for Shearwater, I calculated that one side of the triangle was about 4,000 feet in length!

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

When Helen initially contacted me, my first impulse was to check with tower/radar personnel at the two airports in the greater metropolitan area. These are Halifax International

(identifier YHZ) and CFB Shearwater (identifier YAW).

I asked Halifax the following questions on the evening of August 13:

1. Were there other reports of an object in that area or elsewhere?
2. Were any visual anomalies reported that night by the staff?
3. Did they have radar returns of anything unusual that night?

In each case the answer was no. As it turns out, the negative answer to question 3 was false.

I wasn't able to ask Shearwater these questions because the tower was closed and radar was shut down that evening, as it is most evenings, since it has been drastically downgraded as a military airfield.

CFB Shearwater is situated in the center of an urban area and is overlooked by hundreds of residential dwellings located on a hill about 300 yards distant on the north side of the field. The same holds true of the northeast, northwest, south, and southeast sides of the field.

I want to make it clear that any top-secret or experimental military aircraft landing at Shearwater would enjoy as much privacy or secrecy, even at 2:15 a.m., as a couple having sex on the 10-yard line at the Rose Bowl game at halftime. Any suggestion that this object was landing at or departing from Shearwater is dead wrong. If the calculations of size are accurate, there would be no physical room for this thing to land in any event.

In an attempt to discover if there were other reports of the object, I contacted several newspapers and TV stations. None had received any UFO reports. A check with the Halifax Regional Municipality Police and the RCMP met with the same response. However, one of the reporters at the *Halifax Daily News* contacted me and asked for details. I gave them what I had except for those I reserved to eliminate copycats, and I didn't reveal Helen's name since she wanted to remain anonymous. I was hoping to jar loose other witnesses. It ran as a Sunday report in that paper with my phone number and e-mail address attached.

Unfortunately, that Sunday I left for Ottawa and learned subsequently that it was carried as a wire-service story that went across the country in newspapers and on television. It even appeared in a French newspaper.

I returned 10 days later to 40 odd e-mails and 16 phone messages about this case. Some bore fruit, though not specifically to the Cow Bay sighting. One e-mail offered to help me look into the case but it was not from anyone I recognized and so it went to the bottom of the pile. This was to prove the most important contact I had, but I didn't realize it at the time.

Many of the UFO reports stacked up in my e-mail inbox and several on my answering machine were unrelated to the Cow Bay sighting. There were reports that were years old—nocturnal lights, or reports from other locales in the United States or western Canada. There was one report of a

triangle over the Halifax area the same night and time as the Cow Bay report, but I was never able to reach anyone on the number left on my answering machine despite calling about 10 times.

There was another UFO report from August 13, but this event occurred two hours earlier and was witnessed by twelve people in an RV park near Waterville, 60 miles northwest of Cow Bay. In this sighting, the 12 witnesses were a mix of professional people and the regional general manager for a large chainstore—the person who contacted me. The witnesses reported two silvery, oval objects, each the size of a half moon, crossing the sky to the west-northwest. They sped overhead approximately to the zenith before one angled sharply away from the other and disappeared over the horizon to the southwest.

In this instance, I asked the regional manager detailed questions in order to eliminate satellites, in particular the Naval Ocean Surveillance System group and the Iridium telecom types. Their crossing over in the space of 8–10 seconds and their divergent paths pretty much ruled out satellites as a cause. Though this report was interesting, it seemed far removed from the description of the object over Cow Bay, although the circumstances surrounding its presence might have some role in the overall context of events that evening.

The weekend after August 13 there was another report from three people in Barss Corner, a tiny community 100 miles west of Halifax in the center of the province. The sighting took place at 2:00 on the morning of August 18, on the edge of a small lake. Approximately 20 digital photos were taken of the event. Only one of the three witnesses connected the dots of the lights and came up with a triangle though there is partial evidence of this in the photos. The witnesses also reported a reduction in sound during the sighting, which Helen noted during her sighting.

I've done extensive work on the photos in this case, some of which were saved from the video function of the Olympus Camera, beginning with increasing the pixel size and playing with contrast and saturation. However, my best results are from just pushing the size. In most attempts I ended up with a curved, one-third ring effect made up of the colors blue, red, green, and yellow—much like beads on a string. They are tantalizing but still elusive as to their shape and function.

Meanwhile, I had exhausted all of my usual contacts and resources within a couple of weeks. Even a check of Transport Canada's database of incidents turned up nothing unusual in the way of pilot reports for August 13 or the weekend following.

RADAR DATA

Then 27 days after the sighting, I received an e-mail from the person who had mentioned helping out some time earlier. However, this time he was more specific and advised that if I didn't forward details, such as an exact position and exact

time, then the radar tape which might contain valuable radar information for that evening would be erased at the 30-day mark. This is a standard practice with Canadian radar data when there is nothing on the tape to warrant retaining the information.

Radar tapes! Could he be an air traffic controller or radar operator, or at least someone with access to the radar tapes? A brief e-mail flurry ensued which established that he was, indeed, a controller who was offering to review the radar tapes from that evening. I told him that I had been advised that there had been nothing unusual that evening. He insisted on taking a look anyway.

Later that day, he e-mailed and informed me that there was an unknown target with a strong return at the specified time and in the specified area moving very slowly in the indicated direction. He also advised that even though Helen lost sight of it in the treetops, the object moved very slowly about that area before moving in over the city. He watched the object for 10 minutes. From time to time while over the Cow Bay area, it disappeared then reappeared in and out of the clutter at 1,800 feet, a known floor for radar reception in that area. The tapes were recorded off primary radar returns at Moncton Center in New Brunswick some 80 nautical miles from Halifax. The computer sensor had applied a "chicken's foot" to the return. A chicken's foot is a Y-shaped symbol that denotes an unknown. There was no transponder code attached to the return, making it a pure primary return.

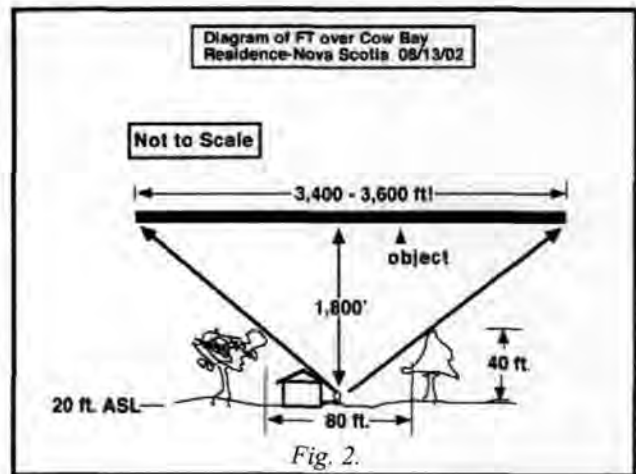
Moncton radar's known altitude floor gave me a better altitude fix for the object (though notice how close this altitude was to Helen's estimate). I asked why there wouldn't have been some concern by the Halifax tower operators about this object, which surely would have shown up on their primary and been a real presence in an approach area, but he had no answer for that.

I was, quite frankly, floored by this radar identification. This was the first case I had investigated where I had electronic evidence (now destroyed) of a UFO event. I wonder now, however, how many times tower operators at Halifax dealt with me in less than an honest manner when I had checked for anomalies on their end. Forewarned is forearmed.

I should note that the radar tapes are routinely erased after 30 days and used over again. In this instance (day 27 after the event), it was too late to file a request. Any letter of request probably would not have reached Nav Canada (the corporation that coordinates Canadian air traffic) in time.

With the very real possibility that this object was at 1,800 feet, I redid the math, coming up with a per-side length of 3,600 feet which is still a staggering dimension (see Figure 2). And it's one I have difficulty coming to terms with. However, I'm sure the Wright brothers would have had difficulty in coming to terms with the dimensions, weight and speed of a Galaxy C-5A back in 1903, had one appeared over the horizon at Kitty Hawk.

If indeed this thing really was on the order of 3,600 feet



on a side, what are we to make of the other dimensions? The underside would have been 6.48 million square feet. How thick was it? Even one foot of thickness gives us 6.48 million cubic feet. That's twice the volume of most scientific balloons launched today. For every extra foot of thickness you add an extra 6.48 million cubic feet. At a ratio of length to height of 20:1, the object would be 180 feet high and contain more than 1.6 billion cubic feet of volume. What would something like this be constructed of and what would be its power source?

The controller advised me that even though this primary return was observed to be at 1,800 feet, I should check with Canadian Coast Guard's Halifax Harbour Traffic Control (HHTC) for some possible supertanker off shore that might have been the cause of the radar return, possibly due to a temperature inversion reflecting a return back from an oceangoing vessel. The weather conditions that evening precluded a temperature inversion. I reminded him that it was unlikely, as well, that a supertanker would be crossing over the Halifax/Dartmouth metropolitan area.

However, since I had that resource to draw on I called a pilot friend of mine who works at HHTC and had him check out the logs for that evening. Halifax Harbour is the busiest Canadian port on the Atlantic coast, rivaling and competing with New York for the heaviest traffic on the east coast of North America. As a result, its approaches and the harbor itself are covered by radar, and traffic is controlled in much the same manner as air traffic.

There are several in-harbor radar sites and also two powerful antennae overlooking the harbor entrance and well to seaward. One of them is located at Lands End at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, only 2 miles from Cow Bay and looking right down upon it, with coverage from the water's surface to about 300 feet above sea level. The logs were checked for that evening and the only vessel leaving/approaching was in this case departing (a Maersk Container vessel), and did so at 10:00 local time. One hour later it was off Chebucto Head and clear of the harbor. The sea that evening was excellent so the container vessel would have increased its speed to between 23 and 25 knots, which would place it between 66

and 75 nautical miles offshore at the time of the sighting and much further to the east-southeast than Cow Bay would be from the radar at Moncton.

I now include this radar resource in any of my investigations in or about the city and offshore even though its height-finding capabilities don't usually exceed several hundred feet. I advise other investigators to consider this resource—a valuable tool, depending on where they are located.

One of the reasons I did get serious about the UFO phenomenon was due to a report by the son of a friend of mine, who also saw a large, silent object. He was with his father at a campground area on the Northumberland coast of Nova Scotia in 1989. This coast faces Prince Edward Island across the Northumberland Strait. The whole coast is lined with summer cottages, usually quite close together and right on the shore. On this particular beautiful, clear, and starry night in July there were the usual campfires and people out enjoying the evening air at approximately 10:30 p.m. The 11-year-old witness related how quite suddenly it got very quiet and there was a prickly sensation in the air. Then in the sky appeared a huge, black, domino-shaped object passing silently overhead, from inland to out over the strait. The witness went by his father's estimates of size of 1,000 feet or more in length and a couple of hundred feet high, though there was nothing to measure it against. There were apparently many witnesses to this object, but the sighting never made the press.

There were some electrical effects observed as well. When they went back into their cabin, a battery-operated clock that had not been working since the previous summer was working. And a WWII, army-issue, single D-celled flashlight, sitting on one end on a windowsill, that hadn't worked since that war was shining upward on the ceiling. The witness remembered this point quite clearly. Another piece in the puzzle?

OTHER REPORTS

The Cow Bay UFO trail goes cold after the harbor radar information. I can only relate some history at this point about flying triangles (FT) reported in the vicinity of Halifax and in this province.

The first evidence I have of an FT is an RCMP report, made by James Yorke and his family, of a triangular-shaped UFO on December 3, 1973, about two miles north of Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. It was out Minas Basin (the north-eastern portion of the Bay of Fundy) and crossing the water quite slowly. It had numerous colored lights along the bottom. He and his family watched it for 15 minutes.

At 9:00 p.m. on the night of April 18, 1995, a mother was drying her 5-year-old son's hair in the kitchen. Their house was large with an upper level and deck occupied by the owner's mother and father, and it was located in a secluded area on the edge of a still water. That end of the house is round with 12 large windows overlooking the still

water. It's located in Prospect, about 12 miles from the center of Halifax. The mother saw a large, brilliant, white light hanging in the sky to the northwest. It was unmoving, suspended, and reflected in the smooth surface of the stillwater. She called her husband who upon seeing the large light got his binoculars and determined that there were two lights side-by-side rather than one. He watched this for several minutes when his mother's voice came from above and asked him if he saw the peculiar light out past the still water. They discussed it for a minute or so, then the son told his mother to switch off her deck lights and he would do the same to enhance the viewing conditions.

As soon as he flicked his deck lights off, the anomalous lights immediately went into motion and moved smoothly toward their house. Terrified, the mother grabbed her son's arm and dragged him to the back of the house, screaming as she went. The father, however, was fascinated and stayed to watch the object fly low and slow over his house. With a hand over his eyes to block the glare of the lights, he watched as a rectangular or triangular object approximately 200 feet long by 100 feet wide flew directly over his house at an altitude of about 100 feet, blocking out the stars. It then disappeared behind his house and over the tree line.

The family was shaken up. I was called in and I did my usual tower checks to no avail. I used my own aircraft in this instance to fly over the area looking for something that might account for this sighting. Other than low hills, a couple of small lakes, and 20 miles of forest between their house and the next populated area (an intersection with a gas station and a store) to the northwest, I could find nothing.

In August 2000, a police officer in Nova Scotia e-mailed Art Bell describing a huge, triangular-shaped object he and his partner had seen, hanging just above the trees. Bell called the number provided, only to discover that the officer was again on duty. His wife, however, provided some detail left by her husband. The object was about an eighth of a mile on a side (660 feet) and was spotted in an area where there are military bases. Since Halifax is the only place in Nova Scotia blessed with more than one (in fact two) bases, I can only assume that it occurred in this area. I made the rounds of the RCMP and Halifax police stations, leaving circulars and my phone number in hopes of discovering the officers in question; however, I came up empty.

As a result of the newspaper article about Cow Bay I received a call from Lisa Stone, age 35, in Lower Sackville, an area where I used to live, and a couple of miles from my present location in Bedford, a part of greater Halifax.

At 9:30 p.m. on March 15, 2002, she was returning to Sackville from Dartmouth accompanied by her 16-year-old son. While sitting at the traffic light on Burnside Drive at the bottom of Magazine Hill she noticed what she thought was an airplane in distress. It was showing white lights and was diving and climbing to the west side of the road she was on and about one mile ahead. It did this maneuver twice then proceeded eastward on a course that would take it over the

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FLYING TRIANGLES—*continued from page 7*

highway and Magazine Hill.

It had rained earlier and the sky was overcast. The traffic light changed and she moved forward, keeping an eye on the lights. The road she was on borders the east side of Halifax Harbour and Bedford Basin, which extends inland some 14 nautical miles from Chebucto Head. Located on the east side of this basin and accessed by the Magazine Hill four-lane highway is the Naval Munitions Magazine that services Canadian and NATO naval vessels. (It has the distinction of having blown itself to pieces shortly after V-E day in 1945 and having knocked out my father while he was carrying me, then three months old, in his arms at the time. Of course, I don't remember this.)

Lisa made her way up the hill and found she was having difficulty keeping the strangely lit craft in view in the windshield of her car. She rolled down her window and could now see that the object showed three lights in a triangular pattern with the "leading light" flashing red to white. The drawing on the cover is Lisa's sketch of the object. When they were about to crest the top of the hill, she could then see the body of the craft that was moving very slowly across the road. It was massive, she related, much bigger than St. Mary's University football field. She doubted this would fit into it.

Lisa advised that she drove directly underneath and, "Boom, just like that it was hailing those really tiny, fast-falling, not quite sleet, kind of hail. We [other traffic] all slowed down further and I tried to reach beside me to get out my camera but there wasn't time, so I rolled down the window to try and hear it, but there was no sound but the hail."

The object slid by them to their right. Once they were out from under the object, the hail stopped. They watched the object do a flat figure-eight and move back over the highway before it sped off in a flash toward Fall River to the east.

The hail is interesting. Do these things generate some charge that might create weather underneath them?

Lisa stated that the event affected her son, who was frightened more than herself by the encounter and did not wish to be interviewed. She admitted that she had heard about UFOs and seen documentaries on TV, "but when you see something like this yourself, it changes your whole outlook. I thought this was a plane crashing." Where have I heard that before?

This incident came to me too long after the event to do much investigation. I checked the aviation weather for that evening and found that the cloud base was at 1,100 feet. Conditions were not right for hail and hail was not forecast in the advisory for pilots in the Automatic Terminal Information Service at Halifax International for that evening.

While writing this article, I contacted one of my sources about the loss of another resource I have used. However, I was advised that a person working at that agency had an FT

sighting the week before about 11 miles off the end of runway 6 at Halifax International. The witness was accompanied by her two daughters, 18 and 21, and watched a large object outlined by its lights move very slowly over the small village of Gays River. This is right on the edge of the zone at the airport and should have been clearly visible by tower operators and on primary radar. I'm checking into this now.

If these FTs are some type of experimental aircraft—and I don't for one moment give any credence to this hypothesis (the National Institute for Discovery Science's claim to that effect notwithstanding)—one wonders what they are doing flying about the Halifax area. Sooner or later, all types of aircraft have an accident. That being the case, where is the crash debris from one of the "experimental aircraft"? These seem sufficiently large to preclude hiding the recovery operation. And there are too many questions that must be answered concerning these objects flying in restricted commercial airspace and flying low over domestic airspace in clear violation of regulations in those 188 countries that are now signatory to the Convention on International Civil Aviation—among them the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Russia, Sweden, and Norway. ♦

GHOST ROCKET—*continued from page 14*

steered by radio with radio impulses from a ground station, perhaps with television or by a pilot in the projectile," wrote the committee.

And as with the submarine intrusions in the 1980s, it was suspected that the perpetrator was the Soviet Union. But also, as with the submarines, no hard evidence was ever found. Whatever was behind the elusive ghost rockets is still anyone's guess.

ADDENDUM

While photos of fireballs are not common, the network of amateur and professional meteor observers around the world is increasingly successful at capturing images, and video, of meteors and fireballs. The Dutch Meteor Society has an excellent Web site at www.dmsweb.org.

In the early afternoon of May 6, 2000, a very bright bolide was seen over Poland and Moravia in the Czech Republic. At maximum brightness it was comparable to the sun in luminosity. Pieces of the meteorite were found near the village of Morávka. A video was made of the bolide, an image of which is shown above. Notice the similarity between the Morávka image and that of the object photographed by Reuterswärd. ♦

