

MID-AIR PLUNGE PANIC AS UFO BUZZES PLANE

TODAY Thursday March 23 1989

THE captain and passengers on a VIP flight watched in amazement as a UFO sped towards them.

They sat spellbound as a silvery glow with flashing lights appeared over the Mediterranean.

Seconds later, guests on the maiden flight were thrown forward as the shape disappeared and the plane plunged, spilling coffee and smoked salmon.

The chairman of British Island Airways, Peter

by NICK CRAVEN

Viller, was among executives and journalists who witnessed the drama on the inaugural flight of the firm's McDonnell Douglas 83.

At first captain Bob Taylor thought it was another plane and told passengers to look out of the window as they crossed Sardinia.

Susie Walton, a presenter with London's LBC Radio, said: "The sky lit up with shimmer-

ing lights. It was like a disco. It was very pretty, almost a romantic light.

"After the light disappeared, the captain came back on and said it wasn't an aircraft. He said it could have been a missile or a UFO. But if it was a missile he would have been warned about it in advance. There was no sound, it was silent.

"When the plane suddenly dropped a few minutes later, it was terrifying. I thought that was it. They later said the drop was due to

'wake disturbance' which you get if you fly into the vacuum created by a jumbo jet. But there were no other planes around."

Capt Taylor added: "I've never seen anything like it before. It looked like the remains of a condensation trail.

"It came towards us somewhat faster than normal, in fact it was obviously missing us and climbing tremendously high way above us.

"At first I thought it was an aircraft. It was the way it suddenly disappeared that made me change my mind. I can tell my grandchildren I might have seen a UFO."

No one has identified the object which did not show up on air control screens. But BIA chairman Peter Viller insisted: "The lights were anything from 500 to 3,000 miles away. I'm certain it was not a UFO."