

APRIL 1979

UFO INVESTIGATOR



NICAP 5012 Del Ray Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20014 A non-profit corporation since 1956

DETAILS ON THE NEW ZEALAND UFO SIGHTINGS

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By now members are aware from the press and TV of the multiple UFO sightings in New Zealand last December. But the media reports were skimpy on details which have since come to light. The following account of these sightings is based largely on information by Dr. Bruce Maccabee, a physicist and NICAP consultant who traveled to New Zealand and Australia to interview the principals in the sightings. He also did photo interpretations of the movie films of the sightings at his laboratory in Washington. Dr. Maccabee is an optical physicist.

These sightings are certainly the most convincing and scientifically impressive evidence of the existence of UFOs that has come along in a long time. Not only were they seen by ground radar and the airplanes' nose radar, but they were sighted visually by two separate aircraft crews on two separate occasions and photographed in black and white and in color on movie film.

Although there had been a number of radar-only sightings off the northeast coast of New Zealand's South Island earlier in the week, the first of the major sightings began at about 12:30 a.m. (New Zealand Daylight Saving Time) on December 21. Wellington radar picked up three targets off the coast of South Island. One target moved southeast of Wellington at a speed of 120 knots for 30 miles and then moved rapidly for another 60 miles. Then it stopped and remained stationary. Wellington radar continued to see it in this position for 30 minutes.

A New Zealand turboprop freighter, an Argosy, was in the vicinity and was asked by Wellington radar to have a look. The freighter radioed that it could see white lights similar to landings lights in the area and that the objects making the lights showed up on the plane's weather radar. That was at about 1:20 a.m. At about 3:30 a.m. the freighter radioed that they were seeing a bright red light to the east of the plane and Wellington radar confirmed that it showed a target about 23 miles to the right of the plane and then watched as the target flew parallel to the freighter for 12 miles. Shortly afterward, the Captain radioed that the object had changed color to white with a red ring. The Captain said that the

light was brilliant and if it went behind a cloud while flying with them he could still see the glow. At the same time Wellington radar reported it had five very strong targets in this area.

As he was nearing his destination, Christchurch, the Captain radioed that an object on their weather radar was approaching the plane at very high speed. He said it traveled 15 miles in five seconds. It went off the plane's radar screen but when the Captain looked out it was off the side of the plane, a flashing white light. Captain Vern Powell has been flying for 35 years and has 18,000 flight hours.

An Australian TV reporter vacationing in New Zealand was asked by his Melbourne channel to ride with the Argosy freighter the next time it flew the route. This is how there happened to be cameramen present. They didn't expect to see any UFOs but they hoped to get the feel of the route and get some background footage. The flight took place on the night of 30-31 December.

Just after midnight, after takeoff from Wellington, the Captain called attention to some bright lights in the direction of Kaikoura, on the northeast coast of South Island. Wellington radar confirmed that it was getting returns from objects in the plane's area. They were described as strong, definite returns. At times there were up to 10 of them on the screen at one time and rarely, over a period of hours, less than two. At one point, one of the UFO's radar blip moved up and merged with that of the plane as if it were flying formation. Over the next 50 minutes the crew and the newsmen made repeated visual sightings of lights.

On the return trip from Christchurch the plane climbed through a low layer of clouds after takeoff. Three minutes after takeoff they saw a very bright light ahead and to the right. The Captain, who compared the object to a featureless moon, turned his nose radar to the mapping mode. He picked up a strong target 20 miles away in the direction of the bright light. Later it came as close as 10 miles. This time it was seen for about 12 minutes and the cameraman took the now famous films with a 240mm lens.

About 37 miles out of Christchurch, with the mysterious object still in sight, the Captain decided to turn towards it. But after a 90 degree turn the object was still not directly ahead. It appeared to move to the right as the plane turned. The object kept its relative distance from the plane until the Captain decided he had better get back on course. As he turned the UFO moved to the front of the craft, the left and then sped away to the right and disappeared. The object is described as having various shapes, including nearly round, even triangular or bell shaped.

From the time of the disappearance of that object until landing, those on board the plane continued to see bright, pulsating objects, and ground radar confirmed the presence of targets in the vicinity of the plane. Captain Bill Startup, who commanded this flight, has 23 years experience as a pilot.

Dr. Maccabee and Dr. J. Allen Hynek, head of CUFOS, after checking and study, discount that these sightings are planets, stars, balloons, meteors, other aircraft, secret military maneuvers, radar angels, fishing boats or weather phenomena. "We don't know what they are, but we do know what they are not."

TO OUR READERS: We have had a number of queries -- both written and by phone -- on the non-appearance of the UFO INVESTIGATOR. This is the first issue to be published since the October-November 1978 one. In the period since January 1979, the NICAP headquarters office has been undergoing a considerable reorganization with the confusion and delays that that always involves. We regret very much the feeling you may have gotten that NICAP was disinterested in you or in the collection of information on UFOs.

PLEASE NOTE: The location of the NICAP office has been changed. The new address is 5012 Del Ray Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20014. The new phone number is: (301) 654-8091. For the time being, the office and the phone are being manned by only one person. Therefore the phone may not always be answered if he is out of the office on business. But letters will always be delivered and acknowledged.

M E M B E R S H I P A P P L I C A T I O N

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON AERIAL PHENOMENA

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GOOD NEWS FOR TAXPAYERS: The following excerpts from an editorial (copyright The Washington Post, 1979, used by permission) should be good news for April taxpayers. But they also point up the importance of organization such as NICAP. "It is rare to find an exception to the indiscriminate government practice of establishing a program for every problem and a bureaucracy for every program. So, when we encounter a conspicuous problem that has spawned neither program nor bureaucracy, we think a celebration of sorts is in order. The problem is UFOs. Any respectable unsolved problem warrants an office, if not an agency, perhaps an inter-agency task force, at least one White House specialist? Right? And once staffed up, any office or agency qualifies for a standing advisory council, plus a squad or two of consultants, not to mention a grants program for academe and an annual conference? Regional domestic offices? A European liaison office? Why not?" NICAP old timers know that there has not been one penny of government money spent in the study of UFOs for the past ten years. Does this tell you something about the importance of supporting NICAP?

REPORTED SIGHTINGS: Since the last issue there have been a number of sightings. Reporting forms have gone out but the results have been slow in coming back. We expect to have more detailed information on this in a coming issue. Claims of sightings came in from, among others, the following areas: Pittsburgh, Pa.; Northeastern Pennsylvania; over Washington, D.C.; Northeast New Jersey and Covina, California.

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