

# RESTRICTED

Air 39/3/3

MINUTE NO 4/1979

Air Staff

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## REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIABLE VISUAL AND RADAR SIGHTINGS EAST COAST SOUTH ISLAND : DECEMBER 1978

1. As a consequence of initial adverse media comment about Defence's response to news of the alleged presence of UFO's off the east coast of the South Island on two evenings in December, my staff undertook a study of the reported events, and prepared a report for me.
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3. At that time, and only because the sightings were observed by more than one SAFE Argosy crew on several occasions, visually and on their aircraft radar, and by Wellington Radar, I agreed that should similar circumstances be reported again, the RNZAF would attempt to put an Orion into the area to accurately observe and report on unusual visual, electronic or meteorological phenomena. CADMOT were informed of the intent, and they arranged for the Air Staff duty officer to be immediately advised of any future sighting.
4. In the event, the occurrences of 21/22 December were similarly repeated on the night of 30/31 December, but because of an administrative fault, the Wellington radar operators were not aware of the Air Staff request to be informed. My staff first became aware of the reported sightings of 30/31 December on the radio news next day; an opportunity to observe the phenomena was lost.
5. After the second sightings, and in response to an increasingly negative news media coverage, my staff arranged to launch an Orion aircraft on the night of 2/3 January; the purpose of the flight was to allay media charges this Ministry was acting irresponsibly, and to see whether any light could be thrown on the reported sightings using the Orion's disciplined crew and electronic equipments. The sortie accomplished the first objective and drew favourable media comment, but added little to our knowledge of the reasons for the purported UFO sightings. The Orion captain reached the conclusion that the Japanese squid fleet, associated with the early morning rise of Venus were leading clues.

/6. Because

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6. Because the Prime Minister took a close personal interest in what went on (he spoke with DCAS twice), and specially asked he be informed of Defence's conclusions to the study it was undertaking, I believe he would wish to see a copy of the Air Staff report.

7. The Air Staff reporting officer has interviewed the principal persons involved in the purported UFO sightings, collaborated with CADMOT, the DSIR and the Meteorological Service. I consider his conclusions are valid considering the circumstances. Not surprisingly they are similar to those of an investigation into the first reported UFO sightings of a "chain of nine saucer-like objects" over Mt. Rainier, USA, in 1947 which proved to be mirages caused by a temperature inversion.

8. Mr M. Collins of the DSIR has prepared a Departmental report on the findings of several scientific studies undertaken, and which is to be submitted to the Minister of Science in the near future. The attached report takes account of the findings of the DSIR investigations, copies of which are held in Air Staff.

9. For the reasons given at para 6 I attach copies of the Air Staff report for onforwarding to the Minister of Defence and the Prime Minister. DPR plans to issue a PR statement next week.



(C.L. SIEBERT)  
AVM  
CAS

18 Jan 79

Enclosure: Copies of Air Staff report.

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AIK 39/31

31 January 1979

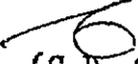
MR D.W. Mitchell  
3/36 Rickaby Street  
Croydon Park  
5008 South Australia  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter to the Commanding Officer of RNZAF Base Woodbourne concerning information on the recent UFO sightings.

The questions you ask in that letter are similar to those asked in letters to the Civil Aviation Division of the Ministry of Transport who will be replying to you in due course.

Yours faithfully,

  
(C.D. COLE)  
Squadron Leader  
RNZAF Public Relations Officer

FILE 6  
31 JAN 1979  
INDEXED

N.F. Draft of release cleared by GDS  
for distribution Thursday 25 Jan 79.

#### RNZAF UFO SIGHTING REPORT

The unidentified radar and visual sightings reported by aircraft and the Air Traffic Control radars off the north east coast of the South Island recently, are the result of natural but unusual atmospheric phenomena. (a)

This is the conclusion arrived at in the Air Force's just completed investigation into the sightings.

Before arriving at his conclusions, the investigating officer interviewed all the principle witnesses involved in the sightings on the nights of 20 and 30 December. He also worked closely with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Civil Aviation Division of the Ministry of Transport, and the Meteorological Service.

His report reveals that during the months of December and early (a) January, atmospheric conditions over New Zealand were conducive to freak effects on radar and light waves. Also, the planet Venus was rising in the eastern sky early in the morning, and at this time of the year is unusually bright in appearance. (b)

It was also revealed that for some time the Wellington Air Traffic Control radar has been giving spurious returns off the east coast of the South Island. (c)

Over the period more than 50 Japanese squid boats sailed from Wellington to a position 120 miles off Banks Peninsula.

Not only would the squid boats give a good source of radar return whilst in transit to the squid fishing grounds, but they generate a very large amount of light when fishing at night. Each boat generates about 200 kilowatts of light to attract squid to its lures, and this light source cannot be discounted as a cause of some of the visual sightings. (d)

The investigating officer also speculates that lights seen in the Clarence River mouth could have come from trains or vehicles travelling long the coast, and affected by unusual atmospheric reflections and refractions. (2)

There is no evidence to connect the many radar and visual sightings at the Clarence River and the larger lights seen to the east. (3)

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said the Ministry was completely satisfied there were no unexplained physical objects in the skies at the time of the sightings.

The lights were almost certainly from surface or planetary sources affected by atmospheric reflection, refraction and distortion.

Radar sets are known to be subject to spurious returns, and it was significant that on the occasions the large light was being filmed by a television team on board the Argosy freighter, neither Christchurch or Wellington radars reported any related visual sightings on their screens.

The spokesman said that the Ministry of Defence was not specifically charged with formal responsibility for investigating so-called unidentified flying objects in peacetime. However, the Ministry does take an active interest in all such reports and within the limitations of its resources, conducts investigations as necessary.

Commenting on some media speculation that the country was defenceless against air attack, the spokesman said that New Zealand did not have a complex air defence system, comprising sophisticated radar equipment and a force of missiles and interceptor aircraft.

The recently announced Defence Review explains that over the next decade at least, a physical threat to New Zealand's security, by sea or from the air, is so remote that expenditure of funds on sophisticated air defence equipments could not be justified.

No costing of a comprehensive air defence system for New Zealand had been done, but the Defence spokesman said that the bill would be enormous and well beyond current resource levels.

The Defence spokesman concluded by saying that the Ministry totally discounts the possibility of visits to New Zealand, and particularly in the areas of the country where the recent reports have suggested, of alien aircraft or other flying machines. It also categorically discounts any suggestion that air activity of any kind has taken place which poses a threat to New Zealand's security. Defence does not share the view of those who believe we are visited from outer space, or covertly by the aircraft or machines of potentially unfriendly nations.

AIR 39/3/3

24 January 1979

Regional Director  
Regional Office  
Ministry of Transport  
PO Box 27144  
Upper Willis Street  
WELLINGTON

CORRESPONDENCE : AERIAL PHENOMENA

1. Please find enclosed a letter from Mr Darren W. Mitchell containing questions relating to the anomalous aerial phenomena sightings in the Kaikoura region and a covering note from your office.
2. As the questions directly concern air traffic control, the inquiry is returned for your action.

Yours faithfully,

(C.D. COLE)  
Squadron Leader  
RNZAF Public Relations Officer

FILE. AIR 39/3/3  
24/1/1979 *[Signature]*

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Air 39/3/3

MINUTE NO 4/1979

*[Handwritten signature]*  
SBS

*W*  
*Noted & accepted. Thank you.*  
*A PR statement has been cleared*  
*and 2 copies of your report*  
*passed to the Minister.* *[Signature]* 23/

Air Staff

REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIABLE VISUAL AND RADAR SIGHTINGS  
EAST COAST SOUTH ISLAND : DECEMBER 1978

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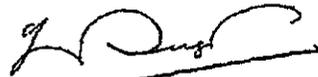
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(C.L. SIEGERT)

AVM  
CAS

18 Jan 79

Enclosure: Copies of Air Staff report.

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MINUTE SHEET

Subject:

RADAR SIGHTINGS

Department:

Ans Staff

File No.

Ans 39/3/3

Date:

17 Jan 79

To

~~PROF~~

1. I believe you have already returned one of these to CADMOT. ~~W Jones~~

2. May I suggest that this one is also returned with the comment that since most of the answers are directly related to CADMOT they may care to reply.

3. In respect of unusual propagation phenomena it is highly probable that such existed. I have heard of this case through the media! The request for formal inquiry is still underway — no definite explanation yet but all sightings very likely will be explained by natural but unusual phenomena.

4. Thanks.

DC  
DOCS FILE to  
(2754.)

1	ORIGINATOR'S INITIALS		
2	BEFORE SIGNATURE	to	
3	FOR SIGNATURE	by	
4	BEFORE DISPATCH	to	
5	DISPATCH	Date	Initials
6	AFTER DISPATCH	to	
7	BRING UP	on	to
FILE	Date	Initials	
	16/1		

39/3/3

16 January 1979

WAITARA.

Dear Sir,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letters of December and 2 January in which you put forward theories on UFO's. The contents of the letters have been noted.

Yours faithfully,

(G.T. Clarke)  
Squadron Leader  
for Director of Public Relations

1	ORIGINATOR'S INITIALS		
2	BEFORE SIGNATURE	to	
3	FOR SIGNATURE	by	
4	BEFORE DISPATCH	to	
5	DISPATCH	Date	Initials
6	AFTER DISPATCH	to	
7	BRING UP	on	to
8	FILE	Date	Initials

39/3/3

16 January 1979

WELLINGTON 5.

Dear

Thank you for your letter reporting your sighting of an unusual object in the Marlborough Sounds last December. We have received no other reports of any unusual activity in that area and I am afraid are at a loss to give you an explanation as to what it was that you saw.

Yours faithfully,

(G.T. Clarke)  
Squadron Leader  
for Director of Public Relations

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NO UNCLASSIFIED  
REPLY OR REFERENCE

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FM NZDEF AIR  
TO RZYWTT/OPHQ RNZAF  
RZYYUT/SGHQ RNZAF  
BT

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DIG KSY/KSZ

849 AIR 36/3/3 SUBJECT UNIDENTIFIED SIGHTINGS CLARENCE RIVER  
MOUTH AREA PD HAVING CONDUCTED INQUIRY INTO RECENT QUOTE UNIDENTIFIED  
VISUAL AND RADAR SIGHTINGS UNQUOTE IN CLARENCE REGION THERE REMAINS  
SOME DOUBT ABOUT THE SOURCE OF THE LIGHTS THAT WERE OBSERVED  
BY THREE SAFE ARCOZY CREWS PD REQUEST ANY FEEDBACK FROM GROUPS  
ESPECIALLY OBSERVATIONS IN THE AREA AT NIGHT PD SPECULATIVELY CMM  
IT IS POSSIBLE THAT LIGHTS ON COAST COULD BE FROM CARS AND TRAINS  
SINCE ALL HAD BEAM APPEARANCE PD UNLIKELY THAT THEY WERE LIGHTS  
FROM A SQUADRON OF HELICOPTERS AS NO REPORTS OF AERONAUTICAL  
ACTIVITY RECEIVED FROM LOCAL INHABITANTS PD FOR YOUR REPEAT YOUR  
INFO ONLY CMM MOST PROBABLE THAT RADAR RETURNS WERE SPURIOUS  
BT  
~~C WA THEY WERE~~

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Air 39/3/3.

11th January 1979

## REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED VISUAL AND RADAR SIGHTINGS EAST COAST SOUTH ISLAND DECEMBER 1978

### Introduction

1. On the nights of 20/21 December 78 and 30/31 December 78 Wellington ATC Radar, and the crews of SAFE Argosy aircraft (both visually and on radar) made many unidentified sightings off the east coast of the South Island. The first sightings gave rise to much publicity by the media and eventual involvement of the RNZAF when it was decided to conduct an Orion surveillance of the area on the night of 2/3 January 79. At that time it was decided to start a Defence investigation and this report is submitted in accordance with DCAS instructions to provide a report on the events surrounding the various sightings.

2. Air Staff was first advised by Civil Aviation Division of Ministry of Transport (CADMOT) of these events mid-morning 21 December 78. Historically, Defence has adopted a 'low profile' in connection with reports of unidentified sightings. Thus CADMOT has not normally reported unusual sightings to Defence. However, because of the number and nature of reports on the night 20/21 December 78 the Director of Civil Aviation specifically instructed his staff to advise Defence. On the basis of the information received Air Staff decided that should any further similar instances occur we would, if possible, carry out an investigation by the most appropriate aircraft available over the Christmas period. CADMOT were advised to contact the Defence Duty Officer in the event of any more sightings. As it transpired the memorandum from CADMOT Head Office to the ATC Centre was not delivered, thus the events of 30/31 December 78 were not reported to Air Staff until the next day.

3. Other Government agencies, notably DSIR and NZ Meteorological Services, are conducting their own investigations and have provided relevant input to this report. The report is confined to the events of 21 and 31 December 78. It does not take into account the film made by TV1 on 3 January 79 which is now being examined by DSIR and will most probably prove to be a film of Venus and Jupiter rising.

4. When interviewing witnesses it was pointed out to them that this was not a judicial enquiry. The credibility of witnesses' statements was taken at face value. However, witnesses were not necessarily interviewed separately because it was considered that, with a fairly emotive issue such as 'UFOs', corroboration was best achieved by interviewing observers of the same events together.

/Events 20/21 ...

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-2-

## Events 20/21 December 78 (Refer Chart at Annex A)

5. On 20/21 December 78 there were two SAFE Argosy flights from Woodbourne to Christchurch one of which proceeded to Dunedin and terminated, and the other returned to Woodbourne. The first aircraft departed Woodbourne 210110 NZDT. At 0159 when south-bound to Christchurch the aircraft captain was asked by Wellington Radar to check the Clarence River area because Wellington ATC was receiving radar returns from there. The crew observed lights at low level that could possibly have been off the Clarence River mouth but when the aircraft was about 30 miles north the lights appeared to go out or disappear. During this period Christchurch was visible and the sky was clear. Later in the morning (0406) when the aircraft was northbound the crew was again requested to check the area because Wellington Radar was again picking up radar returns in that vicinity. The aircraft crew confirmed that lights were visible to seaward and the crew got the impression of the lights making rectangular patterns at irregular frequency. The lights had a beam appearance rather than a point source appearance and seemed to turn away rather than turn off. One light appeared to illuminate the surface of the water and the aircraft captain assesses that the source of the light could have been at about 1,000 feet. However, it is the reporting officer's opinion that from the aircraft's height (14,000 feet) it would not be possible to judge accurately the height of lights below the aircraft. One possibility is that the aircraft captain was observing lights from cars or trains because the main road and railway run parallel and very close to the coast for some miles in this area. However, the aircraft captain considers that the sightings could have been produced by four or five helicopters and the whole thing was 'quite undramatic'. The likelihood of such extensive aeronautical activity has not been confirmed by any reports received from the Police or local inhabitants. In fact, no reports have been received and the Police do not have any interest in the area.

6. The second aircraft, which departed Woodbourne at 0315, was also asked by Wellington Radar to look at the Clarence River mouth area because Wellington was picking up radar returns there. That aircraft crew did not observe anything in the region either visually or on radar.

7. Subsequent investigations and scientific observation carried out by DSIR proves conclusively (in the reporting officer's opinion) that Wellington SRE Radar does give anomalous radar returns off the east coast off the South Island. This was proved by DSIR observation of the Wellington radar 8/9 January 79 and taking a series of photographs of the radar presentation throughout the night. Concurrently three field parties were stationed at vantage points along the east coast with radio communications to the Radar Control Centre. On several occasions during the night when many large returns were painting on Wellington Radar the observers on the coast could see nothing either in the air or on the sea in the positions passed to them by the Radar Controller.

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RESTRICTED

# RESTRICTED

-3-

Furthermore, from discussions with two or three controllers it is evident that the Wellington SRE has for several months been giving anomalous radar returns in the Clarence area and south of Wellington. It is possible that this could be caused by a modification that was recently made to the radar head at Wellington depressing it one degree. DSIR scientists are following up this possibility and their findings should be available in due course.

8. There is no evidence to suggest that there was any clandestine activity in the vicinity of the Clarence River mouth. It is possible however that surface vessels could have been in the area with or without navigation lights but it is doubtful that such vessels could have given rise to the visual observation made by the aircraft crew. The fact that Wellington Radar 'keyed' both aircraft captains to look for objects in the Clarence area might well have induced observations from the air which might or might not have been related to the Wellington Radar returns.

9. From information supplied by DSIR, the NZ Meteorological Services, and astronomers, it is evident that during this period, and indeed for the last month or so, atmospheric conditions have been conducive to freak propagation of radio and light waves. Thus it is possible that the lights observed by the aircraft captain could have been produced by ships' lights reflected or refracted from afar. Such anomalous propagation (ducting) could also give rise to spurious radar returns. Note: The reporting officer has just received (1155 NZDT) a report from Auckland that ATC has issued a NOTAM that Auckland Radar is giving spurious returns caused by atmospheric conditions.

10. During the period that the Wellington Radar Controller was in dialogue with the aircraft captains about radar returns in the Clarence area the radar was also tracking a steady return on a track of 140°(M) which started at Wellington, proceeded to 30 miles and then, with less consistent radar returns, tracked out to 60 miles where it became stationary for 35 minutes. It then moved west and appeared to 'track' the second southbound Argosy at about 0328. The Wellington Radar Controller alerted the captain that there was a strong radar return about 25 miles to the port of the aircraft. The aircraft crew observed on that bearing a very bright light which they variously describe as a bright orb, pear shaped with a reddish tinge that then turned white. From the aircraft the object appeared to be stationary by visual observation but by the aircraft radar appeared to track the aircraft. The light appeared to be very close - less than ten miles. Although the aircraft radar return and the visual observation of the light were on more or less the same bearing the crew cannot confirm that the range was coincident. It is significant that within a few minutes of the crew's observation, Venus was rising on a bearing that coincided with their visual observation. DSIR optics, physics, and meteorological experts have confirmed that prevailing atmospheric conditions might well have produced most unusual but not unknown phenomena that could have made Venus appear large, bright and orange. There is a plethora of astronomical information that describes this phenomenon. Thus it is highly probable that the aircrew's observation was an unusual view of Venus.

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/11. The radar

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-4-

11. The radar returns observed on the aircraft radar might have been caused by a natural return by a ship or perhaps could have been anomalous returns caused by the prevailing atmospheric conditions. During the period 19 - 28 December 78 some 50 Japanese squid boats sailed from Wellington to the area of the Mernoo Bank (120 miles east of Banks Peninsula). These vessels departed Wellington in groups of about 10 and their track to their fishing grounds is almost identical to the radar track plotted by Wellington radar. While there is no conclusive proof that these vessels could have caused the fairly steady trace observed by Wellington it is a fact that during the period of all these observations there was no shortage of shipping in the area. Furthermore, once in position and fishing, the squid fleet would have produced an intense light source which coupled with prevailing meteorological conditions could have been responsible for many and varied reflected or refracted light images. (Each boat puts out about 200kw of light.)

12. A further observation (which has not been reported by the media) was made by the crew of this the same Argosy when the aircraft was some 50 miles north east of Christchurch. The captain observed five consecutive blips on the aircraft radar which over a period of five seconds traced a pattern towards the aircraft and then veered off very sharply to its port. Simultaneously the co-pilot observed a flashing white light (which looked like a strobe light) describing the same sort of path. For the brief period that the returns were received on radar the object must have been travelling at about 10,800mph! This sighting, above all others during the night, caused the crew considerable consternation! It is possible that such a phenomenon could be produced by a meteor which are not unknown at this time of the year. A further possible explanation could be that the effect was caused by a 'double bounce' radar contact produced by ducting. It is note-worthy that an RNZAF Orion crossing Cape Palliser on 9 January 78 at 1652 NZDT observed a radar contact at 15 miles moving fast towards the aircraft. There was no cloud and no surface contacts visible. The radar return crossed the aircraft's track one mile ahead, but there was no visual sighting. The closing speed was calculated at 1,000mph thus the object itself was travelling at some 630 mph. OPHQ staffs have considered the possibilities and assess that the radar return could have been of an object 200 miles north of NZ (perhaps cloud) with freak propagation giving rise to the radar observation made in the aircraft. But for knowing that a Defence enquiry was under way OPHQ would not normally have considered it necessary to pass on this information.

13. A further sighting on the 20/21 December 78 was made by the Orderly Officer and Duty Air Traffic Controller at RNZAF Base Woodbourne. At 2350 the Orderly Officer saw what he considered to be three lights of a Bristol Freighter three to four miles from Woodbourne. However, as no aircraft could be heard and the lights did not appear to get any closer he checked through binoculars and determined that the lights appeared to be going towards Wellington. Of the three lights the middle one appeared as a white beam pointing northward. The lights appeared to move upward

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and around in a rectangular pattern but at random speed. He observed the lights for about 50 minutes. The bearing from Woodbourne was about 080° (M), i.e., towards Cape Campbell. At one stage the lights appeared to 'rush forward' but generally over the period seemed to move northward and eventually fade. In comparative terms the observer considered that the lights' pattern looked like somebody 'spotlighting'. The Duty Air Traffic Controller observed the same lights from the control tower balcony. His impression was that the lights comprised one bright orange light and two less intense white lights. The large light appeared to remain stationary while the other two seemed to move north. A shaft of light periodically appeared to 'beam down' from the white lights at about 40° in a northerly direction. Using binoculars apparently had no enlarging effect on the lights! This could indicate that the lights were at a great distance from the observer and not in Cook Strait as he imagined. This thesis is supported by the fact that on checking with Wellington Radar the Woodbourne observer was advised that the radar was painting five targets in the Clarence area but no mention was made of any returns in Cook Strait. It is highly improbable that the radar returns and the visual observations were in any way connected.

14. The reporting officer awaits a copy of the taped conversation between the Wellington Radar Controller, the aircraft and the Woodbourne observer and in addition the Woodbourne observer is preparing a sketch map showing bearings, etc, in more detail. When these two pieces of evidence are available they may shed more light on the occurrence!

## Summary

15. It is the reporting officer's opinion that almost all the sightings made 20/21 December 78 can be explained by natural but unusual phenomena. There were atmospheric conditions that could have produced unusual visual and radar returns. There is no doubt that Wellington SRE was (and still is) giving spurious radar returns in the area under surveillance. With some of the visual sightings of 'beams' of light it is only possible to speculate on possible causes. On-going investigation by DSIR scientists and the reporting officer may help to clarify this in due course. Perhaps the most difficult aspect to explain away is the apparent concern - even apprehension - of the aircrews involved in the sightings. At present they do not seem to be prepared to accept the fact that they might have observed Venus. Thankfully, however, neither do they believe that they saw a visitor from outer space! Perhaps when more scientific evidence is gathered their minds will be set at rest.

## Events 30/31 December 78 (Refer Chart at Annex B)

16. On 30/31 December 78 an Argosy on a routine flight (but carrying the TV crew that made the film shown on Australian TV) departed Wellington at 2346 to proceed Christchurch and then

/return

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-6-

return to Woodbourne.

17. At 0013 while climbing to 14,000 feet the aircraft crew observed four to five lights close to the surface near the coast of the Kaikoura Peninsula (possibly in the Clarence River area but the crew were not sure and did not confirm with their radar). On checking with Wellington ATC the crew were advised that Wellington Radar had contacts 13 miles ahead of the aircraft (these would have been off Clarence). The crew observed a pulsing type of white light that looked like a helicopter search light zooming on to the beach somewhere north of the Kaikoura Peninsula. Again, it is difficult to explain the lights, short of them being some anomalous type of reflection or refraction, cars, or trains. However it is most probable that the Wellington Radar returns were spurious.

18. At 0018 when the aircraft was about 10 miles north of the Clarence River mouth, Wellington Radar advised the crew that there was a strong radar return behind them. They orbited and saw nothing. This was almost certainly a spurious radar return.

19. At 0042 when the aircraft was about 10 miles northeast of Motunau Island, Wellington Radar advised the crew that there was a large radar target behind the aircraft that appeared on the radar screen as a blip larger than the aircraft return and appeared to be tracking the Argosy. The aircraft captain carried out a left orbit but neither he nor the first officer saw anything. The crew did not refer to the aircraft radar and Christchurch radar was not operating for ATC purposes at the time.

20. Just before crossing the coast near Woodend the crew observed a white light on the starboard side of the aircraft and Christchurch Radar advised that there was a target at three-o'clock to the aircraft that 'moved off' when the aircraft was about 1.5 miles from touch down. No reports have been received from inhabitants of the area of any unusual lights or aeronautical activity. Thus, again, the natural explanation is that the light and radar return were spurious, possibly caused by some sort of anomalous propagation.

21. It is interesting to note that while taxiing to dispersal both the aircrew on the Argosy and the ATC officers in the control tower observed lights to the right of Sugar Loaf Hill which seemed to have the same pulsating characteristics as the lights observed earlier during the flight. The bearing of these lights would almost certainly coincide with the bearing of the squid fleet from Christchurch and if the lights could be proved to be refracted or reflected returns from the squid vessels much of the mystery would be solved!

22. At 0216 the aircraft departed Christchurch on the 033 radial. When overhead Woodend both crew members observed a large white light to the northeast. They also observed on the aircraft radar a very large target at 18 miles from the aircraft. The crew cannot be positive that the light and the radar return were coincident but that was the appearance that they gave. Slightly before these observations, the first officer had noticed through thin cloud a light which he describes as having the

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-7-

appearance of a squashed orange. Eventually this light became fully visible and measured against the thumb at arms length appeared to be about two inches long, that is, a very large source of light. The crew observed this light for some minutes while cruising at 13,000 feet. Between 35 and 40 miles from Christchurch the aircraft captain, of his own volition, turned towards the light. This necessitated a 90° turn onto a heading of about 125° at about 25° bank. The aircraft speed was 215 knots. The image on the aircraft radar moved to 10 miles from the aircraft but the crew cannot say whether this was due to their velocity or the movement of the radar return. The radar image then stayed in the same relative position to the aircraft for a few minutes (as if it were 'backing up' at the aircraft's speed). At this stage the large light appeared to go above, behind, and below the aircraft as the captain turned left to regain track and avoid further 'confrontation' with the object! This series of events occurred over a time frame of about 20 minutes. Throughout, Christchurch radar was working but reported nothing. Wellington Radar had been observing the aircraft during the period but did not report any unidentified radar contact in that area.

23. The visual observation made by the crew is consistent with an unusual view of Venus. The bearing of the observation coincides with the point at which Venus would have been visible. However, this observation was made at about 0225 and Venus did not rise until about 0328. Nevertheless, DSIR scientists have advised that with super refraction it would be possible to see the planet some time before it's actual rising and if it were seen it would have the appearance that the crew described. The last effect of the light passing above, below and behind the aircraft could be explained by an astronomical phenomenon known as the 'troublesome layer'. In the prevailing conditions with a marked inversion above about 10,000 feet, and fairly strong westerly winds with standing waves on the leeward side of the Alps the inversion layer can take on a marked wave form. Thus at the time that the light performed its convolutions around the aircraft it is possible that the aircraft was passing from one side of the inversion layer to the other. The fact that the light was no longer visible tends to support this thesis and it is most probable that the aircraft's radar return was spurious or of a ship, in view of the lack of confirmation of any other targets in the area by the Wellington Radar.

24. As the aircraft approached Kaikoura two or three radar contacts were noted on the aircraft radar at about ten o'clock position. These would be consistent with the radar returns Wellington had noted in the Clarence area for most of the night - and were almost certainly spurious.

25. Approaching Cape Campbell the aircraft captain observed what he thought was a fishing fleet off Cape Palliser. These might well have been part of the squid fleet enroute south.

26. As the aircraft turned towards Blenheim the first officer observed what appeared to be orange lights in the Nelson Bay area which appeared to move across the sounds towards Picton. No explanation can be offered for this observation but it has not

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/been confirmed

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-8-

been confirmed by any sightings made from the ground. The aircraft landed at Blenheim at 0315.

## Conclusions

27. The foregoing report has been compiled after interviews with most of the principle witnesses involved with the sightings 20/21 and 30/31 December 1978. The SAFE pilots were most helpful to the reporting officer in the very frank manner in which they related their experiences and the time they spent in interview. It is considered that the reporting officer should, as soon as possible, informally debrief the SAFE aircrew involved on the general tenor of the findings to date.

28. It is evident that because of the interest over these sightings reports will continue to come in from various sources and on-going investigations by DSIR and meteorological officers will probably serve to correlate much of the information. Nevertheless, it is considered that Defence should issue a PR statement fairly soon in order to tone down much of the wild speculation that has existed over recent weeks.

29. In summary the reporting officer has made the following findings:

- a. During the period of the observations, and indeed now, atmospheric conditions over NZ are conducive to freak propagation of radio and light waves.
- b. Venus was rising in the eastern sky and at this time of the year is unusually bright in appearance.
- c. Wellington Radar has been giving spurious indications off the east coast of the South Island for some time but over recent weeks anomalous returns seem to have been more prevalent.
- d. During the period an unusually large number of vessels (the squid fleet) sailed from Wellington, often at night, to position off Banks Peninsula. Not only would these vessels provide a good source for radar returns but the lights that they use when fishing could explain some of the visual sightings of unusual lights.
- e. The reporting officer speculates that the observation of lights in the Clarence area might have been caused by trains or cars.
- f. The reporting officer is of the opinion that the large number of unusual occurrences on

/the nights

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-9-

the nights in question made some aircrew and air traffic controllers particularly responsive to the various sightings.

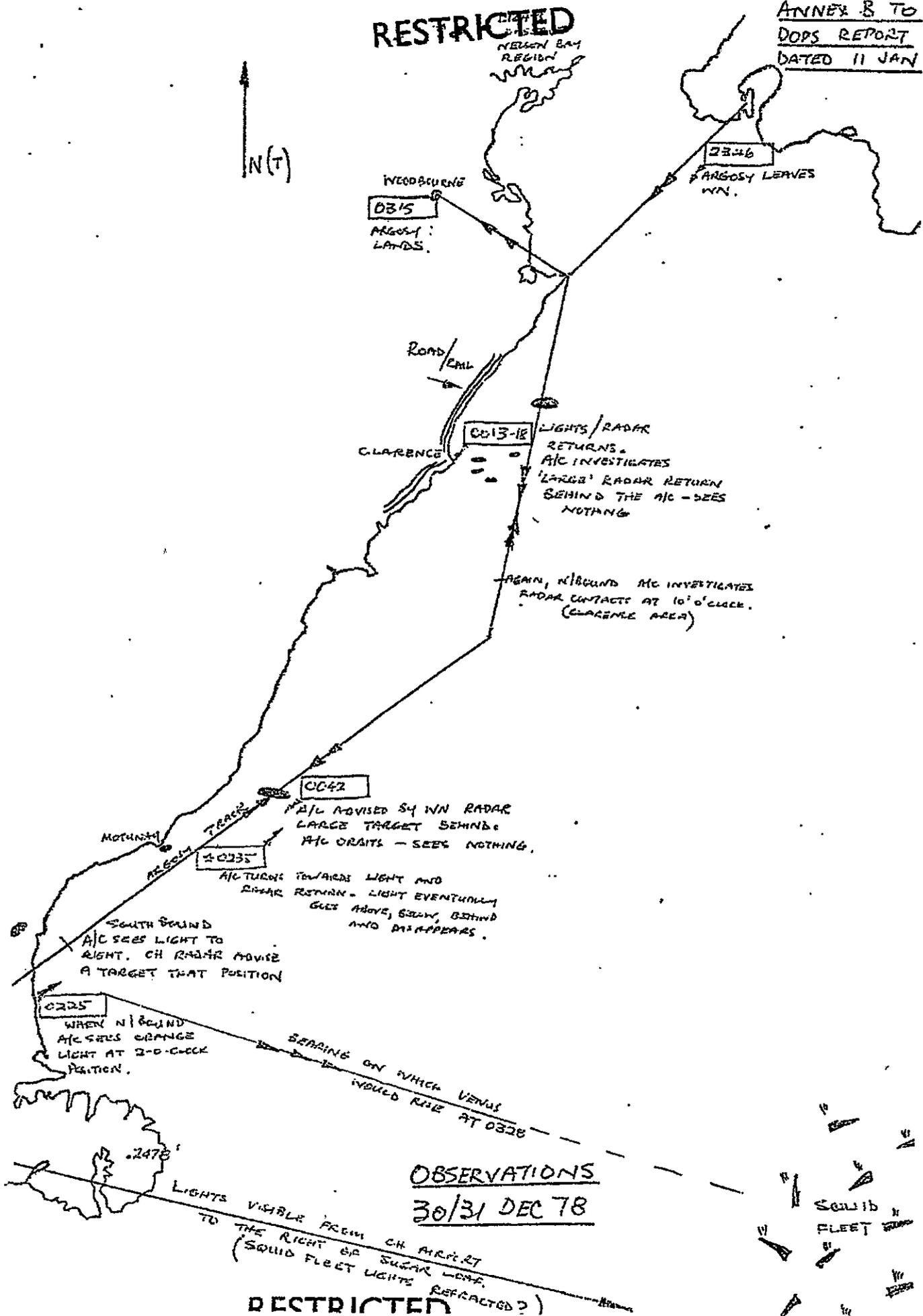
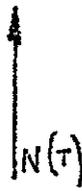
- g. There is no connection between the many sightings in the Clarence area and the larger lights seen to the east (and which were the subject of the much publicised TV films).
- h. Almost all the sightings can be explained by natural but unusual phenomena. The few for which the evidence to date is inconclusive may well be explained in due course when current investigations are completed.

  
(J.B. CLEMENTS)  
Wing Commander  
Director of Operations

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ANNEX B TO  
DOPS REPORT  
DATED 11 JAN



0315  
ARGOSY:  
LANDS.

0346  
ARGOSY LEAVES  
WN.

0313-18  
LIGHTS/RADAR  
RETURNS.  
A/C INVESTIGATES  
'LARGE' RADAR RETURN  
BEHIND THE A/C - SEES  
NOTHING

AGAIN, N/BOUND A/C INVESTIGATES  
RADAR CONTACTS AT 10 O'CLOCK.  
(CLARENCE AREA)

0342  
A/C ADVISED BY WN RADAR  
LARGE TARGET BEHIND.  
A/C ORBITS - SEES NOTHING.

0335  
A/C TURNS TOWARDS LIGHT AND  
DARK RETURN - LIGHT EVENTUALLY  
GETS ABOVE, BEHIND,  
AND DISAPPEARS.

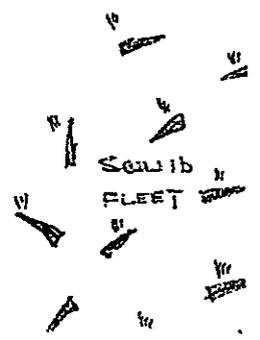
SOUTH SOUND  
A/C SEES LIGHT TO  
RIGHT. CH RADAR ADVISE  
A TARGET THAT POSITION

0225  
WHEN N/BOUND  
A/C SEES ORANGE  
LIGHT AT 2-O-CLOCK  
POSITION.

SEARING ON WHICH WINDS  
WOULD RISE AT 0328

OBSERVATIONS  
30/31 DEC 78

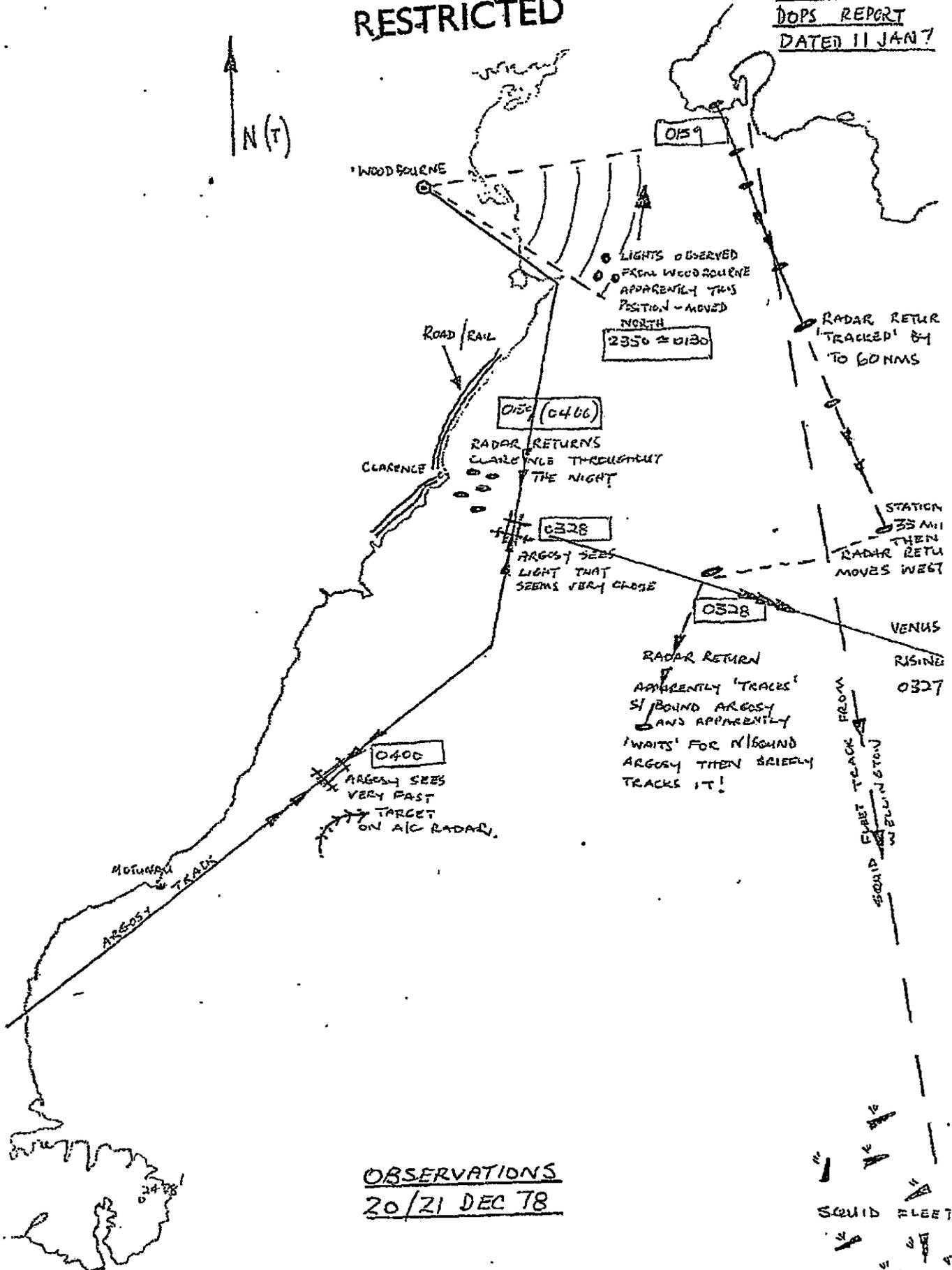
LIGHTS VISIBLE FROM CH AIRCRAFT  
TO THE RIGHT OF SUGAR LOAF.  
(SQUID FLEET LIGHTS REFRACTED?)



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ANNEX 7 10  
DOPS REPORT  
DATED 11 JAN 7



OBSERVATIONS  
20/21 DEC 78

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DEFENCE

NEW ZEALAND  
DEFENCE  
RELEASE

Address all inquiries to:  
Public Relations,  
Defence Headquarters,  
Wellington, N.Z.  
Telephone: 48 800 Ext. 892 or 792.



13 8

RNZAF UFO SIGHTING REPORT

The unidentified radar and visual sightings reported by aircraft and the Air Traffic Control radars off the north east coast of the South Island recently, are the result of natural but unusual atmospheric phenomena.

This is the conclusion arrived at in the Air Force's just completed investigation into the sightings.

Before arriving at his conclusions, the investigating officer interviewed all the principle witnesses involved in the sightings on the nights of 20 and 30 December. He also worked closely with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Civil Aviation Division of the Ministry of Transport, and the Meteorological Service.

His report reveals that during the months of December and early January, atmospheric conditions over New Zealand were conducive to freak effects on radar and light waves. Also, the planet Venus was rising in the eastern sky early in the morning, and at this time of the year is unusually bright in appearance.

It was also revealed that for some time the Wellington Air Traffic Control radar has been giving spurious returns off the east coast of the South Island.

Over the period more than 50 Japanese squid boats sailed from Wellington to a position 120 miles off Banks Peninsula.

Not only would the squid boats give a good source of radar return whilst in transit to the squid fishing grounds, but they generate a very large amount of light when fishing at night. Each boat generates about 200 kilowatts of light to attract squid to its lures, and this light source cannot be discounted as a cause of some of the visual sightings.

The investigating officer also speculates that lights seen in the Clarence River mouth could have come from trains or vehicles travelling along the coast, and affected by unusual atmospheric reflections and refractions.

There is no evidence to connect the many radar and visual sightings in the Clarence River and the larger lights seen to the east.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said the Ministry was completely satisfied there were no unexplained physical objects in the skies at the time of the sightings.

The lights were almost certainly from surface or planetary sources affected by atmospheric reflection, refraction and distortion.

Radar sets are known to be subject to spurious returns, and it was significant that on the occasions the large light was being filmed by a television team on board the Argosy freighter, neither Christchurch or Wellington radars reported any related visual sightings on their screens.

The spokesman said that the Ministry of Defence was not specifically charged with formal responsibility for investigating so-called unidentified flying objects in peacetime. However, the Ministry does take an active interest in all such reports and within the limitations of its resources, conducts investigations as necessary.

Commenting on some media speculation that the country was defenceless against air attack, the spokesman said that New Zealand did not have a complex air defence system, comprising sophisticated radar equipment and a force of missiles and interceptor aircraft.

The recently announced Defence Review explains that over the next decade at least, a physical threat to New Zealand's security, by sea or from the air, is so remote that expenditure of funds on sophisticated air defence equipments could not be justified.

No costing of a comprehensive air defence system for New Zealand had been done, but the Defence spokesman said that the bill would be enormous and well beyond current resource levels.

The Defence spokesman concluded by saying that the Ministry totally discounts the possibility of visits to New Zealand, and particularly to the areas of the country where the recent reports have suggested, of alien aircraft or other flying machines. It also categorically discounts any suggestion that air activity of any kind has taken place which poses any threat to New Zealand's security. Defence does not share the view of those who believe we are visited from outer space, or covertly by the aircraft or machines of potentially unfriendly nations.

39/3/3

UFG/45/MEMO/6EE/7B

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE DEPARTMENT OF AERIAL STUDIES  
\*\*\* CLASSIFIED TO ALL PERSONNEL BELOW AGDO 2

\* CONTAL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 22/ 2/78. (23) AS FOLLOWS:

* K5634	J. MITCHELL	LEICESTER	559/7C	CLASS 5	23/ 5/77	0935
* K5635	O. KRAMER	BRADFORD	11A/?	CLASS 5	24/ 5/77	1116
* K5636	D.M. SMITH	LONDON (SW)	559/7C	CLASS 3	15/ 6/77	0600
* K5637	F.W. SHOEMAKER					
* K5638	R.L. DOORS	LONDON (SW)	559/7C	CLASS 5	23/ 7/77	1755
* K5639	T. BETTS	FALMOUTH	558/01X	CLASS 2D	23/ 7/77	1721
* K5640	W.M. GRANGER	LLANELLI	555/C45	CLASS 5	1/ 8/77	0931
* K5641	T.D. PATEL	SOUTHALL	6400KW/2	CLASS 1E	11/ 8/77	1159
* K5642	S.L.D. O'BRIEN	LEEDS	559/7C	CLASS 5	16/10/77	0445
* K5643	T. MONAMARA	BELFAST	088/23	CLASS 1E	22/11/77	2350
* K5644	E.F. WEST	ABERDEEN	088/23	CLASS E	23/11/77	0920
* K5645	T. BRANDENBURGER	SLEUGH	559/7C	CLASS 5	14/12/77	1807
* K5646	F.K. SPINNER	BELPER	HE/44/46	CLASS 1E	23/12/77	2300
* K5647	V.W. WRIGHT	DERBY	559/KW	CLASS 5	31/12/77	1305
* K5648	T.M. SLABY	TRURO	559/?	CLASS 8	2/ 1/78	0430
* K5649	D.W. H-FLEE	CELE	1030/46	CLASS 1C	23/ 1/78	1351
* K5650	A. ANDREWS	GLASGOW	559SERIES	CLASS 5	1/ 2/78	0945
* K5651	D.T. SMEDLEY	LONDON (E)	7F/7C	CLASS 23	22/ 2/78	1201

/\*ENDLIST

\* CLASSIFICATION NOTIFIED TO THE FOLLOWING DEPARTMENTS:

- \* METROPOLITAN POLICE
- \* DEFENCE (AIR FORCE)
- \* DEFENCE CIVIL
- \* SPECIAL PATROL GROUPS
- \* E.E.C. (INTELLIGENCE BRANCH)
- \* SUB-REGIONAL CONTROLS
- \* COMPUTER DATA SECTION
- \* MICROWAVE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK
- /\*ENDLIST

SECRETARY OF DEFENCE  
RECEIVED  
23 MAR 1978  
DEFENCE OFFICE

Private Secretary

- \* FURTHER CONTROLS AND DATELINE NETWORK CMDAR VIA NDHQ CHELTEN
- \* OPERATION 23 NOTIFICATION TO SECTIONS E H W Z VIA NDHQ CHELTEN
- \* DATA COMPILATION NETWORK SECTIONS H K W NORAD CYBER
- \* FURTHER NOTIFICATION FOR ACTION TO BE TAKEN VIA COM 46 (78)
- \* RLD CIA NORAD UFG 23
- \* \*\*\* LISTED AND CLASSIFIED

29 3 1978

RECEIVED	23 MAR 1978
DEFENCE OFFICE	

/\*END COPY 17/ 75 CLASSIFIED 2298

\*\*\*\*\*

In the recent debate in the House of Lords that the government is operating a cover-up on U.F.O. Lord Strabolgi who spoke on behalf of the Minister of Defence was under a great deal of pressure to deny the existence of U.F.O and that the government had every intention in the future to deny any accusations from every quarter of a cover-up. The public interest in this matter subject has never been higher and the public gallery during the U.F.O Debate was jam packed. More than expected interest the day after when very many more Peers than usual asked the Printed Paper Office in the House of Lords for copies of Hansard containing the U.F.O Debate. They ran out of copies, so the Printed Paper Office contacted H.M. Stationery Office to ask for more copies. No luck! That has not happened before. The General Public had bought them all up. It was a very good debate with 14 speakers but despite the denials of a cover-up by Lord Strabolgi, we have had all along

irrefutable proof of it, and it is high time the people should be told the truth about U.F.O and their capability to disarm all the Defence systems of the major powers, which has already been put to the test when governments up until quite recently get trigger happy.

Since the sightings of U.F.O over the western front in 1943 and the first release of atomic energy information has been pouring in from all corners of the globe and continues to do so every 24 hours.

Evidence of people being maltreated, a lot of well documented evidence of people being killed by U.F.O, who have suffered radiation burns, some badly by unknown forms of rays. People carried off and certainly never returned. A whole neighbourhood next to an American airforce base being terrorised by beings 3 ft tall with large ears, and silver. The airforce were quickly on the scene to witness these beings as people were shooting at point blank range at these creatures to no effect. Airforce on the scene later described what they had seen to USAF artists and the press were allowed to print the impressions. Then there are the countless cases of blood being taken from people, semen, and ovar from women, and

many cases of sexual intercourse that would stand up to scrutiny. The many cases of cattle being taken away. It's nice to know some like beef, but there are other cases where their interest in other forms of protein are very alarming, because we do not know the implications. This is only the tip of the iceberg and this hardly looks like the behaviour of benevolent beings. — Are we in fact not the first humanity there has been on this planet because others have been wiped out or come unstuck. Man is not just the product of chance of the ordinary workings of evolution. He is that plus something else, the result of some very superior genetic engineering by somebody somewhere, and I think that opposed to those forces the creative powers of the Cosmos there are others you could describe as the opposition or the people who are throwing the spanners in the works. We suspect there is a very great struggle going on for control of us. Very recently a group of serious responsible people in America who have managed to penetrate some of the most secret CIA files say they now have irrefutable proof there are four different lots who are fighting for control of Homo Sapiens, and they are certainly not all benevolent. Now this would explain as to why these beings are never seen in their different shapes and sizes in accounts.

with each other, nor is it reported in its daily newspapers, radio and television. It is no longer the popular accepted theory that UFO come from other worlds and are trying to make contact with us, because if this were the case, they have been around for far too long just waiting time in the attempt. Information has turned up from top secret CIA files that Defense Chiefs have had meetings with the benevolent type creatures described as most humanlike in appearance except for pink eyes without any pupils. The height of these beings averaged out at around 6', and the clothes they were wearing were described as as looking rather like ski suits. Then 48 hours after the meeting the Defense Chiefs suffered skin spots and rashes, and the medical reports indicated they were all suffering from radiation sickness. It looks like the CIA are giving out more information to requests from very strong pressure groups around the world and this will we hope be the start of a CIA education programme to prepare the people of the real truth about UFO and of the real threat that they mean to our whole world defences. The British Government will always be the best to tell its people!

---

22 March 1979

Mr Harry Harris  
346 Manchester Road  
West Timperley  
Atrincham  
Cheshire  
ENGLAND

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 13 March asking for details of the report on the sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects during the Christmas/New Year period.

The Air Force's investigation report was not made public. However, I have enclosed a copy of the statement containing the findings of the investigation that was released to the media.

I believe this statement will provide you with the information you seek.

Yours faithfully,

6  
(C.D. COLE)  
Squadron Leader  
RNZAF Public Relations Officer

Enclosure



Subject: /

UFO INVESTIGATION  
JAN 79

Department: Air Staff

File No.: Ai 39/3/3

Date: 15 Jan 79

To -

DCA's  
2013  
DOPS

1. Reference E8.

2. I am rather surprised at the 'tone' of W/O

Uffindell's letter and equally surprised at the manner in which CO Woodbourne has chosen to handle the matter! Nevertheless, since the

papers have wended their way through the

command chain, and because my integrity

is being questioned, I consider it appropriate

that you decide whether Air Staff wants to

respond.

3. CO Woodbourne has seen a copy of my

report since he wrote the covering letter

to W/O Uffindell's submission, thus it might

be appropriate to ask CO Woodbourne to de-brief

W/O Uffindell.

Request your advice please.

✓ SC DOPS  
(2754)

NFF

Ref DCA's instruction for DOPS to verbally apprise CO Woodbourne of DCA's views (opposite). CO W/B so advised 70/3.

✓ SC DOPS  
(2754)

1. Although critics invariably say the various investigations are inadequate, what is really happening is that they are angry at the statements made by the investigation.

2. Since the USAF (with its resources) could reach no tentative conclusion in over 2000 sightings it is unlikely that the old personnel NFI is going to solve what is a mystery - an other words do the Uffindells of this world believe that if you had done your job properly you would have got the answer!

NO - he is annoyed your solution about the one with his.

3. Suppose you let CO W/B know we have seen Uffindell's letter, believe in story that he saw light, and that we know as much as he does about what caused him to see light. When we, or any other agency discover the answer, everyone will be informed - and then the Air Force will take the attitude that there are valid explanations, which do not include beings from outer space, or covert activities by the Vietnamese or Albanians, or Lebanese Saboteurs.

4. CO W/B should be informed it was within his power to deal with this matter without Air Staff is concerned he should see fit to pass it up the command chain. He is aware of the defence position and is to support it unless he can throw not incontestable evidence to the contrary.

SCAS 16/3

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COVERING RESTRICTED

117 = 11/1/79. 8. 4

Telephone: Christchurch 794-240  
Ext 734

RNZAF Support Group  
RNZAF Base Wigram  
Private Bag  
CHRISTCHURCH

In reply quote: SG 2/13/AIR

2nd March 1979

The Chief of Air Staff  
Royal New Zealand Air Force  
Defence Headquarters  
Private Bag  
WELLINGTON



RNZAF/DSIR INVESTIGATION INTO  
UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Forwarded for your action is a letter from Warrant Officer Uffindell regarding the recent interdepartmental investigation into unidentified flying objects. Commanding Officer Woodbourne's covering letter is attached.

(H.S.R. SAUNDERS)  
Squadron Leader  
for Commander

- Enclosure:
1. Letter from Warrant Officer Uffindell, dated 30th January 1979.
  2. Covering letter from Commanding Officer RNZAF Base Woodbourne, 4/AIR, dated 31st January 1979.

ENCLOSURE  
RECEIVED

REFERRED TO	
PRO AIR	2.5.79
D.O.G.	
	JR 14/3

COVERING RESTRICTED

**RESTRICTED**



## ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE

TELEPHONE: Blenheim 28511  
Ext 600

RNZAF Base  
WOODBOURNE  
Private Bag  
BLENHEIM

IN REPLY QUOTE .....4/AIR.....

31 January 1979

~~The Commander~~  
RNZAF Support Group  
RNZAF Base  
Wigram  
Private Bag  
CHRISTCHURCH

RNZAF/DSIR INVESTIGATION INFO  
UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

1. Attached is a letter from Warrant Officer I.B. Uffindell in which he expresses his reservations about the results of the inter-departmental inquiry into the South Island east coast UFO sightings in December 1978.
2. Warrant Officer Uffindell observed objects from this Base the night of 22/23 December while these were simultaneously plotted by Wellington Radar. The duty Flight Service Officer, Mr Bill Frame, corroborates the Warrant Officer's observations. Thus Uffindell had a personal and professional interest in the outcome of the inquiry.
3. The inter-departmental team visited Woodbourne on Friday, 5 January 1979, and during my time with them I gained the firm impression that they were here to "whitewash" the affair. The DSIR chaps had the answers before they heard the evidence, and when the evidence did not fit the preconceived theory, then it was seemingly put aside.
4. I hold no particular views on the matter, but do agree with Warrant Officer Uffindell's opinion that the RNZAF has gained no benefit from the affair. The Safe Air captains involved have both been quite critical of the outcome of the inquiry, and therefore, indirectly, of the RNZAF.

**RESTRICTED**

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5. The Warrant Officer's submission is forwarded with the recommendation that Air Staff be advised of the dissatisfaction of one of its crew witnesses.

  
(W.R. DONALDSON)  
Wing Commander  
Commanding Officer

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A302381  
W/O I.B. Uffindell  
Tech(M)  
No 4TTS

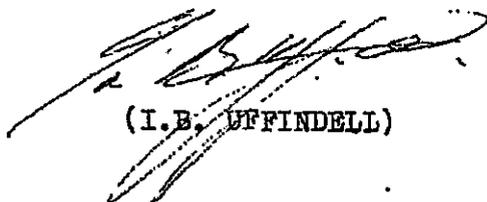
80

30th January 1979

The Commanding Officer  
RNZAF Base Woodbourne

UFO INVESTIGATION

1. I feel that the findings of the Defence Investigation Committee on UFO's off the Marlborough coast Dec 78/Jan 79 are an insult to all those involved in the sightings and subsequent investigation.
2. Whilst the committee was comprised of men with a high degree of intelligence, and scientific background, I believe they were all biased towards the type of finding they arrived at, before they even commenced their inquiry. This was particularly true of Mr Thompson from the meteorological service. He had rubbished the idea of anything but atmospheric conditions being the cause, on numerous occasions on the TV news.
3. Furthermore, Wg Cdr Clements, the committee chairman, stated that he had no doubts whatever that they would find the cause to be astronomical or meteorological phenomena, and the other three members agreed. This was on Friday 5th January, the inquiry was then still in its first day!
4. Wg Cdr Clements further stated that CDS had ordered the inquiry, that they were dragging all the old files out of the archives, and that they were going to try and find the cause or source of the sightings, no matter how long it took. Yet exactly three weeks later on Thursday 25th January the findings are out, case is closed and we don't want to hear anything more about it.
5. On Monday 22nd January Mr Bill Frame and I took bearings and elevations from the Woodbourne control tower to where we had witnessed three UFO's for an hour. I don't think he even had time to send them to the committee, yet they had requested that we take them.
6. Sir, it is my opinion that this inquiry was a farce from beginning to end and has done much to tarnish the RNZAF's image in the public's eye. I request you draw CDS's attention to the points I have raised and urge him to re-open the inquiry, this time with at least some people who hold an open mind on such matters.

  
(I.B. UFFINDELL)