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Have you ever seen a UFO?

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And if you suddenly did, would you have the presence of mind

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

to take a picture of it before it disappeared?

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Some witnesses have.

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A photograph can give a piece of evidence that testimony standing alone could give.

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But what makes photographic evidence reliable?

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And how can you tell a real UFO photo from a hoax?

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Join us as we investigate photographic evidence of UFOs.

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A global effort has begun.

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Secret files hidden from the public for decades.

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Detailing every UFO account are now available to the public.

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We are about to uncover the truth behind these classified documents.

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

Find out what the government doesn't want you to know.

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

Unseal alien files.

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Exposing the biggest secret on planet Earth.

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There are three kinds of proof of UFOs.

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Eyewitness reports, radar evidence, and the most controversial of all, photographs.

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Cameras and photographs can absolutely help us try to figure out the UFO phenomenon.

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Photographs are extremely important when it comes to investigating UFOs.

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It's really one of only a couple of things that takes a story above and beyond hearsay.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:37,000

But to the camera lens, if you capture that very moment,

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:43,000

if you capture something that happens to be in the frame that isn't easily explainable,

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00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:49,000

that's something that photographs can give us that human testimony and the human eye cannot.

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00:01:49,000 --> 00:01:51,000

Unsealed case file.

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The Trent photographs.

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May 8th, 1950, McMinnville, Oregon.

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The Trent photographs were some of the most sensational UFO photographs ever taken.

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And indeed, to this day, remain some of the most important images that we have.

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Evelyn Trent is walking across her farm when she sees a metallic disc-shaped object coming toward her.

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00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:22,000

She yells to her husband, Paul.

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He quickly retrieves his 35mm camera and is able to take two photographs before the object disappears.

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00:02:29,000 --> 00:02:35,000

They show a disc-like object, apparently just hanging in the sky.

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Now a number of photographic analytical techniques were brought to bear on these images,

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00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:45,000

and no evidence of any faking was found.

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00:02:45,000 --> 00:02:50,000

You would naturally just want to explain whatever this UFO or flying saucer was, but you can't.

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00:02:50,000 --> 00:02:53,000

Experts have tried to analyze these photographs, look at them.

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00:02:53,000 --> 00:02:56,000

They know they're not doctored, they know they're genuine.

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00:02:56,000 --> 00:03:01,000

The object, whatever it is, definitely is there, but nobody can figure out what it is.

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

The Trents themselves seemed like an ordinary, everyday couple.

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

No motive for hoaxing this.

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And indeed, they sat on these photos for some considerable time.

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00:03:12,000 --> 00:03:17,000

Their local newspaper gets hold of the story and the international news wires pick it up.

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What was significant about these photos was the way in which they really captured the public obsession with this subject.

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Just three weeks after Trent snapped his famous photos, they were on the cover of one of the world's leading magazines.

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These photographs were literally syndicated all around the world.

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You want to think that it's your government flying top secret military aircraft or whatever it is that you want to believe at the time.

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But in reality, it's something that we can't identify. It's something that we can't explain.

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In 1967, astronomer Dr. William K. Hartman is investigating UFO phenomena for the Condon Committee.

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He analyzes the Trent photos and comes to this conclusion saying,

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this is one of the few UFO reports in which all factors investigated appear to be consistent with the assertion

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00:04:13,000 --> 00:04:18,000

that an extraordinary flying object flew within sight of two witnesses.

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00:04:18,000 --> 00:04:26,000

Pre-digital, there were only a really limited number of ways in which people could fake photographs.

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One technique is to construct a model and throw it into the air.

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But in those circumstances, one can look for a motion blur and one can start to do some calculations about the size of an object.

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And if it's a very small object close to the lens, chances are someone has just thrown something.

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Another technique used by Hoaxers is to suspend the model from a thread.

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But of course, with those pre-digital investigative techniques, you can magnify in and you can find that thread.

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Another classic pre-digital hoaxing technique was the double exposure.

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But again, photographic analysts could spot that.

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By 1975, the now famous Trent negatives gained the attention of a leading UFO investigator.

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Bruce McAbee is an optical physicist by training and indeed worked for the US Navy in that capacity.

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He used his expertise to try and figure out some type of explanation.

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And at the end of the day, he couldn't. And he was really on the forefront of showing how the Trent photographs were genuine.

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Could this 1950 photograph taken by an unassuming Oregon farmer be an actual UFO?

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00:05:42,000 --> 00:05:51,000

And I think what this says to me is that you can never look at the images and indeed the moving films in isolation.

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You don't just investigate the photographs, you investigate the people.

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I mean, very often it's looking at the people making these claims saying, this is what I shot.

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That's the key to solving the mystery. That's the key to determining is this real or is it fake?

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Unsealed case file, the Hillsdale UFO, May 14, 1966, Dexter and Hillsdale, Michigan.

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In 1966, police officers in the Sheriff's Department were receiving phone calls of multiple sightings of these disc shaped objects that were being seen in and around the area.

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Many of the witnesses were actually police officers. Disc shaped craft were seen. Extraordinary speeds and maneuvers were witnessed, including sudden turns that would have produced G-forces fatal to any human occupants.

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I mean, these really were extraordinary sightings.

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

Self-reger force base confirmed that objects were seen over Lake Erie that they could not identify.

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00:07:13,000 --> 00:07:18,000

Normally when air force bases get involved, they can pretty much account for what the sightings are.

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00:07:18,000 --> 00:07:24,000

They scrambled an aircraft for whatever reason and that could be what the witnesses saw, but not in this case.

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00:07:24,000 --> 00:07:36,000

Taken on the night of May 15, 1966, this photo shows the type of highly maneuverable UFO that was described over and over again by respected eyewitnesses.

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Whatever these UFO and disc shaped objects were, they lacked any viable explanation.

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With so many respected witnesses and military radar evidence, the government calls in their leading project blue book investigator of the day, Dr. J. Alan Heineck.

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J. Alan Heineck went out to try and figure out exactly what these objects were. Now, he found them a little bit interesting because they lacked that viable explanation at first glance.

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Heineck analyzes the eyewitness accounts, the radar and photographic evidence.

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A good way to try and smoke out the hoaxes here was to say, I don't want to just see the prints, I want to look at the negatives.

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And that was very often the key to finding out whether something was real or whether it had been done in a dark room.

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But Heineck is barely into the investigation when he allegedly gets a call from the government.

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But he gets a phone call from the Pentagon to say these things need to be discredited, you need to pretty much solve this.

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At the time, the US Air Force often pointed to a visual phenomenon known as autoconiosis to explain and debunk many UFO sightings.

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Autoconiosis is the phenomenon where if you look at a point of light and it is surrounded by darkness and it lacks texture and you really can't see the depth between you and this point of light.

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What this does is it causes someone, for example, to see a distant star or planet and think, my goodness, there's a UFO.

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00:09:07,000 --> 00:09:11,000

So they reach for their camera, they start taking images of it.

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Your brain actually will start playing tricks on you that this light is moving.

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00:09:15,000 --> 00:09:22,000

It could be absolutely stationary and yet your brain sees it as moving around in the darkness.

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But a considerable number of compelling incidents with multiple eyewitness accounts cannot be explained by the optical illusion of autoconiosis.

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When the US Air Force sent Heineck to investigate, the whole thing was dismissed as, oh, it's just swamp gas.

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Now, the extraordinary thing about that was that there really were no swamps in the area.

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So the whole situation was laughable.

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During the years of Project Blue Book, the United States Air Force loved the explanation of swamp gas.

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Whenever a UFO was seen by a witness, swamp gas was always the fallback explanation for what the UFO was.

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It didn't matter if it was metallic, it didn't matter if it was an orb or yellow or green, it didn't really matter.

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

It was essentially always swamp gas.

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The government uses the swamp gas explanation so often it gains a reputation.

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But it almost became a kind of lazy shorthand for the US Air Force.

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It became a cliché, a meme.

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Almost any UFO photograph or sighting could be dismissed as, oh, it was just swamp gas.

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But when you really look at what swamp gas is and you look that the swamp gas is not flying through the sky making right-angled turns,

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stopping, hovering and being intelligent,

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00:10:41,000 --> 00:10:49,000

when we finally come to that conclusion, we realize swamp gas probably isn't that fallback explanation the United States Air Force wanted us to do.

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But why did Alan Heineck, one of Project Blue Book's leading UFO investigators, continue to push the swamp gas explanation?

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One theory is that there was rising public hysteria about this, that US Air Force tried to diffuse the situation.

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Well, in this case it didn't work, it made people angry, including in the longer term, Heineck himself.

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And I mean, this case was, I think, one of those waves of sightings that led to Heineck's later transition from skeptic to believer.

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And indeed, he was quite angry at the way he felt he had been used by the Air Force to debunk all this when actually people were seeing very real things.

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By the mid-1980s, a brand new invention, the digital camera, is about to make everyone on Earth a photographer with the means to collect proof of UFOs.

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But with the advent of digital photographs comes the technology to easily manipulate them.

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And I think when you contrast those cases from 40, 50 years ago versus today in digital photography, I think those are a little bit more valuable to the field.

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You've got the really kind of lack of ability back then to fake photographs.

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From the 1980s onward, UFO investigation is flooded with UFO images, but are the photos real?

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There are great differences between 35mm films and modern digital photography.

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I mean, these days it's all about pixels and computers.

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There's a whole new range of techniques that can be brought to bear, both when it comes to faking images,

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but also the flip side of that when it comes to investigating and seeing whether somebody has cheated it.

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At an age of digital age, more and more people are capturing images in the sky that they are unable to explain.

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Digital cameras and the invention of digital photography has given us a lot more UFO evidence.

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Sometimes that's problematic because now you are just absolutely flooded with evidence,

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but in the same sense it gives us a lot more evidence that it's not a seagull or a crow or a commercial airliner or something that we can easily explain in the sky.

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There's a lot there that is still being captured with digital photography that no one can explain.

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Unsealed case file, the Chile Coppermine UFO.

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April 2013, Colajosi Chile.

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Four technicians working near a remote coppermine witness a soundless silver disc 32 feet wide slowly approach.

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00:13:44,000 --> 00:13:52,000

It allegedly lingers for more than an hour, hovering in different positions about 2,000 feet above.

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00:13:52,000 --> 00:13:56,000

One of the technicians snapped some incredible pictures with his digital camera.

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Now they claim that these lacked any viable explanation whatsoever and truly were UFOs in the sense that they were craft, they were there and they couldn't figure out the origin.

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The Chilean government takes up the investigation.

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When a government gets involved and they come out with a UFO story, there's something to be said about that.

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Now in an era when governments, the military, the air force in countries all around the world that they're getting out of the UFO game, they're closing down their UFO projects, Chile seems to be ramping up its efforts.

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Investigators do a thorough examination of the digital camera settings to verify the authenticity.

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00:14:38,000 --> 00:14:53,000

They looked at these images from the coppermine and they said there is no evidence of any fakery here. These are not faked images. There's no hoaxing here.

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It has let's say the time stamp of the time of day or the date the photograph was taken.

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It holds a lot of evidence then that an investigator can extract from the photo and try and unravel the mystery or the origin of a UFO case.

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They're able to eliminate all the sorts of things that usually cause misidentifications, aircraft lights, weather balloons, etc.

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Chilean Air Force investigators are able to account for other potential objects in restricted airspace at the time.

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But exactly what is depicted in the photos above that Chilean mine is still a mystery.

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I think we really have to entertain the thought that this could be the United States, that this could be technology that we have. Is it? I don't know.

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If they're inquiring with the United States government, the United States military and they say, hey by the way, was this your UFO that was seen over?

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Chances are they're going to get a no and they will move on.

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00:15:50,000 --> 00:15:55,000

And then they say, well, it's truly unidentified.

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The bottom line is that the Chilean government said we don't know what this is, but it's for real and it doesn't look like any known aircraft or aerial phenomenon that we're familiar with.

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When high quality images such as these still cannot yield incontrovertible proof, it points to a bigger problem.

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35 millimeter photographic evidence ushered in a convincing investigative element to the UFO phenomenon.

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But the modern advent of the digital camera has brought a flood of hoaxes and it has many experts questioning the validity of UFO images.

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With technology advancing the way it is, it's difficult to see how photographic evidence is going to fit in to UFO investigation in the future.

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It's like there's a war going on. The hoaxes have more and more sophisticated techniques.

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I mean, it started off with Photoshop and CGI, but it's going to get increasingly complex.

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I think with that invention of technology and with that acceleration of science that allows us to bring so much photographic evidence and videographic evidence along with us of our daily lives, chances are we're going to catch UFO evidence in these pictures, in these videos.

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And if we do catch a UFO, how can we be sure that the image is authentic?

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The only way to get to the truth is to analyze not the photograph, but the person who says they took it, whether it's looking at eye movement, whether it's looking at body language, whether it's

looking at the combination of words that people use, or whether it's even monitoring people's brain waves, because ultimately a picture can tell a thousand words, but a picture can lie.

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But some in the UFO community believe otherwise.

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I think that technology is really going to pave the way for unraveling this mystery, because if there's something in the sky, chances are there's going to be a camera rolling, and that technology hopefully will capture it and give us the evidence we need to try and figure this out.