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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Sheffield Incident

From: David Clarke <dclarke14@compuserve.com>
Date: Mon, 6 Jul 1998 14:34:31 -0400
Fwd Date: Mon, 06 Jul 1998 18:01:55 -0400
Subject: Re: Sheffield Incident

Although I fear UFO Updates readings must be rapidly growing tired of hearing about this case, I feel now is the time for me to put on record what I believe to be the truth.

Max Burns reads much into one paragraph of journalese in my recent article for UFO Magazine, and claims I have reached no positive conclusions about the cause of the incident.

Not so, and even if I had not reached a conclusion, it doesn't follow that we have to immediately accept a fantastic and far-fetched explanation for something which can easily be explained in down-to-earth terms.

Max writes: "And as he has no conclusive proof of what actually occurred, it is an elementary rule of logic that you cannot prove a negative. Coupled with the lack of conclusive evidence he should not have precluded the possibility of extra terrestrial origin of the ufo sightings on the 24th March 1997."

I don't know what strange rule of logic Max's befuddled mind adheres to, but if we follow his reasoning that you cannot prove a negative, then I also cannot prove, for example, that the leprecauns, Bigfoot or even the Jolly Green Giant was not responsible for the sightings either. This line of argument takes us nowhere. Just because we cannot say for sure exactly happened, we should not have to immediately jump to the conclusion that an Alien Craft was responsible.

That is is not science - it's just plain crazy.

Read my lips Max: UFO means Unidentified Flying Object, NOT alien craft. I would have thought that was the first thing someone claiming to be a UFOlogist in this day and age would learn, but apparently not for the X-Files Generation.

This attitude just demonstrates how little time Max has been involved in active UFO investigation, and how little he knows about the history of this subject. He constantly confuses belief with evidence, and evidence with belief.

The first rule of UFOlogy should be you cannot trust what eyewitnesses tell you. How many "eyewitnesses" are qualified observers of the night sky? Not many, judging by the number of people who ring me up saying they have been watching a UFO for the last four hours as the clouds have moved across it, and are amazed when I look out of my window, see it too, and go back to tell them it is a star or the planet Venus (this happens on average once every other month).

Then there are those who see aircraft coming into land at Sheffield's new airport and are convinced they have seen giant triangular-shaped UFOs following their car. If they aren't aircraft then why are they always seen at 8pm at precisely the same time the KLM flight from Amsterdam comes in to land?

Just look at CUFOS' Allan Hendry's excellent UFO Handbook for many other examples of witnesses who have radically misperceived mundane objects and re-described them as UFOs, spaceships and aliens.

A few examples - drawn from actual eyewitness accounts - will suffice: "Never seen anything like it in all our lives" (Police officer's statement - object later confirmed by police to be a star)

"It made a whirring noise like on TV shows (bright star, seen for one hour) "It followed our car and hovered over our house. Didn't follow any other car, only ours..." (Planet Venus, watched every night for a week) "Made my hair stand on end..." (the Moon)

Given this evidence, how can we take at face-value and uncritically accept what Max says two or three witnesses say about a "triangular shaped object" in the sky? What's more we don't even know what these witnesses are really saying or claiming, because we only have Max's word for it, and he won't let anyone question them unless they believe in his version of The Truth. But back to what I believe caused the Sheffield incident..

First of all, forget all preconceived ideas about aliens, UFOs and crashed Tornados. What facts do we know about March 24, 1997?

FACT ONE. We know the RAF were involved in a secret military exercise over the Peak District, involving extremely low-flying jet aircraft, Tornado GR1s and maybe other aircraft too. The MOD received 13 complaints from the public about low-flying aircraft that one evening alone. These jets were certainly operating between 9 and 10pm, judging by the statements of those who saw them, shortly before the sonic booms were recorded.

I believe the presence of the military jets explains the sightings of "triangles". They were simply aircraft taking part in this exercise, misperceived by a small number of observers.

The MOD have not lied to Helen Jackson MP simply because they did not receive any UFO reports that night. The police did not pass any UFO reports to the MOD because they never regarded the incident as a "UFO incident", they regarded it as an incident of low-flying aircraft.

FACT TWO: Two sonic booms were recorded above the Peak/Pennine area at 9.52pm and 10.06pm that night, coincident with the later stages of the above exercise.

Senior seismologist Glenn Ford at Edinburgh University has gone on record and started (and I quote) "on the balance of probabilities [these booms] were definitely caused by an aircraft, in all probability a military aircraft."

Mr Ford and his colleagues record dozens of sonic booms and air blasts every year, and they know what they are talking about. Whatever the MOD or RAF may say, there is little doubt one of their jets caused these booms. Not an "ET triangle" or a UFO shooting down a jet, but a jet going supersonic over land during a low-flying exercise.

I have yet to see ANY conclusive contradictory evidence to change my opinion about the cause of these booms.

FACT THREE. We know for a fact there was an unidentified light aircraft flying on an east to west course across the northern suburbs of Sheffield coincident with the second boom at 10.06 pm. The Sheffield Police log records sightings of this aircraft, and very good eyewitness accounts of it are provided by special constable Marie-France Tattersfield and the farmer Mrs Morton, who saw it from the Bolsterstone area. It was their 999 distress calls which triggered the subsequent search and rescue

operation, NOT the sightings of the triangles which Max emphasises - these were seen half an hour before, or hours later, miles away from the Bolsterstone area. Further proof that an unidentified light aircraft was involved is provided by the video footage taken by two teenagers, Leon Rockley and Alex Hardy, from their home in Parson Cross, Sheffield, that night, a copy of which I obtained after it was examined by detectives at Hammerton Road Police Station. The video clearly shows a light in the sky, which resolves into a "triangle" of lights as it nears the camera, with the clear drone of a light aircraft engine in the background.

Police were never able to identify the owner of this aircraft, or the identity of the pilot whose craft was seen at Bolsterstone, which led to speculation about the craft being part of a covert drugs drop.

So there we have it folks - a covert military operation, coupled with an as yet unidentified light aircraft, all coincidentally taking place on a clear, still night when lots of people were out on the moors watching the Hale-Bopp comet.

The Sheffield case is a microcosm of many other "UFO" cases, a mish-mash of human misperception and wishful thinking, which can rapidly turn into a great mystery when they are not investigated properly or fall into the hands of belief-driven or money-driven individuals out to make a fast buck. Why should we regard Max's claims with suspicion? Here's a few good reasons:

*Max has already admitted on UFO UpDates that he stood to make =A31,500 UK pounds out of selling his far-fetched version of events to a sleazy down-market tabloid newspaper. Hardly the actions of a principled, objective researcher whose only goal is the truth.

*Max has stated on numerous occasions in public that he is determined to make this case "Britain's answer to Roswell". The only way he can do that is by selling it to the USA, where no one is familiar with the true facts and have - until now - only Max's version of events to draw conclusions upon. The reason he has become so upset is because I have presented a different version of events, and a more sensible one, and "rattled his cage". *None of Max's claims about alleged "eyewitnesses" can be trusted to be reliable.

For example, his Website contains a statement by one witness he calls "Leicester Arkwright" who he says claims to have seen body-bags being retrieved from a reservoir and placed inside an RAF Sea King helicopter the morning after the Sheffield Incident.

All he can about this witness is that his statement has been "uncorroborated". What that means is Max has not spoken to him, doesn't know what he claims at all, and is relying upon hearsay evidence, which is good enough for him.

I have spoken to this man, whose name happens to be a Water Board worker, Lester Wainwright (but then Max even has trouble spelling my name, "Mr Clark").. Wainwright makes no claim about body bags, was not even present at the scene on March and tells me in a statement: "The RAF said it was Tornado low flying and fast which caused the flash and the bang, and I understand they admitted it to the police later. It makes me laugh to think someone is claiming I saw body bags when I wasn't even there. It annoys me that people exaggerate stories like this."

The important point about this statement is the FACT that I told Max I had spoken to Mr Wainwright, that he had denied seeing any body bags, and yet Max has gone ahead and placed this man's "testimony" on his Website without any regards to truth or honesty.

This statement alone should make any objective researcher question ANY "evidence" or "eyewitness" statements about this case which Max claims supports his Extraterrestrial theory. He is a proven manipulator and distorter of information to suit his own ends. He just ignores anything which supports a down-to-earth explanation and goes for the fantastic and unprovable every time.

This is not an unjustified attack - it is a fact which is borne

out by checkable evidence which I have provided above. All my claims about this case are supported by independent and checkable statements of fact.

Here I quote from Max's original conclusions about this case, which he kindly supplied me with a copy of earlier this year:

"These Larger Triangled Craft are without doubt Extra Terrestrial in Oridgin.

"As well as that I will go so far as to say that these triangles are being flown and controlled by the beings Known as the Greys...It is without doubt that given the evidence and chain of events which occurred on the that I must conclude as the Triangle data seems to point to them often travelling in pairs and that the authorities seem to be lying about the events over the pennines..that if it was just a tornado gone down on a training exercise like so many have over the last 20yrs when they just normally announce throughout the news media that a plane has crashed like they have done on numerous occasions in the last 20yrs I must conclude the followingpoints:

- "1. one of the tornado jets has shot down one of the triangles while being completely destroyed its self.
- "2. if that is the case was the later sighting of the triangle at 23.30-23.45pm a rescue triangle for the occupants of the first triangle.
- "3. there was only one triangle and it has completely destroyed the tornado jet and the pilot.
- "4. The Triangle has captured on of the tornado,s and the pilot."

Quite reasonable conclusions to arrive at based upon just three vague sightings of a triangular object, spaced out between 7.40pm and 11.45 pm one evening?

Or just plain crazy?

At the end of the day, it's up to the readers of UFO Updates and the great mass of public out there to decide which version of the Truth they buy. The paranoid, belief-driven believers in the ETH will no doubt feel Max is a hero and I'm an heretical skeptic out to spoil their fun.

But as Max has said himself, time will tell, and I predict that in ten years time he will be no nearer finding the answers to these three questions than he is today:

1. Who saw a UFO shoot down a Tornado jet on the night of March 24, 1997?
2. From which base did this Tornado jet fly?
3. What were the names of the pilot and co-pilot?

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