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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:07,000

In 1952, an incredible sight over the skies of Washington, D.C.,

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00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:09,000

sends shockwaves across the nation.

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

This is the Cold War.

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

If you saw a UFO in the sky, a lot of people feared it was the Russians.

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00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:22,000

In Norway, eyewitnesses capture breathtaking images of a spectacular spiral in the sky.

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00:00:22,000 --> 00:00:25,000

I thought that this was something unnatural.

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00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:27,000

What the heck is that?

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

Is it aliens?

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00:00:28,000 --> 00:00:30,000

Is it coming for us?

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00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:36,000

And that Chicago's O'Hare Airport, a mysterious object in Veid's restricted airspace.

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00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:39,000

Is this a flight just got by C-17?

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00:00:39,000 --> 00:00:40,000

They just wanted this to go away.

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00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:44,000

They didn't want to be identified as the UFO airline.

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00:00:44,000 --> 00:00:47,000

Does anyone know what these phenomena are?

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00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:51,000

And do our governments know more than they ever reveal to us?

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

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

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00:00:58,000 --> 00:01:03,000

Washington, D.C.

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00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:07,000

July 19, 1952

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00:01:07,000 --> 00:01:10,000

11.40 p.m.

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00:01:10,000 --> 00:01:15,000

At National Airport, air traffic controller Edward Nugent can't believe his eyes

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00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:20,000

as seven unidentified blips materialize on his radar screen.

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00:01:20,000 --> 00:01:26,000

In the closely guarded airspace of Washington, D.C., this is his worst nightmare.

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00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:32,000

Suspecting a malfunction with his equipment, he calls over his supervisor, Harry Barnes.

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00:01:32,000 --> 00:01:37,000

But he confirms the radar is functioning normally.

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:39,000

The two men are baffled.

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00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:48,000

There are no aircraft on Earth capable of the speeds they are traveling.

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00:01:48,000 --> 00:01:56,000

On the opposite side of the airport, radar operator Howard Coughlin also registers the ominous objects.

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00:01:56,000 --> 00:02:04,000

Unlike his fellow air traffic controllers, he sees the objects with his own eyes.

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00:02:04,000 --> 00:02:09,000

He immediately radios his superior to inform him of the developing situation.

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:17,000

Barnes, now frantic, raises the alarm at Andrews Air Force Base nine miles from the airport.

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00:02:17,000 --> 00:02:25,000

Could the nation's capital, home to nearly a million people and the world's most powerful man, be under threat?

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:32,000

Medical sociologist Dr. Robert Bartholomew believes the political situation at the time increases the concern.

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00:02:32,000 --> 00:02:37,000

There were a number of sightings that were documented during the late 40s and early 50s

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00:02:37,000 --> 00:02:46,000

of people actually reporting that they could see on the side of saucers a hammer and sickle insignia.

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00:02:46,000 --> 00:02:53,000

In the early 1950s, Soviet development of nuclear technology drives a deadly arms race.

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00:02:53,000 --> 00:02:58,000

As the Red Empire expands into Eastern Europe, so does fear of communism.

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00:02:58,000 --> 00:03:04,000

A lot of people don't realize that the FBI routinely interviewed flying saucer witnesses

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00:03:04,000 --> 00:03:10,000

because there was a common belief that they may have been Russian agents

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00:03:10,000 --> 00:03:18,000

and they were actually dispensing disinformation to try to cause mass panic in the United States.

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00:03:18,000 --> 00:03:26,000

So these strange lights immediately make the Air Force go on the offensive.

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00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:38,000

Two F-94s scramble to intercept.

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00:03:38,000 --> 00:03:47,000

The Starfire Jets flying at 600 miles per hour are seconds away when their targets inexplicably vanish.

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00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:53,000

Nick Pope, former head of the UFO project at the British Ministry of Defense, has been fascinated by this case for decades.

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00:03:53,000 --> 00:04:02,000

To some people, it was almost as if a bizarre game of cat and mouse was playing itself out in the skies of Washington, D.C.

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00:04:02,000 --> 00:04:11,000

The following week, the story hits the headlines and in the days that follow, the Air Force is bombarded with hundreds of reports.

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00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:22,000

The Air Force is well prepared for such calls. Since 1947, it has actively investigated around 2,000 unexplained sightings.

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00:04:22,000 --> 00:04:31,000

Many are recorded by Project Blue Book, headed up by Captain Edward Ruppelt, one of the first men to popularize the term UFO.

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00:04:31,000 --> 00:04:37,000

In the wake of the D.C. sightings, he consults radar expert Captain Roy James.

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00:04:37,000 --> 00:04:48,000

The sighting is initially dismissed as a trick of the weather. But just one week later, on July 26th, the lights are back.

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00:04:48,000 --> 00:04:53,000

Again, fighter jets engage in a high-speed pursuit.

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00:04:53,000 --> 00:04:59,000

But the bewildered pilots have never met an adversary like this before.

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

Their supersonic jets don't even get close.

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00:05:04,000 --> 00:05:12,000

How can these mysterious lights, for two weekends in a row, operate with seeming impunity over the skies of Washington, D.C.?

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00:05:12,000 --> 00:05:16,000

For President Truman, enough is enough.

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00:05:16,000 --> 00:05:21,000

President Truman personally telephoned to ask what was going on.

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00:05:21,000 --> 00:05:27,000

This was almost without precedent. Ruppelt must have been shaking in his boots.

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00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:34,000

According to press reports, orders are issued to shoot down UFOs that refuse to land.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:41,000

Mounting public pressure makes the Air Force call its biggest press conference since World War II.

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:56,000

It's been due to our feeling of an obligation to identify and analyze to the best of our ability anything in the air that may have the possibility of threat or menace to the United States.

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00:05:56,000 --> 00:06:05,000

The Air Force's best suggestion is that the lights are explained by a meteorological oddity called a temperature inversion.

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00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:11,000

Atmospheric scientist and storm chaser Dr. Karen Kuseba explains how it works.

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00:06:11,000 --> 00:06:18,000

Temperature inversions happen usually when there's a layer of very cold, dense air near the surface and a layer than a warm air overlaying that.

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00:06:18,000 --> 00:06:29,000

So what you get then is a temperature profile that increases with height, which means that objects look higher up than they normally would because of the way the light bends as it travels through the inversion.

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00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:37,000

This means innocuous objects or lights moving along the ground can seem to be projected high up in the sky.

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00:06:37,000 --> 00:06:46,000

In terms of light that gets refracted that looks like big balls, I mean some of it just could be city lights in the way that it's traveling through these different inversions.

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00:06:46,000 --> 00:06:51,000

It might make things look either flared or that it has some movement associated with it.

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00:06:51,000 --> 00:06:56,000

This might explain the visual sightings, but what about the positive radar readings?

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00:06:56,000 --> 00:07:01,000

Chris Moorshead is a former radar engineer with the British Royal Navy.

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

Primary radar operates on a principle of echolocation.

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00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:15,000

What we do is we transmit pulses of radio energy out into the ether and then we collect any echoes that come back which have bounced off any targets aircraft.

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00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:19,000

Anything that the radar illuminates.

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00:07:19,000 --> 00:07:30,000

In the same way an inversion acts like a prism, bending light, it can also bend radio waves and trick radar into registering targets that are actually in different locations.

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00:07:30,000 --> 00:07:42,000

Temperature inversions and things like that can actually spoof a radar which can lead to factors which cause a response when in fact there's nothing physical out there.

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00:07:42,000 --> 00:07:48,000

Retired Air Force pilot and astronomer James McGehee goes one step further.

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00:07:48,000 --> 00:08:00,000

We have to understand that the radar operators in Washington have very bad radar and they didn't have all kinds of sophisticated filtering devices today.

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00:08:00,000 --> 00:08:04,000

So it would pick up all kinds of various objects.

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00:08:04,000 --> 00:08:14,000

The Air Force Verdict, a combination of weather conditions and inadequate equipment are the cause of both the visual and radar sightings.

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00:08:14,000 --> 00:08:21,000

But some still believe the incursion into American airspace may come from an entirely different source.

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00:08:21,000 --> 00:08:31,000

Can we protect ourselves against the Soviets and if it's not the Soviets, who or what is it?

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00:08:32,000 --> 00:08:38,000

In 1952 a series of strange lights converge over Washington DC.

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00:08:38,000 --> 00:08:45,000

The media jumps on the story. The worried public want answers.

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00:08:45,000 --> 00:08:49,000

We have been able adequately to explain.

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00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:56,000

The government quickly puts forward a rational explanation, but for Nick Pope there is something else fueling the nation's anxiety.

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00:08:56,000 --> 00:09:01,000

The public were getting mixed messages because of the media coverage.

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00:09:01,000 --> 00:09:06,000

Wild stories were doing the rounds about these UFO sightings.

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00:09:06,000 --> 00:09:11,000

Might something otherworldly hold the key to understanding the mystery?

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00:09:11,000 --> 00:09:16,000

Members of the public were obsessed with the whole flying saucer issue.

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00:09:16,000 --> 00:09:27,000

The sci-fi movies like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* had really put in people's mind the possibility that we might meet visitors from another world.

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00:09:27,000 --> 00:09:29,000

We speak every language.

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00:09:29,000 --> 00:09:33,000

Can't expect me to believe that. I'm getting out of here.

91

00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:35,000

Day where you are.

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00:09:35,000 --> 00:09:45,000

In the early 1950s television and cinema saw a record release of science fiction titles, while comic book sales peaked with a circulation of over a billion.

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00:09:45,000 --> 00:09:52,000

In popular culture the threat of alien invasion reflected the menace of communism.

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00:09:52,000 --> 00:10:01,000

It's important not to just look at a sighting per se, but the context in the history of the sighting. That's very important.

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00:10:01,000 --> 00:10:08,000

Against this setting the authorities were quick to subdue wild stories of alien visitors circulating in the nation's press.

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00:10:08,000 --> 00:10:17,000

Equally, if these sightings are simply a Russian ploy to stoke chaos and fear, the US government must do all they can to shut the rumors down.

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00:10:17,000 --> 00:10:25,000

All this worry and panic played itself out in the media in a way which really hadn't happened before.

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00:10:25,000 --> 00:10:31,000

The public were fascinated by this, but they were also rather disturbed by it.

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00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:37,000

The Air Force stand by their initial conclusion.

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00:10:37,000 --> 00:10:44,000

For many people this official explanation is enough and the nation quickly breathes a sigh of relief.

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00:10:44,000 --> 00:10:49,000

But for the confused eyewitnesses, questions remain.

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00:10:49,000 --> 00:11:02,000

In time some of the original air traffic controllers and military who had actually seen the UFOs came to disbelieve the government's own explanation on this.

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00:11:02,000 --> 00:11:08,000

So what was really in the skies over Washington those two weekends in July 1952?

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00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:23,000

What I think probably happened is you have a lot of overactive imaginations, people telling tall tales and stories about it, and it sort of got blown up very quickly.

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00:11:23,000 --> 00:11:28,000

I think this is a complex case which likely has multiple explanations.

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00:11:28,000 --> 00:11:33,000

The temperature inversion and the false radar returns is certainly part of the story.

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00:11:33,000 --> 00:11:42,000

But in amongst all of that, I think there may still be one or two sightings that remain to this day unexplained.

108

00:11:53,000 --> 00:12:06,000

It's 11.55 am. At Shoah Military Garrison, 75 miles south of Thromso, 29-year-old Army officer Christopher Roccoci is driving to his offices just outside the base.

109

00:12:06,000 --> 00:12:14,000

It was the start of the winter. It was dark in the mornings and the sun was hardly ever up.

110

00:12:14,000 --> 00:12:19,000

Suddenly he's distracted by a breathtaking light circling high above him.

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00:12:19,000 --> 00:12:26,000

I saw the spiral up in the sky, dead straight ahead of the road, so it was a good place to stop.

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00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:31,000

But immediately when I pulled my car over, I got out and pulled up my camera.

113

00:12:31,000 --> 00:12:36,000

I thought about taking a picture, but it was too big to take a picture of.

114

00:12:36,000 --> 00:12:40,000

I looked too amazing, so I had to film it.

115

00:12:41,000 --> 00:12:49,000

I thought about when other people film amazing things, they zoom in on it and ruin the whole thing.

116

00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:55,000

So I actually started zooming in and I thought, oh no, no, no, no, don't do it, don't do it, and I zoom back out.

117

00:12:55,000 --> 00:12:58,000

He captures these incredible images.

118

00:13:01,000 --> 00:13:05,000

When I first saw it, I just thought, what the heck is that?

119

00:13:05,000 --> 00:13:09,000

And I thought briefly, oh, is it aliens?

120

00:13:09,000 --> 00:13:17,000

It's coming for us, it is staying put, and after a few seconds you can see that it was staying put and just growing in size, sort of.

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00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:21,000

Christopher is captivated by the bizarre yet beautiful spectacle.

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00:13:21,000 --> 00:13:30,000

It lasted about a minute or so, swirling around, and it ended just turning itself off into a black hole that just started in the middle

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00:13:30,000 --> 00:13:34,000

and expanded out until it was just gone.

124

00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:42,000

I called my security officer off the camp because I wanted to know if I didn't film anything that

we shouldn't film.

125

00:13:42,000 --> 00:13:45,000

But the security officer knows nothing.

126

00:13:45,000 --> 00:13:50,000

I've never in my life seen anything that strange and unexplainable.

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00:13:50,000 --> 00:13:57,000

The size of it and everything that I've been inspired with was the most amazing thing I've seen.

128

00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:01,000

Christopher isn't the only one to witness the astonishing light display.

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00:14:02,000 --> 00:14:06,000

Chaplain Tor Stranda has been serving Tromsø for over 30 years.

130

00:14:06,000 --> 00:14:12,000

I remember it was early in the morning, I just had my breakfast.

131

00:14:12,000 --> 00:14:26,000

This was in a dark period, and I went to the window with a cup of coffee, and I looked out and I saw some strange light behind the mountains.

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00:14:27,000 --> 00:14:30,000

In the beginning it was very small.

133

00:14:30,000 --> 00:14:33,000

First I saw just a strange light.

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00:14:33,000 --> 00:14:43,000

I thought it was a kind of star or something like that, and it grows, so I knew it came from far behind the mountains.

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00:14:43,000 --> 00:14:51,000

So I took my camera and went out on the balcony, and this light became more special.

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00:14:51,000 --> 00:14:54,000

It went like a circle.

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00:14:54,000 --> 00:15:02,000

It was way wide, but when it dissolved it, it went into kind of blue at the edge of this circle.

138

00:15:03,000 --> 00:15:09,000

Tor is stunned. He's had a complete loss to explain the puzzling light in the sky above Norway.

139

00:15:09,000 --> 00:15:16,000

I was so occupied with filming, so afterward I started thinking what was this? What have I filmed?

140

00:15:16,000 --> 00:15:24,000

I knew that I had filmed something strange, but I didn't realize what it was.

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00:15:24,000 --> 00:15:30,000

I know that one day my lord will return, but not in that way.

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00:15:31,000 --> 00:15:40,000

On the other side of town, at the offices of NRK, the Norwegian national broadcaster, one reporter's day is about to take an unexpected turn.

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00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:46,000

My boss said, you are going out. There is a strange light.

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00:15:46,000 --> 00:15:55,000

And I didn't understand a strange light. I hadn't heard about the light.

145

00:15:58,000 --> 00:16:02,000

The newsroom descends into chaos as reports come flooding in.

146

00:16:03,000 --> 00:16:10,000

The phone rang and people were trying to get in contact with us.

147

00:16:10,000 --> 00:16:19,000

My boss was stressed and told me to get in the car and try to find out what this is.

148

00:16:20,000 --> 00:16:27,000

People were scared because we had never seen something like that before.

149

00:16:28,000 --> 00:16:33,000

Head of news Nina Einem knows this will be a busy day.

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00:16:34,000 --> 00:16:43,000

When we got the videos from the more rural areas, we saw that this was something we had never seen before.

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00:16:43,000 --> 00:16:47,000

It was like, wow, we had to try and find out what this was.

152

00:16:47,000 --> 00:16:51,000

But we understood that this was going to be the story of this day.

153

00:16:52,000 --> 00:17:00,000

As a public broadcaster serving the 70,000 people of Tromsø, she feels the full burden of responsibility on her shoulders.

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

For some reason when something strange happened, people tend to believe that we have all the answers.

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00:17:07,000 --> 00:17:11,000

But we had only questions at that time.

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00:17:15,000 --> 00:17:20,000

December 2009. An incredible light is spotted in the sky over Norway.

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00:17:20,000 --> 00:17:27,000

In the media frenzy that follows, the story attracts a worldwide audience.

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00:17:27,000 --> 00:17:34,000

The best meteorological experts can come up with is a bizarre and rare weather phenomenon.

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00:17:34,000 --> 00:17:41,000

There is precedent. In October of the same year, this footage is filmed in the skies over Moscow.

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00:17:41,000 --> 00:17:46,000

Eyewitnesses are convinced they are seeing something otherworldly.

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00:17:46,000 --> 00:17:50,000

Even suggesting a gateway to another dimension has been ripped open.

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00:17:52,000 --> 00:17:57,000

Could a unique weather event really explain the spectacle of the Norway spiral?

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00:17:59,000 --> 00:18:04,000

Professor Randy Servenny is an atmospheric scientist at Arizona State University.

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00:18:04,000 --> 00:18:06,000

He thinks he might have the answer.

165

00:18:06,000 --> 00:18:15,000

The Norway spiral gives maybe the impression that the Norway spiral is a very different kind of spiral.

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00:18:15,000 --> 00:18:20,000

Maybe the impression that something was dropping through a cloud layer.

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00:18:20,000 --> 00:18:24,000

And that brings to mind something that's called a hole punch cloud.

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00:18:24,000 --> 00:18:31,000

The idea that an object can trigger the water in a cloud to suddenly condense out.

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00:18:33,000 --> 00:18:36,000

Clouds are a mass of super-cooled water droplets.

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00:18:36,000 --> 00:18:40,000

It's thought these incredible displays are triggered by passing aircraft.

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00:18:41,000 --> 00:18:46,000

Propellers and wings can rapidly lower the temperature of the cloud formation they're flying through.

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00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:50,000

This quickly transforms the super-cooled water droplets to ice,

173

00:18:50,000 --> 00:18:54,000

starting a chain reaction which expands out to form a giant hole.

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00:18:54,000 --> 00:19:00,000

This might explain the Moscow sighting, but can it also account for what's seen in Norway?

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00:19:02,000 --> 00:19:06,000

Typically, this cloud phenomenon occurs at an average of 20,000 feet,

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00:19:06,000 --> 00:19:10,000

and it's this fact alone that punches the biggest hole in the weather theory.

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

From the video evidence, it's clear Tor Stranda and Christopher filmed the same incredible event.

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00:19:16,000 --> 00:19:20,000

But their sightings are over 75 miles apart.

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00:19:20,000 --> 00:19:25,000

These type of clouds aren't high enough in the sky to be seen across such a wide area.

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00:19:25,000 --> 00:19:31,000

This makes it impossible for two people so far away from each other to witness the same incident.

181

00:19:32,000 --> 00:19:36,000

The source of the spiral has to be from much higher in the atmosphere.

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00:19:36,000 --> 00:19:39,000

Could it really be a visitor from another world?

183

00:19:39,000 --> 00:19:46,000

Many people wanted to show us their photos, but not so many wanted to talk about it.

184

00:19:46,000 --> 00:19:51,000

We were afraid of not being believed.

185

00:19:51,000 --> 00:19:59,000

People want an explanation, a natural explanation, so that they cannot be so afraid.

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00:20:01,000 --> 00:20:09,000

With a lack of credible leads, attention turns to the ISCAT Atmospheric Research Facility, 18 miles southeast of Tromsø.

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00:20:09,000 --> 00:20:15,000

They use high-tech radar equipment to uncover the secrets of Earth's protective shield.

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

Dr. Michael Rietveld is the man in charge.

189

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

We'd got several phone calls from people asking if we knew what the event was.

190

00:20:28,000 --> 00:20:35,000

Here, they study the effects of climate change in the ionosphere, in the upper reaches of the atmosphere.

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00:20:35,000 --> 00:20:40,000

A zone that stretches to over 300 miles high will be on the edge of space.

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00:20:40,000 --> 00:20:46,000

They know that we can actually produce some optical effects in the upper atmosphere using our heating facility.

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00:20:46,000 --> 00:20:49,000

So maybe they thought it was something related to that.

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00:20:49,000 --> 00:20:56,000

One of the experiments they run, codenamed tequila sunrise, uses high-powered radar to superheat air molecules.

195

00:20:56,000 --> 00:21:00,000

It's capable of generating some dramatic results.

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00:21:00,000 --> 00:21:06,000

Well, the heating experiment transmits a powerful shortwave up into the sky.

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00:21:06,000 --> 00:21:13,000

The electrons we energize can excite molecules of the atmosphere and produce light in a limited area.

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00:21:13,000 --> 00:21:18,000

And we use it to try and study the mechanism of how the electrons get accelerated.

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00:21:18,000 --> 00:21:24,000

It seems ISCAT have the power to produce some weird and wonderful cosmic displays.

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00:21:25,000 --> 00:21:29,000

Is this the source of the hypnotic spiral?

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00:21:29,000 --> 00:21:35,000

Michael understands why the people of Norway, desperate for answers, turn their attention on his team.

202

00:21:35,000 --> 00:21:41,000

The optical effects we produce with heating are in the same high range as a spiral.

203

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:47,000

But he also knows that the curious light can't possibly have anything to do with his facility.

204

00:21:47,000 --> 00:21:53,000

Well, the heating experiment produces light that actually normally you can't see with the eye. It's very faint.

205

00:21:54,000 --> 00:22:00,000

I knew it wasn't heating because we were not running that week. We were planning to run the following week.

206

00:22:00,000 --> 00:22:06,000

Michael, now fascinated, offers his own idea as to the origin of the mystifying light.

207

00:22:06,000 --> 00:22:16,000

We knew there was a meteor shower taking place about this time, so I thought maybe it was some unusual spectacular meteor.

208

00:22:16,000 --> 00:22:21,000

Each year, up to 80,000 tons of these cosmic missiles bombard the Earth,

209

00:22:21,000 --> 00:22:25,000

and they are certainly capable of producing energetic light shows.

210

00:22:25,000 --> 00:22:31,000

Stargazer and expert of the cosmos, Professor Carolyn Crawford, explains more.

211

00:22:31,000 --> 00:22:37,000

A meteor is simply a fragment of space rock, and as it falls through the atmosphere,

212

00:22:37,000 --> 00:22:41,000

it's going to rub against the molecules of air, it's going to heat up,

213

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:49,000

and that'll start to cause the space rock itself to glow and create a kind of streak that follows after the space rock as it falls through the air.

214

00:22:50,000 --> 00:22:54,000

It's a solid theory, but there is a major problem.

215

00:22:54,000 --> 00:23:02,000

The key thing about seeing a shooting star and meteor streak through the sky is it produces a long straight streak.

216

00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:08,000

Even with different issues of perspective, it's very difficult to see how that could ever be viewed as a spiral.

217

00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:13,000

So what else could this powerful glowing light be?

218

00:23:13,000 --> 00:23:16,000

Theories were coming in thick and fast.

219

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

Of course, the northern lights are visible from Norway, so people said, well, isn't this the northern lights?

220

00:23:23,000 --> 00:23:29,000

Dr. Paul Brekka is a solar physicist and senior advisor at the Norwegian Space Center.

221

00:23:29,000 --> 00:23:33,000

Well, I just love the northern lights, and I've been working on the Sun-Earth connection,

222

00:23:33,000 --> 00:23:38,000

how the Sun affects us, how it's producing space weather and how it can change climate,

223

00:23:38,000 --> 00:23:41,000

and also how it produces northern lights.

224

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:48,000

It's not long before his phone starts ringing as well, and he gets drawn into the deepening mystery.

225

00:23:48,000 --> 00:23:54,000

Some journalists called, they said they had received some strange images from lots of people in North Norway,

226

00:23:54,000 --> 00:23:57,000

and they wondered if we could comment on these pictures.

227

00:23:58,000 --> 00:24:03,000

The Aurora Borealis is one of the most magnificent sites on Earth.

228

00:24:03,000 --> 00:24:12,000

These dazzling exhibitions occur when charged solar particles from the Sun slam into gas molecules in the Earth's upper atmosphere.

229

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

Here, some are diverted down towards the Earth's magnetic poles, where they create spectacular displays that glow in the sky.

230

00:24:21,000 --> 00:24:25,000

The spiral shape was at the same altitude as the northern lights, so in that respect,

231

00:24:25,000 --> 00:24:29,000

it's okay to think maybe it was some northern lights or some phenomena within space.

232

00:24:30,000 --> 00:24:35,000

The evidence looks strong, and Paul feels compelled to delve deeper into the case.

233

00:24:37,000 --> 00:24:40,000

Here's some very nice pictures of the northern lights.

234

00:24:43,000 --> 00:24:47,000

Well, I can understand that people, maybe, took it for being a northern light.

235

00:24:47,000 --> 00:24:52,000

So this is a very typical picture of the northern lights. You can see a very nice arc, a curtain-like,

236

00:24:52,000 --> 00:24:54,000

very often purple in the lower part.

237

00:24:56,000 --> 00:24:58,000

On closer inspection, he uncovers a problem.

238

00:24:59,000 --> 00:25:04,000

Sometimes the northern lights also do a curly spin like this. It belongs to a much bigger structure.

239

00:25:04,000 --> 00:25:11,000

It's not the perfect spiral, and this one is very perfect, and the color is also very wrong compared to what we see in the northern lights.

240

00:25:11,000 --> 00:25:13,000

But that's not all.

241

00:25:13,000 --> 00:25:17,000

Further analysis reveals that solar activity is low on the morning in question.

242

00:25:19,000 --> 00:25:23,000

To create anything close to something that could be mistaken for a glowing spiral,

243

00:25:24,000 --> 00:25:27,000

the solar winds would need to be far stronger.

244

00:25:29,000 --> 00:25:36,000

So if it's not weird weather, 3,000-degree lumps of speeding space rock, or the magnificent northern lights,

245

00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:38,000

what is it?

246

00:25:39,000 --> 00:25:48,000

With the world's most powerful man on his way to the country, the frantic search for answers continues.

247

00:25:54,000 --> 00:25:59,000

In the hunt for the source of the stunning Norway spiral, the NRK newsroom chased down every lead.

248

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

It's not long before their attention turns to the military.

249

00:26:03,000 --> 00:26:10,000

We called the Norwegian defence. If anyone knows what this is, it's probably the defence.

250

00:26:11,000 --> 00:26:16,000

They didn't want to speculate. They didn't want to say what they knew.

251

00:26:17,000 --> 00:26:21,000

Nina Einem suspects a conspiracy, but she has no proof.

252

00:26:22,000 --> 00:26:28,000

This is one of the most heavy surveillance areas in the world.

253

00:26:28,000 --> 00:26:31,000

We have Russia on our step. We are NATO allies.

254

00:26:32,000 --> 00:26:39,000

And the American defence have built and paid for big radar systems in northern Norway.

255

00:26:40,000 --> 00:26:46,000

Around the same time in 2009, President Barack Obama is awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize.

256

00:26:48,000 --> 00:26:52,000

Is there some connection between this visit and the dazzling Norway spiral?

257

00:26:53,000 --> 00:26:59,000

The fact that President Obama was visiting had focused the eyes of the world on Norway.

258

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

What better setting to maybe display your new technology, your new capability?

259

00:27:07,000 --> 00:27:14,000

Maybe if either the Americans or the Russians possessed some sort of new weapon, they'd want to display it as a show of force.

260

00:27:15,000 --> 00:27:19,000

For Dr Paul Preck, this is nothing more than a time-wasting dead-end for the investigation.

261

00:27:19,000 --> 00:27:24,000

It was a big fuss about Obama, and of course it's not often the American President comes to Oslo.

262

00:27:25,000 --> 00:27:30,000

There's always people trying to draw connection between all kind of stuff, and I think it was just a coincidence that happened this day.

263

00:27:31,000 --> 00:27:35,000

Certain that visit is unconnected, he makes it his mission to uncover the truth.

264

00:27:36,000 --> 00:27:41,000

He sets about analyzing the photos and videos of the spectacular spiral that are now flooding the web.

265

00:27:42,000 --> 00:27:45,000

When I saw the still pictures, it was a little bit hard to explain.

266

00:27:45,000 --> 00:27:52,000

But when I saw the video that was also put online, it was quite clear it must be a rocket that was going wrong.

267

00:27:59,000 --> 00:28:01,000

Rocket misfires are nothing new.

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00:28:04,000 --> 00:28:08,000

From the dawn of their invention, they have failed in all manner of remarkable ways.

269

00:28:16,000 --> 00:28:21,000

So how can a misfiring rocket possibly create such an improbable effect?

270

00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:28,000

This rocket consists basically of three stages, three engines, but each of the engines always have what we call a nozzle, a rocket nozzle,

271

00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:35,000

which is basically used to propel the gases out on the back and have to be perfectly aligned so it goes in a straight position.

272

00:28:36,000 --> 00:28:41,000

If this nozzle breaks off or gets damaged for some reason, the fumes will go out to one side

273

00:28:41,000 --> 00:28:46,000

and that will start pushing the bottom of the rocket to the side while it's moving up in the atmosphere

274

00:28:47,000 --> 00:28:52,000

and making this spiral shape and the rocket fume will then spray out just like the sprinklers in your garden hose.

275

00:28:53,000 --> 00:28:55,000

And that's what makes that very strange pattern in the sky.

276

00:28:56,000 --> 00:29:01,000

This still doesn't account for the concentric pattern. Why are the circles so perfectly formed?

277

00:29:03,000 --> 00:29:07,000

The key could be that the astonishing event takes place extraordinarily high in the atmosphere.

278

00:29:08,000 --> 00:29:14,000

In the vacuum of space, a misfiring rocket would behave very differently to how it would on Earth.

279

00:29:15,000 --> 00:29:25,000

At high altitude, the air is deadly still and the weaker gravitational pull means an out-of-control rocket is able to rotate freely once set in motion.

280

00:29:26,000 --> 00:29:33,000

At this extreme height, there is no wind, so any fumes or fuel being pumped out linger for longer before dispersing.

281

00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:37,000

A malfunctioning missile is now the prime suspect.

282

00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:42,000

Paul is convinced the military are involved, but he needs proof.

283

00:29:43,000 --> 00:29:51,000

The situation was not helped by the fact that inherently when you're dealing with rocket tests, military authorities tend to be quite secretive

284

00:29:52,000 --> 00:29:56,000

and not everyone was telling the same story, not everyone was telling the full story.

285

00:29:57,000 --> 00:30:02,000

To discover the secretive source, it's crucial to figure out where exactly this light originates.

286

00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:06,000

We have a rocket range in North Norway. It is also a rocket range in North Sweden.

287

00:30:07,000 --> 00:30:15,000

From those pictures taken in direction they were taking off, it couldn't be in those two rocket ranges because they were directed towards east.

288

00:30:16,000 --> 00:30:21,000

Based on the trajectory of the strange object and the positions of the sightings, he's able to narrow the search.

289

00:30:22,000 --> 00:30:24,000

He's left with only one possibility.

290

00:30:25,000 --> 00:30:29,000

The only place then is Russia, and most probably then from the White Sea.

291

00:30:30,000 --> 00:30:36,000

The White Sea, around 350 miles from Norway's border, is a hotbed of Russian naval activity.

292

00:30:38,000 --> 00:30:42,000

Now suspecting Norway's eastern neighbor, Paul hunts for the final piece of the jigsaw.

293

00:30:43,000 --> 00:30:45,000

He trolls the internet looking for clues.

294

00:30:46,000 --> 00:30:50,000

At last, he stumbles upon a communication intercepted by an amateur radio website.

295

00:30:51,000 --> 00:30:53,000

It's the breakthrough he needs.

296

00:30:54,000 --> 00:30:57,000

We found the answer, I think, when we found this message.

297

00:30:58,000 --> 00:31:01,000

And it contained lots of information that basically told us this must be a missile.

298

00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:11,000

It says it will be a warning in the White Sea, a rocket launch in the same time frame, 9th of December, from 2 to 9am.

299

00:31:12,000 --> 00:31:13,000

Exactly the same time we saw the event.

300

00:31:14,000 --> 00:31:20,000

So it was clearly a message sent out from the Russian government that you're not allowed to move into this area because of testing of missiles.

301

00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:27,000

Satisfied a high altitude rocket failure is the culprit. Paul feels ready to break the story to Norwegian media.

302

00:31:28,000 --> 00:31:32,000

We think it might be a rocket which was sent up from possibly a boat or submarine in the far north.

303

00:31:33,000 --> 00:31:39,000

In the days that follow, the wild speculation forces the hand of the Russian military, and they release a statement.

304

00:31:40,000 --> 00:31:50,000

Although they don't directly confess that a failed rocket is the source of the light, they do admit to testing submarine-launched intercontinental missiles in the White Sea.

305

00:31:51,000 --> 00:32:00,000

On the second day, they could confirm that there had been a Russian rocket, and there was no doubt about it.

306

00:32:01,000 --> 00:32:06,000

It seems likely a malfunctioning missile is the cause. Case closed.

307

00:32:07,000 --> 00:32:14,000

Even then, despite the weight of evidence, not everyone is sure the mystery can be so easily explained away.

308

00:32:16,000 --> 00:32:21,000

It was a bizarre pattern. Still lots of people I think are not convinced it was a rocket missile.

309

00:32:22,000 --> 00:32:26,000

I think people try to connect it to something out of this world, UFO and so on.

310

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

Still people are arguing this on the internet. It cannot be this missile. It has to be something else.

311

00:32:33,000 --> 00:32:36,000

Some aliens coming in and trying to warp itself through the atmosphere.

312

00:32:43,000 --> 00:32:48,000

Chicago O'Hare International Airport. November 7th, 2006.

313

00:32:49,000 --> 00:32:55,000

This is one of the busiest airports in the world, handling over 2,000 flights a day.

314

00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:02,000

Controlling this much traffic means nothing gets in or out without being seen.

315

00:33:03,000 --> 00:33:05,000

Until today.

316

00:33:07,000 --> 00:33:17,000

At 4.15pm, the United Airlines ramp worker is making final checks on flight number 446 to North Carolina, when he's confronted by an astonishing sight.

317

00:33:19,000 --> 00:33:25,000

Just below the thick grey low-lying cloud, a mysterious object silently hovers.

318

00:33:27,000 --> 00:33:30,000

Anything unusual in the air is a serious threat to passenger safety.

319

00:33:35,000 --> 00:33:40,000

He wastes no time contacting the pilot and first officer on board the waiting 737.

320

00:33:41,000 --> 00:33:46,000

The aircrew are perplexed, as they too bear witness to the incredible sight.

321

00:33:49,000 --> 00:33:54,000

Chicago Tribune reporter John Hilcovitch is the man to first break the story.

322

00:33:55,000 --> 00:34:02,000

The radio waves were just burning up at O'Hare on the United Frequency because so many people were listening in as part of their job.

323

00:34:03,000 --> 00:34:08,000

They have to be tuned in. So there was some banter back and forth that maybe somebody was playing a joke.

324

00:34:10,000 --> 00:34:13,000

What you're about to hear are actual recordings from the day.

325

00:34:14,000 --> 00:34:15,000

We're at the airport.

326

00:34:15,000 --> 00:34:17,000

Hey David, this is from the United Tower.

327

00:34:17,000 --> 00:34:20,000

Hey, did you see a flying disc out by C-17?

328

00:34:20,000 --> 00:34:22,000

Oh, the name is Star-Essue.

329

00:34:22,000 --> 00:34:23,000

Oh, it's a big disc.

330

00:34:23,000 --> 00:34:25,000

Why are you seeing flying discs?

331

00:34:25,000 --> 00:34:30,000

Well, they get the pilot and the rampers are telling us that C-17 is also flying discs above and we can't see it.

332

00:34:30,000 --> 00:34:33,000

Come on, Sue. I imagine anything so.

333

00:34:33,000 --> 00:34:35,000

And if I do, I wouldn't bet to it.

334

00:34:36,000 --> 00:34:43,000

Overhearing the radio chatter, United employees rush out onto the tarmac.

335

00:34:49,000 --> 00:35:00,000

For several minutes, pilots, mechanics, ramp workers and United Airlines supervisors at Gate C-17 stand in stare and wonder at what's hovering above them.

336

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

All these individuals had the same message to a point of what they saw, this gray disc-shaped object.

337

00:35:06,000 --> 00:35:09,000

There were no lights on this aircraft.

338

00:35:09,000 --> 00:35:18,000

Some said it wasn't spinning at all. It was just stationary in the sky. Others said they perceived that it was spinning.

339

00:35:18,000 --> 00:35:21,000

All agreed it was making no noise.

340

00:35:22,000 --> 00:35:28,000

Air traffic controllers can find nothing unusual on radar. Then something extraordinary happens.

341

00:35:28,000 --> 00:35:36,000

This object then just burst through the cloud layer with great velocity in a matter of a fraction of a second, they said.

342

00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:43,000

And it had such energy that it created this donut-shaped hole in an otherwise very cloud-filled sky.

343

00:35:43,000 --> 00:35:50,000

How could this object ever be so much more than a single object?

344

00:35:50,000 --> 00:35:59,000

Could this object, estimated to be between 6 and 20 feet in diameter, infiltrate the closely guarded skies above O'Hare International Airport?

345

00:35:59,000 --> 00:36:06,000

What on this Earth could possibly blast a hole through thousands of feet of dense cloud?

346

00:36:06,000 --> 00:36:11,000

Incredibly, it will be two months before news of this incident hits the headlines.

347

00:36:12,000 --> 00:36:18,000

One of the first tips I received on this was from the National UFO Reporting Center.

348

00:36:18,000 --> 00:36:26,000

Its director, Peter Davenport, led me to a source who led me to one observer, the United Airlines.

349

00:36:26,000 --> 00:36:37,000

In the investigation that follows, John uncover some major discrepancies between the eyewitness accounts on the ground and the official claims of the airline and the government.

350

00:36:38,000 --> 00:36:46,000

He tracks down eyewitness after eyewitness willing to talk, all who claim they report the incident to their bosses.

351

00:36:46,000 --> 00:36:50,000

In total, 12 people come forward.

352

00:36:50,000 --> 00:36:57,000

What sparked my interest and the interest of my editors was that I obviously immediately called United Airlines in FAA,

353

00:36:57,000 --> 00:37:01,000

and their response was they knew nothing about this incident.

354

00:37:01,000 --> 00:37:05,000

Both said that my call to them was the first they heard of this.

355

00:37:06,000 --> 00:37:13,000

Suspecting a cover-up, he files a Freedom of Information request and makes a startling discovery.

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00:37:15,000 --> 00:37:21,000

Both United Airlines as well as the FAA were keenly aware of receiving reports.

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00:37:21,000 --> 00:37:28,000

In fact, United Airlines interviewed employees, had them write reports, had them draw pictures,

358

00:37:28,000 --> 00:37:34,000

and I have emails back and forth showing that clearly there was concern on the part of United officials.

359

00:37:36,000 --> 00:37:40,000

The FAA, I think, realized that I wasn't going to go away.

360

00:37:43,000 --> 00:37:51,000

November 2006, an unidentified object breaches the restricted airspace of O'Hare International Airport.

361

00:37:53,000 --> 00:37:57,000

Veteran reporter John Hilkovic tracks down 12 eyewitnesses.

362

00:37:57,000 --> 00:38:01,000

But frustratingly, none of them are willing to go on the record.

363

00:38:02,000 --> 00:38:06,000

The first officer that I interviewed was going to use his name on the paper.

364

00:38:06,000 --> 00:38:14,000

I had him on the record, and before publication, he was warned that he should not have gone on the record.

365

00:38:14,000 --> 00:38:17,000

He has no choice but to conceal their identities.

366

00:38:19,000 --> 00:38:23,000

On New Year's Day 2007, the story breaks.

367

00:38:23,000 --> 00:38:26,000

It immediately becomes a worldwide sensation.

368

00:38:26,000 --> 00:38:30,000

A lot of it had to do with the high caliber of these witnesses.

369

00:38:30,000 --> 00:38:35,000

I mean, this was not just some farmer on his back 40 saying, I saw something up there.

370

00:38:35,000 --> 00:38:40,000

These were trained pilots and others who had, you know, just huge experience.

371

00:38:42,000 --> 00:38:47,000

Can a person's profession really influence their credibility as an eyewitness?

372

00:38:47,000 --> 00:38:52,000

For medical sociologist Dr. Robert Bartholomew, it's never this cut and dry.

373

00:38:52,000 --> 00:38:56,000

You could have Barack Obama, Albert Einstein as witnesses,

374

00:38:56,000 --> 00:39:03,000

and I would place no more credence in the pilot or the other people as I would Joe down the street.

375

00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:07,000

Because there is no such thing as a trained observer.

376

00:39:07,000 --> 00:39:10,000

We are all susceptible.

377

00:39:10,000 --> 00:39:16,000

After Hilkovic files the Freedom of Information request, the FAA changes its position.

378

00:39:16,000 --> 00:39:21,000

They tell the Tribune that light reflecting off the bottom of clouds is the cause of the uproar.

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00:39:21,000 --> 00:39:26,000

In puzzling cases like this, atmospheric scientist Professor Randy Cervenny

380

00:39:26,000 --> 00:39:29,000

thinks there can be a rational explanation.

381

00:39:29,000 --> 00:39:34,000

Well, we all know that clouds can actually appear to be white.

382

00:39:34,000 --> 00:39:39,000

And the reason that clouds appear to be white is that they are actually reflecting all the radiation,

383

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

all the sunlight that they are getting on them.

384

00:39:42,000 --> 00:39:47,000

With dense cloud cover, sunlight is unable to penetrate the layers all the way down,

385

00:39:47,000 --> 00:39:50,000

so it appears to be much darker.

386

00:39:50,000 --> 00:39:56,000

So if there are bright lights on the ground that can actually inadvertently shine up onto the bottom of a cloud

387

00:39:56,000 --> 00:40:03,000

and the observer doesn't know that, they could mistake those lights on the bottom of the cloud for some other kinds of objects.

388

00:40:03,000 --> 00:40:07,000

A busy airport is the ideal setting to create such baffling effects.

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00:40:07,000 --> 00:40:12,000

But not everyone is convinced this adequately explains the mystery of the O'Hare sighting.

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00:40:12,000 --> 00:40:18,000

The National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena, or NARCAB for short,

391

00:40:18,000 --> 00:40:26,000

is a private agency set up so pilots can anonymously report unidentified aerial dangers without fear of reprisal.

392

00:40:26,000 --> 00:40:29,000

A key member of the team is Don Ledger.

393

00:40:29,000 --> 00:40:36,000

There were reports that maybe runway lights were the reason behind this particular phenomenon,

394

00:40:36,000 --> 00:40:39,000

when in fact this happened during the daylight.

395

00:40:39,000 --> 00:40:41,000

Granted it was late in the season.

396

00:40:41,000 --> 00:40:44,000

So runway lights, now I don't see that at all.

397

00:40:44,000 --> 00:40:48,000

However runway lights are going to make this effect anyway of a whole effect,

398

00:40:48,000 --> 00:40:50,000

where you can see blue sky through it.

399

00:40:50,000 --> 00:40:52,000

It just doesn't make any sense at all.

400

00:40:52,000 --> 00:41:02,000

For the NARCAB team, their greatest fear is that something is able to breach the closely monitored area, utterly undetected.

401

00:41:02,000 --> 00:41:04,000

It has to be of real concern.

402

00:41:04,000 --> 00:41:11,000

We've been concerned to anybody on the ground who saw it, that if you don't know what's in your airspace next to you, you get very frightened.

403

00:41:12,000 --> 00:41:18,000

However, the FAA and United Airlines claim the radar operators record nothing out of the ordinary.

404

00:41:18,000 --> 00:41:25,000

For them, this is proof enough that there is no viable threat, and they see no need to investigate further.

405

00:41:27,000 --> 00:41:34,000

With today's modern radar, it's near impossible for something solid to slip through the tightly woven net protecting the airport.

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00:41:34,000 --> 00:41:39,000

Airfields, major airports are very well served by radars.

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00:41:39,000 --> 00:41:48,000

So to actually have something physical in the vicinity of an airport, which isn't tracked by radar, is extremely unusual.

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00:41:50,000 --> 00:41:54,000

Retired Air Force pilot James McGayhay backs up this position.

409

00:41:55,000 --> 00:42:01,000

There was no evidence that anything was there that was solid because there was nothing on the radar.

410

00:42:01,000 --> 00:42:06,000

It's almost 100% certain that this is an atmospheric phenomena.

411

00:42:07,000 --> 00:42:12,000

Narcat produced an exhaustive 155 page report on the incident.

412

00:42:12,000 --> 00:42:15,000

In the final analysis, their conclusion is disturbing.

413

00:42:15,000 --> 00:42:18,000

But it came out as a true unknown as far as we were concerned.

414

00:42:18,000 --> 00:42:23,000

It was unresolved, but that it was not a weather phenomena.

415

00:42:24,000 --> 00:42:29,000

United Airlines have never veered from their assertion that nothing unusual happened.

416

00:42:29,000 --> 00:42:34,000

And despite requests, they have never produced an official report on the incident.

417

00:42:35,000 --> 00:42:42,000

I received thousands of calls, thousands of emails right after the incident and even continuing to this day.

418

00:42:42,000 --> 00:42:44,000

People do want answers.

419

00:42:46,000 --> 00:42:50,000

I think many people have the feeling that there is no conclusion to this story.

420

00:42:50,000 --> 00:42:53,000

The government didn't take it seriously enough.

421

00:42:53,000 --> 00:42:56,000

United Airlines really did not want to address this at all.

422

00:42:56,000 --> 00:43:02,000

And so the mystery remains what happened on that November 7 day in 2006.