

# Official hush-hush over 'UFO' scare

20/5/85

Mystery sparked after many night sightings

# '1,000FT-LONG UFO' LIGHTS UP DEVON

**SIGHTINGS** of a massive cigar-shaped UFO covered in light sparked a Devon mystery today.

Reports of the object have come from various parts of the county with claims that it was 1,000ft-long and moved back and forth in a straight line for about an hour before shooting off into the night sky.

Amateur astronomer Mr Ian Platt, of Beacon Heath, Exeter, watched the strange object through his telescope and said today he had never seen anything like it before.

"It was massive and brilliantly lit. I couldn't believe it at first so I got some of my neighbours to come and look as well," he said.

"It must have been about 5,000 ft up and moving at about 100 mph. I first saw it in the west and then it moved north east, stopped, came back along the same lines and then went back to the north east again before it shot off."

A similar brilliantly lit object was also seen by Mr Peter Doyle and his wife in the St David's area of the city. The whole underside was covered in lights and it was cigar-shaped, he said. A report of the object also came from a man in Dartington who phoned Devon and Cornwall police HQ in Exeter to say he had seen a series of lights moving west to north, shortly after midnight.

RAF Chivenor in North Devon and Exeter Airport both said they had had no reports of the object and did not know what it might be. One of Devon's best known astronomers, Mr James Hedley Robinson of Teignmouth was convinced today that whatever it was in the sky was not of extra-terrestrial origin.

"I am satisfied that whatever it was it was a man-made gadget. Probably something to do with the military."

"If it had been a meteor travelling east to west it would have been travelling incredibly fast and even if it had been going west to east it would still be going too fast to be an object like that sighted last night."

request from callers for the same number.

But an airport spokesman said: "We've not made efforts to find out what it was, that's up to the military or the police."

However, two Exeter men believe they have solved the mystery themselves. Mr David Howell, of 72 East Wonford Hill, and Mr Brian Cosway, of Old Rydon Lane, both saw the object and say it looked like large transport aircraft, possibly practising mid-air refuelling.

Mr Howell said: "My observation was of a pair of large, transport-size aircraft manoeuvring together fully lit up during flight."

He followed up a similar sighting some years ago, and received a reply from the Ministry of Defence explaining the need for such flying practice.

Mr Cosway said the flights were a regular occurrence. "The aircraft carry a large array of coloured light underneath, and three of these aircraft in a row would look cigar-shaped. But they would look startling to people, and I'm surprised RAF Chivenor said it had no reports of the aircraft."

## Helicopters

"My wife Theresa rang the airport that night and they said they had been trying to track it on the radar, but couldn't. They also said the only aircraft which should have been in the area were two helicopters half an hour earlier."

Mr Bond added that when his wife rang directory inquiries for the airport numbers the operator asked her what was happening because she'd had several

**AN OFFICIAL cloak of secrecy has been thrown around the sightings of a massive UFO over Devon.**

The Express and Echo has received telephone calls and letters from people who saw the object all asking the same question: "Was it one of ours?"

But the Ministry of Defence was mysteriously vague. Asked if the brightly lit cigar shaped craft could have been part of secret military trials, a spokesman replied cryptically: "You've answered your own question."

Exeter residents who saw the object fly over their homes have been puzzled that the city's airport said it had no reports of the craft.

"It's almost as if they trying to cover something up," said Mr Robert Bond, of 6 Elaine Close, Beacon Heath.