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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: ET Hypothesis: Government Concern?

From: **Peregrine Mendoza** <101653.2205@compuserve.com> [Peter Brookesmith]
Date: Fri, 31 Oct 1997 11:39:31 -0500
Fwd Date: Fri, 31 Oct 1997 21:31:46 -0500
Subject: Re: ET Hypothesis: Government Concern?

The Duke of Mendoza presents his compliments to the List.

>Date: Thu, 30 Oct 1997 21:13:27 -0500
>From: James Easton <pulsar@compuserve.com>
>Subject: ET Hypothesis: Government Concern?
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>

The following is an expanded version of my treatment of the so-called Belgian Triangles in "UFO: The Government Files" (ISBN 0-7607-0218-7).

Case #32
FALCONS HUNT TRIANGLES

Brussels--Tienen--Li=E8ge--Eupen Axis, Belgium
30-31 March, 1990

The Belgian UFO flap opened on 29 November 1989, when hundreds of people in and around Eupen, near the German border, saw a huge triangular UFO, showing bright spotlights, pass over the town. The prime witnesses were two gendarmes. In the following months, similar craft were reported from around the country. Many skywatches were organized, and many photographs and some 30 videotapes were taken of the UFOs.

By March 1990 the Belgian authorities had received over 2500 reports of triangular UFOs, mostly around Eupen and Li=E8ge, since November 1989. The Royal Belgian Air Force (RBAF) agreed that if a Brussels-based UFO research group, SOBEPS, would co-ordinate reports at ground level, the RBAF would handle tracking and interception.

On the night of 30/31 March, police patrols and civilian witnesses linked to SOBEPS reported from 11:00pm that a UFO - the first report, from a gendarme at Ramillies, mentioned three, showing red, green and yellow lights - appeared to be flying on a consistent course across Belgium. RBAF radars at Glons and Semmerzake confirmed the sightings and, at 00:05am, two F-16 Fighting Falcons were scrambled to intercept. The UFO had been flying slowly at 150kt/280kmh at 9000ft/2750m until the F-16s' radar locked on to it, when it accelerated at an extraordinary rate to 970kt/1800kmh and dived to below 5000ft/1500m. Next it flashed up to 11,000ft/3350m and then suddenly dived, and in a few seconds was lost to radar amid 'ground clutter'. The chase continued, with several brief lock-ons, until 1:02am, when the F-16s headed for their base, landing a few minutes later. Ground observers reported that around 1:30am four UFOs 'lost their

luminosity' and 'seemed to disappear in four different directions'. Video tapes of the airborne radar read-outs were later released to the press.

The RBAF at first suspected that the USAF was testing the effectiveness of their 'stealth' aircraft - the F117A fighter in particular, which has an unusual triangular configuration. The USAF denied the charge twice, in December 1989 and again in June 1990, saying the plane had 'never flown in the European theater'. This may have been disingenuous: there were persistent rumors in aviation circles in the late 1980s that the F117A was occasionally operating at night from USAF bases in eastern England, while the equally unorthodox-looking B-2 stealth bomber openly visited the UK not long after its unveiling in November 1988. It also became known in 1992 that, despite previous denials, US stealth aircraft had secretly photographed a French uranium-enrichment plant at Pierrelatte. However, the F-16 can fly twice as fast as either the B-2 or F-117A: so how would they have outpaced the Belgian jets?

Belgian skeptic Wim van Utrecht demolished many of the claims surrounding the events of 30/31 March 1990 (see text) but conceded that 'some kind of unusual flying machine did manifest itself over our country on two or three occasions' in November and December 1989. The object 'may have been an experimental, self-propelled balloon of triangular configuration. This would explain not only the slow and almost silent overflight... but also its reason to carry [lights] attuned to standard safety regulations. ...[B]limps and new generation airships are now advertised in military circles as the best possible solution for covert reconnaissance duties.'

THE TRIANGLES OF BELGIUM

Beginning on 29 November 1989, one of the largest flaps of recent years overtook Belgium (see Case #32) and reached its peak in April 1990. Professor of physics Auguste Meessen managed to secure the radar tapes of several of these incidents. His analysis revealed a previously unrecognized atmospheric phenomenon that he called 'flying angels', but much data remained unexplained. While Meessen found that none of the radar traces corresponded to any of the visual reports, his report of November 1990 [*1] spent many words satirizing the [skeptical] press treatment of the wave, wondered 'if UFOs are extraterrestrial, why are their shapes now different from previously reported objects?' and asserted that the collective unconscious 'does not, for the most part, desire extraterrestrials'.

In October 1991, SOBEPS, the main UFO group involved in the flap, published a 500-page dossier on the events ['Vague d'OVNI sur la Belgique - Un dossier exceptionnel']. It had an introduction by Dr J.-P. Petit of the French National Centre of Scientific Research (CNRS) and included papers by Meessen advocating the ETH as the best explanation for the sightings. The book sold out rapidly, but was not universally admired. Ten Belgian scientists denounced Petit and Meessen for their 'rash statements and pseudo-scientific approach'. Meessen had already speculated about UFO propulsion systems on the basis of a tape-recording that turned out to be of radio interference from an over-the-horizon radar, while Petit was soon to publish a book in which he revealed that his research at CNRS had been dictated to him by aliens from Ummo! (The Ummo affair was an elaborate hoax that started in Spain in 1965 and continued for years.)

In a long analysis in 1992 [*2] Belgian skeptic Wim van Utrecht disposed of several items of would-be photographic evidence, including one whose lights, he drily remarked, showed that Belgian UFOs 'strictly abide by European safety regulations for air traffic'. As Meessen had found but ignored, van Utrecht noted a complete lack of correlation between ground reports and radar traces from the 30/31 March sightings; sky maps showed many visual reports were probably bright stars and planets. [*3] In addition, the SOBEPS book showed that witnesses reported not just triangles that night, but 'rectangle, trapezoid, diamond and boomerang shapes', while 'protrusions, windows, domes and hatches always appear to be positioned at different sides of the objects'. 'In short,' wrote van Utrecht, witnesses reported 'exactly those shapes that match designers' views on what airplanes and spacecraft of the future should look like... Apparently, the old flying saucer myth has put on a new face,

perfectly in line with modern trends in design.' And the internal inconsistencies in the SOBEPS dossier scarcely make sense if the same group of identical triangular UFOs was traversing eastern Belgium, as claimed. [*4]

On that point, van Utrecht observed that almost all the reports came from south of the language border between northern, Flemish-speaking Belgium and the French-speaking south. He suggested this could be explained 'either by postulating that the intelligences behind the UFOs adapt their flight-paths to culturally-defined borders, or by accepting that cultural factors had a strong influence on the reporting process'.

In 1993, a confidential study by a civilian engineer from the Belgian Electronic War Center and a major of sappers 'revealed that the unidentified F-16 radar returns captured on video on March 30-31, 1990, were partly due to unusual atmospheric conditions of that night and partly to the fact that the F-16 radar in question had mistakenly locked onto the second F-16 that was taking part in the UFO chase!' Van Utrecht speculated that, among other reasons, the report may not have been released to the public because 'the military wanted to conceal a malfunction of newly acquired expensive radar equipment'.[*5]

NOTES & REFERENCES

*1: Auguste Meessen, 'The Belgian Sightings', International UFO Reporter, Vol 16 No 3 (1991)

*2: Wim van Utrecht, Triangles Over Belgium: A case of Uforia?, Caelestia 1992

*3: '...the recorded [radar] images acted so spooky (sudden changes in altitude and incredible accelerations with no reports of sonic booms) that they remind of false radar returns (due to meteorological conditions or to instrument malfunction) or of distorted echoes from real targets (such as ground-based objects or aircraft equipped with stealth technology. However, to Meessen, "the only reasonable hypothesis" is that we are dealing with "UFOs, of which the performances clearly indicate a non-terrestrial origin". Surely this is an anti-scientific way of rounding off an investigation. Why not simply conclude that a satisfactory explanation has not yet been found!' - van Utrecht, op. cit., pp13-14.

*4: Van Utrecht continues [pp16-17] with a timely reminder of the fragility of the Myth of the Trained Observer: '...that many cases are unique because they were reported by people with occupations or educations that indicate "trained observers" is another often heard argument from the believers' camp. Hendry's much-praised analysis of explained and unexplained UFO reports [The UFO Handbook, Sphere 1980, pp101-102] gives a sobering view on this. Comparing 1,158 UFO cases (explained reports) with 113 UFO cases (unexplained reports) for any one occupation, Hendry created a misperception "failure rate" for the different occupations. The ratio of UFOs reported [as UFOs] to all occupations yielded unexpected results: police officers (the number one witnesses in almost every major event of the Belgian flap) ranked on top with the highest number of identified UFO reports, meaning that, for one reason or another, policemen are the first ones to report natural phenomena and man-made objects as UFOs. Hendry found that all other occupations did better, including students, housewives and people with no job.'

*5: Wim van Utrecht, personal communication, January 1996.

What I have yet to see is some documentation of Col [later Maj-Gen] de Brouwer's personal views on UFOs and the ETH before he instigated the SOBEPS skywatch of 30-31 March 1990. It would seem that he has stuck with the SOBEPS line since, as he appears from time to time at ufological conferences, and repeat invitations to these gatherings of the faithful tend not to be extended to skeptics and curmudgeons. But it is clear that the Belgian government view of UFOs is not identical with de Brouwer's.

Comments, corrections, updates and additional details (preferably facts) welcomed.

Yours &c
Parallelogram D. Mensuration
Square Peg

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