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

The reports came from England.

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

This was not just a UFO sighting.

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

It was essentially a security incident.

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

Also from the United States and Belgium.

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

They were violating airspace rules.

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

The Belgian Air Force had to do something about it.

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00:00:17,000 --> 00:00:22,000

Massive triangular shaped craft hovering in the sky.

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

Many around the world claim to have seen them during the Cold War.

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

But what were they?

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

The government takes them very seriously.

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

Not because they necessarily believe they're extraterrestrial,

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

but they are concerned about the Soviet Union and the threat it poses.

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00:00:41,000 --> 00:00:43,000

At the height of international turbulence,

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

something caused even more distress.

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

A black triangle frenzy.

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00:00:49,000 --> 00:00:52,000

We don't know what it is. It doesn't mean extraterrestrial.

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

It doesn't mean government cover-up.

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00:00:54,000 --> 00:00:56,000

It doesn't mean your pet theory is right.

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

It just means I don't know.

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00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:30,000

March 1990.

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00:01:30,000 --> 00:01:34,000

An air force base in Belgium scrambles two F-16s

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00:01:34,000 --> 00:01:38,000

to investigate a possible violation of Belgian airspace.

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00:01:38,000 --> 00:01:44,000

Eid Mielbergs is one of the pilots ordered to address the threat.

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00:01:44,000 --> 00:01:52,000

The operation center told us something was going on with the UFO over Belgium.

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00:01:52,000 --> 00:01:54,000

Captain Mielbergs has been briefed

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:59,000

for the description of the object given by an eyewitness on the ground.

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00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:03,000

It was a kind of object of triangular shape,

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:07,000

with lights on the edge, kind of dormant top,

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00:02:07,000 --> 00:02:09,000

moving really slowly without noise,

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:15,000

and sometimes accelerating very fast beyond supersonic speeds.

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00:02:18,000 --> 00:02:23,000

The order was to intercept and eventually identify those objects.

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:30,000

The Belgian Air Force report presents an exact timeline of the evening.

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00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:34,000

12.30 a.m. Mielbergs makes radar contact

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00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:38,000

20 nautical miles from Bovachine Air Force Base.

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00:02:38,000 --> 00:02:43,000

It appears to be moving at 740 knots.

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00:02:43,000 --> 00:02:48,000

So we picked up the target the first time, about 20 miles.

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00:02:48,000 --> 00:02:52,000

We had a radar contact, so we could see on the radar a blip.

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00:02:52,000 --> 00:02:56,000

This is the actual radar recording from Captain Mielbergs F-16.

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00:02:56,000 --> 00:02:59,000

The square at the top is the target.

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00:02:59,000 --> 00:03:05,000

Which was, in fact, the confirmation that there was something in the air at that moment.

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:09,000

And it was the same contact as the ground station observed as well.

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

But just as the two F-16 pilots think they are closing in, the target vanishes.

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00:03:15,000 --> 00:03:21,000

If it was an intrusion by a foreign military, it escaped before being seen.

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00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:25,000

If it was a false radar reading, there was nothing there in the first place.

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00:03:25,000 --> 00:03:29,000

But some believed in another possibility.

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00:03:37,000 --> 00:03:39,000

In the months leading up to this incident,

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00:03:39,000 --> 00:03:44,000

hundreds of Belgians had reported seeing triangular aircraft.

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00:03:45,000 --> 00:03:50,000

It all started in the small town of Uben, just six miles from the German border.

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00:03:54,000 --> 00:04:00,000

Two police officers on patrol reported something unusual in the sky.

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

They noticed very bright lights hovering over an open field.

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00:04:06,000 --> 00:04:13,000

And these bright lights were fixed to some type of triangular platform as they described it.

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00:04:14,000 --> 00:04:19,000

Author and UFO researcher David Marlar investigated this incident.

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00:04:19,000 --> 00:04:24,000

The object encompassed the field that was near their vehicle. It was silent.

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00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:29,000

They claimed the object then began to move slowly toward the town.

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

They were gobsmacked as far as what they were looking at.

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00:04:32,000 --> 00:04:35,000

They had no frame of reference for this.

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00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:41,000

The initial two police officers who saw it light up the field, they followed it for a while.

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00:04:41,000 --> 00:04:48,000

Author and investigative journalist Leslie Cain has interviewed many who claimed to have seen something that night.

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00:04:48,000 --> 00:04:51,000

And it ended up over Lake Jalepe.

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00:04:53,000 --> 00:04:57,000

They watched the thing for over an hour sitting above Lake Jalepe.

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00:04:57,000 --> 00:04:59,000

And what they saw was something extraordinary.

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00:04:59,000 --> 00:05:01,000

The craft was very strong.

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00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:06,000

They were shooting out horizontally along the surface of the lake and then it was pulling it back in.

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00:05:09,000 --> 00:05:16,000

Then the two officers say they saw a second triangular UFO rising up over a row of trees by the edge of the lake.

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00:05:16,000 --> 00:05:20,000

Then hovering silently alongside the first UFO.

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00:05:24,000 --> 00:05:28,000

They contacted the dispatcher in Yupon and he left the scene.

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00:05:28,000 --> 00:05:34,000

They contacted the dispatcher in Yupon and he laughed and said it might be Santa Claus coming in to land.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:38,000

And they stated that we're not joking. This is something very serious.

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:48,000

During this period there were many reported sightings of unidentified triangular craft all over the Belgian countryside.

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00:05:48,000 --> 00:05:53,000

But no photos, video or other hard evidence to confirm their existence.

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00:05:53,000 --> 00:06:00,000

Instead many of the witnesses sketched what they claim to have seen.

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

The drawings are strikingly similar.

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

Ever since the sightings in Belgium there have been thousands of similar reports all over Europe and North America.

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00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:18,000

Black delta shaped flying objects that became known as black triangles.

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00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:23,000

Could these sightings be explained by some natural phenomena?

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00:06:23,000 --> 00:06:28,000

Could they be a case of mass delusion or do they defy explanation?

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00:06:28,000 --> 00:06:33,000

In the 90s black triangles usurped saucers for a while.

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00:06:33,000 --> 00:06:38,000

Michael Schurmer is a science author and publisher of Skeptic Magazine.

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00:06:38,000 --> 00:06:41,000

People say well I saw these weird lights in the sky.

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00:06:41,000 --> 00:06:46,000

It was 6 p.m. it was just getting dark and sort of triangular shaped and then zoomed off.

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00:06:46,000 --> 00:06:48,000

So that makes a big story.

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00:06:51,000 --> 00:06:57,000

After the first sightings over Upen in November of 1989 Belgian UFOs became the media topic of the day.

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00:06:57,000 --> 00:07:02,000

Reporters asked if alien spacecraft were hovering over the country.

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00:07:02,000 --> 00:07:08,000

Amid the increasing publicity Belgians made over 500 claims of UFO sightings.

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00:07:08,000 --> 00:07:11,000

Authorities found themselves in a UFO wave.

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

Some call it a frenzy a phenomenon that some say has more to do with psychology than reality.

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00:07:18,000 --> 00:07:23,000

UFO sightings are by definition unidentified so we don't know what they are.

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00:07:23,000 --> 00:07:28,000

Dr. Roger Launius is an associate director at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

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00:07:28,000 --> 00:07:34,000

One of the things that tends to happen with many people is that when they believe certain things are out there.

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00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:40,000

Any piece of evidence that they can come up with that might confirm that they latch upon.

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:44,000

Psychologists call this confirmation bias.

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00:07:44,000 --> 00:07:48,000

The tendency to seek out only information that confirms one's beliefs.

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00:07:48,000 --> 00:07:57,000

Confirmation bias is the tendency to find confirmatory evidence for what you already believe and discount or rationalize disconfirming evidence.

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00:07:57,000 --> 00:08:00,000

That is we remember the hits we forget the misses.

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

But whether the black triangles were real or imagined the reports kept coming.

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00:08:05,000 --> 00:08:09,000

Even with no hard evidence officials took notice.

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00:08:09,000 --> 00:08:17,000

Which is perhaps why the Belgian Air Force scrambled two F-16s to investigate a report at the height of the UFO wave.

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00:08:19,000 --> 00:08:25,000

It was an attempt to pin down some hard evidence and confront what could have been a tangible threat.

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00:08:26,000 --> 00:08:32,000

The Belgian Air Force was concerned about this and had to take some action because there was something invading their airspace.

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00:08:36,000 --> 00:08:40,000

The night's events began to unfold before 11 p.m.

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00:08:40,000 --> 00:08:46,000

An off-duty police officer reported seeing three strange lights over the town of Jean Bleu.

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00:08:50,000 --> 00:08:52,000

He said the lights form a triangle.

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00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:59,000

The Belgian wave really came to a head on the night of March 30th, 1990.

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00:08:59,000 --> 00:09:04,000

This involved sightings being reported by the citizenry and several municipalities.

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00:09:06,000 --> 00:09:16,000

The Belgian Air Force reports states that at 11 p.m. the Glans Control Reporting Center received a phone call from the policeman reporting the strange lights in the sky.

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00:09:17,000 --> 00:09:26,000

Fifteen minutes later their military radar picked up an unidentified object moving very slowly at 25 knots towards the west.

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00:09:27,000 --> 00:09:33,000

Then another Air Force radar station center confirmed the target in the same position.

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00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:37,000

Glans Control gave the order to scramble jets.

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00:09:38,000 --> 00:09:45,000

Pilot Yves Milbergs picks up the target on his radar about seven nautical miles away. He still can't see it.

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00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:51,000

It was dark with no lights at the object and we couldn't see anything.

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00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:56,000

Relying only on their instruments, the two F-16 pilots moved to engage the target.

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00:09:56,000 --> 00:10:05,000

If it's a breach of Belgian airspace by a foreign military, what Milbergs does next could spark an international incident.

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

Over an hour after an off-duty police officer reports a strange object in the sky, two F-16s are closing in on their target.

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00:10:18,000 --> 00:10:25,000

Captain Milbergs has a radar lock on. He's just about to intercept when the target suddenly appears to take evasive action.

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

The target was rapidly reacting, changing heading and altitude and speeds.

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00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:35,000

The target starts to move radically around the pilot's radar screen.

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00:10:36,000 --> 00:10:39,000

The performance of that object is really outstanding.

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00:10:39,000 --> 00:10:46,000

We had speeds going from very low speed until supersonic speed, so it was quite difficult to intercept that target.

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00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:54,000

The Air Force report says the pilots managed to lock onto the target three times, but each time it evaded them.

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00:10:54,000 --> 00:11:04,000

The report states the object appeared to accelerate from 150 to 970 knots or almost 1200 miles per hour in just a few seconds.

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

We could manage to close in and the closest distance we could achieve was 5 nautical miles.

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00:11:12,000 --> 00:11:20,000

The pilots made nine attempts to intercept the object, but they never actually saw it with their own eyes. It existed only on radar.

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00:11:22,000 --> 00:11:29,000

That's basically an identified object. What is that object? Because so far we still don't know.

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00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:36,000

But Belgian officials still needed an explanation for the numerous eyewitness reports.

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00:11:38,000 --> 00:11:44,000

They turned to Air Force Chief of Operations Colonel Wilfred de Brouwer, who proposes a theory.

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00:11:44,000 --> 00:11:50,000

The only thing you could think about was that it could be some kind of stealth technology from America.

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00:11:50,000 --> 00:11:58,000

It's conceivable that some of them might be testing programs for exotic types of flying vehicles that has happened in the past.

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00:11:58,000 --> 00:12:08,000

There were sightings, for instance, in the 1970s and early 80s before the programs were revealed of stealth technology that was being tested.

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00:12:09,000 --> 00:12:18,000

This Department of Defense Intelligence report reveals that Colonel de Brouwer contacted officials in the United States about two top-secret stealth planes.

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00:12:21,000 --> 00:12:28,000

The F-117 Nighthawk and the B-2 Stealth Bomber, they're both black and have an unusual triangular shape.

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00:12:30,000 --> 00:12:35,000

Is it possible that one of these aircraft was behind the eyewitness reports of that night?

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00:12:36,000 --> 00:12:44,000

He was informed very clearly that it was not, and this is written up in an official American document that the Americans informed him that it was not one of theirs.

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00:12:44,000 --> 00:12:49,000

Either it was a straight denial or the Pentagon was hiding the test of a secret aircraft.

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00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:58,000

It's always a remote possibility that something that people see in the sky could be a classified program under test.

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00:12:59,000 --> 00:13:05,000

Bill Sweetman is an aviation writer and expert in top-secret military projects.

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00:13:05,000 --> 00:13:10,000

The late 80s were a time when the black project world was expanding very fast.

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00:13:10,000 --> 00:13:15,000

Could the Americans have been secretly testing new aircraft in that area?

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00:13:15,000 --> 00:13:22,000

The triangles could conceivably be aircraft. There have been aircraft designs studied that looked like that.

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00:13:23,000 --> 00:13:28,000

Belgium's location near the eastern front of the Cold War could have made it an enticing test site.

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00:13:28,000 --> 00:13:34,000

There might be a few reasons why you'd test a secret aircraft outside the U.S.

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00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:38,000

You might want to test it against different defensive systems.

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00:13:38,000 --> 00:13:44,000

You might want to fly close to the former Soviet Union and just see if any of them would pick it up.

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00:13:45,000 --> 00:13:53,000

If the sightings were of top-secret American aircraft, the U.S. might officially deny their existence, even to their allies.

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00:13:53,000 --> 00:13:59,000

With the public demanding answers, Colonel de Brouwer made an unprecedented move and called a press conference.

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00:13:59,000 --> 00:14:04,000

He qualified his statement with many ifs, as he could not rule out a radar error.

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00:14:15,000 --> 00:14:21,000

The Belgians released the radar recording from a cockpit of Captain Milberg's F-16

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00:14:21,000 --> 00:14:27,000

and invited expert interpretation of what can be a fickle technology.

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00:14:27,000 --> 00:14:34,000

Radar is generally reliable, but like any other technology, there's going to be a residue of anomalies of stuff that happens we can't explain.

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00:14:34,000 --> 00:14:39,000

And so like with everything else in science, what do you do with those that residue of anomalies?
Nothing.

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00:14:39,000 --> 00:14:46,000

We just can't explain everything. So a radar operator sees a blip, a blip is there, a blip is gone, what was it?

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00:14:46,000 --> 00:14:48,000

Better know.

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00:14:55,000 --> 00:14:58,000

So what caused the blip on the radar that night?

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00:14:58,000 --> 00:15:04,000

So what we're seeing here is the radar data collected from the F-16 radar.

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00:15:05,000 --> 00:15:11,000

Dr. Ravi Raj Advani is an engineering professor who specializes in radar signal processing.

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00:15:11,000 --> 00:15:16,000

His first question is if the target was an artifact of weather.

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00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:24,000

I don't believe so because this is not consistent with the profile of something that would be natural.

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00:15:24,000 --> 00:15:27,000

Dr. Advi consults a graph of the radar data.

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00:15:27,000 --> 00:15:40,000

We see that the target falls down to about 6000 feet, but then it rapidly gains height and then starts falling at an extremely rapid rate to the point where it almost crashes into the ground.

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00:15:40,000 --> 00:15:45,000

At the same time, it's making incredible changes in speed.

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00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:51,000

The speed jumps from about 175 knots to about 600 knots in less than a second.

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00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:56,000

That is an insane acceleration that just doesn't seem physically possible.

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00:15:56,000 --> 00:16:03,000

It then does another jump right at the end. It's moving at a thousand knots toward the ground.

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00:16:03,000 --> 00:16:07,000

We haven't recovered any debris from any crashes, but it should have crashed.

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00:16:07,000 --> 00:16:14,000

The extreme acceleration captured on the F-16's radar is beyond the performance of any known aircraft.

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00:16:14,000 --> 00:16:19,000

But Dr. Advi may provide an answer to what Captain Mielberg's pursued that night.

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00:16:19,000 --> 00:16:25,000

His examination suggests not an alien spacecraft, but a military hoax.

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00:16:26,000 --> 00:16:33,000

It is my feeling that this is a fake target created by an electronic countermeasure system to spoof this radar.

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00:16:33,000 --> 00:16:37,000

It's a technique known as radar jamming.

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00:16:37,000 --> 00:16:41,000

This kind of technology is used by military defense applications.

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00:16:41,000 --> 00:16:51,000

They are used to create false targets so that an enemy radar believes that there are many aircraft out there while there are really none.

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00:16:51,000 --> 00:16:59,000

It's a fascinating theory and could explain this particular incident, especially since the flight crew never actually saw an object.

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00:16:59,000 --> 00:17:03,000

We still don't know exactly what happened that day. That's for sure.

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00:17:03,000 --> 00:17:08,000

We know what didn't happen. That's for sure. It was not a meteorological phenomena.

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00:17:08,000 --> 00:17:12,000

It was not a helicopter. It was not a prototype and stuff like that.

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00:17:12,000 --> 00:17:17,000

But it's still an unidentified object so far.

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00:17:18,000 --> 00:17:26,000

After the Air Force incident ended with nothing but odd radar readings and unanswered questions, black triangle sightings decreased.

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00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:29,000

The frenzy in Belgium died down.

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00:17:29,000 --> 00:17:37,000

But three years later, there was another mysterious incident, this time in Britain.

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00:17:37,000 --> 00:17:46,000

I think within hours it was clear that we really did have a staggeringly significant event on our hands.

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00:17:53,000 --> 00:18:04,000

140 miles northeast of London, exactly three years after the sightings in Belgium, two Royal Air Force policemen are on patrol outside the RAF airbase in Cosford.

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00:18:08,000 --> 00:18:23,000

According to their report, the patrol of Air Force police stopped their car, got out and looked directly overhead.

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00:18:25,000 --> 00:18:36,000

They saw two bright white lights, but they weren't able to ascertain whether or not they were separate objects or lights on the underside of a much bigger craft.

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00:18:38,000 --> 00:18:52,000

The two corpals return immediately to base and file this report. It is the earliest account of the strange events of the night, events that became known as the Cosford Incident.

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00:18:56,000 --> 00:19:01,000

This is RAF Cosford where the UFO sighting actually took place.

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00:19:01,000 --> 00:19:08,000

In 1993, Nick Pope worked for the British Ministry of Defence investigating unidentified flying objects.

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00:19:08,000 --> 00:19:18,000

My job was to research and investigate all sightings reported to the Ministry of Defence to see if there was evidence of any potential threat to the United Kingdom.

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

This is Pope's official Ministry of Defence report. It documents the most prolific wave of UFO sightings in British history.

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00:19:26,000 --> 00:19:39,000

This sighting at Cosford really kickstarted an investigation which was to bring in dozens and dozens of other reports including sightings of large triangular shaped craft.

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00:19:40,000 --> 00:19:50,000

It wasn't just military personnel who filed reports. Ten minutes after the sightings at RAF Cosford, there are more reported sightings 18 miles northeast of the base.

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00:19:57,000 --> 00:20:10,000

One family saw the UFO in a town called Rougeley. They got into their car as I recall and actually tried to chase this thing.

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00:20:10,000 --> 00:20:34,000

One of the witnesses described this vast craft passing directly overhead. They heard a humming sound coming from it and they thought that this thing was so low that it had actually landed in a field in a place called Hazelside.

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00:20:34,000 --> 00:20:43,000

And when they got to the area, there was nothing to be seen. There were also no impressions on the ground to indicate that anything had landed.

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00:20:43,000 --> 00:20:53,000

The RAF police determined that no military or civil aircraft activity had taken place that night

that might explain these sightings.

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00:20:54,000 --> 00:21:00,000

This was not just a UFO sighting, it was essentially a security incident.

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

As military police at RAF Cosford secured the base, just 20 miles away at a second military base, the meteorological officer on duty reported seeing a similar unidentified flying object.

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00:21:17,000 --> 00:21:34,000

He described it to me as a vast, triangular or delta shaped craft. He saw a pencil thin beam of light shoot down from this craft and track backwards and forwards.

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00:21:34,000 --> 00:21:45,000

He said almost as if it was looking for something. Then he said after a few minutes, the UFO accelerated away to the horizon many times faster than a military jet.

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00:21:45,000 --> 00:21:54,000

And he said, well look, I see fast jets on an almost daily basis. This was orders of magnitude above and beyond that speed.

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

While stories like this sound persuasive, eyewitness testimony is often unreliable.

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00:22:00,000 --> 00:22:07,000

Eyewitnesses misperceive things, they distort things, they retell things and not just people that see UFOs, people that see anything.

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00:22:07,000 --> 00:22:13,000

We know from research that, you know, right now, these counts are not reliable, mine's not any better than yours.

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00:22:13,000 --> 00:22:19,000

So we have to actually have physical evidence or else we don't really have a case.

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00:22:19,000 --> 00:22:28,000

But eyewitness accounts were all there was to go on, 200 of them, over eight hours from all over southern England.

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00:22:31,000 --> 00:22:40,000

Hope and his colleagues were left to sort through the stories, trying to find explanations that would account for this spade of reports.

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00:22:40,000 --> 00:22:55,000

One by one, we eliminated all the usual things that people misidentify, bright stars and planets, satellites, meteors, aircraft lights, weather balloon launches.

206

00:22:55,000 --> 00:23:02,000

And the more of these explanations we crossed off, the more mysterious and exciting this seemed to be.

207

00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:12,000

And the sense from my colleagues and myself, who normally came at this from a very skeptical viewpoint, was, my goodness, there is something really bizarre going on here.

208

00:23:13,000 --> 00:23:19,000

After a month-long investigation, Hope's team concluded that people saw some sort of real object.

209

00:23:20,000 --> 00:23:28,000

Despite this conclusion, they had no hard evidence to prove it, much less any idea of the origin or nature of such a craft.

210

00:23:28,000 --> 00:23:33,000

One of our theories, of course, was secret prototype aircraft or drone.

211

00:23:33,000 --> 00:23:42,000

Just as the Belgians had done, the British asked the United States government if it was one of theirs, a large triangular craft capable of hovering.

212

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:44,000

And they got the same answer.

213

00:23:45,000 --> 00:23:57,000

Now the Americans told us we have no such aircraft and no such test flights have been conducted over the United Kingdom.

214

00:23:58,000 --> 00:24:05,000

Still suspicious, Hope used a back channel to inquire if the CIA or other defense agencies might have been involved.

215

00:24:05,000 --> 00:24:11,000

The American Defense Secretary was apparently incandescent with rage.

216

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

If we say it doesn't exist, it doesn't exist.

217

00:24:15,000 --> 00:24:23,000

And we had to act very quickly to stop this flaring up into a full diplomatic row with our greatest ally.

218

00:24:23,000 --> 00:24:29,000

With his investigation at a dead end, Nick Pope can only wonder what really happened that night.

219

00:24:30,000 --> 00:24:34,000

I have no realistic assessment of what this could be.

220

00:24:34,000 --> 00:24:44,000

If it wasn't some secret prototype aircraft decades ahead of anything that's public knowledge, then I'm stumped. I have no idea.

221

00:24:44,000 --> 00:24:50,000

Officials in Belgium and England were not able to come up with a feasible explanation for this rash of sightings.

222

00:24:50,000 --> 00:24:56,000

With only eyewitness reports to go on, there were limited scientific avenues to pursue.

223

00:24:56,000 --> 00:25:02,000

But soon it would be America's turn to deal with mystery triumphs.

224

00:25:02,000 --> 00:25:07,000

I've got that object inside also. It's huge.

225

00:25:13,000 --> 00:25:21,000

In St. Clair County, Illinois, Officer Ed Barton is on overnight patrol when he receives a call from Central Police dispatch.

226

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

Well, this is a secret call from Highland TV.

227

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

As he gets the call, Officer Barton is driving south on the main road into the small city of Lebanon.

228

00:25:32,000 --> 00:25:37,000

This is the actual police recording from that night.

229

00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:45,000

The truck driver just stopped in and said there was a flying object in the area of Lebanon.

230

00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:53,000

This recording presents a minute-by-minute account of the strange events that unfolded in Illinois.

231

00:25:53,000 --> 00:26:01,000

It's very rare that we have official documentation that chronicles the wave of sightings as it was taking place.

232

00:26:01,000 --> 00:26:08,000

Journalist David Marlar is a member of MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network, which investigates UFO sightings.

233

00:26:08,000 --> 00:26:12,000

In 2000, Marlar looked into this case.

234

00:26:13,000 --> 00:26:19,000

The overall tone of the recordings at first were somewhat light-hearted and jovial.

235

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

It was like a two-story house, and it had white lights and red, blinking lights.

236

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

Officer, could you check the area?

237

00:26:29,000 --> 00:26:32,000

If I see it, I'm not saying a word.

238

00:26:32,000 --> 00:26:36,000

Officer Ed Barton, he was ready just to simply write it off.

239

00:26:36,000 --> 00:26:40,000

But then he noticed lights moving toward the east part of town.

240

00:26:42,000 --> 00:26:48,000

Upon closer approach, he realized that the lights were fixed to a large, triangular object that was low altitude.

241

00:26:48,000 --> 00:26:53,000

For the authorities, there's a very bright, white light east of town.

242

00:26:53,000 --> 00:26:57,000

Also, there's a famous haircare, doesn't look like an haircare, though.

243

00:26:57,000 --> 00:27:02,000

In my personal investigation of the case, I spoke with Officer Ed Barton from Lebanon, Illinois.

244

00:27:02,000 --> 00:27:08,000

This is the statement Officer Barton gave to David Marlar ten days after the event.

245

00:27:08,000 --> 00:27:14,000

In it, he says that the object hovered at about 1,000 feet, almost directly overhead.

246

00:27:14,000 --> 00:27:17,000

Officer Barton stated, as this object was hovering above me,

247

00:27:17,000 --> 00:27:21,000

every aircraft that I've ever seen or know of makes some type of noise.

248

00:27:21,000 --> 00:27:24,000

This aircraft made no noise.

249

00:27:26,000 --> 00:27:32,000

After several minutes, he claims the object pivoted and sped toward the southwest at high speed.

250

00:27:32,000 --> 00:27:36,000

He wonders if it's some kind of experimental military craft.

251

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

Would you contact Scott Air Force Base to see if there are any disquieting in this area, please?

252

00:27:41,000 --> 00:27:44,000

Scott Air Force Base is only three miles away.

253

00:27:44,000 --> 00:27:48,000

Officer Barton thinks it could be one of theirs.

254

00:27:48,000 --> 00:27:51,000

This is heading west down now.

255

00:27:51,000 --> 00:27:54,000

It should be really close to Scott now.

256

00:27:54,000 --> 00:27:58,000

Matter of fact, if a shallow object is hovering here and by now.

257

00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:02,000

The village of Shiloh is right next to Scott Air Force Base.

258

00:28:03,000 --> 00:28:09,000

At 4.24 am, Shiloh police officer David Martin responds to Barton's call.

259

00:28:09,000 --> 00:28:13,000

What if I ask if you ask these things and I don't know what they're doing.

260

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

But just as he thinks he catches a glimpse of the object,

261

00:28:16,000 --> 00:28:20,000

it appears to suddenly shoot away at high speed into the distance.

262

00:28:23,000 --> 00:28:29,000

Fifteen minutes later, outside the town of Milstadt, Officer Craig Steven says he spots it.

263

00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:31,000

I think I'm 6.04.

264

00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:33,000

Go ahead.

265

00:28:33,000 --> 00:28:36,000

I've got that object in sight also.

266

00:28:36,000 --> 00:28:38,000

Are you serious?

267

00:28:38,000 --> 00:28:40,000

It's huge.

268

00:28:40,000 --> 00:28:45,000

6.04 doesn't look like a... what is it like to you?

269

00:28:45,000 --> 00:28:48,000

It's kind of B shaped.

270

00:28:50,000 --> 00:28:54,000

Officer Stevens tries to take a photo of what he's seeing.

271

00:28:54,000 --> 00:28:58,000

But due to the freezing conditions, the Polaroid doesn't turn out.

272

00:28:58,000 --> 00:29:04,000

There appears to be lights on the image, but there's no way to tell if it's a real physical object.

273

00:29:06,000 --> 00:29:10,000

Days later, Stevens makes these sketches for David Marver's report.

274

00:29:10,000 --> 00:29:14,000

He draws an object that is distinctly triangular.

275

00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:20,000

On the same night, in the town of Dupont, a fourth officer reports seeing something.

276

00:29:21,000 --> 00:29:28,000

Plotting the four sightings on a map, one can imagine a flight path traveling 38 miles over a one hour period.

277

00:29:28,000 --> 00:29:31,000

However, all they have is eyewitness testimony.

278

00:29:31,000 --> 00:29:34,000

There's no tangible evidence to examine.

279

00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:38,000

But the media doesn't need hard evidence to publish a story.

280

00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:43,000

The so-called Highland UFO made headlines.

281

00:29:43,000 --> 00:29:49,000

Newspaper accounts may have been fueled by the British and Belgian sightings a decade or so.

282

00:29:49,000 --> 00:29:57,000

Triangle-shaped UFOs were now part of pop culture and skeptics believe the accounts color popular perception.

283

00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:05,000

UFO frenzies usually begin with either a single sighting or a sighting that was witnessed by multiple people.

284

00:30:05,000 --> 00:30:11,000

And then it gets reported and if it gets picked up in the media, then that can start to drive the number of column inches.

285

00:30:11,000 --> 00:30:16,000

Then what becomes the story is not the UFO sighting, it's the event surrounding it.

286

00:30:16,000 --> 00:30:19,000

And that's the beginning of a myth. That's how myths are created.

287

00:30:19,000 --> 00:30:25,000

The biggest problem with UFO investigators is that they almost all believe they're not objective enough.

288

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

They're too driven by what they would like to be true.

289

00:30:29,000 --> 00:30:36,000

They do have a preconceived belief that UFOs are out there, that they are extraterrestrial in origin.

290

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:39,000

And they are searching for evidence of that.

291

00:30:39,000 --> 00:30:42,000

And they are spring-loaded to find that evidence.

292

00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:50,000

Since I personally do not believe we are being visited by extraterrestrials, I'm spring-loaded in the other direction and I'm willing to admit that.

293

00:30:50,000 --> 00:30:58,000

David Marlar investigates UFO sightings from MUFON, an organization that believes UFOs may have alien origins.

294

00:30:58,000 --> 00:31:05,000

Marlar's research, like the Belgians and Nick Pope before him, began by trying to rule out the military.

295

00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:12,000

I was mainly interested in seeing if the military was testing any type of experimental aircraft that might have been in the area.

296

00:31:12,000 --> 00:31:16,000

The fact that it was seen near a major military installation warranted that question.

297

00:31:16,000 --> 00:31:24,000

The estimated flight path of the alleged UFO shows it would have flown within two miles of Scott Air Force Base.

298

00:31:24,000 --> 00:31:27,000

The police and military declined to comment.

299

00:31:29,000 --> 00:31:33,000

Then David Marlar took the investigation a step further.

300

00:31:34,000 --> 00:31:41,000

I filed a Freedom of Information Act request with Scott Air Force Base and I have the official documentation as a result.

301

00:31:41,000 --> 00:31:48,000

In a letter dated two weeks after the event, the commander of Scott Air Force Base responded to Marlar's questions.

302

00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:54,000

They came back and stated negative that they had no military aircraft in the area.

303

00:31:54,000 --> 00:31:59,000

They weren't testing or supporting the test of any vehicle in the area at that time.

304

00:31:59,000 --> 00:32:05,000

Marlar then requested the radar data, hoping to get at least some hard evidence from that night.

305

00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:12,000

They stated that at the time of the UFO sighting, their radar systems were down. They were not operating.

306

00:32:12,000 --> 00:32:19,000

Military answers are often elusive with regards to questions that could be prying into top secret programs.

307

00:32:19,000 --> 00:32:27,000

So, with compelling eyewitness reports but limited evidence to go on, Marlar tries to connect the dots.

308

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

Initially, I thought it was military in origin. It seemed to be the most practical explanation.

309

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

But when we look at the eyewitness testimony, when we look at the description of this large triangular UFO,

310

00:32:38,000 --> 00:32:42,000

it bears striking similarities to Belgium, to Cosford.

311

00:32:42,000 --> 00:32:52,000

And at this point, we have to look at this information and come away with the fact that these witnesses are essentially describing the same type of object, if not the same object.

312

00:32:53,000 --> 00:32:57,000

Bill Sweetman also sees a link between the objects.

313

00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:05,000

There are conceivable aircraft that would account for some of the phenomena that people have described as black triangles,

314

00:33:05,000 --> 00:33:10,000

would account for some of the things seen at Cosford, some of the things seen in Belgium.

315

00:33:10,000 --> 00:33:15,000

But most of what has gone on in the black world, we really don't know anything about.

316

00:33:15,000 --> 00:33:21,000

Most top secret projects tested in the 1980s and 90s have not been declassified.

317

00:33:21,000 --> 00:33:31,000

I would think that there have been tens of programs over the years that have at least reached the flight test stage.

318

00:33:31,000 --> 00:33:35,000

We know of perhaps two or three that have been declassified.

319

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

So perhaps 10% of what has happened, we know about.

320

00:33:41,000 --> 00:33:48,000

Could the reported black triangles turn out to be ultra top secret projects, not yet disclosed to the public?

321

00:33:49,000 --> 00:33:56,000

Marlar turns to the past to explain the present, digging into the historical record to shed light on the mystery.

322

00:33:59,000 --> 00:34:06,000

When we look at the history of the reports of triangular UFOs, I knew that the reports went back several decades.

323

00:34:06,000 --> 00:34:09,000

I had no idea how far back they in fact went.

324

00:34:09,000 --> 00:34:14,000

One of Marlar's sources for UFO research is the U.S. military itself.

325

00:34:14,000 --> 00:34:23,000

From 1947 to 1969, the Air Force investigated thousands of UFO sightings out of genuine concern for national security.

326

00:34:23,000 --> 00:34:28,000

The United States Air Force is constantly on the alert 24 hours a day.

327

00:34:28,000 --> 00:34:31,000

We're interested in anything that flies in our atmosphere.

328

00:34:32,000 --> 00:34:44,000

It began with Project Sine, continued with Project Grudge, and officially became known as Project Blue Book in 1952.

329

00:34:44,000 --> 00:34:50,000

The three projects comprised the largest government investigation of UFOs ever undertaken.

330

00:34:50,000 --> 00:34:58,000

This was an extensive collection of over 12,000 reports that the United States Air Force investigated, collated and analyzed.

331

00:34:59,000 --> 00:35:06,000

The effort was spurred by a glut of sightings during the Cold War, when a cloak of paranoia influenced everyday America.

332

00:35:06,000 --> 00:35:14,000

With international tension tripwire tight, the military took any reported anomaly as a possible threat.

333

00:35:14,000 --> 00:35:20,000

As the Cold War is heating up in the latter part of the 1940s, we see a lot of these reports.

334

00:35:20,000 --> 00:35:26,000

And the government takes them very seriously, not because they necessarily believe they're extraterrestrial,

335

00:35:26,000 --> 00:35:32,000

but they are concerned about the Soviet Union and the threat it poses.

336

00:35:32,000 --> 00:35:40,000

Project Blue Book's objectives were to scientifically analyze UFO data and determine whether UFOs posed a threat to national security.

337

00:35:40,000 --> 00:35:49,000

Of the more than 12,000 Project Blue Book UFO sightings, the vast majority were explained as birds, planes, stars or clouds.

338

00:35:49,000 --> 00:35:56,000

6% had no conventional explanation, and the Air Force classified them as unidentified.

339

00:36:00,000 --> 00:36:07,000

One file is known as Incident 398, a triangular UFO sighting in Baltimore in 1949.

340

00:36:08,000 --> 00:36:22,000

The primary witness was an art student. He was also a former United States Air Force tech sergeant and World War II veteran, so he was familiar with aircraft.

341

00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:31,000

At 6.30pm, the witness reports something moving through the clouds. He thinks it may be an aircraft, but not like anything he saw in the war.

342

00:36:31,000 --> 00:36:39,000

He noticed not one, not two, not three, but numerous triangular UFOs during daylight hours.

343

00:36:41,000 --> 00:36:50,000

Project Blue Book states that the eyewitness reported seeing approximately 15-20 V-shaped objects flying in circular formation.

344

00:36:52,000 --> 00:37:00,000

He remarked that they did not look like any conventional aircraft he knew of. They were black, very maneuverable and capable of great speed.

345

00:37:01,000 --> 00:37:13,000

These triangular UFOs exhibited unusual flight characteristics in the sense that they were darting about, moving in and out of the clouds, but when visible, they could clearly discern a triangular shape.

346

00:37:15,000 --> 00:37:26,000

Being an art student, the witness sketched what he saw. He drew the shape of the unidentified objects as triangular. The witness contacted the Air Force to report the unusual sighting.

347

00:37:27,000 --> 00:37:40,000

Investigators arrived for an interview, and he presented his sketch. The distance of the objects makes it difficult to interpret, but at first glance, it appears to be birds. The eyewitness insisted they were not.

348

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

Air Force investigators later determined that the objects were not detected by radar, nor were they seen by any pilots flying in the vicinity.

349

00:37:52,000 --> 00:38:01,000

Their final report could not confirm or deny the student's account, but years later, a new theory would come to light.

350

00:38:05,000 --> 00:38:15,000

In 1949, multiple witnesses on a Baltimore Street reported seeing triangular UFOs in the distance. The Air Force report at the time was inconclusive.

351

00:38:16,000 --> 00:38:22,000

Now, UFO investigator David Marlar is combing through history looking for answers.

352

00:38:22,000 --> 00:38:32,000

When we look at 1949, we can look back now with a fair degree of certainty and know what was the cutting-edge technology of the time, since everything at that time has been declassified.

353

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

It turns out there was a top-secret program at the time that might fit the Baltimore case.

354

00:38:40,000 --> 00:38:43,000

The Northrop YB-49, or Flying Wing.

355

00:38:44,000 --> 00:38:55,000

In 1949, Northrop had been testing the Flying Wing aircraft in various forms for a couple of years, and that was an extraordinary-looking aircraft of the era. It still is, really.

356

00:38:55,000 --> 00:39:01,000

However, Bill Sweetman doesn't believe the Northrop Flying Wing could have been what those neighbors saw that day.

357

00:39:02,000 --> 00:39:11,000

The Flying Wing was not a very maneuverable aircraft. Any hard maneuvering would cause the aircraft to fall out of the sky. It's an aircraft you had to fly very carefully, even then.

358

00:39:11,000 --> 00:39:23,000

And if you've got people claiming that they're seeing multiple flying wings at any given time in the 40s or 50s, it just didn't happen. There weren't that many aircraft.

359

00:39:24,000 --> 00:39:31,000

Marlar's own investigation ends just as the Air Force's had in the 1940s, inconclusive and unsolved.

360

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

When we look at the official investigation by military authorities, there is still no plausible explanation for these sightings.

361

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

Then and now, finding a solid explanation for such an enigmatic sighting is beyond reach.

362

00:39:46,000 --> 00:39:58,000

With no photographs, no radar detection, and only a handful of eyewitnesses confined to a single Baltimore Street, it is one of the more questionable and difficult to solve cases found in Blue Book.

363

00:39:58,000 --> 00:40:07,000

There's now declassified reports from the CIA in which there are science and technology panels that were looking at these incidents.

364

00:40:07,000 --> 00:40:17,000

We'd always come back to, we may not be able to exactly explain what was taking place here, but there's no evidence to indicate that this is a national security threat.

365

00:40:17,000 --> 00:40:25,000

The Baltimore case was one of several Air Force investigations into black triangles during the 1940s and 50s.

366

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

Another report in Project Blue Book documents a sighting within the Air Force itself, January 28, 1953, at Turner Air Force Base in Albany, Georgia, and signed by the commanding officer.

367

00:40:41,000 --> 00:40:55,000

At 9.35pm, an Air Force pilot was flying a T-33 jet just outside of Albany. The pilot was a seasoned officer with 11 years experience and 3100 hours of flying time.

368

00:40:55,000 --> 00:41:01,000

On a routine night flight, he reported something strange in front of him.

369

00:41:01,000 --> 00:41:10,000

He thought, I'll increase in altitude, if it gets larger in my windscreen, then obviously it's something that's in the atmosphere and I should be able to identify it.

370

00:41:10,000 --> 00:41:22,000

If it doesn't get larger, then it must be a star or a planet. Before he knew it, the light which was above him was now below him, which immediately ruled out satellite, star, or planet.

371

00:41:22,000 --> 00:41:30,000

In the Project Blue Book file, the pilot states that the object constantly changed color, from white to orange and back.

372

00:41:30,000 --> 00:41:46,000

As if that wasn't strange enough, the object in his own words changed into an equilateral triangle. He then witnessed the triangle divide into two equilateral triangles, which shot off in different directions.

373

00:41:46,000 --> 00:41:52,000

Aviation expert Bill Sweetman thinks this could be a simple case of unfamiliar surroundings.

374

00:41:53,000 --> 00:42:11,000

When we talk about people flying jets in Georgia in the 1950s, it's a pretty new environment for people to be flying in, in terms of speed, in terms of being single-seater at night, in terms of working with very, very crude radar.

375

00:42:11,000 --> 00:42:18,000

So it's very easy to see that somebody could become confused. Very, very difficult environment.

376

00:42:19,000 --> 00:42:32,000

Complicating the investigation was evidence that the Albany Airport had radar contact with something it could not identify. But the Air Force reached a conclusion that still surprises David Marlar.

377

00:42:33,000 --> 00:42:49,000

The Albany, Georgia case was concluded to be the planet Venus, a visual sighting of the planet Venus, which really stretches the imagination when you look at the fact that the pilot was able to see Venus below him.

378

00:42:51,000 --> 00:42:58,000

This is another event that may never have a solid scientific explanation, but Marlar proposes his own theory.

379

00:42:59,000 --> 00:43:08,000

It really makes me lean towards the fact that some, underline that three times, some of these triangular UFOs may be of nonterrestrial origin.

380

00:43:10,000 --> 00:43:14,000

Without definitive evidence, all that remains are theories.

381

00:43:15,000 --> 00:43:30,000

The absence of facts, what people do is they fill in the blanks with their imagination. In science, what we're supposed to do is just lead the blanks blank. You just keep working on it, and you just, you don't fill it in with your imagination.

382

00:43:31,000 --> 00:43:47,000

Skeptics argue that it's a matter of critical thinking. They say that the black triangle wave is not evidence of aliens, but evidence of how a series of unconnected events can become a self-perpetuating legend. Such is the power of a good UFO mystery.

383

00:43:48,000 --> 00:44:07,000

The universe is massive. You can't even begin to understand how massive. And clearly, that would suggest that there are other planets that could support life, and probably do.

384

00:44:08,000 --> 00:44:27,000

But there's a world of difference between that belief, which I think most of us share, myself included, and believing that some entity or some several entities from out there are visiting us. There's just no good reason to reach that conclusion.

385

00:44:28,000 --> 00:44:32,000

Bill Sweetman believes that the mystery exists only in the realm of human perception.

386

00:44:33,000 --> 00:44:56,000

I think the most likely explanation for most unidentified flying object sightings is that people saw something that wasn't really there. People not being delusional, people not being crazy, people just being bad eyewitnesses.

387

00:44:57,000 --> 00:45:14,000

Finally, consider the long shadow of secret government programs. Only recently, in 2014, did the CIA suggest that many UFO sightings in the 1950s were indeed their own experimental aircraft. As they recently tweeted, it was us.

388

00:45:15,000 --> 00:45:32,000

This information was so secret, it was even kept from the Air Force investigators of Project Blue Book. The thousands of incidents documented in Project Blue Book have long been declassified, so people can read every line, and often in between them, to formulate their own opinions.

389

00:45:32,000 --> 00:45:40,000

Without definitive evidence, black triangles may forever be debated, and forever remain unidentified.

390

00:45:40,000 --> 00:45:55,000

An unsolved UFO case is rather like an unsolved crime. I'm skeptical that we'll ever get a definitive explanation of this, but of course, I hope that some new information does come to light, and we finally solve the mystery.