

# UFO INVESTIGATOR



NICAP ■ SUITE 23, 3535 UNIVERSITY BLVD. WEST ■ KENSINGTON, MARYLAND 20795 ■ A NONPROFIT CORPORATION FOUNDED 1956

## UFOs Sighted In Puerto Rico

Hundreds of citizens in towns and villages scattered throughout Puerto Rico are currently scanning the skies to catch a glimpse of the UFO or UFOs that seem to have adopted this island commonwealth during the past few weeks.

Speculation in the island's news media has ranged from weather balloons to Martians. The first report appeared Oct. 10 in the San Juan *Star*.

The paper, in a story headlined "Is Adjuntas UFO A Balloon?", reported that numerous reports had been received by local police regarding a mysterious object seen floating over mountains near Adjuntas, a small village in southwestern Puerto Rico.

According to newspaper accounts eyewitnesses reported the object is sphere-shaped and adorned with yellow lights. A police spokesman at Adjuntas told reporters for the *Star* that the UFO appears frequently over the mountains of Barrio Vega Arriba at night and is visible for

approximately five minutes before it disappears.

The National Weather Service in San Juan has speculated the flying object may be a weather balloon released by them at 7 p.m. each night. According to the bureau, prevailing air currents would likely bring the balloon in the vicinity of Adjuntas.

The "balloon theory" may indeed have merit, according to some reports, but it failed to explain a subsequent story in the *Star*, Oct. 14, headlined, "UFOs Seen by Adjuntas Mayor, Others."

"If I hadn't seen those things with my own eyes, I would never have believed in flying saucers, but I can't say no to my own eyes," said Adjuntas Mayor Rigo-berto Ramos, describing UFOs he and a group of witnesses claimed to have witnessed Oct. 13.

The mayor and a group of townspeople were driving towards San Juan on a "lonely stretch of road" around 9 p.m.

when they spotted "three bright discs moving along in the sky." The mayor told reporters the three discs emitted light which changed in intensity and color as they moved across the sky.

"I had no doubt in my mind that I was looking at something I had never before seen in my life," said the mayor.

The same newspaper story mentioned another series of sightings which were reported in Aguadilla, a coastal city at the northwestern end of the island.

Twenty employees of Aguadilla Hospital and a local shoe factory reportedly had witnessed numerous strange objects moving silently across the sky.

Rosa G. DeCastro, the hospital's supervisor, said she clearly saw the objects. "They were large, saucer-shaped, with a cone protruding from the top and moving lights." At least four Aguadilla policemen also reported seeing the objects.

Sighting reports and stories of UFOs over Puerto Rico continued to appear in the island's major newspapers throughout October. According to the papers, UFO reports have come from both large and small cities and towns — Cabo Rojo, Hormigueros, Lares, Cayey, Caguas and even San Juan.

In the midst of newspaper accounts of various sightings, the Associated Press, in one of its wire service dispatches, noted the following:

*And although the Federal Aviation Administration and Air Force disclaim any knowledge, a highly reliable source says a strange fast-moving blip appeared on aviation radar screens at least once in the past weeks.*

*"It moved faster than any known aircraft, civilian or military and could not be identified," the source said.*

*And although the Air Force, which operates huge Ramey Air Base on the island's northwestern tip, declines comment, area residents say that shortly after the sightings began to be reported, "there were a considerable number of aircraft circling at night, over the area, as if on a search mission."*

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## Army Assisting NICAP In UFO Investigation

The U.S. Army has provided NICAP a report on its investigation of the low-flying UFO spotted by a National Guard officer and his wife over Alaskan terrain during August (*UFO Investigator*, October 1972).

According to an Army *Memorandum For Record*, Sergeant John Cheenuk and his wife, of St. Michael Island, Alaska, were at home drinking coffee, Aug. 15, when they spotted a "bright red object land about 800 feet from their house."

The couple, according to the Army, claimed the object stayed on the ground for approximately three minutes and then took off in a northeasterly direction.

Sgt. Cheenuk said he was afraid to go outside at the time to investigate. Checking the area in question the next day, he said he found a "burnt spot" about three feet by three feet on the ground.

Soil samples taken by Army investigators from the "landing" area have been subjected to chemical analysis. According to the Army, their results showed that

the test samples and control samples taken from the same site did not differ in essential characteristics.

Photographs of the "burnt spot" were taken by an Army photographer, but a faulty camera apparently failed to expose the film. Subsequent weather conditions prevented photographers from taking "any meaningful pictures," noted the Army report.

The Army also advised NICAP that on Aug. 16, near Stebbins Village, Alaska, a UFO sighting was made by Sgt. Pius Mihe. Sgt. Mihe, according to the Army, claims he spotted a "low-flying object with red lights, bright blinking lights on the bottom and two large windows," around 11 p.m. According to the witness, the object was flying slower than an airplane and emitted no noise. It was about 15 feet long, oval, and traveling toward St. Michael when last seen.

NICAP is currently seeking additional details on both cases from Army headquarters in Alaska.

## REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Stuart Nixon

## Photographs: A Continuing Problem

During its 16 years of operation, NICAP has received thousands of pictures purported to show UFOs. The images in these pictures span such a diverse range of characteristics, no generalization is adequate to describe the potpourri of dots, streaks, lines, rings, spots, and a hundred other assorted forms that have been represented as UFOs.

For a variety of reasons, most of these pictures have been given only a preliminary examination. In many cases, the imagery is too poor to permit any sort of meaningful analysis. In others, there is an obvious explanation for what was photographed. Some cases are dropped for lack of cooperation from the photographer or lack of information about the reported sighting. Still others involve claims too outlandish to merit investigation, or show "accidental" UFOs that were not observed when the photographs were taken.

A relatively small number of pictures contains clearly structured objects that more or less conform to generally reported types of UFOs. Most of these pictures are given detailed study if the necessary data on camera, geographic site, and other circumstances can be obtained. One critical element often missing is the original negative of the picture, or the original Polaroid print. Without the negative, a complete investigation cannot be made. In many structured object cases, failure to obtain the negative or Polaroid print is the primary reason the picture is rejected or filed away unevaluated.

One advantage for the analyst in assessing structured object photographs is the high probability he is dealing with either a hoax or a truly unusual image (a UFO). Since the former can usually be detected, his job is reduced largely to ruling out the hoax hypothesis if he can. When he cannot, he is forced to reject the picture altogether or offer only a highly qualified acceptance. A few well known UFO pictures fall in this category, including McMinnville, Oregon; Santa Ana, California; and Trindade Isle, Brazil.

Although it is often assumed otherwise, NICAP has never analyzed a structured object picture that is fully consistent with the claim an extraordinary flying device was photographed. In every case, there has been some small detail, or group of details, that raised the suspicion of a hoax or a mistake.

In itself, this fact does not prove anything about UFO photographs, since any human experience is bound to involve inconsistencies, errors, and ambiguous details. It does suggest, however, that photographs are a nonproductive source of information about UFOs, unless a drastic change occurs in the kind of

picture typically turned in. Statistically speaking, an unimpeachable photograph must sooner or later appear if UFOs are a physical reality. Every year that passes without such a photograph being produced is evidence against the position that unknown objects are operating in the Earth's atmosphere.

Some theorists might argue that an unimpeachable picture cannot be obtained, even under the best of circumstances. No matter who takes it, how many exposures are made, or how dramatic the imagery, there will always be somebody to find fault with the report, or to point out that by some faint possibility, a hoax could have been perpetrated.

While this may be a moot argument, it is easy enough to imagine the kind of situation where a hoax would be extremely difficult to accept as a picture's explanation. If one person can photograph a UFO, so can two. Two pictures, taken from different locations at approximately or exactly the same time, would be hard evidence to refute if weather conditions, angles of observation, and other circumstantial factors produced high quality imagery with ample reference points for analysis. This is particularly true if the two cameramen were unknown to each other. Such a case would most likely permit only one of two explanations: a conventional object mistakenly interpreted, or a UFO. Since the first explanation might easily be eliminated by the pictures themselves or by subsequent investigation, the possibility of the pictures showing an authentic UFO would be reasonably good.

This, however, is only hypothetical, since no such case of simultaneous photography has ever been brought to NICAP's attention. In actual practice, the flow of pictures for analysis is highly predictable, with such constantly repeated patterns that few submissions offer any surprises. In the structured object cases, there is usually one or two exposures, often taken by a lone witness who reports that he saw the object for a short duration and was unable to do anything but fire off the few pictures he got. Almost without exception, he is male — often a teenager — and the picture shows a disc-shaped object (sometimes with a dome) over an open area. Often there will be a second or third witness, but they are invariably related to or associated with the photographer.

This last fact is particularly significant. The lack of corroborating witnesses in structured object photographic reports is often the most suspicious element of the case. One can accept, for example, the presence of only two witnesses in the McMinnville episode, but the failure of

any person besides the photographer to report the Santa Ana UFO is difficult to understand. In the former, the site was a rural farm, while the latter involved a heavily traveled area. The statistics begin to seem curiously lopsided when picture after picture is taken in locales where dozens of people might reasonably be expected to have reported the object described by the photographer.

One sensible approach to the problem of pictures might be to develop specific criteria for admissibility of photographic evidence. If the criteria were sufficiently restrictive, the signal-to-noise ratio in UFO photographs might be improved. At the very least, some understanding might be gained of the complexities involved in judging claims made for UFO pictures.

Underlying any such criteria should be the recognition that authenticity per se is not enough to require of a UFO photograph. An additional and equally important consideration is the *usefulness* of the picture as evidence. Most researchers will agree that certain UFO photos are authentic in the sense they support the photographer's claim he saw something unusual in the sky. Hardly anybody, however, would defend the view that these same pictures provide useful information about the phenomenon observed. Thus it is necessary to formulate criteria that take into account the scientific purpose of seeking valid UFO photographs.

Some of these criteria might be as follows:

1. Only pictures of clearly structured objects would be accepted for analysis. No pictures of light sources, contrails, glows, "funny clouds," or wiggly lines would be admissible.

2. Only pictures of objects visually observed by the photographer would be accepted. Images taken accidentally or discovered after the picture was developed would not be analyzed.

3. All single witness pictures would be rejected, unless exceptional circumstances presented a plausible explanation for why the photographer was the only person to report the object. This would preclude most one-witness cases from densely populated areas, heavily traveled highways, and other locations where a flyover should have been observed and reported by more than one person.

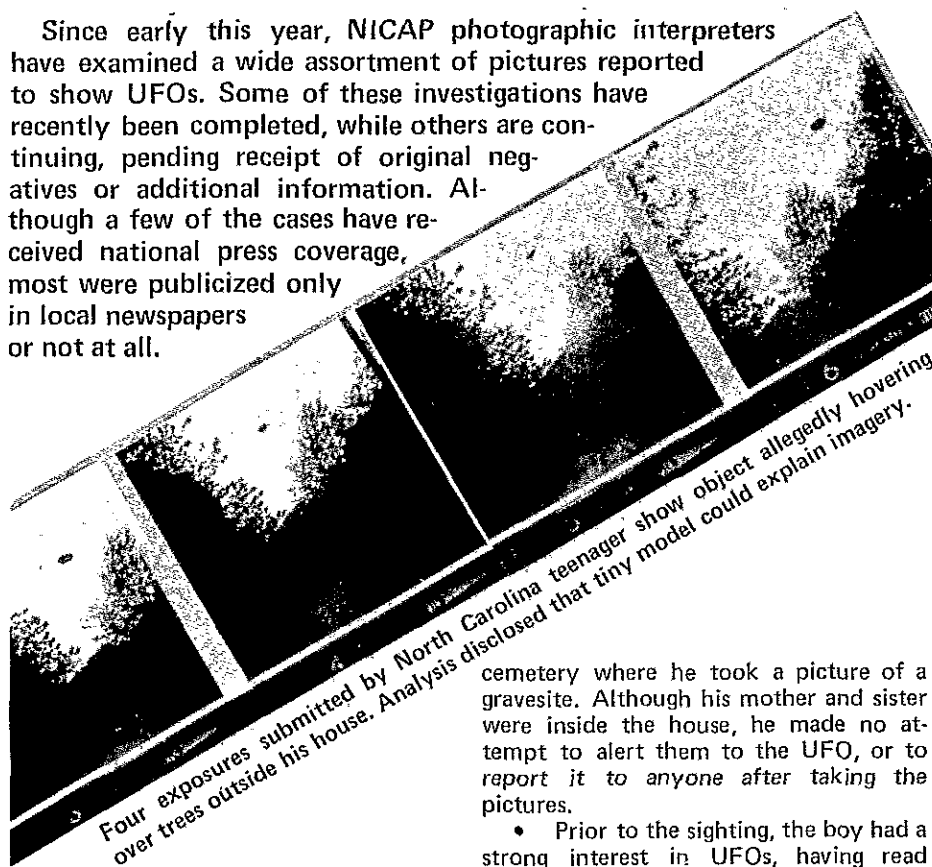
4. Pictures taken at night would be inadmissible, unless Criterion No. 1 could be met.

5. Pictures with no reference points would be inadmissible, unless the imagery

(See A Continuing Problem, page 4)

# RECENT PHOTO CASES ARE VARIED LOT

Since early this year, NICAP photographic interpreters have examined a wide assortment of pictures reported to show UFOs. Some of these investigations have recently been completed, while others are continuing, pending receipt of original negatives or additional information. Although a few of the cases have received national press coverage, most were publicized only in local newspapers or not at all.



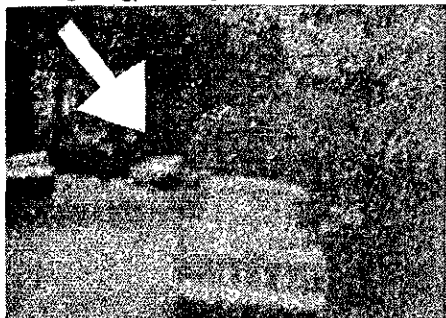
Four exposures submitted by North Carolina teenager show object allegedly hovering over trees outside his house. Analysis disclosed that tiny model could explain imagery.

## Warrenton, North Carolina — May 1, 1972

On May 15, NICAP received a letter from a 14-year-old boy with four drug-store snapshots of what he said was a UFO he sighted in front of his house. Taken with a Kodak Instamatic 100, the pictures showed a disc-shaped object that was consistent with the boy's claim of having spotted the UFO about 5 p.m. on May 1.

On the basis of detailed information obtained from the witness and his family, the following facts were learned:

- The boy was alone at the time of the sighting, having just returned from a



Photographer's failure to seek other witnesses was made more curious by discovery of second car in third exposure. Apparent direction of car indicates it probably passed witness in street as he stood photographing object.

cemetery where he took a picture of a gravesite. Although his mother and sister were inside the house, he made no attempt to alert them to the UFO, or to report it to anyone after taking the pictures.

- Prior to the sighting, the boy had a strong interest in UFOs, having read extensively on the subject. Of particular importance, he had been severely harassed by his brothers and friends for being interested in UFOs.

- The boy was exceptionally intelligent, spent a lot of time at the local library, had artistic leanings, and took an active interest in model airplanes and astronomy.

Analysis of the photographs revealed that a small suspended model could have produced the images in question. Enlargement of one of the images suggested that two aluminum pie pans could have been used to make the model.

This fact, coupled with the constant ridicule the boy had received for his belief in UFOs, led NICAP investigators to conclude the pictures were not genuine.

## Cape May, New Jersey — July 7, 1972

In late July, a report reached NICAP from southern New Jersey concerning a newspaper photographer who claimed he had taken a picture of a UFO several weeks earlier. The report said the UFO had been spotted at dusk while the witness was driving home from work. NICAP contacted the man and sought his cooperation in making an analysis of the photograph. He agreed to supply written

details of his experience but was hesitant about loaning the original film for study.

On the basis of NICAP's investigation, several inconsistencies were discovered between published reports and information from the witness. These included:

- Although identified as a staff photographer for his newspaper, the witness reported he is actually a printer who has had almost no experience with cameras.
- Published sources do not make clear whether more than one picture was taken. In actuality, two exposures were made, only one of which turned out and was released.

- In his statements to the press, the witness said he saw a circular object with a flat bottom and "a gracefully tapering topside." The object, he said, was "completely surrounded by lights." The picture, however, shows a distinctly oval object with no tapering sides and no lights. No explanation has been given for this discrepancy.

Without the opportunity to examine the original negatives, NICAP can offer no conclusion on the case. On the basis of available information, a possible explanation for the sighting is an aircraft with an unusual arrangement of lights, although this would not account for the strange oval image in the photograph.

## Mart, Texas — February 27, 1972

Contact has finally been established with the Texas electrician who claimed he photographed a UFO over a field near his house early this year (*UFO Investigator*, April 1972). The man has agreed to supply NICAP with details of his report, but has not agreed to permit an analysis of the pictures. Two pictures were taken — both Polaroid — which the witness is hesitant to allow out of his sight. He did make them available to a local college student, who is currently selling copies at a reported \$1.50 apiece. In a recent conversation with NICAP, the man said he has made no money from the pictures but originally offered them to a man associated with a Midwest UFO group, who sold a story about them to a newspaper for a reputed \$2500. The witness said this was done without his permission. He added that he has been besieged with requests for the photographs, and has received a lot of "crank calls."

## Victoriaville, Quebec — May 18, 1972

After photographing dark storm clouds over his home, a man in Canada developed the film and discovered a strange object apparently moving through (See Photo Cases, page 4)



## IS YOUR FILE OF BACK ISSUES COMPLETE?

NICAP members are always asking how they can get back issues of the newsletter to add to their library or fill in gaps in their file. Many members like to refer to earlier articles mentioned in current issues, to check on details they may have missed or forgotten. In many news stories we include specific references to back issues to make it easy for members to check on previously published information.

To order back issues, see the special offer on the back page of last month's issue (October 1972) or write for details. The offer ends December 31, 1972, so check your files now and send in your order without delay.

## FOREIGN AIR MAIL SERVICE STILL AVAILABLE

Foreign members are reminded they may receive their newsletter by Air Mail if they pay an extra \$3.00 when they renew. This makes their total dues payment \$15.00. Foreign members who recently renewed but didn't send the extra amount may still receive the service if they send payment now. If you are due to expire in May 1973 or sooner, send only \$1.50. All others should send \$3.00. Please note this service is not available to members in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

# Puerto Rico

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The lack of assistance from federal and commonwealth agencies in seeking explanations for the sightings has apparently not deterred Lt. Louis Maldonado Trinidad, police chief of the Southern Area, from conducting his own investigation of the reports that have plagued his jurisdiction.

According to a story in *El Nuevo Dia*, Trinidad told reporters he would try to uncover everything that is back of the appearance of the UFOs and will reveal it to the public if it is a hoax or practical joke by unknown persons.

Despite Trinidad's assurances, reports of UFOs over various sections of Puerto Rico continued to increase as October came to an end. From Bayamon to Carolina and Caues and Cayey, dozens of persons insisted they were seeing strange things in the sky.

## Donations ARE Deductible

It's that time of year when people plan their contributions to nonprofit organizations to take advantage of tax benefits for the current year. If you would like to donate to NICAP and take a tax deduction on your 1972 return, please remember that the contribution must be made by December 31. Also keep in mind the donation does not have to be money; it may be in the form of securities, real estate, or other tangible assets. Membership dues are not deductible.

## PHOTO CASES

(Continued from page 3)

the sky beneath the clouds. Analysis of the negative confirmed that an object was photographed, but offered no clue as to what it might be. The general outline of the image and the lack of any structural features made it unlikely the object was a plane or bird, although a piece of airborne debris could not be ruled out as an explanation. NICAP's chief photographic consultant, W. F. McIntyre, judged the image too fuzzy to permit any meaningful conclusion. The photographer said he saw nothing unusual at the time he took the picture.



Unknown to photographer, strange object passed in front of camera as he took this shot of clouds. NICAP evaluators cannot identify object but suggest it might be piece of trash picked up by wind.

### Buffalo, South Dakota — June 29, 1972

Presently under investigation is a case from rural South Dakota involving a man and wife who reportedly photographed a UFO at close range this past summer. In reply to a NICAP query, the woman said her husband took four shots of the object, which hovered over their heads at an unspecified location. NICAP has requested loan of the original negatives and a full report on the sighting.

### Sunnyvale, California — January 24, 1972

One of the more doubtful cases submitted to NICAP this year came from an

individual in Illinois who signed his letter in the normal manner, then crossed through the signature to make it illegible. With the letter were 11 color prints of a hat-shaped object hovering over a California housing development. Examination of the negatives, which were also enclosed, revealed that the order in which the letterwriter said he took the pictures was not correct. Investigators also noted that the negatives had been carefully cut apart, and all film numbers removed, in an apparent effort to prevent NICAP from determining exposure sequence. Further evidence of the photographer's true intent was found in one of the prints, which showed a barely noticeable piece of string stretched between the UFO and part of a nearby house.

## A Continuing Problem

(Continued from page 2)

was deemed sufficiently interesting to justify analysis.

6. Pictures for which the photographer refused to provide original negatives (or Polaroid prints) would be rejected.

7. Pictures taken by individuals with a history of UFO sightings would be rejected.

Using these criteria, a number of famous UFO photographs qualify for study, including McMinnville; Beaver, Pa.; Trindade Isle (assuming Criterion No. 6 could be met); Calgary, Alberta; and even a few single-witness cases. So do one or two famous movie sequences, such as Great Falls, Montana.

Excluded are virtually every picture that has appeared in the vast majority of sensational UFO publications, as well as most pictures commonly submitted to organizations like NICAP. The typical one-witness hoax is eliminated by Criterion No. 3, especially those concocted by practical jokers and publicity seekers. There is no way to screen out multiple-witness hoaxes using these criteria.

Such criteria may distress long-time followers of the UFO subject, since they are prejudicial toward the solitary witness who chances to take a picture under less than ideal conditions. However, there can be little doubt over the need for better screening of photographs, in view of the inordinate amount of time and money thus far expended on worthless pictures. In particular, an effort should be made to discriminate against the hoax photograph, which continues to present one of the most serious problems facing UFO research. By adoption of more rigorous standards, the truly promising evidence will have a better chance of surviving the difficult analytic process.