

AURA
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DISCLOSURE AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER TWENTY-FIVE OCTOBER 2005

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The Valentich disappearance and Government documents

Recently, the Project received an unsolicited communication from a woman who identified herself as the former girlfriend of Frederick Valentich, the Australian pilot who disappeared while flying an aircraft over Bass Strait in 1978. She was seeking our knowledge of the existence of any Government documents on the event. It is intended to interview her shortly, to obtain her own knowledge of the events of that time. In the meantime, was there anything in the Government's UFO files about this disappearance?

Government files from the year 1978 are not yet accessible under the Archives Act. Files have to be at least 30 years old in order to access them. However, under the Federal Freedom of Information (FOI) Act it is possible to go back to 1978.

The Project had already submitted an FOI request to the Department of Defence (DOD) for their UFO files of that era. The DOD in Canberra transferred a number of UFO files to their Edinburgh Air Force Base in Adelaide in order that they might be inspected. Hand written notes were allowed to be taken but papers could not be photocopied. One of the files in that batch had some relevant papers on them re Valentich. The following is a typed version of our handwritten notes:

(1) "Memo. 27 Nov 78 from Department of Transport Melbourne file ref V116/783/1047 to Command Intelligence officer HQ Support Command. Re missing aircraft Cessna 182 VH-DSJ on 21.10.78. "A recent letter to you. concerning missing aircraft VH-DSJ and other matters, was despatched without the mentioned attachments. These attachments are included with these letters for your attention." Attachments are RAAF proforma mentioned in the list above. Sightings around the time of Valentich's disappearance"

(2) "File note: "SNCIO I/C General Registry" on with compliments slip.
From SOI HQSC "Please file these UAS reports on 5/6/1/Air Part 8 (closed). They were kept apart from the file during the inquiry into the Valentich incident and never replaced. Folio number is unimportant." Flt Lt Int 1"

(3) "File note: "Note for further Intelos lumbered with questions about Frederick Valentich "In 1983 all paper work on Valentich's disappearance was photocopied by the UFO Research Society in Victoria and all enquiries should be directed to them." CINTO. 10 Feb 1989."

In the above a reference will be seen to a Department of Transport (DOT) file number V116/783/1047. The DOT's Air Safety area was the Government agency responsible for conducting the official investigation into Frederick's disappearance, not the RAAF. This file was presumably the official DOT file on the investigation.

In (2) above, note the words "They were kept apart from the file during the inquiry into the Valentich incident and never replaced." What inquiry? The DOT's or the RAAF's? As far as is known the RAAF has always maintained that it did not investigate this disappearance.

An FOI request was therefore submitted to the DOT on 10 August 2004 which in part asked for a copy of file V116/783/1047. Their reply on 1 September 2004, in part, read: "I understand that file V116/783/1047 has been destroyed by the National Archives of Australia." (NAA). An electronic search of files held by the NAA failed to find any record of such a file. However, only 10% of NAA files are available through their electronic database.

Another part of the current DOT is the Australian Transport Safety Bureau which maintains an electronic database, called "OASIS," of aviation "occurrences." The Project asked the DOT to search this database and provide any information on references to "UFO." They did so and one of the references related to Valentich. It was brief: "Occurrence number 197802563. Occurrence id 70857. 21 Oct 1978. Near Cape Otway Vic. Plt reported UFO then rough running eng. TX ceased-ACFT missing. Cessna 182."

The Project supplied the above detail in response to the woman's enquiry.

Interestingly, the DOT's OASIS data base also contained another pilot report from Bass Strait. This one was dated 16 Apr 1977 and occurred near King Island:

"Occurrence number 197703195. Occurrence id 77512. 16 Apr 1977. Near King island Tas. UFO report from pilot. Passed to RAAF for study. CFT beacon abeam VH-KRY. Cessna 401."

The Project was unable to locate any such report in the RAAF's UFO files examined at Edinburgh RAAF base.

Report from Maralinga South Australia in 1960

The NAA themselves recently highlighted a UFO report in their "Find of the Month" section of their web site. File A6456, control symbol R029/284 located in Canberra is titled: "Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) Salisbury-Department of Supply-Maralinga Project-General-Policy and Administration." In its 45 pages there are 7 which relate details of the sighting.

Maralinga, South Australia was the location of a number of atomic bomb tests in the 1950's and like Woomera was a "secured" location. A number of observations of apparently the same object are documented for 15 July 1960.

- 7.15pm Constable H D Scarborough saw a light of "approximately the power of bright moonlight, playing on the ground." The white light was moving from East to West. It grew larger in size and turned red. The duration was estimated at 30 seconds. Scarborough was located 15 miles from Maralinga village

7pm. Constable R H Maxwell was 13 miles from the village and saw a light which appeared to come from the direction of Wewak-a place 2.25 miles away

- 7pm Maralinga Village. Witnesses Ross, Hoskins, Kingsley and Haskard saw a light over the REME workshop building in the village coming from Wewak. Duration estimated between 2-15 seconds

- 7.10pm Mrs Fuller at a homestead 500 miles NW of Woomera reported a bright light and heard two loud "bangs" seemingly from the light travelling SW to East. It changed colour from white to red. The "bangs" occurred two minutes after the light was seen

- Between 7.30 and 8pm. Giles weather station. Observer saw a light bearing 100 degrees true at 15 degrees elevation. Reddish glow which faded and then came on again

- Also seen from Ernabella, Kenmore Park and Kulgera.

Explanations ranged from St Elmo's fire; a meteor; to a "reflection of distant vehicle lights on a low inversion layer" to a "flying saucer." The flying saucer explanation is worth elaborating on, for the opinion came from none other than Harry Turner, the ex Joint Intelligence Bureau officer whom we interviewed last year. "Mr Oliver Harry Turner, Health Physics Officer, who possesses an inquiring mind, made an independent investigation and extensive calculations. He is of the opinion that the light was not the result of a natural phenomenon but caused by an unidentified flying object, either a cone from a satellite or a "flying saucer."

What happens to UFO reports from Department of Defence (DOD) personnel?

Recently the DOD website was revisited, where there is an area which mentions UFOs. It reads in full:

"Unidentified Aerial Sightings (UAS)

Sightings of unusual or unidentified aerial objects or UFO's.

Provided by: Directorate of Concepts and Capability Development Royal Australian Air Force

Postal: Russell Offices Department of Defence Canberra ACT 2600

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) formerly had a responsibility for investigating and assessing the validity of UAS. After careful examination of the factual data and historical records that had been gathered over many years, it was determined that the collective evidence did not warrant the continued allocation of resources by the RAAF to investigate and report on UAS. Subsequently, the RAAF ceased this function.

Current Defence policy on UAS where members of the public may have questions on, or seek to report sightings, is to direct them to their local police authorities or civil Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) research organisations, through the relevant state telephone directory."

The words "where members of the public seek to report sightings" may or may not be meant to include DOD personnel; civilian aircrew or such people as Air Traffic Controllers. So a letter has been despatched to the Minister of Defence as follows:

"Over the last two years I have been locating and examining federal Government files relating to the subject of Unusual Aerial Sightings (UAS), utilising both the Archive and FOI Acts.

I understand that up until 1994 the Department of Defence (DOD) was the federal government agency tasked with the collection and analysis of such reports from the general public. I further understand that in 1994 the DOD ceased this function and that from that date reports of UAS by members of the public to the DOD are referred to civilian UFO

research organisations.

The current DOD website (at <http://www.defence.gov.au> access contacts under UAS) has a statement of the current position of the Dept. on UAS reports provided by your Directorate, which states in part:

"Current Defence policy on UAS where members of the public may have questions on, or seek to report sightings is to direct them to their local police authorities or civil Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) research organisations."

DOD files I have examined demonstrate that between the 1950's and early 1990's, besides reports from the general public, the department received reports from members of the DOD, civilian airline crew and air traffic controllers.

I would therefore seek your response to the following questions:

1. If current UAS reports from the general public are referred onwards, what happens to reports made by members of the DOD, civilian airline crew and air traffic controllers?
2. How many reports have been made since 1994 to the DOD from members of the DOD, civilian airline crew and air traffic controllers?
3. If there have been any such reports made by members of the DOD, civilian airline crew and air traffic controllers since 1994 may I obtain full details of these?
4. Since 1994, has the DOD maintained any personnel whose duties include the monitoring, collection or analysis of UAS reports from members of the DOD, civilian airline crew and air traffic controllers?
5. In the years between 1947 and 1994 did the DOD ever conduct any scientific research into the subject of UAS, and if so, who conducted this research and what were their findings?
6. Given that the RAAF was the area of the DOD involved with the collection and analysis of UAS reports between 1947 and 1994, and publicly announced it was ceasing this function in 1994; did any other area of the DOD continue with this role between 1994 and today?
7. Has any area of the DOD conducted any scientific research into the subject of UAS between 1994 and today, and if so, who conducted this research and what were their findings?

I look forward to your response."

Details of any response will be provided in due course.

Woomera on the web

A website on the Internet carries general information about Woomera and also e-mail comments of people who used to, or indeed still, live in Woomera. An e-mail was sent to 75 people who left e-mail addresses on the website expressing an interest in hearing from anyone who had a "UFO story" to tell. Six people responded but none reported having seen any UFOs despite dozens of years between them of living in Woomera.

Media exposure

With the first stage of the Disclosure Project drawing to a close, there has been an opportunity recently to undertake some exposure in the media:

Press items have appeared in: The Adelaide Advertiser; The NT News; The Sunday Mail (Brisbane); The Sunday Sun-Herald (Melbourne). The Sunday Mail (Brisbane) article resulted in a dozen calls to the UFO Hotline including one from an Ex RAAF man and another from an ex-military man; with the Sun-Herald generating close to two dozen calls. The Adelaide Advertiser article brought a call from an ex kinetheodelite operator from Woomera whom was subsequently interviewed.

Radio station interviews appeared in Adelaide, Canberra, Albany, and Perth.

A TV item appeared on Channel 7's "Today Tonight" show in NSW, Qld & SA.

Questionnaire survey results

The Project is now two years into its task. Stage one, uncovering and examining of Australian Government files has almost concluded. Both the Archive and the Freedom of Information Acts have been utilised in the process. Our web site and a series of 24 Newsletters have disseminated the findings. A copy of each Newsletter has been mailed (e-mail or snail mail) to the Project's Liaison Officers of each Australian UFO research organization. Stage two has commenced. This is to collate available documentation on "good" Australian UFO cases. Following this, stage three is scheduled to "lobby" the Federal Government to ascertain their knowledge of the UFO phenomenon.

A review was recently undertaken of the Project's perceived performance and sought the assistance of Australian UFO groups and individual researchers via a survey questionnaire. Thank you to all those who completed and returned it.

The 1-5 assessment scale utilised was:

- 1 = Very poor
- 2 = Poor
- 3 = Satisfactory
- 4 = Very good
- 5 = Excellent

Here then are the averaged results.

Q1 Rate the overall success, or otherwise, of the Project in uncovering and examining Australian Federal Government UFO related files.

The average result was 4.7 which lies between very good and excellent.
Comments included "Informative, precise, presented clearly with no speculation."

Q2 Rate the Project's performance in disseminating its findings to you.

Website at <http://disclosure.freewebsite.org> Average was 4.3

Newsletters Average was 4.6

Revelations column in "Australasian UFOlogist" Average was 4.6

Presentations at conferences Average was 4.0

Comments included: "The Project's image seemed a bit introverted and defensive; why not call it Disclosure! Australian Project."

Q3 Rate the Project in terms of new information that it has provided to you.

The average was 4.1.

Q4 Have you been surprised at the volume of information that the Project has uncovered?

54% of respondents said yes with 46% saying no. On reflection the question could have been better worded as both responses are in a way positive. If you answered no then you might have felt that you believed there would be a large volume of information; and if yes then there was a larger amount than you thought.

Q5 From the material you have seen do you believe that the Australian Government conducted any scientific research into UFOs?

30% thought no and 70% thought yes.

Comments included:

"I suspect the important scientific research is probably being handled by the Americans."

"Due to CSIRO investigations of foliage and input from known physicists."

"Probably research done in secret."

"Sporadic, usually individual efforts, usually for political rather than scientific reasons."

Q6 From the material you have seen do you believe that the Australian Government has any hidden knowledge concerning UFOs?

80% thought yes. 20% thought no.

Comments included:

"Although the nature of the secrecy game is that one never knows for sure, thus prompting paranoia and conspiracy beliefs."

"Because we have only ever had Top Secret or under classifications. There are higher classifications that I feel will not be released."

"Over the years there have been so many wild stories: of a crashed UFO retrieval from the Outback, of a TV media crew wandering into a hangar at RAAF Sale and seeing a large disk-shaped craft, of RAAF fighters being seen hotly pursuing UFOs, of saucer-shaped craft, apparently coming and going from Pine Gap—if any one of the stories is true, the Australian Government is hiding plenty."

Q7 Have you or your group any original material, documents or photographs on the following Australian cases?

No comments necessary here.

Q8 Given the information you have just read, do you believe it is possible to work out a process to lobby the Australian Government to divulge what it knows about UFOs?

Yes and no were both 50%.

Q9 If you replied yes to question 8 how would you go about it?

9a By attempting to instigate questions in Parliament

100% of those who said yes thought it should be by this process.

9b By communicating with the Federal Government

100% of those who said yes thought it should also be by this process.

9c In another way

If you replied yes to 9c please elaborate

Comments included:

"An approach that is "open and honest" in that what is sought is information to assist in painstaking scientific research on the topic. Although I am sure that this has always been the method of approach."

"I think that now that we've got a foot in the door and achieved some public awareness that official UFO files do exist, it's a great time to strike while the iron's hot."

Q10 If lobbying requires the hiring of a professional lobbyist, would you/your group be prepared to financially contribute to such a lobbying effort?

No one was prepared to financially contribute.

Q11 If you don't think we would be successful in lobbying, then would it pay to continue on a smaller scale , e.g.

(a) raising signatures on a petition which would be worded to get the Government to admit their role in collating UFO evidence/reports

Yes and no were both 50% of the total of the respondents.

(b) submit an ongoing request at quarterly intervals to the Department of Defence

14% said no and 86% said yes.

(c) ask new MP's to raise the issue

77% said yes and 23% said no.

(d) continue to check periodically with the NAA for newly released files

88% said yes and 12% said no.

Comments included: "Co-ordinated and encouraged letter-writing campaign would be more noticed than a petition."

Q12 Are there any other comments you wish to make about the Project at this time?

"Congratulations, the Project so far has been a great success in achieving most of what it set out to do."

If a 'sympathetic ear' were to be found at MP level, or elsewhere, I believe that a 'co-operative' rather than a 'demanding' approach is usually more successful."

"I sometimes listen to Question Time on the radio and have noticed that petitions are usually read out soon afterwards and that sometimes the petitions are signed by just a few dozen people. If the UFO research community regularly generated petitions I think they would help to raise awareness of the issue inside and outside of parliament.

" I think the smaller parties and independents would be more open to discussing UFO issues than the major parties."

"A lot of work done by a few researchers, very much appreciated." "Congratulations on a very worthwhile, well-focused and successful project."

Q13 If the consensus of the participants of this survey is that they do not see a way to successfully lobby the Federal Government (our proposed stage 3), should we then terminate the Disclosure Australia Project after stage 2, and move

on to other fruitful work?

44% said no and 56% said yes.

If no, what do you see can be further achieved and how?

"Apart from attempting to wake up the government to the fact there is widespread interest and concern about the issue, the Project should now also try to make contact with ex-service people or serving people who have had experiences with UFOs. There must be hundreds of them."

"Would e-mail all MPs (Federal) outlining the "Disclosure Project", along with the best cases from Government files. Ask them for their support in obtaining further Government files etc. May just get lucky and find an MP with an interest in UFOs."

Where to from here?

The Project Secretariat will now digest the above results and determine its next course of action.

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