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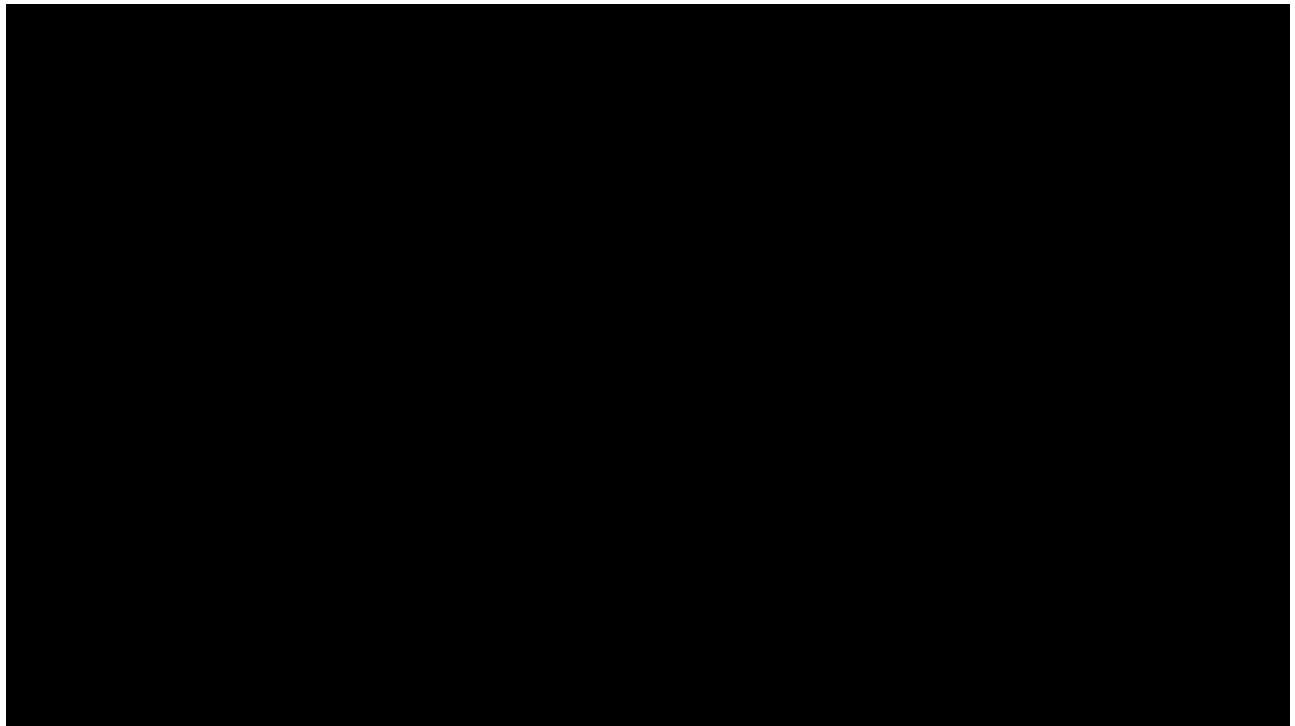
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THE MOST CREDIBLE UFO SIGHTINGS AND ENCOUNTERS IN MODERN HISTORY, ACCORDING TO RESEARCH

BY **CALLUM PATON** ON 4/17/19 AT 9:55 AM EDT



U.S.

UFO

U.S. AIR FORCE

The modern era of UFO sightings began in 1947 when Kenneth Arnold, a businessman and pilot from Idaho, spotted what he believed was a formation of flying saucers near Mount Rainier in Washington. Encounters with unidentified flying objects have been recorded since ancient times, but Arnold's sighting hooked the American public. It was the encounter that launched a thousand theories.

The U.S. military attempted to discredit Arnold's claims. "The report cannot bear even superficial examination, therefore, must be disregarded," the Air Force Materiel Command wrote in a now-declassified document.

As reported sightings increased and UFO obsession spread like wildfire, its flames fanned by the notorious Roswell incident, the military attempted to douse the issue. A series of UFO studies commissioned by the U.S. Air Force culminated in Project Blue Book, which wrapped up in 1969 and found no evidence of the presence of extra

terrestrial vehicles on Earth or in the skies above.

The Air Force clearly hoped to put an end to the UFO craze—but the studies had the opposite effect. Josef Allen Hynek, who had overseen the Air Force efforts, broke with the military, claiming the importance of UFOs had been underplayed. His scientific analysis forms much of the basis of modern UFOlogy and his close encounters classification system is the benchmark in grading the credibility of UFO sightings.

Experts warn that mundane explanations often exist for UFO sightings.
ISTOCK

In devising our own credibility rating system for UFO sightings, *Newsweek* built upon Hynek's foundations. The astronomer and preeminent UFOlogist valued sightings that involved multiple or highly credible witnesses. We have also incorporated advances in technology into our scale. The advent of cameras and infrared devices on aircraft have presented new kinds of evidence for sightings.

The credibility scale works on a point-based system. One point is given for sightings with multiple witnesses, another for an expert witness (a pilot, air traffic controller, military or government official). One point is awarded for picture evidence and an additional point for film of a moving UFO. Unidentified flying objects can often be explained away as foreign aircraft, so an additional point is given for UFOs seen to be flying in a manner inconsistent with flight as humans know it.

Hynek also prized close encounters. Close encounters of the first kind—sightings of an object less than 500 feet away—are given one point. Close encounters of the second kind, a UFO event where a physical effect is felt (a car light breaks, extreme heat is felt, scorch marks on the ground), are given two points. Finally, close encounters of the third kind, instances where an animated pilot is seen, earn three points.

A system for removing points has also been incorporated to account for cases where military or government bodies have discredited the sightings. Three points are

removed in these cases, as the baseline for credibility in the scale begins at three.

A group of protestors march in front of the General Accounting Office (GAO) Washington D.C. 29 March to raise awareness about an examination being conducted by the GAO for documents about a weather balloon crash at Roswell, N.M. in 1947.

JOSHUA ROBERTS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The list of sightings analyzed with the scale has been compiled with input from the Scientific Coalition for UFOlogy. The coalition, which was started in 2017, is composed of 45 UFOlogists. Most of them either have backgrounds in science, the military or law enforcement. The body's members have 11 Ph.D.s between them; one member is from NASA and another is from the European Space Agency.

Some 6,000 UFO encounters are reported every year, says Robert Powell, an SCU board member. "Ninety-eight percent or more of sightings are basically misidentifications and they are airplanes or Chinese lanterns or a variety of different things," Powell told *Newsweek*. "What's left is cases where there is a lot of good information and you have some possibility of trying to discuss it in detail.

"In order to be on here someone needed to do work to investigate the case. If no report or investigation was done then it is hard to put a lot of stock in a case," he added.

Experts warn that mundane explanations often exist for UFO sightings. Because encounters are unexplained does not mean that the event has extraterrestrial origins. "The overwhelming majority (typically more than 90 percent of these 'sightings') can be explained as due to prosaic, terrestrial phenomena," Seth Shostak, Senior astronomer and institute Fellow at the SETI Institute told *Newsweek* via email. "Could the rest be alien craft? Maybe, but that's like saying that the 40 percent of homicides committed in New York City that are unsolved could be due to alien murderers. Possible, but not likely."

1. Roswell Incident

Over the years hundreds of witnesses have come forward claiming to have some connection with the Roswell UFO sighting.

ROSWELL DAILY RECORD

Location: Roswell, New Mexico

July 1947

Hundreds of witnesses have come forward claiming to have some connection with the Roswell UFO sighting. Books published from 1980 onwards have claimed an alien craft crash landed near a ranch in Roswell, New Mexico, with one or more dead extraterrestrial beings inside. The truth appears to be far more mundane. In 1997, the Air Force released a report on the 50th anniversary of the incident entitled: "Case Closed: Final Report on the Roswell Crash." An article in *The New York Times* from the time read: "No bodies. No bulbous heads. No secret autopsies. No spaceship. No crash. No extraterrestrials or alien artifacts of any sort. And most emphatically of all, no government cover-up."

Credibility Rating: -2

2. Kenneth Arnold UFO Sighting

Pilots E.J. Smith, Kenneth Arnold, and Ralph E. Stevens look at a photo of an unidentified flying object which they sighted while en route to Seattle, Washington.

BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Location: Mount Rainier, Washington

June 1947

Pilot Kenneth Arnold's sighting of nine "circular-type" objects flying in formation at a speed judged to be more than twice the speed of sound gave birth to the modern notion of flying saucers. Reports from the Idaho pilot that he witnessed the strange craft while flying north of Mount Rainier were dismissed out of hand by an Air Force investigation. Until his death in 1984 Arnold maintained he had seen the UFOs. He told the *Seattle Times* in 1977: "I made my report because I thought it was my duty. It

was the only proper and American thing to do. I saw what I saw."

Credibility Rating: 0

3. Levelland UFO Case

A press cutting from the Lubbock Morning Avalanche following UFO sightings in Levelland, Texas.

LUBBOCK MORNING AVALANCHE

Location: Levelland, Texas

November 1957

Multiple witnesses reported seeing an egg-shaped object or a large flash of light moving across the sky in the small town of Levelland, Texas. One witness told police the passing object had interfered with the electronics in his car. The Associated Press reported at the time that a "mystery object" had flown around with a "great sound and rush of wind." The sighting was later discredited by the Air Force's Project Blue Book, which claimed the phenomenon had been caused by severe electrical storms and ball lightning.

Credibility Rating: 0

4. Stephenville, Texas, UFO Sightings

Location: Stephenville, Texas

January 2008

Multiple witnesses in Stephenville, Texas, reported seeing inexplicable objects moving through the sky or bright lights. The episode created confusion when the nearby Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base mistakenly said its planes had not been active on the nights in question. It later emerged that military aircraft had been training in the area, CNN reported.

Credibility Rating: 0

5. NASA Curiosity Rover Photograph

UFOlogist Scott C. Waring claims to have spotted a UFO on Mars.
NASA

Location: Mars

March 2019

To test the efficacy of our rating system we applied it to a sighting by UFOlogist Scott C. Waring, who claims to have spotted a UFO on Mars. His sighting was publicized in Britain's Daily Express newspaper. Waring's sighting is reliant on images beamed back from NASA's Curiosity Rover. There have been no human witnesses to the case, expert or otherwise, and the UFO is not shown moving. Even if we generously say that the picture is of an extraterrestrial craft, which is up for debate, this contemporary sighting does not score particularly high.

Credibility Rating: 1

6.The Washington, D.C., Flap

Officers of the operations,technical and intelligence divisions of the USAF are shown at a news conference.
BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Location: Washington, D.C.

July 1952

On two separate occasions Air Force F-94s were scrambled over Washington after UFOs were sighted on radar at Andrews and Bolling Air Force bases. The reports of UFOs disappearing or outrunning the Air Force jets cemented the flying saucer craze in the popular imagination. The unusual blips, seen by multiple air traffic controllers, cruised at between 100 to 130 mph before zooming off at incredible speed. At the time The Washington Post ran the banner headline: "'Saucer' Outran Jet, Pilot

Reveals."

Credibility Rating: 3

7. Valensole UFO Sighting

A general view of lavender fields in Valensole, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, where Maurice Masse spotted a UFO and two humanoid aliens.

ISTOCK

Location: Valensole, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, France
July 1965

Dubbed France's Roswell by regional Le Dauphine newspaper, this sighting by Maurice Masse constitutes a close encounter of the third kind. Masse claimed he saw two humanoid aliens land a spherical UFO in a field. They then exited the craft. The French farmer said he was left paralyzed when one of the beings pointed a cylindrical instrument at him. The pair then flew away after briefly inspecting the surroundings. This incident rates so highly because close encounters where witnesses spotted physical beings were considered the most important by Hynek.

Credibility Rating: 3

8. Delphos Ring Incident

Location: Delphos, Kansas
November 1971

Sixteen-year-old Ronald Johnson claimed to have seen a glowing object hovering over a specific area close to his family farm in the early evening. When he went to fetch other witnesses the object had vanished. However, an eerie glowing ring was found where the UFO had been. Another witness corroborated to police the sighting of the strange flying object. In 2017, Britain's Daily Express newspaper reported a U.K.-based scientist had analysed soil preserved from the site of the sighting, finding it to contain a potentially chemiluminescent organic compound.

Credibility Rating: 3

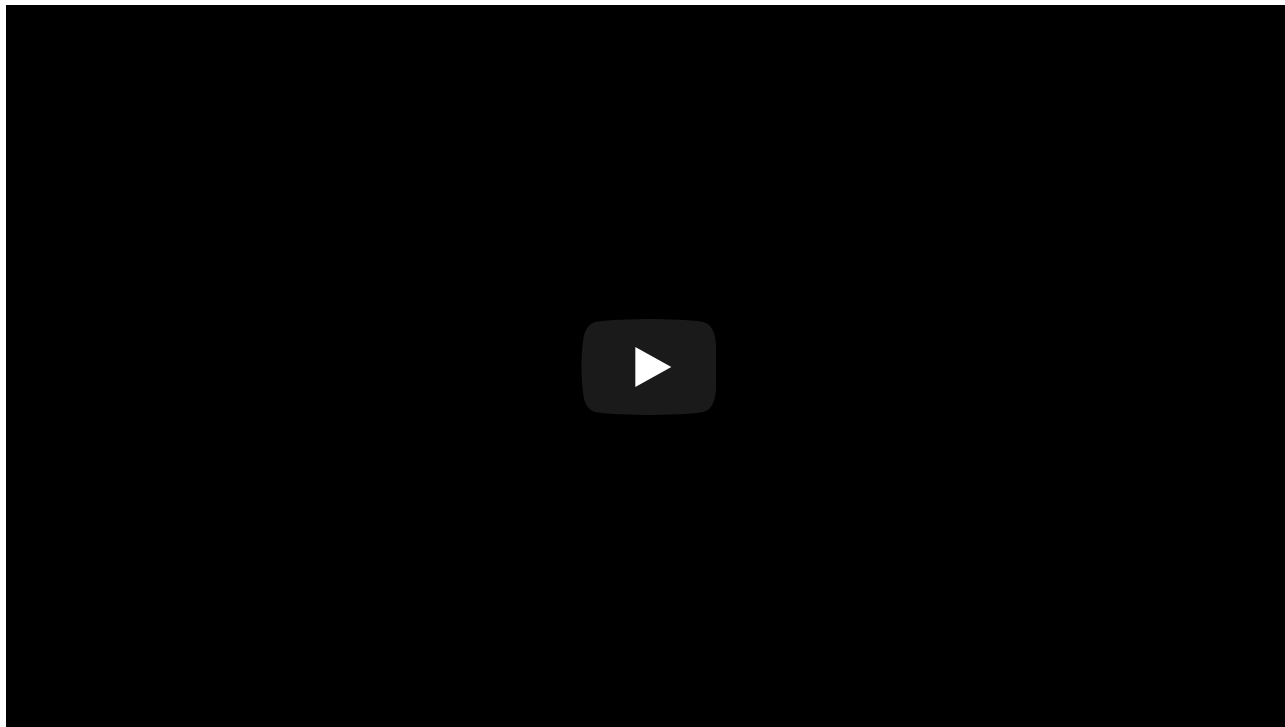
9. Loring Air Force Base Sighting

Location: Loring Air Force Base, Maine
October 1975

On two successive nights servicemembers reported seeing a UFO hovering over Loring Air Force Base. An object described as a cigar-shaped craft was reportedly seen on radar. The CIA has released documents that show a 1975 watch log describing "unidentified helicopter(s) flying out of Canada."

Credibility Rating: 3

10. Sheriff's Deputy Val Johnson Incident



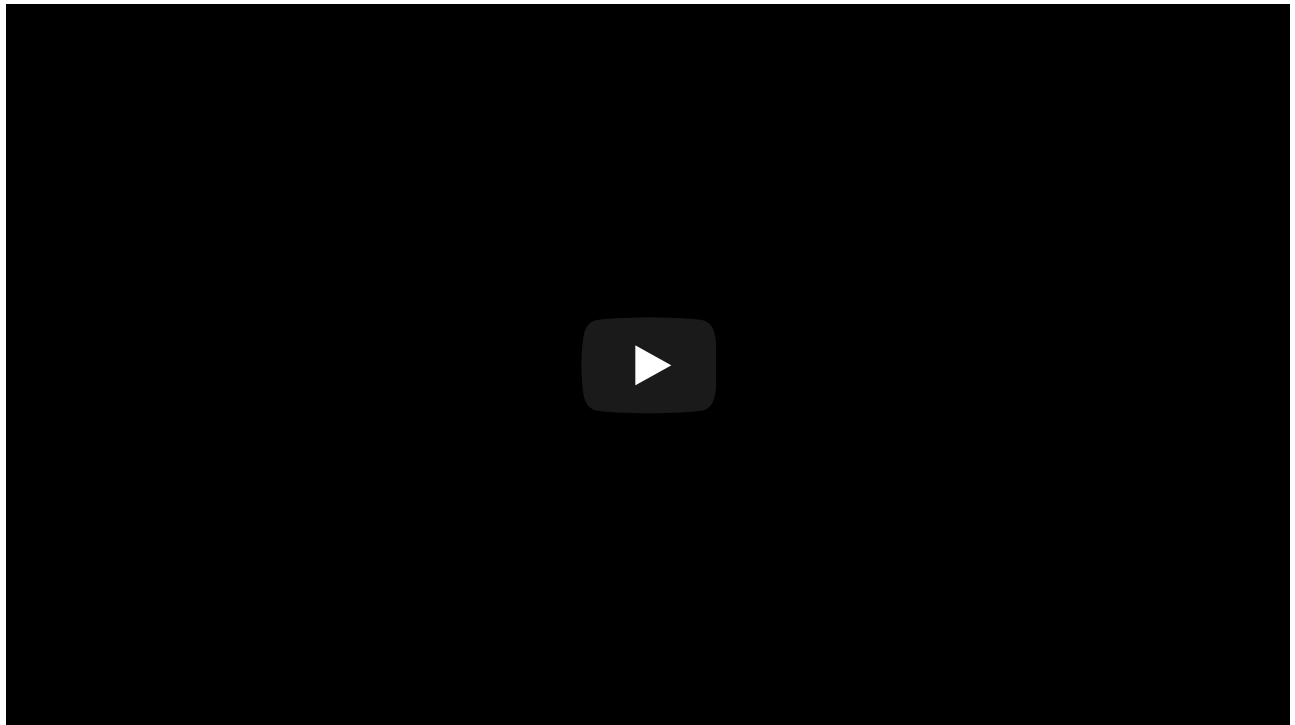
Location: Marshall County, Minnesota
August 1979

In the early hours of the morning on September 11, 1979, Marshall County sheriff's deputy Val Johnson encountered what he described as a white ball of light while

driving on a rural section of State Highway 220. After diving towards the "bright, brilliant light," which hovered three to four feet from the ground, Johnson woke up in a ditch half an hour later. His patrol car had suffered superficial damage and he had burns around his eyes. The now retired chief of police has kept an open mind about the experience. "I saw a ball of light," he told MPR in an interview. "I drove toward it, and suddenly it was in the car with me. It's unexplainable, and will remain so. I'm happy with my mental stability."

Credibility Rating: 3

11. Cash-Landrum Sighting



Location: Dayton, Texas

December 1980

Named for three individuals involved in the sighting, Betty Cash, Vickie Landrum and Colby Landrum—who claimed they were followed by hovering disc with a single fiery thruster as they drove home through dense woods in eastern Texas. When the trio abandoned their car they felt intense heat generated by the UFO. All three claimed to suffer health problems in the aftermath of the encounter.

Credibility Rating: 3

12. Trans-en-Provence Case

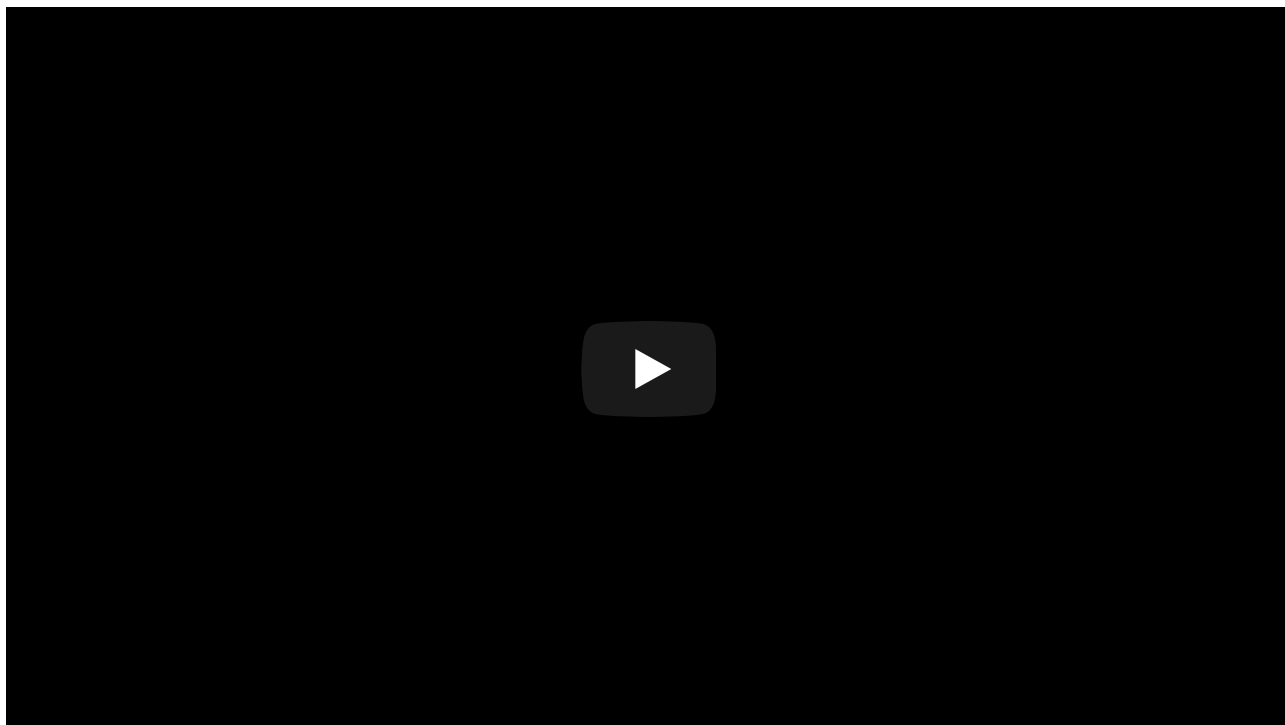
Location: Trans-en-Provence, Var, France

January 1981

In the early evening at his farm in the southern Var region of France, Renato Nicolai, a 55-year-old farmer, observed a saucer-shaped UFO land on his property at a distance of about 50 yards. The lead-colored vessel then lifted off from the ground and flew towards a nearby treeline. The case is considered remarkable because of scorch marks left by the machine, documented and extensively analysed by French authorities. No definitive explanation for the incident has ever been given, and 31 years later retired French police confirmed to the Var-Martin that they believed the case remained of the utmost importance.

Credibility Rating: 3

13. Belgian UFO Wave



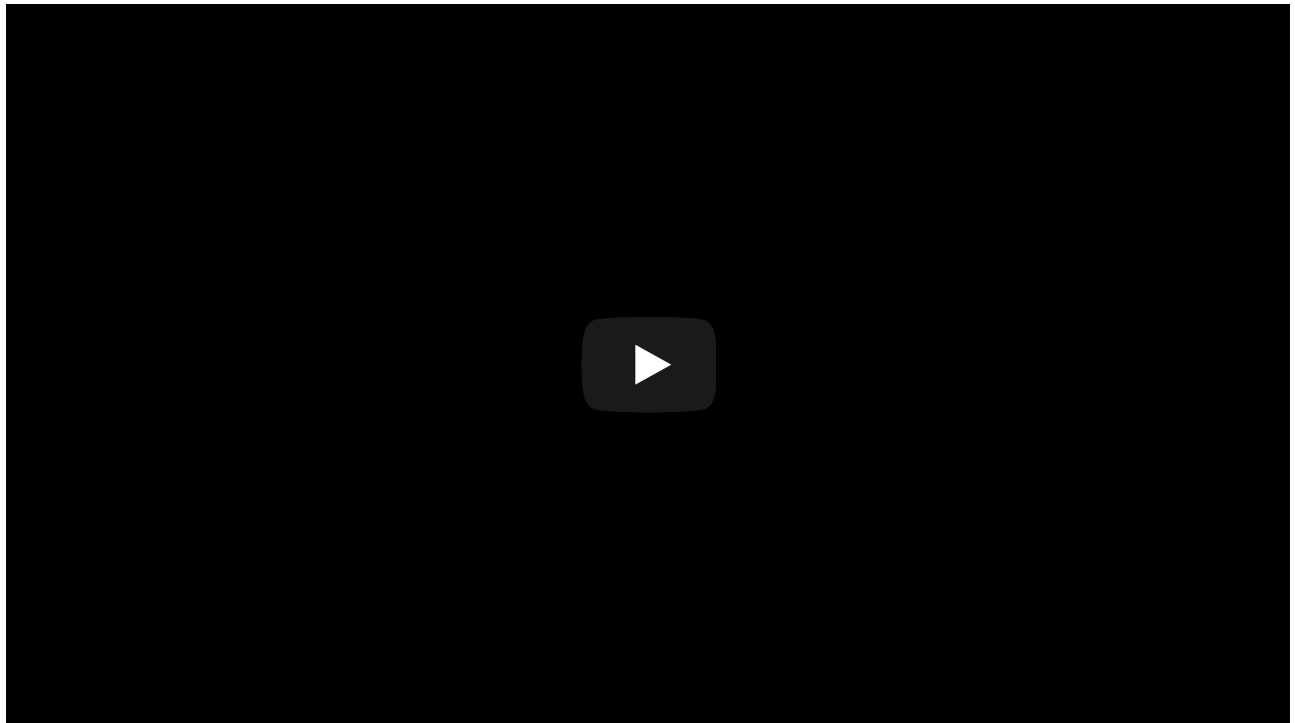
Location: Belgium

March 1990

Over a number of days at the end of March 1990, scores of individuals reported seeing strange lights in the sky over Belgium. Belgian Air Force F-16s were dispatched to investigate. The F-16 pilots discovered nothing, but media frenzy over the European sightings exploded when a supposed image of one of the UFOs, a triangular craft with four thrusters, emerged. In 2011 the Belgian TV Channel RTL revealed the photo to be a fake. The faked image has been disregarded in our credibility rating, however the close encounter of the first kind was witnessed by multiple individuals and trained air traffic controllers.

Credibility Rating: 3

14. Phoenix Lights Phenomenon



Location: Phoenix, Arizona

March 1997

UFOlogists have claimed hundreds of witnesses saw the "otherworldly" lights across

Arizona, Nevada and northern Mexico. The sighting comprised two principal parts: The spotting of a giant V-shaped craft displaying a number of lights or light-emitting thrusters and the sight of a series of stationary orange and red lights hanging in the sky. According to Arizona's [KStar News](#), the governor of the state at the time, Fife Symington, claimed he saw the lights. "I'm a pilot, and I know just about every machine that flies," Symington said. "It was bigger than anything that I've ever seen. It remains a great mystery."

Credibility Rating: 3

15. McMinnville UFO Photographs

A picture of a flying saucer photographed by farmer Paul Trent shown flying over his farm.
BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

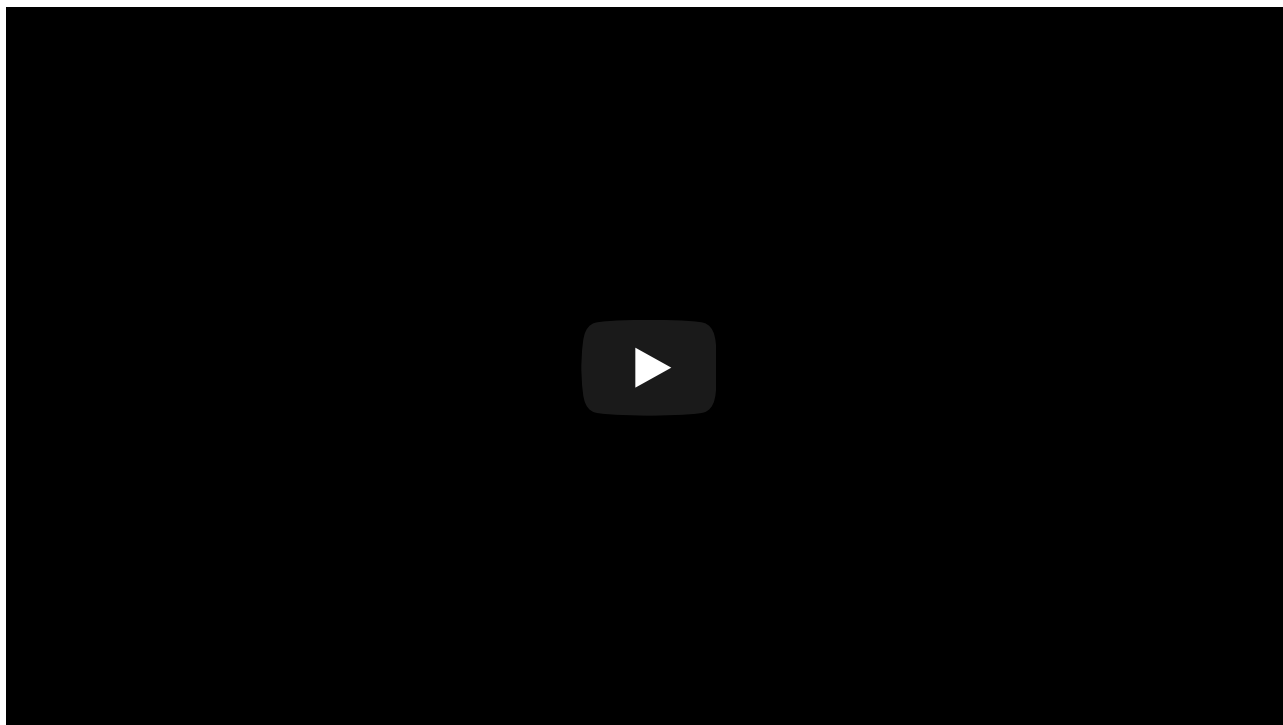
Location: McMinnville, Oregon

May 1950

Widely regarded by UFOlogists to have produced the most important photographs of a UFO, the McMinnville sighting became famous at the height of the 1950s UFO craze. Paul Trent captured the images on camera after his wife, Evelyn, spotted a slow-moving metal disk while feeding the rabbits on their farm. The images went on to be printed in *Life* magazine. The pair maintained they had seen a genuine UFO until their deaths, repeating the tale for [The Oregonian](#) in 1997.

Credibility Rating: 4

16. Shag Harbour Sighting



Location: Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia, Canada
October 1967

Multiple witnesses, including pilots, reported to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that they had witnessed a UFO with many glowing or flashing lights flying over the Nova Scotia shoreline. A dozen or so witnesses said they saw a glowing orange sphere crash into the water and then slip beneath the surface. No wreckage was ever found, Canada's *National Post* reported.

Credibility Rating: 4

17. The 1976 Tehran Incident

Illustrative: US made Iranian air force F-4 Phantom jets attack mock enemy targets during military maneuvers in the Zabol area on the Iran-Afghan border.

BEHROUZ MEHRI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Location: Tehran, Iran
September 1976

Two Iranian F-4 interceptor aircraft reported their equipment jammed as they approached a star-shaped UFO over the areas surrounding the Iranian capital, Tehran. Ground control equipment at Mehrabad International Airport was also reportedly affected by the strange craft. Speaking at a pilot's conference in 2007, pilot Parviz Jafari said he attempted to fire on the UFO but was unable to cause any damage. "My weapons jammed and my radio communications garbled," he said, according to the [Irish Independent](#).

Credibility Rating: 4

18. Coyne, Mansfield Helicopter Incident

Location: Mansfield, Ohio

October 1973

Four crew members of an Army Reserve helicopter recorded a near collision with a UFO near Charles Mill Lake. The incident was corroborated by witnesses in Richland and Ashland counties who described an object or a ball of light moving in a manner not consistent with human flight. The crew on the helicopter, piloted by Lawrence Coyne (for whom the sighting is named), reported seeing a 60-foot-long, cigar-shaped object with a bright green light, according to the [Mansfield News Journal](#).

Credibility Rating: 4

19. Nancy France Sighting

Location: Nancy, Grand Est, France

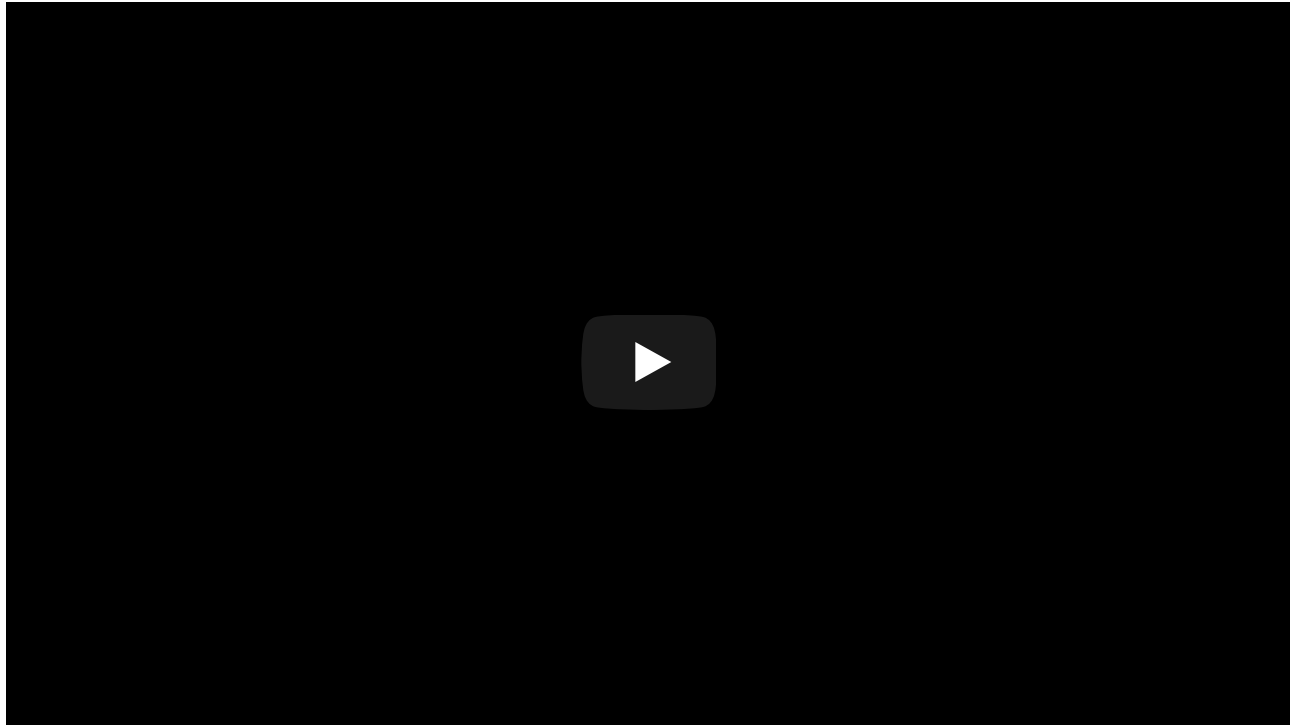
October 1982

According to [an investigation by GEPAN](#), a unit of France's national aerospace agency tasked with investigating UFO sightings, a biologist, identified as M. Henri, and his wife observed an unidentified object that hovered for 20 minutes over their garden. The ovoid vessel had a shiny metallic appearance. M. Henri attempted to photograph the craft but found his camera had jammed. After the UFO regained altitude it moved at a speed and trajectory impossible for man-made aircraft. The witness claimed the vessel had an effect on his garden plants but under analysis they

were found to be simply dehydrated.

Credibility Rating: 4

20. Japan Airlines Flight 1628 Incident



Location: Alaska

November 1986

The pilot and crew of a Japan Airlines cargo flight carrying wine from Paris to Tokyo reported seeing strange flashing colorful lights that followed their aircraft over Alaska. *The New York Times* reported during an FAA investigation into the sighting that the yellow, amber and green lights were spotted on a clear evening by pilot Kenji Terauchi. The lights appeared as the flight crossed into Alaska from Canada, while the plane cruised at 35,000 feet. The FAA later came to no definitive conclusion about the sighting.

Credibility Rating: 4

21. Chicago O'Hare Airport Sighting

Illustrative: A United Airlines jet takes off from O'Hare International Airport.
SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

Location: Chicago, Illinois
November 2006

United Airlines staff and pilots at Chicago O'Hare Airport reported seeing a flying saucer hovering over the airport terminal on an overcast day. The vessel then shot up into the air so quickly that it punched a hole in the clouds. The FAA told The Chicago Tribune that the sighting had likely been caused by "weather phenomenon" and did not further investigate the incident. One flight traffic controller official remarked at the time: "To fly seven million light years to O'Hare and then have to turn around and go home because your gate was occupied is simply unacceptable."

Credibility Rating: 4

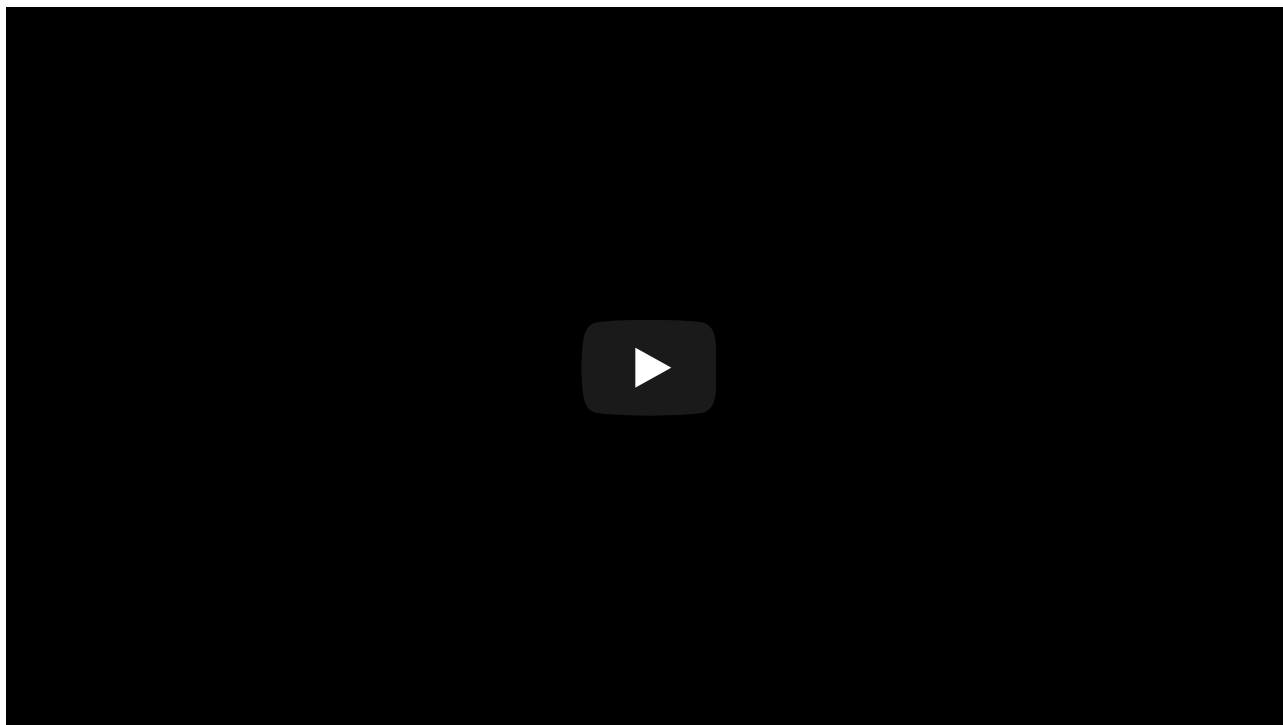
22. Rendlesham Forest Incident

Location: Suffolk, England
December 1980

Between December 26-28, 1980, U.S. Air Force personnel stationed at RAF Bentwaters reported seeing strange lights near Rendlesham forest. The incident, which has been referred to as Britain's Roswell, was never investigated by U.K. authorities. In 2015 Col. Charles Halt, one of the observers, told the BBC he had recovered statements from radar operators at the base recounting how they had observed a UFO moving too quickly for normal human flight.

Credibility Rating: 5

23. Aguadilla Airport Incident



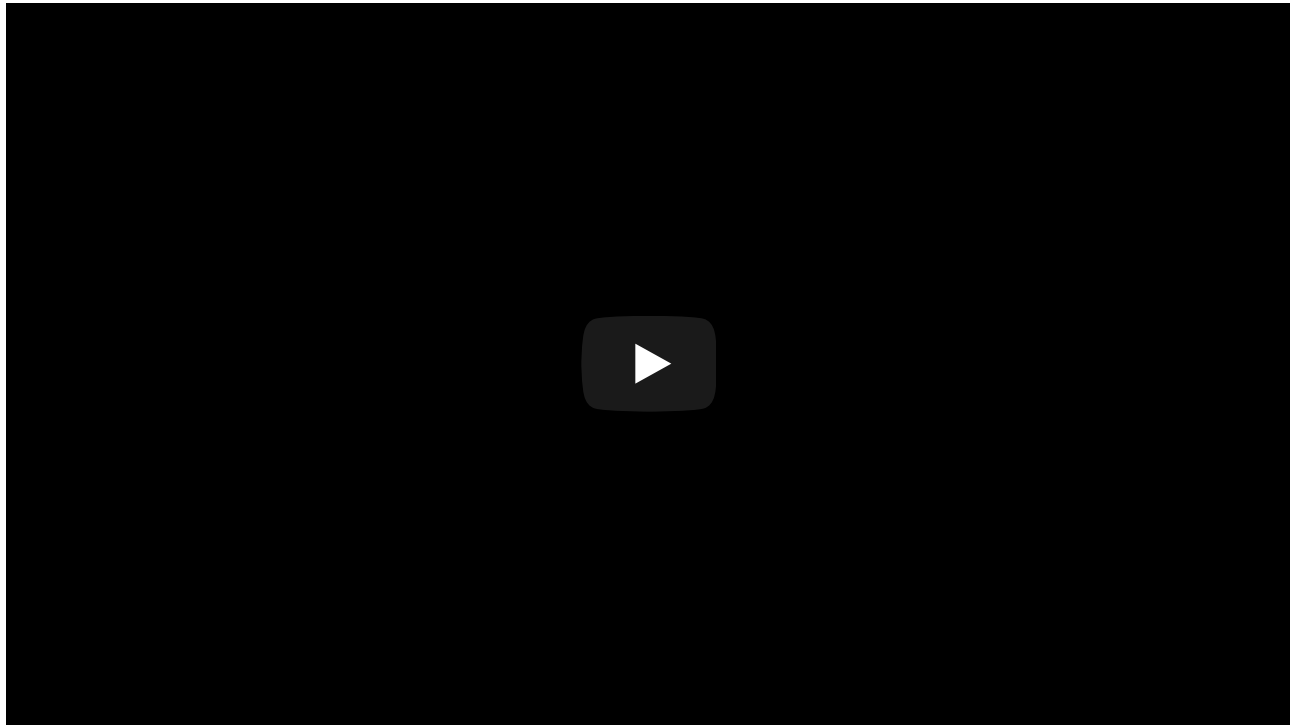
Location: Aguadilla, Puerto Rico

April 2013

An unidentified flying object was seen flying at low altitude across the Rafael Hernandez Airport runway in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The object did not give any warning signals, although it delayed the departure of a commercial flight. A U.S. Customs and Border Protection aircraft captured infrared video of the episode that was supplied to the Scientific Coalition for UFOology (SCU) by a whistleblower. The video shows the vessel apparently travelling without lights, at some instances below tree-top altitude, at speeds close to 100 mph. An analysis of the video was published in a report by the SCU.

Credibility Rating: 6

24. USS Nimitz Tic-Tac UFO Incident



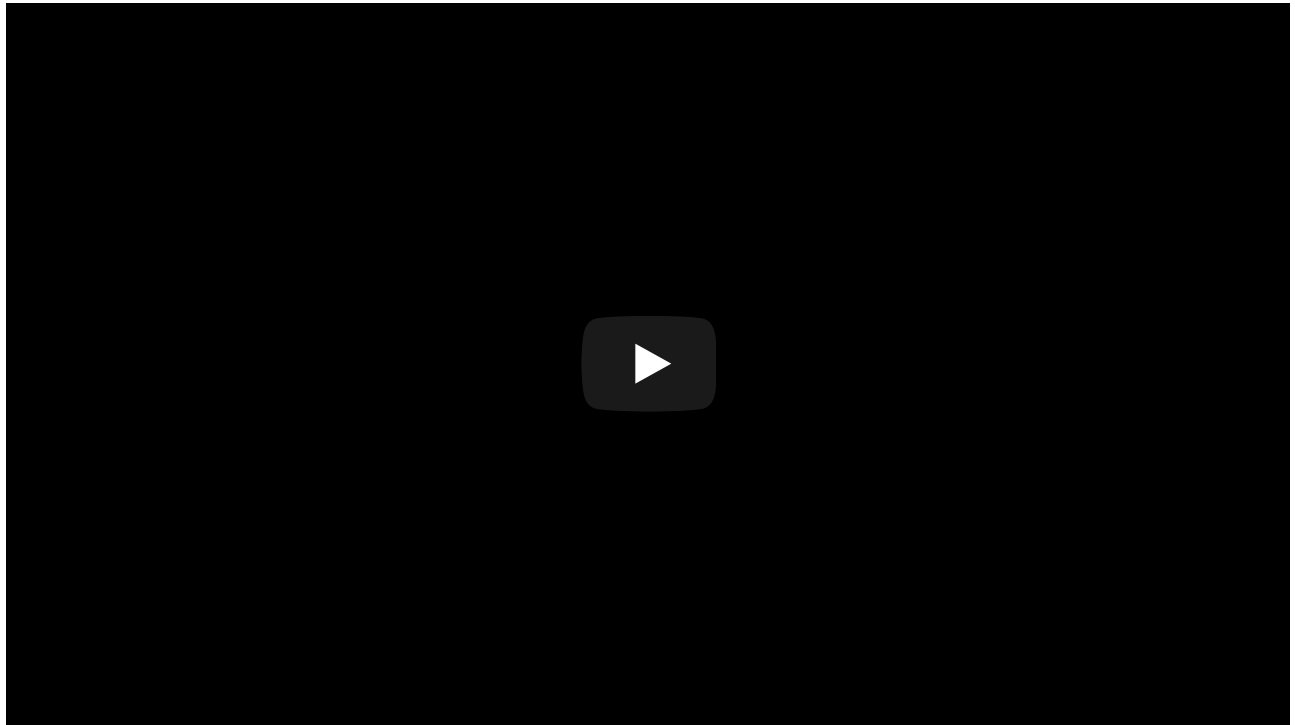
Location: California Coast

November 2004

U.S. Navy pilot Cmdr. David Fravor recalled seeing "something not from this earth" while commanding a U.S. Navy strike fighter squadron during exercises some 60 to 100 miles off the coast of California. He recounted observing a tic-tac shaped vessel moving at great speed. The UFO was seen by a crew separate from Fravor that tracked the object and filmed it for more than a minute. The footage has now been declassified and published. The case was publicized by *The New York Times* following the Pentagon's acknowledgement of its Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program, a 21st-century study of UFO sightings.

Credibility Rating: 6

25. F/A-18 Super Hornet GO FASTER Video

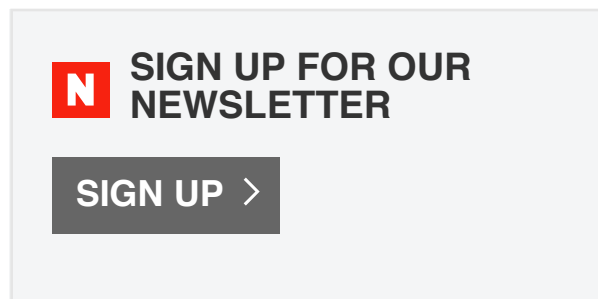


Location: East Coast
2015

The third video publicized following the Pentagon's acknowledgement of its Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program, this footage shows the high-speed flight of an unidentified aircraft at low altitude by a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet. Released by the Department of Defense, the date, location, and other information have been removed by the originating authority as part of the release approval process.

Credibility Rating: 6

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