

Flying Saucer Joke Backfires

Mainz, West Germany

Astonished and fearful television viewers flooded police switchboards with phone calls after seeing a TV report that a flying saucer had landed. The network admitted later that the report was a joke.

One of the country's three television channels broke into a detective comedy at 8:30 p.m. Friday and flashed a message that an unidentified flying object had landed in Duisburg, West Germany's 10th largest city. It announced that there would be a special program on the landing later.

Police headquarters in Duisburg received about 1000 telephone calls that blocked all lines. Hundreds of others phoned newspapers and local stations that had carried the nationwide program.

At 9 p.m., 30 minutes after the first report, another message flashed across screens: "UFOs have not landed. There will be no special show."

That message produced hundreds more phone calls, asking where the saucers were if they had not landed.

Finally an announcer broke in to say it was all a joke.

"It is regrettable that we find it necessary to issue an order that only true reports will be transmitted," said Fritz Hufen, a spokesman for the Second Channel. "The program directors succumbed to a temptation. They have been reprimanded."

"Completely irresponsible," said Police Chief Inspector Juergen Katmann.

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