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UFO UpDates Mailing List

IFOs [was: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?]

From: **Jim Deardorff** <deardorj@proaxis.com>
 Date: Wed, 21 Jul 1999 21:58:46 -0700 (PDT)
 Fwd Date: Thu, 22 Jul 1999 07:48:14 -0400
 Subject: IFOs [was: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?]

>From: Jenny Randles <nufon@currantbun.com>
 >To: <updates@globalseve.net>
 >Subject: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?
 >Date: Wed, 21 Jul 1999 11:50:26 +0100

>>Date: Tue, 20 Jul 1999 13:25:23 -0700 (PDT)
 >>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalseve.net>,
 >>From: Jim Deardorff <deardorj@proaxis.com>
 >>Subject: Re: Sheffield UFO Incident 2?

>>...As a corollary, it will very likely be similarly decided that
 >>the figure one often hears, that 90% or 95% of all UFO reports
 >>have prosaic explanations, was part of the dream. It has never
 >>been good science for a ufologist to claim an IFO solution to a
 >>UFO report on the basis that it *might possibly* have been
 >>Venus, a weather balloon, aircraft, etc., over and against the
 >>objections of witnesses who claim to know better. However, this
 >>tactic made the dream easier to maintain, and made it easier for
 >>the one-way "skeptics" to claim that if 95% of the cases can be
 >>explained away, then surely the other 5% can be also. I suspect
 >>the true percentage of IFOs lies somewhere between 50% and 75%.

>I can see your argument, Jim, but I cannot agree with it. I
 >certainly don't work that way.

>I have been investigating UFO sightings first hand for 25 years
 >as both a local researcher (who gets cases channeled regularly
 >from Jodrell Bank to 'trouble shoot' for them) and as a
 >coordinator of national UFO teams. At the start I estimated
 >maybe 90% were solvable. I have raised my estimate to 95% as a
 >direct result of experience across several hundreds of cases
 >(probably in fact well into four figures by now).

>...
 >You are right that in maybe only 60% of cases can we do more
 >than provide reasonable certainty that a UFO is really an IFO.

Hi Jenny,

That was really my point, that the other 35% which you might
 conclude were possibly IFOs should not be considered actual IFOs
 if that identification goes against important details provided
 by the witnesses.

>However, I do not regard it as bad science to adopt a probable
 >solution that makes sense when it stretches no evidence to be
 >able to do so. I'd love to know why you think it is - since
 >science, in my experience, properly accepts the most feasible
 >solution to a problem unless and until it is contradicted by
 >strong observational data.

If, in reaching an IFO conclusion, certain important elements of the witness's report are dismissed or ignored, that's what I would call improper stretching of the "evidence". In your "jelly-fish" case, I'd of course want to know more about the details of the sighting, a sketch, the duration, etc. before concluding anything:

>If someone, for instance (A real recent case) sees a high
>flying, slow moving, amorphous jellyfish like shape in the sky
>is that a UFO or IFO? I believe, based on the physical
>parameters of the case, that the witness saw a partly deflated
>weather balloon. I base this verdict on previous cases that
>were proven to be such a thing and the degree of consistency
>between this sighting and these other cases.

A partially deflated weather balloon is still vertically elongated, narrowest at the bottom, with dangling instrument package attached below, while most of the jelly fish I'm aware of aren't this way, and may have outer tendrils all around. If it were a descending "popped" weather balloon, then it might look somewhat amorphous, but quite possibly not in the manner of the thing that was witnessed.

There have actually been large numbers, I believe, of UFOs that have been passed off as aircraft because they resembled aircraft in certain respects, but they were not because other aspects of them did not resemble aircraft. One of my own sightings could illustrate this. It was rather like a medium sized aircraft 1 to 2 miles away, just moving along steadily. However, it was cylindrical shaped (horizontally oriented), without any tail section and no wings either (which I intensively looked for). And it made no noise, though small planes at a comparable distance can definitely be heard in my neighborhood. And this object had a single vertical stripe around its middle, rather as a capsule is sometimes divided into two halves. Now, some ufologists would simply say: It acted like an airplane, it might have been too far away to hear, and you just couldn't see the wings and tail; so since it can't be proven otherwise, we must call it an IFO -- and airplane. But that would ignore the fact that its wings and tail would indeed have been visible if it had been a plane, and an airplane would not have had only a single pronounced marking on it of a stripe around its cylindrical middle. A few weeks later Peter Davenport received another, quite independent report, of a UFO of the same description just 20 miles north of where I live in western Oregon.

But my point here is that this UFO "tactic" has been known since Stan Gordon first wrote about it -- how some UFOs can take on the appearance of natural or man-made phenomena/objects, and in my opinion and experience this is very correct. Bruce Cornet is one who demonstrated many years ago how certain UFOs can take on the appearance of airplanes at night, but they give themselves away by their odd-ball lighting or other characteristics. Unmarked black helicopters flying too low and making no noise, with base and pilot never identified, are another example. Another example is the UFO that looks just like a star until it suddenly moves around relative to the other stars, and then retreats or moves somewhere else and is then stationary there and looks like a star again (someone else on this list can perhaps recall the name of the midwestern US astronomer who investigated this with some of his students). This is a whole class of UFO sightings that the unaware ufologist would likely assign as IFOs rather than run the risk of receiving ridicule from other ufologists who would not want to allow that UFO intelligences would or could play tricks on us.

You probably saw Stan Friedman's e-mail on this. So you can see that the opinions vary alot on this question of IFO percentage. For one more opinion, here's what Bill Hamilton sent me on this topic:

>It has been my experience when
>investigating a reported sighting and hearing the details that
>I could identify or probably identify the object approximately
>50% of the time. Of my own sightings, this figure drops to about
>only 10 - 20%. I have concluded that the IFO figures given by
>various individuals quoting 95 - 99% of sightings having prosaic
>explanations is a myth. I have seen no such study supporting
>this. Even the Bluebook Report 14 attempts to explain only 79%
>stating that the remainder are unidentified or unknown. This
>would indicate we have more unknown aerial objects flying our

>skies than the skeptics are willing to concede and this gives them
>a problem.

So that's how it looks from my vantage point -- a matter we'll
have to agree to disagree on.

Jim Deardorff

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