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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: UFO Over English Channel?

From: David Clarke <crazydiamonds@compuserve.com>
Date: Sun, 19 Sep 1999 08:46:23 -0400
Fwd Date: Sun, 19 Sep 1999 10:28:38 -0400
Subject: Re: UFO Over English Channel?

>From: David Clarke <crazydiamonds@compuserve.com>
>Subject: UFOs Filmed Over English Channel
>Date: Wed, 11 Aug 1999 14:45:44 -0400
>To: UFO UpDates <updates@globalserve.net>

Dear all,

>I am in possession of a remarkable camcorder video which
>appears to show at least two, possibly three, unidentified
>flying objects alongside a passenger jet over the English
>Channel.

Thanks to everyone who expressed an interest in my earlier post with regards the camcorder tape allegedly depicting UFOs shot from a 737 en route from Birmingham to Morocco.

The footage has now been examined by three independent sources, who have all reached the same conclusion with regards to the origin of the images. One of these was a colleague at Sheffield University, another was aviation writer Bill Rose whose observations and opinions follow.

To summarise, here is the gist of Bill Rose's email to colleague Gloria Dixon:

Frankly, I'm surprised anyone would give this tape a second glance, but here are my observations.

1) I can tell immediately from the quality that the camcorder was a low band model producing a maximum of 250 lines resolution, which gives a clear guide to the limit of overall sharpness. I can also deduce that the lens was set to wide angle for the rearward shot although details of the camera, chip size and zoom lens would have been useful for further analysis.

2) The island doesn't look like Guernsey to me. (and Jersey doesn't quite match but it is nearer) It might be one of several other possibilities, but I don't have a sufficiently detailed map to tell for sure. The identity of the island would give more useful data.

3) According to the blurb, footage taken earlier/later does not show any obvious features on the aircraft window. Where is this rearward facing footage?

MY OPINION

With the lens set to wide angle on a camcorder, this provides the maximum range of image sharpness known as "depth of field." With a camcorder that has a very short focal length lens, the area of sharp focus is massive. (compared to an ordinary still camera) In bright conditions, it means that a tiny close-up object can be nearly as sharp as something big on the horizon.

Furthermore, perspective will usually create a misleading impression of a nearby image's size, making it seem much bigger than it really is. Windows in commercial airliners are protected by a secondary plastic screens and in many cases, these become marked and scratched. It's also quite common to see cleaning marks and smears on the outside of the glass.

Shooting through a double layer of non-optical quality glass/plastic at an oblique angle is an invitation to record dirt marks, minor optical defects/flare etc, and these are going to be rendered fairly clearly with a wide angle lens which provides a big depth of sharp focus.

Even if there are no artifacts visible in the images made earlier or later, this might be explained by changes in the aircraft's heading and the Sun's position or the positioning of the camera.

Slight repositioning (of the camera) can also make small nearby optical artifacts appear and disappear.

The two small objects by the wing actually appear to move across it, suggesting parallax created by camera movement/position adjustment, which is another strong indication that nothing more than small window smudges are involved.

The other possibility would be internal lens flare, which is very common with mass produced zoom lenses. However, I am inclined to rule this out as there are no bright "off-axis" lights sources visible. (ie: reflective surfaces of any note)

Another aircraft or a balloon seems very unlikely to me and despite anything you might be told, the resolution of this footage is insufficient to allow any meaningful computer enhancement.

If a large percentage of the passengers had seen something unusual or there had been unidentified radar returns or whatever, then this tape might warrant further investigation.

DEMO PICS

To try to illustrate the point I'm making about small artifacts, flare and a big depth of sharp focus, I've attached a slightly enhanced image and an enlarged section of a aircraft window view. This pic was taken by me in 1980 over the Baltic and the lens used was a very high quality Olympus 24mm wide angle on a 35mm camera. A lot of clutter has been picked up in this image which is certainly not UFO related! By all means pass it on, although its not to be used for commercial reproduction.

Hope you find my comments useful,

In addition, a colleague of Gloria Dixon's, Paul Cabby, attached the following after a viewing of the footage:

I concur entirely with Bill Rose's findings.

As I said, it's not the camera because the marks don't move when the camera does. incidentally, I do not share Bill's optimism about a camcorders depth of field. Most camcorders equate (approx) to a 35-50 mm lens on a still camera, which is near the human perspective and I wouldn't consider that to be a particularly wide angle- however I take his point entirely about the sharpness of them, it's not the camera, so it has to be that it's either aircraft a long way away (unlikely) or scratches on the window (almost certain as I can testify trying to take a picture of a F3 pilot smiling at me through the window of a VC10!)

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