

THE USES OF MIST AND FOG

Gordon Creighton

Case 1. The landing on the target-range at Las Bardenas Reales, Spain (night of January 2, 1975).

[A] EXTRACTS FROM FSR 20/5 (published March 1975).

World Round-up: Spain UFO Lands at Air Force Base

The following item taken from the national daily newspaper *The Guardian* of January 9, 1975, was dated "Madrid, January 8," —

"For the first time senior officers of Spain's military air force have taken up the case of UFO with the grim seriousness which they usually apply to politics.

"On the night of January 2, an unidentified flying object reportedly landed on an air force bombing and gunnery range at Las Bardenas Reales, near Zaragoza, where the United States have a lease on a joint Spanish-American base.

"The Spanish military authorities of the Third Air Force Region, after consultation with the Air Ministry in Madrid, have appointed an investigating judge to inquire into the incident.

"These reports were confirmed by members of the US Air Force. Numerous more sensational but contradictory stories have been furnished by local inhabitants."

Our thanks to Robert Chapman for drawing our attention to this item, also to Mrs. Anne Dooley.

Spain: More Explanatory Moonshine

The following item appeared in the *Yorkshire Post* of January 10, 1975, under the heading "Thing from Space just moonshine." —

"Prospective holidaymakers to Spain can breathe easily again — there is no risk of meeting beings from outer space on the beaches.

"An unidentified flying object was said to have landed on the night of January 2 at an Air Force bombing and gunnery range near Zaragoza, a joint Spanish-American base leased by the US.

"Although reports of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) are not uncommon in Spain, this one was taken sufficiently seriously for the Spanish military authorities and the Air Ministry in Madrid to appoint an investigating judge to inquire into the incident.

"All was explained. According to the Spanish news agency in London, yesterday, the two soldiers who reported the UFO landing had 'experienced an optical illusion' because of the effects of moonlight and cloud."

Credit: Valerie M. Parkinson of Bradford, and others.

UFO LANDS ON SPANISH AIR FORCE TARGET RANGE

WHAT'S MORE, THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT ADMITTED IT.

Gordon Creighton

[B] EXTRACT FROM FSR 24/5 (published March 1979).

LIKE other countries, Spain has allocated certain wild land deserted parts of the country for use as military target ranges where live ammunition can be used. The Spanish Air Force has two such polygons. One near Teruel (due east of Madrid), and the other in a particularly desolate tract of territory to the north of the province of Navarre and lying on the left (north-ern) bank of the river Ebro. This tract is known as las Bardenas Reales (42° 10N 01° 25W), and is several kilometres in extent. According to articles in the Spanish press, it is used for live target practice by not only the Spanish Air Force but also the United States Air Force (by virtue of the Hispano-American Agreement on Co-operation).

On January 5, 1975, the following brief but interesting Logos agency report from its correspondent at Zaragoza, datelined January 4, appeared in the Madrid newspaper *ABC* under the following headlines: *Unidentified Flying Object Over Military Zone of Las Bardenas Reales.*

and, below that: *Senior Officers from the Base come to Zaragoza to Report to Air Force Zone Authorities.*

"At about 11.00 p.m. last night, an unidentified flying object landed on the firing range. A few minutes later the device took off and vanished in the skies.

"Several of the senior military officers at the Las Bardenas Base have arrived in Zaragoza this morning to report to the Headquarters of this Air Force Zone concerning the incident.

"There was an Air Force accident at the Base in 1972. The aircraft plunged to the ground at high speed, but the two crew members were both able to escape by parachute. It was said at the time of that accident that, as the plane was falling, a strange luminous object was observed in the sky overhead.

"The affair gave rise to much talk and discussion in the surrounding districts of Las Bardenas and Las Cinco Villas."

If this report had not let a few cats out of the bag, at any rate it had permitted a small pink nose to appear, and nobody should be surprised therefore, when the same newspaper, *ABC*, of four days later, January 9, 1975, carried a Cifra release with the following neat explanation by the Spanish Air Force under the headline: *It was due to Optical Effects caused by the Moon's Halo.*

The text of the release is as follows: "The Press Office of the Third Air Force Zone states that, after all necessary investigations have been made, no proof has been found to suggest that unidentified flying objects (UFOs) have flown low over, or have landed on the firing-range at Las Bardenas Reales (Province of Navarra).

"The present official notice arises out of the supposed landing of a UFO at Las Bardenas Reales on the 3rd instant, which matter has been made the subject of talk and comments gathered by the news media from the region of Las Cinco Villas and the Navarrese bank of the river.

"According to the reports, certain eyewitnesses of the occurrence were said to have seen the object emit vivid flashes and then take off again and vanish shortly after it had landed."

On that very same morning however, January 9, 1975, another Madrid newspaper carried a rather different Cifra agency report about the matter, which I also reproduce in full; the headlines were:

Military authorities nominate special Judge.

Did a spy-UFO land on the firing-range at Las Bardenas Reales?

"The military authorities of the Air Force Zone III have appointed a judge to preside over the enquiry in connection with the unidentified flying object which is said to have landed early in the morning of January 2 on the Air Force's firing-range at Las Bardenas Reales and regarding which there are conflicting accounts.

"The report of his findings will be conveyed to the Air Ministry who, if they deem it fitting, will issue a statement about it.

"On contacting the town-hall authorities in Arguedas (Province of Navarra), a town that is near the firing-range, *Informaciones* were assured that they have received no report of any local resident having seen the UFO. Pursuing our inquiry further, we finally managed to speak to the person who did see the unidentified flying object. He is Lt. Campos, an officer stationed at the firing range. He has refused to furnish any kind of information regarding the strange occurrence, because the case is at present in the hands of the authorities and *sub-judice*...

"The appearance of an unidentified flying object over the range may be related to one of the numerous exercises against electronic devices which the Air Force carries out periodically. Should such be the case in this instance (and the appointment, for the first time ever, of a special judge in this fashion would seem to indicate that it *is* the case) then the military secrecy in which these exercises are swathed will probably preclude the issue of any public statement on the matter. Nevertheless the possibility should not be ruled out that it may indeed have been a true UFO, an unidentified flying object. The UFOs started appearing around 1947 in our own era, although it is affirmed that they have existed for more than 5,000 years. In Spain, according to recently compiled statistics, there have been one hundred UFO landings between 1925 and 1970. In the Province of Navarre alone there has been one UFO landing (in 1969.)

"According to those who investigate these UFOs, we are at present in the sixth phase of their activity here. This phase, which began in 1954, is directed at objectives that are emphatically military; the fourth and fifth phases were devoted to ecological, biological, and geographical exploration.

"On the other hand, this is not the first time that a UFO has landed in a Spanish Military enclave: five years ago another UFO was observed on the military airfield at Reus."

NOTE BY EDITOR, FSR

So far as I can judge from the material at present available to me no official statement was in fact put out by the Spanish Air Force about the Las Bardenas case. In his article¹ on another landing (at Burgos) which Sr Pere Redon, Deputy-Director of the Spanish Centre for Interplanetary Studies, published in their journal *Stendek* (No. 19, March 1975) he complained of the excessive secrecy of the Spanish Air Force in UFO matters (which he compared unfavourably with what he considered to be the more open policy of the Spanish Army). Where the Air Force were concerned, he said that "... it was all secrecy and denials, with attempts being made to nullify, by means of a smoke-screen, all knowledge of what had really happened. From the outset, this policy has put us in mind of the various denials issued in recent years by the U.S. Air Force. It is because of this different approach by the Spanish Army and the Spanish Air Force that we are unable — at least for the time being — to publish a study of the case which occurred at Las Bardenas during the night of January 2, 1975."

We have seen an example of the "smoke-screen", namely the statement (quoted above) which the Press Office of the Third Air Force Zone put out on January 9, explaining the UFO story as "due to the optical effects caused by the Moon's halo".

One has to give them credit. As the years have rolled by it must have become harder and harder to hit upon a fresh explanation for UFOs, and so far as I know this is the first case in which the Moon's halo has been branded as responsible for a landing on the surface of our Planet.

The next development in the Las Bardenas story (at least so far as I can ascertain) came early last year,* when on January 8, 1977, the Spanish magazine *Personas*² (no. 166) dropped a bombshell in the form of a long cover story by news reporter J.J. Benítez, in which he claimed that on October 20, 1976, he had interviewed a highly placed official of the Madrid government, who had confirmed to him that the Spanish Government knew that UFOs exist and (like everyone else) had been quietly studying them for many years. This official allegedly handed to him 78 folio pages containing résumés of twelve of the most spectacular UFO cases in the government's files.

The title of J.J. Benítez's article is: *UFOs over Spain: There are official proofs. Documents from our Government recognize twelve cases of "Unidentified Flying Objects"*.

Owing to its length, I will merely extract and quote here that portion of it which refers to Las Bardenas, for Las Bardenas, after all the talk about the halo of the Moon, turns out as we now see, to be one of the best UFO cases that the Spanish Government has on its books!

It seems that on the night of January 2, 1975, some Air Force privates, a sergeant, and two poachers, were in the Arguedas-Tudela area, within the limits of the firing range, and that they can say not merely one UFO but *several* landed in the target-zone.

According to the sergeant's statement, he was on duty that night, and at 11.00 p.m. received a telephone call from the operator in charge of the telephone network, to the effect that the surveillance towers had reported that lights had been seen moving about on the terrain of the firing range. He took a pair of binoculars and got up on to a hillock, from where he was able to observe an object "... shaped like an inverted cup", with white lights on the upper and lower parts and intermittent white and amber lights on its sides. He was unable to give an exact estimate

of its size, but thought that it might have been of the approximate size of a truck. The UFO remained on the firing range for about half an hour, and took off and departed at 11.25 p.m.

The weather conditions that night were fine and clear, there were no clouds, and the outlines of the nearby mountain ranges stood out sharply. The sergeant detected no sound from the UFO. When the object took off, he said its course was at first northwards, but then when it reached a point level with the second surveillance tower it began to climb steeply and veered off to the north-east and was quickly lost to sight.

While the UFO was in flight above the firing-range

a powerful light on its underside was directed downwards and lit up the whole area around about.

The accounts given by the other enlisted men (who were on duty on the look-out towers) bore out the statement of the sergeant. The best view of the UFO was secured by those on the main tower as it climbed past them.

Notes and References

1. For a translation of this Article, see *The Landing Near Burgos*, in FSR Vol. 23, No. 2.
2. We are indebted to Sr. Russel Guérard y Holmes for the full text of this article.

* [Mr. Creighton wrote his article in 1978 — ED]

THE LANDING NEAR BURGOS

Pere Redon

[C] EXTRACT FROM FSR 23/2 (published August 1977).

Our contributor is Deputy Director of CEI (Centro de Estudios Interplanetarios) of Barcelona. Précis translation from Spanish by Gordon Creighton. We are indebted to the Editors of Stendek, journal of CEI, for permission to reproduce this article which appeared in their issue No. 19 (March 1975).

EARLY in January 1975 there were two UFO happenings in the northern part of Spain. They had features in common, but what is striking is the diametrically different fashions in which they were handled by the branches of the Spanish Armed Forces which were concerned with them.

For it is a strange fact that in both cases the eyewitnesses were people connected with the Forces, in the one case with the Spanish Army, and in the other case with the Air Force. The treatment given was radically different. The Army showed themselves to be totally frank and open, permitting the eyewitnesses to supply information to the news media, while with the Air Force, in the other case, it was all secrecy and denials, with attempts being made to nullify, by means of a smoke-screen, all knowledge of what had really happened. From the outset, this policy put us in mind of the various denials issued in recent years by the U.S. Air Force.

It is because of this different approach by the Spanish Army and Air Force that we are unable, at least for the time being, to publish a study of the second case, which occurred at Las Bardenas during the night of January 2, 1975.

We will therefore confine ourselves here to the first case, which was in the early hours of January 1, 1975, at Quintanaortuño, in the Province of Burgos. As stated above, we received nothing but help from the authorities in this case, and indeed we even have on our files a letter from Major Francisco Llorente in which he offers to pass on our sighting report questionnaires to the four soldiers who were involved in the affair. Apart from that, we know for a fact that these soldiers, who belong to the Military Engineering Academy at Burgos, were given official support, which means to say that at no time was any attempt made to cover up what had happened.

Details of the case

Three of the soldiers, Manolo Aguera, Felipe Sánchez, and Ricardo Iglesias, had been to their homes in the Province of Santander for a brief Christmas leave,

and a little before 4.00 a.m. on January 1 they started out for Burgos, where they were to enter the Military Engineering Academy. The party had arranged to meet in the *Lotus* discotheque at Torrelavega, where Manolo is the bar attendant. (Those anxious to minimize the importance of this sighting did not of course fail to take, as the principal plank in their argument, the suggestion that the soldiers must have been tippling copiously just before they set out on their journey. According to the soldiers' own statements, however, Ricardo had had only one brandy; Felipe had had a little champagne, while Manolo, who was going to be the driver on the 126-kilometer run to Burgos, had drunk one coca-cola. Naturally we have only their word for this, nevertheless all the indications are that they were entirely sober, since they are hardly likely to have wanted to turn up in any other state for their daily duties at the Engineering Academy.)

A vivid point of light in the sky

They were travelling in a Morris *Mini* (850 c.c.) owned by Manolo. Ricardo was in front beside him, and Felipe sat behind.

Forty minutes later, at the spot where National Highway No. 623 intersects with the road leading to Ontoneda, they stopped, by prior arrangement, to pick up a fourth man, José Laso, also of the Engineering Academy. Then the party continued on their way to Burgos City.

When they were about 15 km. past the Puerto del Escudo they stopped for a while to stretch their legs, and it was then that Manolo noticed a "star" which seemed to be shining a bit more brightly than the rest, and he mentioned it to his companions though without paying further heed to it. Later he would recall, however, that this star had seemed to him to be very low, and very near, and that its flashes as it twinkled were pinkish and bluish.

Starting up again, they drove on. Everything was running normally. But at 6.25 a.m. Manolo was astonished to see a luminous object move in a parabolic course across the sky and descend towards the ground

at high speed. He shouted to the others and applied his brakes. All four of them sat there looking towards where the thing had fallen – an area now lit up by a powerful glow which they described as comparable to the floodlights at a football field.

The spot where they had pulled up was right beside the 252 kilometre marker on the Santander-Burgos road. (This reference point was to be helpful to them later in compiling their account of what happened.)

Beyond the highway, to their left, and fairly near its junction with the country road leading to Villarcayo, stood a luminous body, shaped like a truncated cone (see Fig. 1). Making a rapid calculation, they decided that it was probably about two metres high (Manolo says he thinks it could have held a standing man), and about three metres wide. The weird object was irradiating a yellowish glow, turning almost to white in the lower part and terminating in luminous jets shooting downwards to the ground. The object was stationary, but had not touched down.

Suddenly the glow was extinguished and all was momentarily dark. Then, almost immediately, four other absolutely identical objects, apparently ranged in a line, with short distances between them, also lit up.

Opinions were divided as to what to do, but in the end they all got back into the car and drove on, but stopped again when they had driven 50 metres or so. They now perceived that another car was travelling along the rural road leading to Villarcayo, and was nearer to the four luminous bodies than they were. And, about 800 metres or so behind them, there was a third vehicle, stationary. So bright was the glow illuminating the whole countryside around about that none of the handful of motorists in the vicinity could have failed to notice it.

The four soldiers have never attempted to hide the fact that they were thoroughly scared by the sight, which must have been impressive, at 6.25 a.m. in such a lonely spot. Nevertheless, Felipe Sánchez felt that they ought to make some sort of effort at an investigation, so, after driving on again, they stopped once more, and sat there in the car, looking out at the spectacle. Then, when they decided to move on, they continued to drive slowly, still observing the four “truncated cones”, until they reached Quintanaortuño, about one kilometre further up the road.

Here they stopped again. Now only two of the truncated cones were to be seen, brightly and clearly defined against the dark background. The party sat there for three more minutes or so, watching the sight. They then started up again, anxious to reach the Academy before their leave passes expired at Reveille.

(As January 1 was a holiday in the calendar, Reveille would be an hour later than usual, that is to say 8.00 a.m.) Had the soldiers remembered this at the time, they would not have been in such a hurry to get back to barracks, and maybe they would have been able to observe the departure of the objects and to note further valuable details.

They estimate the total duration of their observation at about ten minutes. One can imagine that, had they stayed there half an hour longer, they might have seen a lot more.

The investigation

As is logically to be expected in such cases, the soldiers decided to say nothing about it at the Engineering Academy for fear of being ridiculed. But Manolo, who was quite disturbed by what he had seen, finally told one of his friends about it, and this friend told an officer, and the officer then reported the matter to

Major Francisco Llorente, Adjutant to the Colonel in command of the Engineering Academy. The latter was interested, and asked Manolo to tell him about it, and then made arrangements for all four men to give an account to a senior officer.

In the evening, the Colonel went with the four men to the scene of the sighting. (Fig. 2) They halted at the kilometre – 252 marker, where the soldiers had made their first stop that morning, and from there they attempted to ‘reconstruct’ the sighting and determine the precise position of the luminous cones. The site, a somewhat wettish spot in an uncultivated field, had grass which seemed to be rather dry. Behind a row of bushes they discovered a scorched area about 40 metres long and about 4 metres wide. It must be emphasised that, apart from this one area, there was no other burnt area anywhere in the vicinity. The local villagers said that the last time they had burned stubble was in October 1974, in other words, three months previously, and that this related to the whole district round about.

The appearance of the large burned patch indicated that the burning had been very recent, thus offering good corroboration for the view that there was a direct link with the phenomenon seen by the four soldiers in the early hours of that same day.

Comments

What we have here is a landing case (Type I according to Jacques Vallée’s classification) with several witnesses, though only four of them have decided to relate their experiences. In our opinion the four young soldiers, who would have nothing to gain by making up a story, have told the truth. It is regrettable that the other potential witnesses (in the other cars in the area) have not decided to come forward and inform the media, because maybe they might have been in a position to perceive certain aspects of the phenomenon that were not seen by the four soldiers. It is highly probable that, observing from various angles and over a longer period of time it would have been possible to furnish further details of the greatest importance for investigators. Nevertheless we fully appreciate that these other witnesses may have preferred to avoid involvement for fear of ridicule.

There is little more that we can add to what the soldiers have said. The objects seen were seemingly very sharply defined and very luminous and stationary quite near to the ground. The “jets” of light emanating from the under-parts of the objects and directed towards the ground may possibly have been the “mechanism” by which the objects were held in suspension. The burned area would have been closely linked to the “jets” of light, which in all probability would be the direct cause of the burning.

We are still hoping to secure more concrete information about what actually happened in this case, and we are sending Major Llorente some of our sighting forms, along with a number of questions. Perhaps we shall in due course learn of important details, for example whether any other kind of marks have been found at the site or whether any other sort of remains have been discovered in the district. Should such further details come to light, we shall publish them too.

Postscript

After this article had already gone to the printer, we received further reports on the case. Our good friend and collaborator, Sr. Malo Martínez, residing at Padrones de Bureba (Burgos Province), took certain

action on his own initiative and then followed it up later along lines indicated to him by us.

Sr. Martínez went to Quintanaortuño to try to find fresh witnesses. He also paid a visit to Burgos to interview the soldiers and secure further details from them. On this latter point, however, he was unsuccessful, for he was refused permission to interview them, on the ground that "there had already been too much discussion of the subject" and it had already been given sufficient coverage in the magazine *Actualidad Española**.

In the region where the affair had happened, Sr. Martínez was only able to interview a few people, because the matter had remained totally unknown to almost all the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, indeed so much was this the case that he found it quite difficult to find anyone who could take him to the landing site. Finally, however, he managed to get the 60-year-old Feliciano Porras, a farm worker living in the Villaverde-Peñahonda area, to go there with him. In view of their interest, we give here some of the views and statements of Feliciano Porras, who knows the whole region thoroughly:—

"The pasture where the UFO landed lies between Quintanaortuño and Villaverde/Peñahonda and is what we call consumo, that is to say a field used as common land by both villages for grazing their cattle.

"I know even the very stones at the place and I can tell by looking at them whether the burning dates from last October or is more recent. In fact these burn marks are not from October, but later, and indeed very recent."

When they began to compare the actual terrain with the photographs published in *Actualidad*, they noted that there was a considerable discrepancy as to the burnt area, and they tried to find the explanation for this.* Sr. Feliciano Porras gave his own explanation, maintaining that the disappearance of a considerable portion of the burnt patch was simply due to the fact that only the ends of the blades of grass had been scorched, without the whole of the plant being affected, and that consequently the grass had gone on growing, with the result that part of the burn had already vanished. Nevertheless numerous burnt "hollow" spots still remained. These, to be precise, were not exactly hollows, but patches where the burning of the grass had extended down to the stems.

Sr. Malo Martínez measured the area outlined by these burn "hollows" and found it to be 60 × 12

metres. Then came a strip 15 metres wide on which there were no burn marks, after which there came a second zone of 30 × 12 metres where the burn marks appeared again. They found no trace of burning anywhere else in the whole vicinity.

The distance from this burnt area to the Santander road on which the witnesses had been travelling is 213 metres. The Villarcayo road, taken by the second lot of witnesses (to whom we shall refer later) is about 500 metres.

Sr. Malo Martínez took soil and grass samples at the site. These will be examined in a specialized laboratory.

As a result of various contacts made by Sr. Malo Martínez, we are now informed that four other people, who were in the car travelling along the road to Villarcayo, did see a tremendous glow over in the direction of the site where the burns have been found.

The four people in this other car were Don José Rivas Riaño, an official of the Secret Police, and three companions. At the time, Sr. Rivas Riaño was doing his military service in Burgos. He and his party saw a huge glow, of a colour between white and pink, behind a hillock (see sketch map Fig. 2), but they carried on with their journey without paying too much heed to it, as their first thought was that it was simply the beginning of the dawn. However, talking it over they soon came to the conclusion that it could not be dawn, since it was still far too early for that, and moreover the glow lay towards the West and not the East.

Reverting to the burnt "hollows" in the field we would add that these were distributed without any kind of order; They were two larger ones, 60 × 31 cm. and 1m × 31 cm. respectively. The rest were fairly regular, measuring from 21 × 21 cm to 17 × 30 cm.

Having put these further details on record, it only remains to us to await the verdict of the laboratory on the samples sent to them.**

NOTES BY EDITOR OF FSR, MARCH 1990

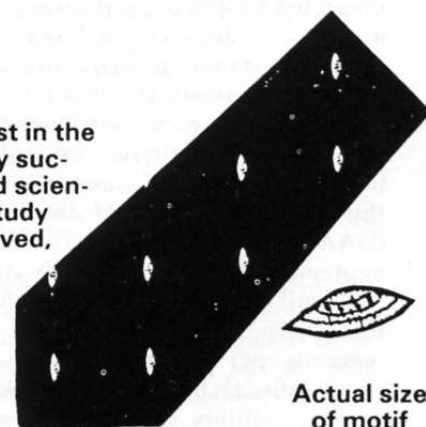
* Maybe Sr Redon's enthusiasm about the greater degree of co-operativeness by the Spanish Army was not entirely justified!

** Needless to say that FSR never heard any more about the Burgos case, or about the results of the tests on the soil samples.

FLYING SAUCER TIE

"We introduced the Flying Saucer necktie in 1962 to indicate (1) A serious interest in the subject of Flying Saucers and (2) a willingness to discuss it. Although commercially successful, we allowed it to lapse, because we came to think that the subject required scientific study rather than club enthusiasm. We are still of this opinion: however, the study of the UFO phenomena has become worldwide and, with different languages involved, as well as greater opportunity to travel, we are now reviving this tie in its original meaning, as a token of serious scientific study for the interest of all mankind.

"The design is the same as before and shows a pattern of small, silvery saucers on a dark-blue background. The necktie, in 100% polyester reppe weave, is available from us at £5.00 each (\$10.00 US), post free by surface mail."



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