

Air Force wait on UFOs

Australian Associated Press

WELLINGTON, Monday—The New Zealand Air Force's strike squadron has been put on standby to investigate any further positive UFO sightings over the country.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said tonight one or two Skyhawk fighter-bombers would be "scrambled" if the Wellington airport radar picked up more positive sightings.

The move follows the sighting of a UFO 13,000 feet over the north-west of the South Island at the weekend.

An Australian television crew filmed the object from an Argosy freighter plane.

The film has been screened in Australia and Britain.

"We do not consider there is a defence threat," a Ministry spokesman said tonight. "But it's all very interesting."

Melbourne's Channel O TV station says Saturday night's filming is the best documented sighting of a UFO.

The latest UFO sightings — by experienced pilots of inter-island freighter aircraft in the Cook Strait area — began a week ago.

The Wellington airport radar picked up several unexplained signals in the Clarence River area of the South Island on Saturday night.

Strange lights were seen at the same time by an Argosy airfreighter, on a newspaper delivery run with the TV crew aboard.

The lights were tracked by the Wellington air traffic control radar on the

There must be something up there — air controller

Argosy's outward flight from Wellington to Christchurch.

Although the TV men had planned to leave the aircraft at Christchurch, the pilot, Captain W. Startup, persuaded them to do the return trip with him in view of the earlier sightings.

"We were just re-creating a similar flight which spotted UFOs on the night of December 20," Capt. Startup said. "No one in their wildest dreams thought we would actually see anything."

He said the mystery object apparently had tracked his plane.

"It was a very bright white light," he said.

"We first saw it about 18 miles ahead of us. It appeared to stay still until we got within 10 miles, then it turned with us as I changed course.

"It then went above us, and circled and came down beneath us. It was making definite movements in relation to us.

"I have no idea what it was. But whatever it was made of, it was big enough to show on our aircraft radar."

Air traffic controllers have described the sightings in the same area on the north-west of the South Island as "New Zealand's closest encounters."

"It's got us guessing," Wellington's chief controller Mr. R. Phillips said today.

"We have all been sceptical about flying saucers, but there must be something up there."

Air traffic controllers in Wellington got more mystery blips on their radar screens early today.

One officer said they lasted only seconds, "but despite their brief appearance and faintness they registered as something travelling at speed."

In MELBOURNE, Quentin Fogarty, 32, the TV reporter who organised the UFO filming, said: "I wouldn't be surprised if someone engineered the whole thing — everything just seemed to fall into place.

"I feel someone or something wanted us to film these UFOs."

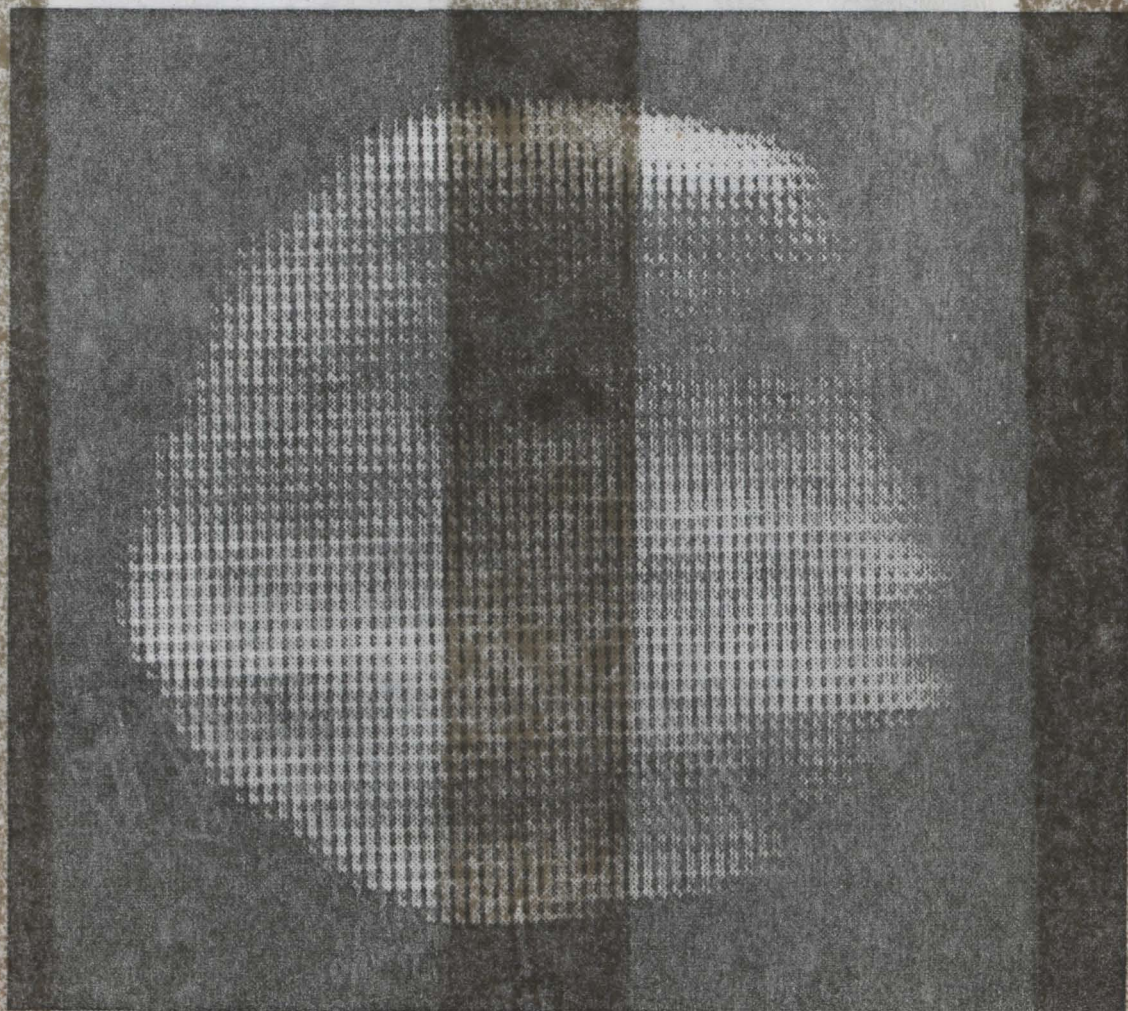
He said that was the only way he could rationalise what he saw.

"There were bright globules of light pulsating and expanding and lighting up the foreshore and town of Kaitioura.

"We got frightened when Wellington radar control told us we had one on our tail. Then it was joined by four or five more.

"I thought once, maybe this is it. I was thinking of Valentich. I was scared stiff."

Frederick Valentich was the Melbourne pilot of a light plane which disappeared over Bass Strait in October after he radioed that he was being "buzzed" by a large silver object.



This shot of an unidentified object was filmed from an aircraft over New Zealand at the weekend. The film was shown on Channel 10 last night.