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The Bentwaters and Woodbridge Incidents

From: James Easton <pulsar@compuserve.com>
Date: Tue, 6 Apr 1999 21:28:15 -0400
Fwd Date: Wed, 07 Apr 1999 09:21:04 -0400
Subject: The Bentwaters and Woodbridge Incidents

Pulsar Newsletter - Issue No. 4

Welcome to the latest issue of the newsletter.

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This newsletter is concerned with only one topic - recent developments in the RAF Bentwaters/RAF Woodbridge case.

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The Bentwaters and Woodbridge Incidents.

The events which occurred just after Christmas 1980 at the twin-base complex of RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk, England, are one of the UK's most enduring mysteries.

The American bases located on British soil were an important component of NATO's front-line defences.

At approximately 3 a.m. on the morning of 26 December, 1980, a security patrol at the 'east gate' sentry point on RAF Woodbridge, noticed unfamiliar lights in Rendlesham forest, which adjoined the Woodbridge base.

The ensuing investigation by Staff-Sergeant (SSgt) Jim Penniston, Airman 1st Class John Burroughs and Airman Ed Cabansag, all with the 81st Security Police Squadron (SPS), led to later publicised claims from Burroughs and Penniston that they had encountered an unidentified object which manoeuvred through the forest.

During the late evening and early hours of 27th/28th December, further reports of 'strange lights' resulted in the Deputy Base Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Halt, forming a team to investigate.

Amongst those known to have accompanied Halt were Lieutenant Bruce Englund, the Duty Flight Lieutenant, Sergeant Monroe Nevilles from Disaster Preparedness Operations and Master-Sergeant [MSgt] Bobby Ball, a shift commander from the 81st SPS.

Also possibly in Halt's party were Major Malcolm Zickler, Chief of Base Security and Captain Mike Verano, the Day Shift Commander.

Sometime around 11.00 p.m., they entered Rendlesham forest and examined the area where Penniston and Burroughs claimed to have seen the 'strange lights'.

Halt's party took radiation readings from possible 'landing marks' which had been identified after the first incident, proceeded through the forest where they saw a 'strange flashing red light' plus other perceived phenomena, and headed due east through farmland.

At this point, the most momentous event of that night was documented on the microcassette recorder which Halt had taken with him. The recording was later made public and a transcript reads:

HALT: 3:05. At about ten degrees, horizon, directly north, we've got two strange objects, er, half moon shape, dancing about, with colored lights on 'em. At, er, guess to be about five to ten miles out, maybe less. The half moons have now turned into full circles as though there was an eclipse or something there for a minute or two.

HALT: 03:15. Now we've got an object about 10 degrees directly south, 10 degrees off the horizon. And the ones to the north are moving. One's moving away from us.

1ST VOICE: Moving out fast.

2ND VOICE: This one on the right's heading away, too.

HALT: They're both heading north. Hey, here he comes from the south, he's coming toward us now.

HALT: Now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground.

SHOUT IN BACKGROUND: [Unclear - possibly 'colors!' or 'take cover!']

HALT: This is unreal.

At 0400, Halt's last remarks were, "One object still hovering over Woodbridge base at about five to ten degrees off the horizon, still moving erratic and similar lights and beaming down as earlier".

One possible explanation is that stars were being mistaken for moving aerial objects. However, it seems clear from the actual tape that the first and second 'voices' are different and added to Halt's observations, means that if stars were being inadvertently assumed to be rapidly moving, then three people had an identical optical aberration at the same time.

There's also the acute point that one of the 'celestial' objects was observed and documented at the time to have not only accelerated from the south, it sent down a beam of light close to Halt's group.

During 1998, Halt was interviewed by American journalist AJS (Salley) Rayl and elaborated:

"We've crossed the farmer's field past his house and across the road, stumbled through a small stream and went out into a large ploughed field. Somebody noticed several objects in the sky to the north - three objects clearly visible with multiple-colored lights on them. The objects appeared elliptical and then they turned full round, which I thought was quite interesting. All three doing that. They were stationary for awhile and then they started to move at high speed in sharp angular patterns as though they were doing a grid search. About that same time, somebody noticed the south, a similar object, it was round - did not change shape - and at one point it appeared to come toward us at a very high speed.

It stopped overhead and sent down a small pencil-like beam, sort of like a laser beam. It was an interesting beam in that it stayed - it was the same size all the way down the beam. It illuminated the ground about ten feet from us and we just stood there in awe wondering whether it was a signal, a warning, or what it was. We really didn't know."

"It clicked off as though someone threw a switch, and the object receded, back up into the sky".

"Then it moved back toward Bentwaters and continued to send down beams of light, at one point near the weapons storage facility. We knew that, because we could hear the chatter on the radio".

An incredible tale and somewhat disconcerting as the weapons storage facility has long been rumoured to have housed nuclear weapons.

The apparent intrusion was never solved by Halt and at a subsequent staff meeting of the Third Air Force, he was informed that as the incidents occurred on British soil, it was a matter for the Ministry of Defence.

In 1993, American researcher Robert Todd, obtained a copy of Halt's memo to the MoD, under the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The Ministry have clarified in writing to myself and others that they did investigate the affair and found nothing which was 'of defence significance'. One reason cited is that considerable time had elapsed between the incidents and receiving Halt's brief memo.

There seems to be no evidence that Halt's memo resulted in a thorough enquiry by the Ministry and Halt has expressed his bewilderment that he didn't even receive an acknowledgement from them.

Although some witnesses to both night's events have come forward with their accounts since 1980, missing from the contemporary evidence was a testimony from anyone who was on duty in the weapons storage area (WSA) that night.

Until now.

Recently, I was contacted by a member of the 81st SPS who had come across some lengthy articles I had written in 1998, following extensive research into the case.

>From the information given, there seems no doubt that the events he relates took place on the same date as Lt. Col. (subsequently Colonel) Halt recorded his own experiences on tape.

The witness is Randy D. Smith, an Honor Graduate from Air Training Command.

A Security Specialist, Randy's Certificate of Appointment confirms he was assigned to RAF Bentwaters with the noncommissioned rank of Sergeant on 1 September, 1980.

Noting that any comments of my own, or clarifications, are contained in square brackets, this is Sergeant Randy Smith's story of what happened one night in late December, 1980:

"I was either a SrA.[Senior Airman] or Sgt. at the time. It was Christmas time 1980. 'D' flight had been working the 3-11pm shift, while 'C' flight had been working the 11pm-7am shift.

It was a quiet, clear night. I believe I was working 'Whiskey 5' which was the alarm response team in the weapons storage area on Bentwaters. I am unsure of my partner that night. I had free range of one half of the WSA and I was driving a pickup truck. Clarence George was my area supervisor. Rick Bobo was the SPCDS [Small Permanent Communications Display

Segment -a 'computerized alarm system'] tower operator in the WSA.

The next thing I recall, not long after the shift began, perhaps midnight or so, I heard Bob Ball come over the radio and request that the aircraft control tower give him permission to cross the active runway, it saves 15 minutes driving time, as opposed to driving the perimeter road. At that point I knew SOMETHING was happening because no-one ever crossed the active runway unless there was an extreme emergency. Bob, perhaps logically accompanied by Lt. Bruce Englund, crossed the runway on Bentwaters, they picked up Lt. Col. Halt and some equipment and returned by the same route. I would say that between 30 minutes to an hour had passed since Bob made his first request to cross. They then proceeded to recross the runway, and went out the back gate headed toward RAF Woodbridge. After that, the radio was quiet for a long time.

It was a very quiet night, no planes, no helicopters flying. Clarence George came by to talk to me and he said that everyone in the WSA was in the SPCDS tower watching 'lights' and did I want to come check it out? So I did. Clarence thought they were all crazy. It's a small tower and people were jammed in there body to body, overloading the tower I'm sure. More people than I've ever seen in the tower at one time".

Randy's reported observation from the security tower was of what appeared to be a silent, triangular-shaped craft, hovering near the twin base complex.

It's an assertion which might be startling on its own.

Randy, however, states there were three of them.

"I asked what everyone was looking at and they pointed out 3 objects that appeared like stars to the naked eye. Binoculars were being passed around and when I had my turn I saw VERY CLEAR images of 3 triangular shaped craft that were hovering a few miles away and above treetop level".

"They were triangular in shape, larger than a fighter jet, but smaller than a C5. Definitely triangular with lights that were arranged around the bottom that were perhaps different colors but unable to distinguish at that distance. I only stayed in the tower for an hour or so and heard one of the guys with a turn on the binoculars say, 'Wow, it just took off'. Two of the craft left at a high rate of speed. The one remaining craft was still in position when I left the tower".

"Regarding sound-very quiet, no motor sounds whatsoever".

"I also remember hearing the radio traffic regarding the light-alls [these were gas powered, portable lights which it's known were being used that night and proved problematic] and not working, replacing them, they didn't work, then much later, they all worked fine".

"The following night, I went on duty. At guardmount, Bob Ball was very serious, he's almost never serious, a very jovial person. He said, 'I saw something last night, but I'm not at liberty to discuss it'. And that was the 'end'. I later heard that the morning we got off our first midnight shift, an A-10 was scrambled and sent to Ramstein, Germany, by Lt. Col. Halt".

As for the 'beams of light' which Halt claims were being reported on radio as coming down near the WSA, Randy has no knowledge of this.

Randy, in fact, can't recall much of what happened afterwards: "I remember leaving the tower and then I can remember as I was riding my bicycle home I was thinking that I must have turned in my weapon because I don't have it with me".

He couldn't think of any significant occurrences in-between.

Except for one thing..

Randy believes that at some point he was, "on top of the structure near the bunker where you'd go if you were under attack".

Why he may have thought the WSA was under attack, is something that poses an enigma and one which Randy would like to resolve.

In the past it's been claimed that RAF Bentwaters held a 'tactical nuclear weapons' stockpile, a fact not acknowledged by the respective US and UK governments.

Some 20 years later, there's no obvious reason why that should remain a vital secret and as one former serviceman was on record as alleging that Bentwaters held the largest 'NATO nuclear weapons dump', I asked if this entire issue might now be clarified.

Randy's wife, Kathy, provided considerable assistance in obtaining answers to what at times seemed an unreasonable amount of questions. Fortunately, she fully appreciated it was necessary to understand the context of this new evidence and her patience, diligence and knowledge of the issues were invaluable.

Kathy responded:

"Yes, of course there were small, 'hot', tactical nuclear weapons at Bentwaters, as used on an F-16, not large as used on B-52's and B-1's. However, Bentwaters probably had the least weapons, not the 'largest NATO dump' by any means. The WSA is the highest security area on the base. In a 'hot' nuclear area, you employ the two man concept throughout the entire area, no single person ever allowed around nukes".

"The bunkers would look like small hills. They were covered with dirt and had grass growing on them sloped front to back.

There were about 10 bunkers total, the two large on the ends and 8 all within the long middle section. All of these contained 'hot' nuclear weapons. This was Rand's posted position that night".

"Use of deadly force was authorized".

"The bunkers on each end were defensive fighting positions. That was where Randy believes (98% positive) he was when Tsgt.[Technical-Sergeant] Clarence George, the area supervisor, approached him and asked if he wanted to go up in the tower. That was where you would take position if you were ever under attack, not where you'd ever be under normal conditions".

"The bunker is the weapon storage facility itself, where the nukes are stored. It has thick steel, double doors, 2 high security padlocks, and the Munitions Maintenance Squadron were the ONLY people authorized to enter these structures. Up on top, the SP's [Security Police] had a defensive fighting position - 2 short steel walls, with sandbags in between the walls. The only time anyone ever went up there was during an exercise to prepare for an attack. In case of an actual attack, you would follow the procedures practiced during the exercise. It was training or it was real, no gray areas.

He knows they weren't training that night.

He has tried to recall why he was there that night but simply can't".

I pointed out that if his supervisor had found Randy in a defensive position, rather than inviting him to watch some 'strange lights', wouldn't he first have enquired why Randy thought the WSA was under attack?

Kathy replied:

"Regarding the inability to recall what happened after Randy left the tower, and the less than 100% assuredness of being on the bunker when Tsgt. George invited him to the tower. What if

he isn't sure because it was after he left the tower that he took that position up on the bunker? Maybe at that point the area supervisor would have joined him at that location. He would be the one to be in charge of what actions to take if the WSA was penetrated".

This was precisely the scenario I had wondered about. If Halt is correct and those 'beams of light' described on tape were being directed near the WSA, then it's evident from the timing documented in Halt's recording and Randy's statement, that this occurred after Randy had left the observation tower.

Questioned about the exact timings, although realising it was so long ago, Kathy provided more details:

"He believes he heard the radio traffic re Ball crossing active, 'around' midnight, could have been as early as 11:30. He would have begun hearing about the light-alls having problems around 1:00am. He would have gone up in the tower between 1:50-2:00am. Stayed until 3:00-3:30, and doesn't recall anything else, until riding bike home".

We know from Halt's crucial documentation that the most puzzling 'aerial phenomena' occurred between 0300 and 0330. If Randy and his colleagues were conceivably observing the same objects and aware of their evidently sudden, rapid departure, then during this time - 0300 to 0330 - Randy would have to be in the tower.

It looks like he possibly was and may have left directly after that 'excitement' had passed.

Whilst it's impossible to be certain about this, the timings are at least coincidentally close, perhaps surprisingly so if there's no relationship.

Assuming Randy's claims are accurate and two of the 'objects' being observed from the tower departed rapidly or were no longer visible, then as noted, we have people in the security tower who are experiencing similar misperceptions at around the same as Halt's group, who were some two miles away.

It's something which might be further clarified if we had accounts from the dozen or so others who were in the tower.

Asked for any additional information in this respect, Kathy cited:

"The tower operator was Sgt. Rick Bobo.

Others that could possibly have been there were: Mike Dahl, Dan Grogul, Jim Gouge, Jim O'Farrell, Mike Christian, Mike Smith.

The 15 men with clearance to be in the tower would be a vehicle searcher from the entry control point, the shift supervisor, tower operator, 8 in the alert fire team facility, and two 2-man patrols. The entry controller and the alarm monitor were the only 2 people in the area that could not leave their posts, as far as he knows, bringing the total to 17 people within the WSA".

An explanation of what exactly took place within the WSA that night might lie with these colleagues, most, if not all, of whom have presumably long since returned to the US.

Could the observations reported by Randy simply have been misidentified stars, perhaps distorted by the optically imperfect glass windows of the observation tower, the use of binoculars and further compounded by mist, haze, fog, ice particles, etc.

The answer must be affirmative, there are many examples of stars being misidentified as 'strange objects'.

Where this case notably differs is that Halt's tape recording provides corroborative evidence that there was at around the same time a documented observation of 'star-like' objects

which exhibited characteristics that can't easily, if at all, be equated with stars.

Furthermore, a nearby resident, Gerry Harris, has testified that earlier on the same night, he observed 'abnormal lights' moving over the base complex:

"I stood watching them and they were going up and moving about this way and that way and they were going up, they were coming down and I watched them for, three quarters of an hour and, all of a sudden, they disappeared.

But just before they went, before they disappeared, there was a lot of activity on the base, I could hear vehicles running about, I could see the flashing lights of vehicles moving about and I could hear people shouting, it was quiet and the wind must have been in this direction. I could hear their voices and then they were calling to each other and then I could hear the roaring of their vehicles, which at that time of night was unusual".

It's against this overall background that Randy's account needs to be placed in perspective.

Any conclusion about what may, or may not, have occurred during these incidents is hampered by the absence of testimonies from so many who participated.

Added to all who are identified above, are those that took part in the first night's incident, when Burroughs, Cabansag and Penniston pursued the source of 'peculiar lights' through Rendlesham forest.

At Lt. Col Halt's request, Burroughs, Cabansag and Penniston, plus the Flight Chief, Master-Sergeant J. D. Chandler and the Shift Commander, Fred A. Buran [rank unknown], provided written statements of their involvement in this first incident.

I obtained copies of these witness affidavits last year and they served as proof that Burroughs, Cabansag and Penniston pursued a light through the forest and farm terrain for some two miles, before realising it was the beacon from nearby Orfordness lighthouse. This had never previously been disclosed and confirmed the lighthouse was a factor.

The deceptive lighthouse beacon had been suggested as the explanation for all that transpired, however, from a painstaking analysis of the evidence, that seems impossible.

Two of the unidentified lights first observed from 'east gate' were consistently mentioned in this early documentation as 'red and blue', for example, Burroughs described:

"On the night of 25-26 Dec at around 0300 while on patrol down at east gate myself and my partner saw lights coming from the woods due east of the gate. The lights were red and blue the red one above the blue one and they were flashing on and off".

It's the source of these 'red and blue lights', seen from the east gate and then reportedly moving through the forest, which has never been determined.

>From the complete accounts, it seems evident that the 'beacon' light later seen in the forest and which turned out to be from Orfordness was a completely separate occurrence, for example, Burroughs later attested:

"We climbed over the fence and started heading towards the red and blue lights and they just disappeared. Once we reached the farmer's house we could see a beacon going around so we went towards it. We followed it for about 2 miles before we could see it was coming from a lighthouse2.

Penniston indeed made the distinction, Chandler confirming:

"Each time Penniston gave me the indication that he was about to reach the area where the lights were, he would give an extended estimated location. He eventually arrived at a 'beacon light', however, he stated that this was not the light

or lights he had originally observed".

Buran verified:

"SSgt Penniston reported getting near the 'object' and then all of a sudden said they had gone past it and were looking at a marker beacon that was in the same general direction as the other lights. I asked him, through SSgt Coffey, if he could have been mistaken, to which SSgt Penniston replied that had I seen the other lights I would know the difference. SSgt Penniston seemed agitated at this point".

Staff-sergeant Coffey is another who might help our understanding of this episode.

In Penniston's written testimony to Halt, he makes the following claim:

"After receiving permission from CSC, we proceeded off base past east gate, down an old logging road. Left vehicle proceeded on foot. Burroughs and I were approximately 15-20 meters apart and proceeding on a true east direction from the logging road. The area in front of us was lighting up a 30 meter area. When we got within a 50 meter distance. The object was producing red and blue light. The blue light was steady and projecting under the object. It was lighting up the area directly under extending a meter or two out.

At this point of positive identification I relayed to CSC, SSgt Coffey. Positive sighting of object...colour of lights and that it was definitely mechanical in nature".

An anomaly is that Penniston then immediately added, "This is the closest point that I was near the object at any point", which differs markedly from his subsequent public claims to have examined a triangular-shaped object at close range for some 10-20 minutes and even touched 'strange symbols' on its surface.

All of the statements gathered by Lt. Col. Halt seem to support Penniston's original contention that the source of the lights was in fact never located.

In later years Burroughs also acknowledged, "I never saw anything metallic or anything hard".

The articles I published in 1998 specifically highlighted the clear discrepancies between what was documented at the time and the more elaborate tales later told. As it was hoped this might lead to the anomalies being addressed and perhaps even rationalised, some other aspects were left aside.

Consequently, a fact which is publicly divulged here for the first time is that in their respective statements, Chandler and Buran do confirm that Penniston radioed he had seen an actual object, nor merely illusive lights.

Chandler wrote: "On one occasion, Penniston relayed that he was close enough to the object to determine that it was definitely a mechanical object", with Buran agreeing, "at one point SSgt Penniston stated that it was a definite metallic object".

Was it, or wasn't it and if so , what was it.

A key testimony is Ed Cabansag's and he has never spoken about the events. I'm not aware that he has ever been located and asked.

A close colleague of Burroughs and Penniston was Geraldo Valdes-Sanchez, perhaps better known as Jerry Valdez.

Jerry contacted me in April, 1997 and recounted how he was part of 'B' flight in the 81st SPS and a member of a patrol which had been sent to check on Burroughs, Penniston and Cabansag that first night.

Although I published the essence of Jerry's story, giving him the pseudonym of 'Tom', that full story has never been told before now:

"I was assigned to RAF Bentwaters in August of 1980.

I worked with Burroughs and Penniston. What they said was true. As a matter of fact, the following statements are true and can be verified by many people.

The acting squadron was the 81st. SPS and 'B' Flight was the acting security force on duty. Burroughs and Penniston were on 'B' flight.

'A' flight was the day flight, daytime only.

The Guard at East gate was Amn [Airman] Burroughs and Amn Beachum [it was actually Airman 1st Class John Burroughs and Staff Sergeant Bud Steffans].

I was stationed on Security - 6 with either Amn Hartman or Sgt Sauls. We saw the entire thing.

Shift change was from 26th at 2300 hrs till 0700 hrs of the 27th.

The top Flight Sgt on duty was MSgt Fail. Lt. Col. Halt was not there the first night.

It was a bitterly cold night and clear.

Radio communications were disrupted on and off due to some type of atmospheric disturbance. The radios weren't working at all that night. There were 6 channels, called 'Queen', 'Queen 1', 'King 1' and so on. One channel was reserved for Law Enforcement, one for RAF Bentwaters and the rest were open.

We switched channels all night.

Contact had been lost with Burroughs, Penniston and Beachum [Steffans remained at 'east gate', the other participant was Airman Ed Cabansag].

The base had an Alarm Response Team (ART) and a Security Response Team (SRT).

Codes in use at that time and which have now been declassified were 'Helping Hand' - a potentially hostile threat - and 'Covered Wagon' - a confirmed hostile threat.

If the first alert status was unresolved after 30 minutes, it automatically became a confirmed, hostile threat.

The person on the post should have been Burroughs, but he was missing, the weapons were missing and the phone was off the hook.

This was around 2:00 a.m. [it's known this must have been after 3.00 a.m.].

We were carrying weapons and were told to hold our position. MSgt Fail went out.

I could clearly see the lights from the gate, just outside the back gate [east gate]. It was next to the road.

They were intermittent lights, very bright, 15-20 feet above the ground.

They were pulsating and from what I recall there were 3 lights, red green and blue.

It made no noise, but it defied gravity. It was really weird and scary. We all knew what we were looking at, but no one really came out and said it.

I saw them, so did Amn Beachum, Amn Hartman, Amn Randy Hernandez.

Burroughs and Penniston finally showed up. I somehow think something happened to them. They were acting strange.

We were then told to go back to our posts.

Shift change in the morney for 'B' flight was extremely late. 'A' Flight relieved us at 9:30 am, very late.

When we went out the East gate back to Bentwaters, leaving Woodbridge, there were many people, including numerous people in typical lab coats making an analysis of the area. You could see out the vehicle to the right side, that there were many people examining the area, searching, looking for something. Some of these people were in white overcoats, that's why I say that they looked like typical techs in lab coats.

They were searching the area in front of the forest.

The 'few branches' that were broken off were not a few, it was a lot, a huge area had been cleared. There were trees missing.

I also saw Bobbys [British Policemen] and little white police cars.

I was pointing these things out and Hartman says, 'Valdez, shut up about that [or words to that effect]'.
I was green.

I know that they got pictures and hard evidence of this thing.

Penniston told me he shot a roll of film, but it had been confiscated.

The base had a problem with 'bird watchers', people who were suspected to be Russian spies. The base security personnel had to photograph anyone who showed an interest in the base activities. Penniston may have had a loaded camera in his duffel bag.

[Note: it was only last year that Penniston first revealed he had taken photographs of the perceived 'object' in the forest - Penniston states he was told the photographs 'didn't come out', which is likely as they were taken within a dense forest in the dark of night].

A lot of people staked the place out on the second night. The crew on duty then was 'C' Flight, 'B' Flight had just finished its last midnight shift for the cycle. Halt's night was 'C' shift.

The starlight scope mentioned by Lt. Col. Halt [referred to in Halt's recording], fits on top of an M16. There were no night vision binoculars in those days.

There were a large number of light-alls in the forest and I wondered how they had got them all in there. We always had problems with them. This was 17 years ago, not today's technology.

If Charles [Halt] says a beam of light shone down at his feet, then a beam of light shone down at his feet. You can take that to the bank.

As far as people that saw or knew about this incident, there were well over 30 security people who swept the area looking for Beachum [Cabansag], Burroughs and Penniston, who were missing.

Everyone involved on the 26th and 27th is listed in the Security Police Blotter AF Form 53.

Woodbridge security and LE [Law Enforcement] can verify everything. The Deskblotter AF Form 53 has a complete account of the entire event.

Also, try and get a hold of the form 'Incident Complaint

Report 1569'.

[Note: I requested these documents under the US FOIA and was eventually advised they would have been destroyed after 2-3 years per normal procedures].

It happened 17 years ago, but I remember it clearly. Here are some more details:

Other Security Forces involved in incident were Security Flight Leader, Msgt Fail, Security One, Col. Schultz, Chief of Security Police, Buckholst [spelling uncertain] and Central Security Controller, Chandler [Chandler was the Flight Chief on 'C' flight].

It happened and a lot of people know about it".

What exactly happened remains the mystery.

The people in 'lab coats' are a singular puzzle. Their presence is substantiated by another testimony on record, which refers to them as being from 'environmental health'.

Did the base complex have an environmental health division and why such a rapid response to a sighting of 'odd lights' - this was only a few hours after the initial incident and it was during the holiday period.

Staff Sergeant William A. Kirk Jr., was "NCOIC of the Telecommunications Facility located next to the Commanders hut".

Also published for the first time is his account as told to me of the apparent high-level communications traffic after the 'UFO' incident. He wasn't sure which of the two incidents this followed, however, it was recalled:

"At the time, I was posted on temporary duty to RAF Bentwaters from RAF Martlesham Heath.

When I showed for duty, communications was running at a peak, and stayed that way. Many users complained because of busy signals or being 'bumped'.

Radio traffic between RAF Bentwaters and RAF Martlesham Heath was full. Switch Techs at Martlesham complained to me of a great deal of 'Flash' traffic.

Radio Communications Techs at Bentwaters complained about the amount of traffic. Bentwaters Switchboard Operators remarked about how 'busy' it was.

I noted increased personnel traffic into the commanders office. I naturally assumed that an alert or recall was possible or starting. NATO seemed to have a great deal of them over the previous year. Whatever the reason, it was a very busy day for telecommunications traffic".

I asked William he could clarify the nature of 'flash traffic' and he helpfully obliged:

"American military telephone traffic (AUTOVON = automatic voice network) has some small differences to regular telephone communications. The telephone set is push button (long before the general public had push buttons). 4 extra buttons are located to the left of the 1 - 4 - 7 - * buttons. They are labelled P, I, F, FO (P = priority, and is located next to 1), (I = immediate, located next to 4), (F = flash, located next to 7), (FO = flash override, next to *). VERY few people had access to autovon phones and usually there was about one to two per office area. Usually they were contained at a desk with a person of higher rank. EVEN fewer were given the power to use the buttons. Just because you had them did not mean you could use them. The more important you were, the higher power you had to 'bump'.

If you were talking on a normal telephone call, just like if

you were to pick up the telephone right now and call a friend, and I called you, I would hear a busy tone. Well... if I had the power, I would hang up, push the P button, touch in the number again, and BANG, you were disconnected from your friend, you would get a special ring, and there I would be. Your friend would be high and dry.... HOWEVER if your friend had the power to call on an Immediate precedence, he could "bump" me. If I had flash.... well you get the point by now. Few people had an autovon telephone, fewer had the use of the P button, even fewer had the use of the I button, less the F (usually commanders), and only the President and such had use of the FO button".

As "only the senior base officials had access to 'Flash', usually commanders", it appears there was an exceptional amount of communications traffic using the highest base priority and also, possibly substantiating this, greater than normal activity in the 'commanders office'.

Again, it was the holiday period, so what was this all about?

It brings us full circle and poses the question; was any of this related to the incidents and specifically concerns about nuclear weapons?

How can Randy be so certain about what he claims to have seen.

It's a question I put to him in a number of ways, querying for example:

- was there any cloud cover and if so, were the objects ever covered by cloud or definitely lower than clouds
- if the latter, what was their altitude with respect to the forest trees and did the altitude noticeably change (it would have altered if they were stars)
- was it easy to keep the objects centred in the binoculars' viewfinder (using hand held binoculars and due to inadvertent body movement, it's extremely difficult to focus steadily on stars).

He responded:

"In regards to cloud cover, I remember the night as being clear. If there were clouds, these objects were lower than the clouds. As you state, clouds would block out stars, these objects were never blocked out.

It wasn't even the lights that were important. It was the shape that made us realize what we were looking at.

It's hard to determine how far above the trees these craft were. Best guess, several hundred feet above the ground. They weren't 'just above' treetop, but they weren't really that high either.

They didn't noticeably change altitude while I was looking. They also didn't appear to be stationary-like a star would have been. More like viewing say a helicopter that's hovering very smoothly. i.e. no or very little yaw, and no buck. And yes, they were always perceived to be the same distance above the trees while I was viewing. There was only one pair of binoculars in the tower and not on a tripod. The objects were steady in the viewfinder and it wasn't really difficult to keep them centered.

You also ask about the tower's windows. They are not angled outwards as with an aircraft control tower. The windows aren't as big as in an aircraft control tower. The window glass is thick and bullet resistant. However, I don't believe my view was either impeded nor distorted by this glass. It's designed to be an OBSERVATION tower, I OBSERVED 3 triangular craft with lights, my vision was and is perfect, the area of observation was clear. There is NO DOUBT in my mind whatsoever".

>From lengthy discussions, Randy has provided finite details of the perceived objects, all of which seemed to be identical, together with a drawing.

The shape is effectively an upright pyramid, Randy being uncertain whether it may have been flat-surfaced or conical. However, he believed the objects were cone-shaped as they "didn't look to be so flat as an actual pyramid".

The lights underneath, which "created somewhat of a backlit effect enabling the shape of the crafts to be seen clearly", were observed to be 8-10 rectangular blocks, arranged in a circle.

Randy's claim to have perfect vision has substance. He retired from the services in 1995 and I noticed from his 'Certificate of Release or Discharge' that he was an expert marksman with both pistol and rifle.

Subsequent enquiries revealed that during his later service at Fort Drum between 1992-94, Randy was on the SRT (SWAT) team for three years.

For eighteen months of that stint, Randy was a sniper.

Asked for her own recollections, specifically if Randy confided details at the time of what he observed, Kathy related how Randy was visibly shaken when he returned home and confirmed, "Yes, he told me the description of the crafts early in the morning following his shift".

Kathy added, "Randy never considered his information to be all that important because so many saw the same thing from the tower and others had more rank and authority".

I forwarded an Ordnance survey map showing both bases and asked Randy if he would indicate on this where the WSA was, plus the direction of his observation. He has also provided a detailed sketch of the WSA, identifying where the objects were observed.

The three objects were in close proximity, as Kathy explained:

"He said he could estimate the distance to the craft a bit more accurately if he KNEW how big the craft were up close and then compare to the apparent size due to distance. He obviously could not make that comparison. They could very well have been much closer, perhaps as close as 1-2 miles. It's very difficult to judge distance due to so many unknown variables.

He states, 'They weren't real close, and they weren't real far away'.

They shimmered like large bright stars to the naked eye. Randy directed the binoculars to the one on the far right, focused, and could immediately distinguish the triangular shaped craft with the bank of shimmery lights underneath. He got the impression of colors shimmering in the silvery white light. Then scanned slightly left and saw identical 2nd craft, scanned further left and saw the 3rd identical craft. The 2 on the right were closer together than the one to the left. No two could be seen simultaneously. He spent at least 15 minutes scanning back and forth, they seemed to hold their positions in a 'hover'. Passed the binoculars, next time around, not sure how much later, on 2nd turn, all 3 craft were still visible seemingly in the same positions. After several minutes, passed the binoculars to, perhaps, Rick Bobo, he was next to Randy, and he may have been the one to say, 'WOW, they just TOOK OFF!', implying with great speed".

"Not sure what it was hovering over, his best guess would be the forest. He does not know if they showed up on radar or not, does not know if Lakenheath or Heathrow were called. Not aware of anything in the local or base press".

As the three 'objects' were approximately to the south-west of RAF Bentwaters and two of three documented by Halt were to the north (the other to the south), then if they were all stars, there had to be, at least four, if not an astonishing FIVE

separate stars, which gave rise to the misperceptions.

James McGaha, 'technical consultant' for the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), suggested that the lights Halt observed - two in the north and one to the south - were almost certainly, if not unquestionably, the stars Vega, Deneb and Sirius, respectively.

Science writer Ian Ridpath, who has a considerable knowledge of the case history, was asked for his opinion on Randy's testimony and believes that from the description of their positions, the right-hand star was Rigel, the one to the left was Saiph (Kappa Orionis) and to the far left was Sirius.

It's understandable why Ian concludes these three objects were also stars, however, as noted, there are conversely reasons to conclude otherwise.

If not stars and they were in fact infinitely closer, possibly 'objects' above the base complex, then there may only have been three prominent, unfamiliar aerial objects, as reported by the base observers.

In a separate interview with AJS Rayl from last year, Halt was asked for his opinion on the idea that some form of 'psychological warfare' may have been involved. He dismissed this, stating:

"The idea that we or the British would be testing some kind of psychological warfare just outside one of the most sensitive NATO bases in Europe, where civilians could possibly be involved doesn't make any sense either".

"We can do some very interesting things alright, but some of the men in the weapons storage area saw the objects in the sky as well as the object that projected the pencil-like beam - and they were a mile and a half away, maybe two from where we were, and I question whether or not they could have been influenced by some kind of projection. I don't think so, not at that distance".

If other personnel in the WSA did report seeing the same 'objects', it's a significant confirmation of Sergeant Randy Smith's testimony.

Despite so many intervening years, the truth is proverbially out there and it's hoped the evidence deliberated here may yet result in new information coming to light.

If anyone can directly assist in finally answering the many questions highlighted, or provide contact details for the personnel mentioned, I would obviously be delighted to hear from them.

James Easton.
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5 April, 1999.

Appendix:

The following documents from Sergeant Randy Smith are available on my web site:

Certificate - Honor Graduate from Air Training Command, 21 April, 1978 - Security Specialist:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/graduate.gif>

Letter designating the award of Honor Graduate:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/graduat2.gif>

Certificate of completed training - US Army Marksmanship Unit:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/marksman.gif>

Certificate of Appointment as a Sergeant, RAF Bentwaters,
1 September, 1980:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/appoint.gif>

Certificate of Recognition for "Outstanding Contributions" at
RAF Bentwaters:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/recogn.jpg>

Certificate of Appreciation and Citation from Strategic Air
Command for duties involving "47 Primary Nuclear Airlift Force
missions":

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/sac.gif>

Certificate from 10th Military Police Battalion, Fort Drum in
recognition of "outstanding participation" during a
presidential visit on 15 March, 1994:

http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/10th_mil.gif

Certificate of Release or Discharge - Page 1:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/release1.gif>

Certificate of Release or Discharge - Page 2:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/release2.gif>

Detailing drawing of RAF Bentwaters weapons storage area
(WSA), showing the nuclear weapons bunkers, the approximate
direction of reported observations and the defensive
positions:

<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/wsa.jpg>

Ordnance Survey (OS) map, showing RAF Bentwaters, RAF
Woodbridge and surrounding area. The weapons storage area and
approximate direction of the reported observations have been
added by Sergeant Smith:

http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pulsar/rand_map.jpg

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