

# THE LANDING NEAR BURGOS

*Pere Redon*

Our contributor is Deputy Director of CEI (Centro de Estudios Interplanetarios) of Barcelona. Precise 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 Quintanaortuno, 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 Sanchez, 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 tipping 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.

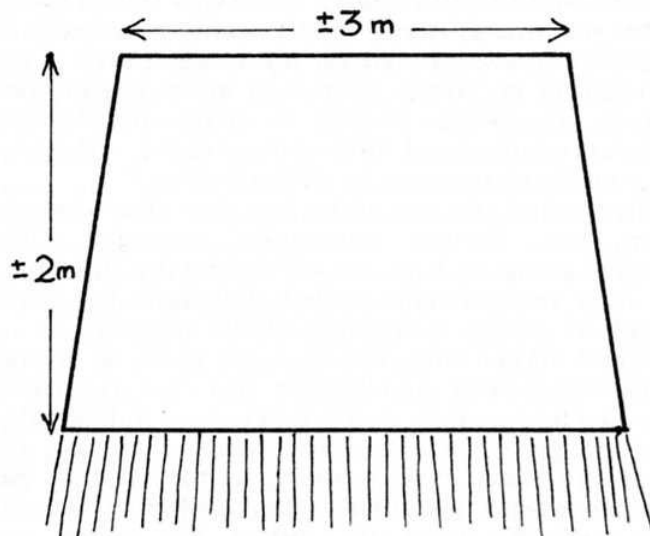


Figure 1: Truncated cone

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 flow 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 Quintana-ortuño, 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

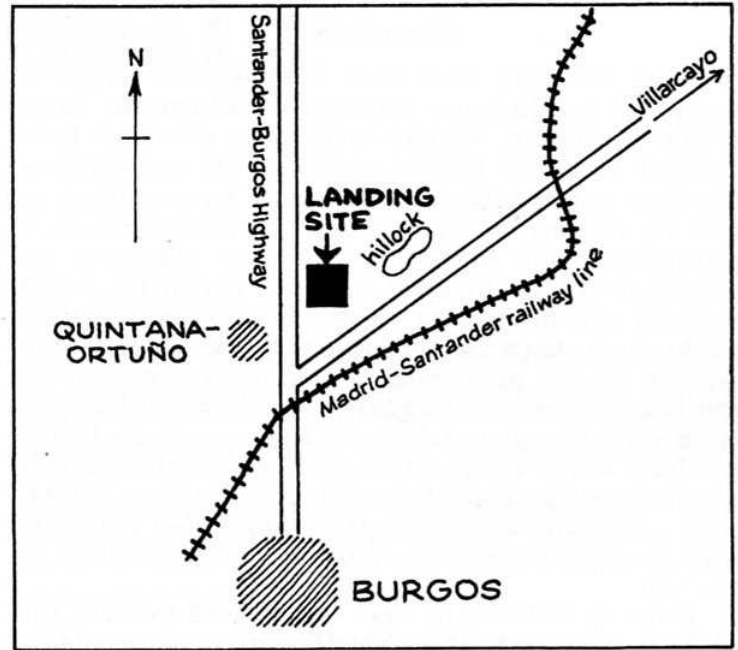


Figure 2: The Location

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 wetish 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 Quintaortuño 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 Quintaortuño and Villaverde/Penahonda 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 burnt "hollows" and found it to be 60 x 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 x 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

*(continued on page 27)*

\* Maybe Sr. Redon's enthusiasm about the greater degree of co-operativeness of the Spanish Army was not entirely justified!—G.C.

# UFO ANSWERS SIGNALS OVER COLOMBIA

*Gordon Creighton*

WE are indebted to Sr. Sebastián Robiou Lamarche of Puerto Rico for a photostat copy of an article from the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo*, published in Bogotá. (Date of article: February 18, 1977.) The article gives details of a number of recent UFO happenings in that South American republic, and, in particular, of an extraordinary sighting reported by an air-liner of the Avianca Company. This I have extracted and paraphrased as follows...

At 9.00 p.m. on January 21 of this year, the Avianca machine, registration no. HK-1273, had just taken off from Eldorado Airport at Bogotá, and was flying at a height of 20,000 feet. Suddenly the Captain, Gustavo Ferreira, caught sight of an extremely bright light heading straight towards them from the opposite direction. Simultaneously the radar operator, Jorge Jiménez, picked up on his screen an object travelling at 44,000 km.p.h., in other words forty times the speed of the Avianca jet. The size of the object on the screen was three times the size of a normal aircraft, and that it could be no aircraft was evident, since it was moving in a pronounced zig-zag fashion.

Other crew members of the jet liner, which was on a routine run, Flight No. 132, to Pereira, also saw the UFO. These were Pedro Tapias the co-pilot, the flight engineer, and the two stewardesses.

When he first saw the vivid light bearing down on them, the Captain said to the co-pilot: "Look, Pedro! Do you see that vivid light at — I should reckon — 25 miles or so from us and over Ibagué? What do you think it is?"

"I don't know, Skipper," replied Pedro Tapias.

"It must be an aircraft", said the Captain. "Call the Bogotá Control Centre and ask them why they have put us on a head-on collision course with another plane. It's a dangerous thing to do!"

A few seconds later the radar man, Jimenez, had the Control Centre's reply: "Negative. I have no report of any traffic in that quarter, but our screen is picking up an object flying in zigzags at 44,000 km. per hour. What are you seeing?"

"We are seeing a very brilliant white light. At times it is stationary, and at other times it is moving," answered Jiménez.

Captain Ferreira instantly gave orders to put on the landing lights. As he explained later to the newspaper: "I put them on so that he would be able to see me, and although I was quite calm, I felt a weird sensation, of mingled surprise and bewilderment."

The night sky was totally clear and full of stars. Inside the cabin was in darkness; the five members of the crew sat with their eyes glued on the weird light.

Suddenly, its vivid white light changed to red. At once the Captain again switched one of the buttons on his control panel and turned off his landing lights, so that his machine was in total darkness. Then he switched on his landing lights once more, and the UFO at once replied by flashing green lights. This exchange of signals had taken some three minutes or so, after which the UFO moved away southwards and was rapidly out of sight.

The radar man shouted: "Captain, I've lost it! It did a 90° turn at a fantastic speed!" And he duly noted the strange events of this night in his log-book.

Captain Gustavo Ferreira told the newspaper that he had been flying for more than twenty years, and had never before believed in the existence of UFOs. "But I saw one during the night of Friday, January 21, and now I am certain that they exist. No longer is it possible for me to say that they are "secret nuclear weapons of a foreign power," or "the chariot of Elijah mentioned in the Bible."

The article in *El Tiempo* then proceeded to discuss other recent Colombian sightings, adding that these had been so numerous and so persistent over the last two months or so that the control tower and radar personnel at Eldorado Airport decided on February 17 that they would break their silence and open up on the subject. They said that all cases had hitherto been kept secret "...for fear of being thought to be crazy if they revealed them."

Jorge Jimenez, the radar man of the Avianca jet, was also interviewed at the Eldorado Radar Centre. He firmly ruled out all possibility that what they had seen might have been a nuclear weapon "...since those are teleguided, so that their flight is always in a straight line."

Sr. Jaime Olarte, air traffic controller at Eldorado, pointed out that Venus can never be taken for a UFO because this planet, bright as it is, maintains a definite position and a definite course through the sky. And Controller Octavio Lemos remarked confidently: "The facts of the situation are already so evident that it is clear the extra-terrestrial beings are far in advance of us. Any day now, they'll be landing right here on the Eldorado runway."

The paper went on to mention, as a point of some curiosity, that Controller Octavio Lemos is the only one of the Tower's personnel who has had a daylight sighting of a UFO. All the other sightings around Bogota in recent months have always been at night and to the west of the Eldorado Airport.

A year and a half previously, Octavio Lemos saw four objects flying in line ahead, at an unheard-of