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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,000

What's really up there in the skies above us?

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00:00:06,000 --> 00:00:11,000

For decades all around the world, thousands of people have reported strange,

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00:00:11,000 --> 00:00:14,000

unidentified lights and objects aloft.

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00:00:14,000 --> 00:00:21,000

Some forensically investigated.

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00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:25,000

Others seemingly covered up by governments.

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00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:30,000

In Texas, townsfolk are astonished as the sky above them

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00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:35,000

turns into the battle scene from a sci-fi movie.

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00:00:35,000 --> 00:00:38,000

I can't explain just how fast it was, but nothing like a plane.

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00:00:38,000 --> 00:00:43,000

I mean, they went from point A to point B and they were gone.

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00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:52,000

In the Amazon jungle of Peru, university students filmed something they too cannot explain.

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00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:57,000

Fearful locals try to scare away the haunting lights.

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00:00:57,000 --> 00:01:04,000

It's very easy for us to get confused between what we think we're seeing and what we really saw.

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00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:09,000

And in Australia, a young pilot reports mysterious lights flashing around his plane.

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00:01:09,000 --> 00:01:12,000

It's on Ringbert, but it's not an aircraft.

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00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:15,000

Frederick Valentich never reaches his destination.

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00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:19,000

We're pretty wet, we don't know because we can't find anything of him.

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00:01:19,000 --> 00:01:24,000

Oh, we've got his tape and his unusual clicks at the end and then nothing.

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00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:33,000

Some cases seem to defy rational explanation.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:39,000

The answers may lie in these fascinating stories of UFO conspiracies.

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00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:46,000

Stevenville, Texas.

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00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:53,000

This rural community proclaims itself to be the cowboy capital of the world.

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00:01:53,000 --> 00:02:00,000

In 2008, its main claim to fame is that it's close to the country home of President George Bush.

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00:02:00,000 --> 00:02:06,000

But residents here are about to witness something seemingly far stranger than presidential motorcade.

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00:02:06,000 --> 00:02:11,000

A chilly 6 am in January.

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00:02:11,000 --> 00:02:19,000

Local business owner Steve Allen is enjoying a campfire with his buddies when they spot high speed lights racing their way.

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00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:24,000

What is that?

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00:02:24,000 --> 00:02:26,000

I saw him coming from the east.

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00:02:26,000 --> 00:02:31,000

He was in the middle of a campfire.

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00:02:31,000 --> 00:02:36,000

I saw him coming from the east, going to the west.

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00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:41,000

They were coming at us at a very high rate of speed, no wind noise.

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00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:44,000

All we could see was the lights of the parameters of it.

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00:02:44,000 --> 00:02:49,000

All the same heading, same altitude, about 2,500 foot.

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00:02:49,000 --> 00:02:56,000

There are lots of lights, but Steven's friends are convinced they're all attached to one huge craft.

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00:02:57,000 --> 00:03:01,000

It appeared to be about a half a mile wide and about a mile long.

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00:03:01,000 --> 00:03:05,000

There was a light on each corner of it at the first when I first saw it.

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:08,000

A very bright, white, intensity light.

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00:03:08,000 --> 00:03:11,000

Totally silent, couldn't hear anything.

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00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:17,000

An hour later, County Constable Leroy Gaten leaves his house.

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:23,000

He too see strange glowing lights in the night sky.

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00:03:23,000 --> 00:03:26,000

Like a bubble, I call it an orb.

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00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:32,000

It was large, it was a brightish-reddish-orange color.

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00:03:32,000 --> 00:03:35,000

He hurries inside to tell his wife.

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00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:43,000

When he comes back out, the one light becomes many, strobing and dancing, before hurtling out of sight.

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00:03:43,000 --> 00:03:47,000

I can't explain just how fast it was, but nothing like a plane.

45

00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:52,000

I mean, they went from point A to point B and they were gone.

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00:03:52,000 --> 00:03:59,000

One of Steve's friends is so frightened by what seems to him to be an alien craft that he flees in his car.

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00:03:59,000 --> 00:04:05,000

When they call him to check that he's okay, he warns them that the lights are heading back their way.

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00:04:05,000 --> 00:04:06,000

Hell yeah.

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00:04:06,000 --> 00:04:11,000

But this time, they're not the only fast-moving objects in the sky.

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00:04:12,000 --> 00:04:16,000

It came back from the west, traveling to the east at a high rate of speed.

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00:04:16,000 --> 00:04:21,000

That's when it had its two F-16s directly behind it, full afterburner.

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00:04:21,000 --> 00:04:23,000

They was chasing it with a vengeance.

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00:04:23,000 --> 00:04:24,000

It headed off to the east.

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00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:27,000

We watched it until it went across the sunset.

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00:04:29,000 --> 00:04:32,000

Then, events take a more alarming turn.

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00:04:32,000 --> 00:04:39,000

Pursued by the fighter planes, one of the lights now heads towards the home of the county's most heavily guarded resident,

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00:04:39,000 --> 00:04:42,000

President George W. Bush.

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00:04:43,000 --> 00:04:46,000

I know that's a no-fly zone when he's in town.

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00:04:46,000 --> 00:04:49,000

At that time, it was a 60-mile radius.

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00:04:49,000 --> 00:04:51,000

If he's gone, it's a three-mile radius.

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00:04:51,000 --> 00:04:57,000

So we're, all of us are very aware that that is there and you don't fly in that area.

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00:04:57,000 --> 00:05:00,000

Fortunately, the president is not at home.

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00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:07,000

So what has been happening in the skies above Stephenville, and why have military planes been involved?

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00:05:08,000 --> 00:05:15,000

The news of what Steve and others have seen spreads quickly through town.

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00:05:15,000 --> 00:05:19,000

Everybody in the small community is keen to swap stories.

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00:05:19,000 --> 00:05:26,000

And the next day in my office, all of our lines was lit up all day long from people that had seen it.

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00:05:26,000 --> 00:05:33,000

There was business people and several law enforcement people, so I just felt like that they was genuine.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:40,000

But psychologists say the status of witnesses has no bearing on the reliability of their testimony.

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00:05:40,000 --> 00:05:47,000

Critical to spreading a rumor or getting a panic going is having an authority figure talk out about it.

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00:05:47,000 --> 00:05:54,000

Somebody who's very credible in some area of government or politics or entertainment speak out about what happens.

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00:05:54,000 --> 00:06:00,000

That really has a kind of explosive effect on the credibility to which the belief is assigned by other people.

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00:06:03,000 --> 00:06:08,000

Stephenville townsfolk are desperate to find out exactly what flew over their town that night.

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00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:17,000

They ask for help from nearby military bases, where the chasing F-16s were thought to come from.

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00:06:17,000 --> 00:06:24,000

But the Air Force not only denies chasing any lights, it claims that none of its planes were airborne at the time.

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00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:27,000

Even the county constable senses a cover-up.

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00:06:27,000 --> 00:06:35,000

It was a red flag when they immediately denied not having any aircraft in that sky that night.

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00:06:35,000 --> 00:06:40,000

They tried to simply explain the phenomena away.

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00:06:40,000 --> 00:06:46,000

First they said we've got it figured out it was a reflection off of a high altitude jet airliner.

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00:06:46,000 --> 00:06:53,000

And I had to remark it was a reflection off of my shiny white ass and I don't think they liked that.

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00:06:54,000 --> 00:07:04,000

Then, curiously, at a press conference two weeks later, the Air Force suddenly remembers that yes, in fact it did have F-16s in the sky at the time.

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00:07:04,000 --> 00:07:06,000

About ten of them.

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00:07:06,000 --> 00:07:11,000

But none of them, it says, chased any lights.

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00:07:11,000 --> 00:07:15,000

If it's something that military was doing, they were doing it for reason.

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00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:17,000

I hope to find out.

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00:07:17,000 --> 00:07:27,000

One thing I certainly hope is that it's something from this earth that it's not something from somewhere else.

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00:07:28,000 --> 00:07:37,000

Mystified Stephen Ville Texans soon have an ally in their search for information about the lights they claim to have seen in the sky in January 2008.

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00:07:37,000 --> 00:07:47,000

The Mutual UFO Network, or MOUFON, is an unofficial organization collecting data on UFO sightings.

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00:07:47,000 --> 00:07:53,000

One of their most experienced investigators is Robert Powell.

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00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:58,000

Stephen Ville, it's probably one of the most interesting cases, I would say, in the last 20 years.

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00:07:58,000 --> 00:08:00,000

These people didn't all see it at once.

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00:08:00,000 --> 00:08:06,000

They saw it across three hours of time, across a 30 to 40 mile area.

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00:08:07,000 --> 00:08:16,000

MOUFON investigators claim to have found new radar evidence from the night of the sightings confirming what key witnesses saw.

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00:08:16,000 --> 00:08:20,000

Could this solve the mystery of the Stephen Ville lights?

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00:08:20,000 --> 00:08:27,000

It was kind of reassuring that there was something black and white to prove that there was something flying around that night.

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00:08:37,000 --> 00:08:48,000

Frustrated by a lack of answers from the military, UFO investigator Robert Powell petitions authorities to release radar data from the night of the Stephen Ville sightings.

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00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:53,000

I immediately filed Freedom of Information Act requests.

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00:08:53,000 --> 00:08:59,000

There are about five to six U.S. Air Force and Army installations within 60 to 70 miles of Stephen Ville.

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00:08:59,000 --> 00:09:02,000

So I sent Freedom of Information requests to them.

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00:09:02,000 --> 00:09:10,000

I also sent requests to all the local sheriff offices, to the highway patrol, to the FAA.

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00:09:12,000 --> 00:09:19,000

The military says it has no records responsive to his request, but the Federal Aviation Administration is more forthcoming.

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00:09:19,000 --> 00:09:25,000

They provided us five different radar sites that basically covered all of this part of Texas.

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00:09:26,000 --> 00:09:30,000

Powell and his team analyzed two types of radar information.

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00:09:30,000 --> 00:09:34,000

Data from aircraft which identify themselves with transponders.

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00:09:34,000 --> 00:09:43,000

And radar returns seemingly generated by other objects which lack a transponder signal and are less easy to identify.

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00:09:43,000 --> 00:09:49,000

He and his team take into account the military operating areas or MOAs nearby.

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00:09:50,000 --> 00:10:04,000

What was interesting and was different in this event was that when we looked where the witnesses were in the area they were looking at when they saw these unknown objects, these lights in the sky, there were no jets in that direction.

107

00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:10,000

Powell believes he is able to verify every detail of Constable Leroy Gaten's sighting.

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00:10:12,000 --> 00:10:15,000

The time on the radar matches, the time he said this occurs.

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00:10:16,000 --> 00:10:27,000

You have an object south of his home on radar just as he indicates, and then suddenly you get a ping far to the northeast and that's actually directionally roices this object suddenly moved.

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00:10:28,000 --> 00:10:35,000

It was kind of reassuring that there was something black and white to prove that there was something flying around that night.

111

00:10:36,000 --> 00:10:43,000

But radar reflections can come from flocks of birds or be generated by technical glitches.

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00:10:43,000 --> 00:10:48,000

So Powell's data fails to impress former U.S. Air Force Major James McGayhay.

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00:10:49,000 --> 00:11:03,000

What they received was the raw data which is the unfiltered data which shows all the anomalies, various bad aspects of radar that are normally filtered out.

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00:11:03,000 --> 00:11:07,000

In a four hour period there were about two and a half million targets.

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00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:15,000

Of that they selected 187 of them thinking that this was something significant.

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00:11:15,000 --> 00:11:24,000

There was no evidence on any radar that night of anything other than a few civilian airplanes and the F-16s flying.

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00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:32,000

One of the U.K.'s leading radar experts is former military communications and radar engineer Chris Mooreshead.

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00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:37,000

Analysis of radar returns is a fairly specialized task.

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00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:43,000

The reason is you need to know what you're looking at and be able to interpret what's coming back accurately.

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00:11:43,000 --> 00:11:52,000

The danger of amateurs looking at a radar response is they will see something and perhaps not understand that that's a common fault perhaps with that radar.

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00:11:52,000 --> 00:11:54,000

Or common occurrence with that radar.

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00:11:55,000 --> 00:12:02,000

Robert Powell defends MuFON's radar analysis claiming it's been verified by experienced air traffic controllers.

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00:12:02,000 --> 00:12:06,000

He also worries about one of the more alarming aspects of the Stephenville incident.

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00:12:06,000 --> 00:12:13,000

Why did unidentified lights appear to fly so close to restricted airspace around President Bush's ranch?

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00:12:13,000 --> 00:12:18,000

This is area P-49, the circular area. We put a little blue dot in it so you can see it better.

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00:12:18,000 --> 00:12:24,000

So this is a significant issue for a pilot to dare to fly through this type of area.

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00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:32,000

Powell claims to have picked up 140 unidentified radar pings traveling from Stephenville towards the Bush Ranch.

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00:12:33,000 --> 00:12:35,000

These are the actual traces.

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00:12:38,000 --> 00:12:41,000

Powell is convinced this is no normal aircraft.

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00:12:42,000 --> 00:12:46,000

There were two different times where the object suddenly increased speed.

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00:12:46,000 --> 00:12:53,000

It would increase its speed up to 500 miles an hour from 40 miles an hour in one sweep of the radar.

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00:12:53,000 --> 00:12:55,000

And the radar sweeps every 10 seconds.

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00:12:56,000 --> 00:13:00,000

The radar evidence around President Bush's ranch is confusing.

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00:13:00,000 --> 00:13:06,000

Could the blips have come from military planes? Or might radar data be intrinsically unreliable?

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00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:14,000

Quite often you'll get a spurious response coming up on a radar for some reason.

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00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:20,000

So for example, as the radar sweeps through, you might get a bright up occurring.

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00:13:20,000 --> 00:13:24,000

And the next time the radar scans round, there's nothing there.

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00:13:24,000 --> 00:13:29,000

But the operator would have just ignored that as being a spurious response.

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00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:35,000

It was just cherry picking various data out of this. It sort of lined up.

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00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:43,000

And the interesting thing is the data lines up very closely with a highway that goes in that direction.

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00:13:44,000 --> 00:13:51,000

James McGayhay still believes that military activity accounts for what the people of Stephenville see in January 2008.

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00:13:52,000 --> 00:14:00,000

Stephenville is only 10 miles away straight line from the edge of the Brownwood Moa, 3200 square mile moa,

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00:14:00,000 --> 00:14:08,000

military operating area for the military to operate various air operations both day and night.

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00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:12,000

What was going on, the airplanes were conducting air to air operations.

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00:14:12,000 --> 00:14:18,000

So one would be acting as enemy aircraft and one would be chasing the aircraft.

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00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:28,000

And someone may be ejected a flare, then somebody went to afterburner and you wind up with all these lights in the sky.

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00:14:28,000 --> 00:14:31,000

And they're changing because of different things are happening.

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00:14:31,000 --> 00:14:39,000

I know what flares look like and they don't travel horizontal either, especially for quite a few miles.

149

00:14:39,000 --> 00:14:42,000

And they don't travel with two F-16s chasing them.

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00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:49,000

That's not enough to shake McGayhay's belief that people simply see a mixture of flares and afterburners from fighter jets.

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00:14:49,000 --> 00:15:01,000

They did afterburner climbs and when they did these afterburner climbs at night, the afterburner, the flame comes out the end of the tailpipe, maybe 100 feet.

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00:15:01,000 --> 00:15:07,000

And so this would be a spectacular looking thing as viewed in the night sky.

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00:15:07,000 --> 00:15:11,000

Eye witnesses remain unconvinced.

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00:15:11,000 --> 00:15:17,000

110% believe that the military is covering something up.

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00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:23,000

They don't want to say what it really was or not.

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00:15:23,000 --> 00:15:26,000

The military have never confirmed one vital detail.

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00:15:26,000 --> 00:15:31,000

Did their fighters that night have transponder identifying transmitters switched on or not?

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00:15:31,000 --> 00:15:36,000

When these are deactivated, they are not able to see the light.

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00:15:36,000 --> 00:15:43,000

When these are deactivated in military operating areas, or MOAs, the jets can appear as UFOs.

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00:15:43,000 --> 00:15:52,000

I wound up clarifying this because I know the exact times that the F-16 flights flew into the MOAs.

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00:15:52,000 --> 00:15:56,000

So we know exactly when the F-16s went in and when they came out.

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00:15:56,000 --> 00:16:04,000

And of course the time period in between is when the Stevensville lights were observed in the direction of the Brownwood MOAs.

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00:16:07,000 --> 00:16:13,000

So the official explanation is that a routine military exercise was taking place.

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00:16:13,000 --> 00:16:19,000

Yet nothing will stop eye witnesses believing they saw something far more mysterious.

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00:16:19,000 --> 00:16:24,000

Somebody somewhere knows what the answers are.

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00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:27,000

I've made a public plea to then President Bush.

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00:16:27,000 --> 00:16:32,000

I said, President Bush, the jig's up, the cat's out of the bag. Tell us what's going on.

168

00:16:32,000 --> 00:16:38,000

We can handle it. You know, we're intelligent people. We just need to know, you know.

169

00:16:38,000 --> 00:16:42,000

To date, Steve has received no reply from the White House.

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00:16:42,000 --> 00:17:02,000

Kukalpa, a sprawling, hot and steamy Peruvian jungle city, home to 200,000 people.

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00:17:03,000 --> 00:17:11,000

In spring 2008, residents in the nearby village of San Juan see something peculiar as darkness falls.

172

00:17:14,000 --> 00:17:18,000

Strange flashing lights appear, hovering over the Amazon jungle.

173

00:17:21,000 --> 00:17:29,000

One of the first to hear about the lights and later to see them himself is Moto Taxi driver Jesus Diaz.

174

00:17:32,000 --> 00:17:38,000

People told me there's an object that pointed us with lights as if it would like to take us away.

175

00:17:38,000 --> 00:17:43,000

They said, we feel scared at night. We can't go out.

176

00:17:43,000 --> 00:17:46,000

Then one evening, the object started to follow me.

177

00:17:46,000 --> 00:17:51,000

There were three little lights at a height of 100 meters, 200 meters away.

178

00:17:51,000 --> 00:17:55,000

I was scared and hid in the trees.

179

00:17:55,000 --> 00:17:59,000

I was scared and ran to the plattens.

180

00:18:01,000 --> 00:18:06,000

The lights are totally silent, making locals ask, what could they be?

181

00:18:06,000 --> 00:18:14,000

Jesus reports his sighting to the mayor, Guillermo Sanchez Pacheco, who was already aware of growing local concern.

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00:18:14,000 --> 00:18:18,000

Could other sinister rumors be connected?

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00:18:19,000 --> 00:18:27,000

Many thought the lights were connected with the disappearance and deaths of local people, later found without their skin or organs.

184

00:18:27,000 --> 00:18:30,000

They thought there was a ship trying to take people away.

185

00:18:30,000 --> 00:18:37,000

I was totally incredulous. I don't normally believe in that sort of thing.

186

00:18:39,000 --> 00:18:46,000

The rumors of deaths remain just folklore to this day, but the mayor needs to investigate.

187

00:18:49,000 --> 00:18:56,000

So together with Jesus and his gun, he sets off for the jungle, where many of the sightings are occurring.

188

00:18:57,000 --> 00:19:01,000

At 7pm, the light appears.

189

00:19:01,000 --> 00:19:06,000

I said it's a plane or a helicopter, but it didn't make any noise.

190

00:19:06,000 --> 00:19:11,000

It came closer and closer, so I shot at it.

191

00:19:11,000 --> 00:19:16,000

The light went out and disappeared.

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00:19:18,000 --> 00:19:26,000

Guillermo writes to the Peruvian Air Force to request protection from the lights preying on local people.

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00:19:28,000 --> 00:19:35,000

But at the time, their UFO Investigations Unit in Lima has disbanded and its chief retired.

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00:19:35,000 --> 00:19:43,000

Instead, his daughter, journalism student Teresa Luchia Chamorro, starts an amateur investigation for a university project.

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00:19:44,000 --> 00:19:54,000

We're not scientists or ufologists. We just wanted to do our assignment, get an A, and maybe help the Air Force a bit.

196

00:19:56,000 --> 00:20:01,000

Teresa and some college friends hope their investigation will be of use.

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00:20:01,000 --> 00:20:08,000

But it all gets more serious in Bacalpa as their filmed interviews reveal true fear in the streets.

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00:20:13,000 --> 00:20:19,000

People were experiencing a collective hysteria.

199

00:20:19,000 --> 00:20:29,000

Each of them talked about the same dates, the same shape, the same movements, but above all, they shared the same fear.

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00:20:33,000 --> 00:20:39,000

Fellow student Marta Wong sets out to find some of the very first to witness the mystery lights.

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00:20:39,000 --> 00:20:48,000

We heard about a boy with his sister who went to fish in the river. They saw the lights and ran away from them.

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00:20:48,000 --> 00:20:52,000

The students track down the youngsters mother for an interview.

203

00:20:52,000 --> 00:20:59,000

He told her, run, go tell them at home, run, go tell our uncle and aunt.

204

00:20:59,000 --> 00:21:04,000

And so she comes running, but she was almost passing out by the time that she reached us.

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00:21:05,000 --> 00:21:10,000

Whatever it is they're seeing, the townsfolk are clearly spooked.

206

00:21:10,000 --> 00:21:15,000

It was a round light that was moving as if looking for something.

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00:21:15,000 --> 00:21:22,000

Wherever it fell, they say people disappeared.

208

00:21:22,000 --> 00:21:27,000

Nobody can provide any real evidence of missing people.

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00:21:27,000 --> 00:21:32,000

Then the students videotape an interview with Moto Taxi driver Jesus.

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00:21:32,000 --> 00:21:39,000

The Air Force came and said it was nothing. They even told me that I was crazy and I was cheating them.

211

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:46,000

Jesus shows the students where the lights can be found.

212

00:21:46,000 --> 00:21:54,000

Puzzled by a mix of fact and fantasy, they want to know, are the lights still there?

213

00:21:54,000 --> 00:21:59,000

They soon see far more than they bargained for.

214

00:22:03,000 --> 00:22:08,000

It's 8.30pm at the edge of the Peruvian jungle.

215

00:22:08,000 --> 00:22:15,000

Two journalism students become the latest to see the mystery lights that have been tormenting the villagers of San Juan.

216

00:22:15,000 --> 00:22:20,000

And their cameras are rolling.

217

00:22:22,000 --> 00:22:30,000

Here it is. At this moment, all the advice about you need to include a tree in your shot so you can see the movement.

218

00:22:30,000 --> 00:22:37,000

You should use a tripod. I forgot all that in the excitement.

219

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:48,000

And I was looking through the camera and I said this can't be happening.

220

00:22:48,000 --> 00:22:55,000

Was I looking at a street light? But there weren't any street lights. It must be a star.

221

00:22:55,000 --> 00:23:00,000

But the camera didn't have a strong enough lens to see that.

222

00:23:07,000 --> 00:23:16,000

I mean, I was scared. But at the same time, I was excited to be in a place where people told us the truth and we had proved it.

223

00:23:17,000 --> 00:23:26,000

To this day, the students can't explain the mystery of the lights.

224

00:23:26,000 --> 00:23:36,000

After reviewing their evidence, Tareza's father, retired head of the Peruvian Air Force's UFO Investigations Department, has no answers either.

225

00:23:36,000 --> 00:23:40,000

He has a suggestion that's more spiritual than factual.

226

00:23:41,000 --> 00:23:52,000

I think that this country is a magical country. And maybe the UFOs is something magical. I like that position.

227

00:23:54,000 --> 00:24:01,000

No answers have ever come from Peruvian officials. That disappoints many local villagers and their mayor.

228

00:24:02,000 --> 00:24:09,000

When I sent the letter, I expected a more conclusive answer from the Air Force.

229

00:24:09,000 --> 00:24:18,000

They have the means to be able to identify these objects. I've never received an explanation from the authorities.

230

00:24:23,000 --> 00:24:28,000

So now, the search for answers has been handed to experts outside Peru.

231

00:24:29,000 --> 00:24:39,000

Because the lights appear at the same time as rumors of other sinister events, the first question is, could the villagers all be suffering from some form of mass hysteria?

232

00:24:39,000 --> 00:24:47,000

I don't really like that term because mass hysteria implies that these people are crazy. These people are not crazy. It's something about being human.

233

00:24:47,000 --> 00:24:55,000

It's an underlying social mechanism that when we see lots of other people reporting something or saying something or feeling something, we're more likely to see it too.

234

00:24:55,000 --> 00:25:03,000

The problem is, we have very flawed perceptual systems. It's very easy for us to get confused between what we think we're seeing and what we really saw.

235

00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:17,000

That suggests, beneath all the anxiety and mystery, there could be a simple explanation. Could the lights be those of a regular aircraft? A helicopter, for instance.

236

00:25:18,000 --> 00:25:29,000

Now, if I was looking at the helicopter with a bright searchlight on, the bright searchlight may obliterate the rest of the light, so I may not see anything but the bright searchlight.

237

00:25:29,000 --> 00:25:37,000

But the minute the aircraft starts to change position, then one of the other lights may be visible, such as the flashing strobe light.

238

00:25:38,000 --> 00:25:47,000

That would explain how it moved forward in a straight line, turned on its axis and then went back. But it didn't make any sound.

239

00:25:49,000 --> 00:25:57,000

So, since they don't hear anything, many witnesses dismissed the possibility of a helicopter. But could this be a mistake?

240

00:25:57,000 --> 00:26:12,000

Well, if I give you a scenario of a police helicopter sitting in the hover on a windy night and the witnesses actually upwind of the helicopter, so all the noise footprint of the helicopter is being taken downwind, then upwind you may not hear the helicopter.

241

00:26:13,000 --> 00:26:17,000

Police and military helicopters have good reason to fly here.

242

00:26:19,000 --> 00:26:24,000

Peru is now the world's primary producer of cocaine. Smuggling is rife.

243

00:26:27,000 --> 00:26:31,000

Hunting down the drug barons is a major challenge for the authorities.

244

00:26:32,000 --> 00:26:41,000

So could fear surrounding that criminal activity and simple perceptual error explain the hysteria local people display when seeing the lights?

245

00:26:41,000 --> 00:27:00,000

They're looking for an explanation. They want to understand what it is. And they've got this cultural narrative available that all of us have been exposed to, that if things are flying in the sky and you don't know what they are, it probably makes them a UFO.

246

00:27:01,000 --> 00:27:12,000

As there was no official investigation, the case remains unsolved. The sightings last a total of three months, but even today, some still claim to see the lights.

247

00:27:13,000 --> 00:27:19,000

Along the river you can see the light. It's a disturbing light, but it doesn't attack them like before.

248

00:27:20,000 --> 00:27:34,000

The people of Picalpa became like family to us. We shared their fear. We got top marks for our work, but I would have preferred to have left them living in peace with the mystery solved.

249

00:27:34,000 --> 00:27:36,000

We were left with a calm mind.

250

00:27:43,000 --> 00:27:46,000

Bass Strait, Australia, 1978

251

00:27:50,000 --> 00:27:53,000

It's 6.20 p.m. on a fine October evening.

252

00:27:54,000 --> 00:27:59,000

Frederick Valentich, Freddie as he's known, prepares for take-off from Moriban Airport.

253

00:27:59,000 --> 00:28:13,000

been airport. Ahead of him, a 180-mile, 70-minute flight. Just the day before, a 100-hour service

254

00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:16,200

gives his plane a clean bill of health.

255

00:28:16,200 --> 00:28:22,400

Frederick Valentich's aircraft was a Cessna 182, a typical four-seat high-wing aircraft

256

00:28:22,400 --> 00:28:27,200

with a moderately powered engine. It was a very common aircraft back in those days.

257

00:28:27,200 --> 00:28:32,200

They got a very good safety record.

258

00:28:32,200 --> 00:28:38,200

Local ufologists George Simpson and John Ocottel, a light aircraft pilot himself, both know the

259

00:28:38,200 --> 00:28:40,200

Valentich case intimately.

260

00:28:40,200 --> 00:28:45,200

I actually saw this aircraft flying over my parents' house on the day that Frederick disappeared.

261

00:28:45,200 --> 00:28:49,200

There wasn't a cloud in the sky. There was no wind, or very, very light wind, if any.

262

00:28:49,200 --> 00:28:52,200

It was just perfect flying weather.

263

00:28:52,200 --> 00:28:57,200

Freddie was working his way up like all pilots did in those days. And one of the components is night

264

00:28:57,200 --> 00:29:02,200

navigation. And that's how this story starts, because Freddie was actually building his night

265

00:29:02,200 --> 00:29:05,200

navigation hours up.

266

00:29:05,200 --> 00:29:11,200

Freddie is healthy, happy, and seemingly facing a bright future. A hero to his 12-year-old

267

00:29:11,200 --> 00:29:13,200

brother, Richard.

268

00:29:13,200 --> 00:29:17,200

When he was younger, my dad took him for a joy flight. He just loved it. And that was it.

269

00:29:17,200 --> 00:29:24,200

He was his passion. He wanted to be a pilot from then onwards. And yeah, that's all he wanted to do.

270

00:29:24,200 --> 00:29:28,200

That night he was going to go to King Island. And while he was over there, what he used to do

271

00:29:28,200 --> 00:29:33,200

was he used to catch up with some people that he used to know and buy some crayfish and bring

272

00:29:33,200 --> 00:29:36,200

it back for the family.

273

00:29:36,200 --> 00:29:42,200

Freddie has a modest 150 flying hours under his belt, and is in contact with air traffic

274

00:29:42,200 --> 00:29:46,200

control throughout his flight.

275

00:29:46,200 --> 00:29:50,200

That means that transcripts of his radio messages are available to investigators like John

276

00:29:50,200 --> 00:29:52,200

Ocotel.

277

00:29:52,200 --> 00:29:59,200

About 500 feet, he would switch over to the frequency that looks after the area, which is

278

00:29:59,200 --> 00:30:04,200

controlled by Melbourne's Control Center in over Tullamarene. And that's where Steve

279

00:30:04,200 --> 00:30:09,200

Berovi, the air traffic controller, first makes contact with Freddie.

280

00:30:09,200 --> 00:30:14,200

The original voice recordings have never been released. They're recreated here from official

281

00:30:14,200 --> 00:30:17,200

transcripts.

282

00:30:17,200 --> 00:30:21,200

A question from Freddie gives the first sign of trouble.

283

00:30:21,200 --> 00:30:25,200

Is there any known traffic below 5,000?

284

00:30:25,200 --> 00:30:30,200

And the answer came back very quickly, no, there's no aircraft. And then Fred said, well, I think there's

285

00:30:30,200 --> 00:30:37,200

something flying around here.

286

00:30:37,200 --> 00:30:43,200

Freddie reports four bright landing lights on a fast moving object close to his plane.

287

00:30:43,200 --> 00:30:50,200

It was something very long. It was physical and Freddie obviously could see it.

288

00:30:50,200 --> 00:30:55,200

Freddie persists in his questions to air traffic control. Could military planes be nearby?

289

00:30:55,200 --> 00:31:01,200

And they ask him, can you confirm that you cannot identify the aircraft? And he says yes,

290

00:31:01,200 --> 00:31:04,200

affirmative. You cannot identify this aircraft.

291

00:31:04,200 --> 00:31:10,200

When I heard the tape, the way he describes it, it's just, it's calm and he's just describing

292

00:31:10,200 --> 00:31:15,200

what he's actually seen.

293

00:31:15,200 --> 00:31:20,200

It's been disappearing. It's been above him. More than a thousand of it above him. It's gone away.

294

00:31:20,200 --> 00:31:24,200

It's come back. It's disappeared. And now he says it seems to be playing some sort of a game.

295

00:31:24,200 --> 00:31:30,200

Then Freddie reports lights heading straight towards his plane, a situation in which any pilot

296

00:31:30,200 --> 00:31:34,200

considers rapid evasive action.

297

00:31:34,200 --> 00:31:41,200

A minute or so later, he says, Melvin, that strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again.

298

00:31:41,200 --> 00:31:44,200

It's hovering, but it's not an aircraft.

299

00:31:44,200 --> 00:31:54,200

There are the last words ever heard from Frederick Valentich. What follows next is chilling.

300

00:31:54,200 --> 00:31:59,200

This is the actual recording of what came over Freddie's radio.

301

00:31:59,200 --> 00:32:07,200

Then suddenly there's this click, click, click, click, click for about 17 seconds or so.

302

00:32:07,200 --> 00:32:13,200

Like a metallic sound of something like being rattled along.

303

00:32:13,200 --> 00:32:19,200

The air trapping controllers realize that something unusual has happened to Fred very rapidly.

304

00:32:19,200 --> 00:32:23,200

After that, there's nothing.

305

00:32:23,200 --> 00:32:30,200

12 minutes past 7, Melbourne loses contact with Frederick Valentich.

306

00:32:30,200 --> 00:32:35,200

I thought, no, no problem. If he's ditched in the sea, they'll find him. He'll be floating around.

307

00:32:35,200 --> 00:32:39,200

And there was no problem. They'll just rescue him.

308

00:32:39,200 --> 00:32:46,200

And probably by the end of the night, we'll see him again.

309

00:32:46,200 --> 00:32:51,200

For a week, aircraft and ships scour the seas for Freddie's plane.

310

00:32:51,200 --> 00:32:56,200

There's no trace of it. There's no oil slick. There's no ties around. There's no seat covers.

311

00:32:56,200 --> 00:33:02,200

There's no floating bits anywhere. There's just nothing left over.

312

00:33:02,200 --> 00:33:04,200

An official investigation begins.

313

00:33:04,200 --> 00:33:10,200

Some representatives from the Department of Transport came to our office and asked some questions,

314

00:33:10,200 --> 00:33:16,200

some general questions about whether we knew what could possibly have caused the aircraft to go missing.

315

00:33:16,200 --> 00:33:25,200

I haven't a clue. They took away the logbooks and probably the paperwork and I haven't seen them since.

316

00:33:25,200 --> 00:33:32,200

Soon afterwards, photographs emerge that may help the investigation.

317

00:33:32,200 --> 00:33:37,200

A tourist snapshot allegedly shows Freddie's plane.

318

00:33:37,200 --> 00:33:43,200

Is this confirmation that he is where he says he is at the time?

319

00:33:43,200 --> 00:33:47,200

Even the photograph itself, you blow it up and have a look at it under analysis.

320

00:33:47,200 --> 00:33:50,200

You can see Freddie's 182 going down the coast.

321

00:33:50,200 --> 00:33:57,200

A second batch of sunset pictures from another tourist captures a bizarre looking object far harder to explain.

322

00:33:57,200 --> 00:34:02,200

Now, it took about six photographs.

323

00:34:02,200 --> 00:34:08,200

The last photo was this odd photo, this strange looking thing in the sky.

324

00:34:08,200 --> 00:34:15,200

George Simpson claims the photographs were authenticated by experts, but there's no independent confirmation of that.

325

00:34:15,200 --> 00:34:21,200

I reckon that if it could have been identified, Fred would have told us. He said, I don't know about this thing.

326

00:34:21,200 --> 00:34:27,200

This thing was flying extremely fast. It was doing things that aircraft don't do.

327

00:34:27,200 --> 00:34:31,200

I think he's had an encounter with the UFO.

328

00:34:31,200 --> 00:34:41,200

Ahead of the British government's former UFO project at the Ministry of Defence, Nick Pope approaches the mysterious photographic evidence of a possible alien craft with caution.

329

00:34:41,200 --> 00:34:52,200

The vast straight photos are inconclusive. The photographs were examined at the time by a UFO organisation, but really the resources available to them were limited.

330

00:34:52,200 --> 00:35:01,200

For a proper retrospective analysis, you'd need the photographs, the camera, the negatives and the photographer himself.

331

00:35:06,200 --> 00:35:14,200

Through the years following Freddie's 1978 disappearance, investigators hunt for more down-to-earth explanations.

332

00:35:14,200 --> 00:35:21,200

The first big question, could this be a case of mechanical failure?

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00:35:21,200 --> 00:35:29,200

The man responsible for servicing and inspecting the plane just 24 hours before the fatal flight is mechanic Mike Hodges.

334

00:35:29,200 --> 00:35:37,200

The plane was in perfect condition when it left. Structurally sound, ready to go for another 100 hours.

335

00:35:37,200 --> 00:35:46,200

But could the aircraft have been overstressed in flight? Some speculate that Freddie pushes it too hard when he fears a collision.

336

00:35:46,200 --> 00:35:52,200

It's approaching from the south-west. The engine is one-file low. The thing is coughing.

337

00:35:59,200 --> 00:36:08,200

Some speculate Frederick Valentich pushes his plane too hard when he fears a collision with the unidentified flying object he reports over his radio.

338

00:36:09,200 --> 00:36:17,200

If another aircraft was coming towards you and you saw it at the last minute, it would necessitate very violent movements on the aircraft controls.

339

00:36:17,200 --> 00:36:22,200

And possibly the aircraft would be overstressed if you go beyond the limits.

340

00:36:22,200 --> 00:36:28,200

The Cessna 182 has a maximum manoeuvring speed of 128 miles per hour.

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00:36:29,200 --> 00:36:38,200

Beyond this, violent maneuvers run the risk of damaging cables, bending the structure or inducing G-forces that would cut off its fuel.

342

00:36:38,200 --> 00:36:44,200

Could mechanical damage like that account for the radio's haunting recording?

343

00:36:47,200 --> 00:36:57,200

The aircraft is being agitated very violently. The only way you could get that amount of vibration in an aircraft is, for example,

344

00:36:57,200 --> 00:37:05,200

if a propeller blade broke off. I think there's been a mid-air collision of some kind. That's my impression.

345

00:37:05,200 --> 00:37:12,200

But with no officially verified wreckage ever found, such mechanical issues can't be proved or disproved.

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00:37:12,200 --> 00:37:19,200

So investigators look at another theory. Could pilot error be responsible for Freddie's disappearance?

347

00:37:20,200 --> 00:37:27,200

He is qualified to fly a Cessna, but 20-year-old Frederick Valentich is far from experienced.

348

00:37:27,200 --> 00:37:30,200

This was his first ever night flight over water.

349

00:37:30,200 --> 00:37:36,200

Pilots inexperienced in instrument flying can become disorientated at night over the sea.

350

00:37:36,200 --> 00:37:42,200

So much so that they may even end up unwittingly flying upside down.

351

00:37:42,200 --> 00:37:53,200

If a person is deprived of their visual cues, like it's dark or they're flying in cloud, it's very common for pilots to find themselves upside down and heading towards the ground.

352

00:37:53,200 --> 00:37:59,200

Medical sociologist Dr. Robert Bartholomew believes this accounts for Freddie's unusual radio messages.

353

00:37:59,200 --> 00:38:07,200

It was genuinely, it appears, describing what he thought was a UFO and that he was being tell by this object.

354

00:38:07,200 --> 00:38:12,200

I believe him when he said that, but I think that object was himself.

355

00:38:12,200 --> 00:38:17,200

And he was seeing his own reflection got disoriented and crashed into the water.

356

00:38:19,200 --> 00:38:26,200

A government report found that Freddie was a firm believer in UFOs, a claim his family deny.

357

00:38:26,200 --> 00:38:36,200

Could this, together with the distraction of Freddie's own aircraft lights reflected in the water, have prevented him monitoring the Cessna's instruments with fatal results?

358

00:38:36,200 --> 00:38:41,200

Flying on instruments is a skill and it's a skill that you have to practice and keep current.

359

00:38:41,200 --> 00:38:46,200

And if that scan of your instruments breaks down, then you're in trouble.

360

00:38:46,200 --> 00:38:50,200

Cessnas are not designed to fly upside down for long.

361

00:38:50,200 --> 00:39:00,200

Because they fitted with a carburetor, which is gravity filled, and within a few seconds of the engine being upside down, the engine becomes starved of fuel.

362

00:39:00,200 --> 00:39:04,200

Yet Freddie's flying abilities are vigorously defended by his brother.

363

00:39:04,200 --> 00:39:09,200

If he was out of control, then he should have crashed into the suit. As simple as that.

364

00:39:09,200 --> 00:39:13,200

And so if that's what he's done, then where is any part of the wreckage?

365

00:39:13,200 --> 00:39:25,200

The ocean is a very big place and ships, planes go down all the time and it took years and years, decades to even locate the Titanic.

366

00:39:25,200 --> 00:39:27,200

And that's a massive vessel.

367

00:39:27,200 --> 00:39:34,200

So to think that this small plane that Valentich was in has never been found, that's no mystery at all.

368

00:39:34,200 --> 00:39:46,200

The lack of wreckage makes any theory impossible to prove, which leaves investigators with darker questions of whether Freddie's baffling radio messages were designed to confuse.

369

00:39:46,200 --> 00:39:51,200

An elaborate plot to run away or kill himself?

370

00:39:51,200 --> 00:40:00,200

Yeah, we had the drug running rumour. He wanted to commit suicide and if you want to commit suicide, you just jump off a bridge or just go under a train.

371

00:40:00,200 --> 00:40:04,200

The plane's not his, so there's nothing for him to claim. He didn't have life insurance.

372

00:40:04,200 --> 00:40:12,200

He had no mental illness, anything to really set alarms off when you're doing something like this. The department found nothing also.

373

00:40:12,200 --> 00:40:21,200

He was a guy who was very serious about his flying and so he wouldn't have done anything that would have jeopardized that position.

374

00:40:30,200 --> 00:40:38,200

The lack of any proven cause feeds speculation that Freddie had some form of alien encounter.

375

00:40:38,200 --> 00:40:43,200

What is certain is that the official investigation could come up with no answers.

376

00:40:43,200 --> 00:40:47,200

They don't have Fred, they don't have the aircraft, there's nothing that they can really come up with.

377

00:40:47,200 --> 00:40:51,200

They just said it's undetermined. The cause of this is undetermined.

378

00:40:51,200 --> 00:41:01,200

While it's a fascinating case for UFO investigators, for Freddie's family with no goodbyes and no body to bury, it's a tragedy.

379

00:41:01,200 --> 00:41:18,200

The thought of something from outside taking him is, I don't know, I'm not convinced about that, but without a body or without wreckage, I really don't understand what had actually happened to him.

380

00:41:18,200 --> 00:41:23,200

I mean, all I know is that I've lost a brother and my parents lost a son.

381

00:41:24,200 --> 00:41:37,200

Many UFO sightings have rational explanations, but others continue to defy understanding.

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00:41:37,200 --> 00:41:46,200

They are the cases that will always remain among the world's most intriguing UFO conspiracies.