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Phoenix Lights - 'Solved'?

From: TotlResrch@aol.com [Kal Korff]
Date: Fri, 25 Jul 1997 06:10:28 -0400 (EDT)
Fwd Date: Fri, 25 Jul 1997 10:51:26 -0400
Subject: Phoenix Lights - 'Solved'?

Dear List:

This article speaks for itself...remember, Jim Dilettoso is also the same person who "authenticated" the infamous Eduard "Billy" Meier hoax UFO photographs. Like his Meier analysis, it appears that his Phoenix lights one (a cause celeb with Richard Hoagland and Art Bell) is badly in error as well. There were no UFOs, just military flares, as some of us suspected all along.

Air Guard unit sheds
light on Valley's UFOs

Randy Reid/The Arizona Republic
"I had one too many UFO calls," says Guard Capt. Eileen Bienz.

By Richard Ruelas
The Arizona Republic

There's still the chance it was flying saucers bent on world domination, but another explanation turned up Thursday for those eerie lights spotted over Phoenix on March 13.

Turns out the Maryland Air National Guard was running an exercise called Operation Snowbird along the Barry Goldwater Gunnery Range southwest of Phoenix on that fabled night.

They flew eight A-10s and dropped a mess of high-intensity flares on their way back to Tucson, military officials said.

Since March, Arizona military bases said they had nothing in the air that would have caused the mysterious lights seen from Phoenix on March 13. But the bases didn't check visiting aircraft.

That is until they were asked to by Capt. Eileen Bienz, public affairs officer for the Army and Air National Guard. She started a one-woman investigation into the luminaries.

"I had one too many UFO calls," Bienz said. "I said, 'I've got to figure this thing out' is what it finally came down to."

What Bienz found out about was Operation Snowbird, which brings in aircraft from bases in the northern United States from November to April. Hence the name.

A flight schedule from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, shows that a squadron of planes from Operation Snowbird left at 8:15 p.m. on March 13 and returned at 10:30 p.m.

A spokesman for Luke Air Force Base confirmed that the Maryland planes were authorized to use the Barry Goldwater range from 9:30 to 10 p.m. on March 13.

According to Village Labs in Tempe, which used reports to create computer simulations of the lights, the lights came to a rest near the Estrella Mountains southwest of Phoenix. There were also reports of huge balls of lights that suddenly disappeared.

The Phoenix lights gained national attention in June after an article in USA Today. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Phoenix City Councilwoman Francis Emma Barwood asked for an Air Force investigation. Neither could be reached for comment Thursday.

The lights entered UFO folklore. They were referenced liberally by Art Bell, host of a late-night radio show focusing on the paranormal. The V-shaped Phoenix lights made it onto T-shirts sold at the 50th anniversary celebration in Roswell, N.M.

The lights also prompted a bizarre news conference by Gov. Fife Symington, who trotted out an aide dressed in an alien costume.

Bienz said the Snowbird planes don't explain away everything spotted that night. The planes don't match up with reports of lights coming in from the north, zooming through Phoenix and popping up again near Kingman. But Bienz is trying to find the origin of those as well.

But the Operation Snowbird planes might account for the lights seen near 10 p.m. in the west, the sightings that have provided most of the videotape and photographs seen around the country.

"Our guys did create, while they were up there, an event that this one colonel told me could be perceived as a hell of a light show," said Capt. Drew Sullins, of the Maryland Air National Guard.

Sullins said the planes were probably in a formation, then peeled off one or two at a time to perform the run, Sullins said.

During the run, they would drop high-intensity flares, called Luu-2, made of either magnesium or cesium, Sullins said. The flares are suspended by a tiny parachute and take a long time to drop, Sullins said.

The planes completed their required runs and their time at the busy range was coming to a close. But the A-10s still had a bunch of flares on board, and Davis-Monthan doesn't let planes land with flares aboard.

"I don't know the logic of that rule, but I imagine it's a safety thing," Sullins said.

So as they were leaving the range, the planes jettisoned their flares.

The flares would be visible for a great distance as they slowly floated down, said Keith Shepherd, spokesman for Davis-Monthan.

"(Our pilots) told me that at 6,000 feet and using those types of flares, you can see them from 150 miles away on a good night," Shepherd said.

Jim Delitoso of Village Labs was at a loss for words when told of the Snowbird planes.

When he got his bearings back, he said that optical analysis of photos and videotapes show the lights couldn't be flares and that a computer simulation matching witness accounts places the lights nowhere near the gunnery range.

"I'm open-minded that it could be flares, but we have no evidence of that," Delitoso said.

The Maryland Air National Guard is also keeping an open mind, said Sullins, its spokesman.

"All I'm saying is, yes, we had aircraft flying in that area doing night illuminations," he said. "These guys were flying it. They were there. We can prove it. Whether people want to believe it was the mysterious

lights, it's up to them."

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