

# THE PHOENIX LIGHTS, THE REAL INVESTIGATION

by Richard F. Motzer

Field Investigator for Arizona MUFON

In the May issue of the *MUFON UFO Journal*, there appeared a very misleading article by Bill Hamilton on the Phoenix Lights of March 13, 1997. That article represented a biased judgment of events and incorrect facts. Now, with these facts in mind, I am presenting the true information of the still ongoing investigation.

At about 8:30 p.m. Thursday, the 13th of March, Peter Davenport at the UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, WA, started receiving calls, first from the northwest part of Arizona, of a formation of lights moving south toward Prescott, AZ. These lights formed a basic triangle with as many as six or seven lights per side with two red lights trailing.

The real time line for this event is somewhere around 8:00 p.m. MST. As the calls kept flowing in, the description changed as to how many lights were involved. Some even said there were no lights at all, but they could see a black mass blocking out the stars as it passed between the viewer and the sky. The general description was of a V, but it also resembled a crown with lights that formed an upward triangle. These lights were not like aircraft landing lights but more like stars. This description would change as the objects moved into the Phoenix area. The only consistent properties of the object/objects would be that there were no sound and very slow movement. However, if there was only one object, it could not have covered that distance in such a short time. This is a real "Catch-22," but may be the key to the solution. I know of three V formations that night and there may be more.

As the readers may know, all of this was broadcast worldwide at 11:00 PST on Art Bell's Coast-to-Coast talk radio program. I knew it would be a very busy day for me the next morning, so I retired.

I was involved with the videos of this event even before it happened. I received a call from Tom Taylor, our state director for MUFON, that a person in Paradise Valley had been taping lights west of the TV towers on South Mountain for over two years, suggesting that I make contact with her to view the footage. I did so and set the next

Wednesday, the 12th at 9:00 a.m., for her to come to my home to view the tapes. Due to the death of Mr. Taylor's mother, I changed the meeting date to the 14th, Friday, the day after the events of the 13th. While talking to her on the phone, I discussed the idea that she might be seeing flares from the Gila Bend Gunnery Range. She felt this was not the case, so we met Friday around 10:15 a.m. Even before her arrival, the news media were at my house getting my reaction to the events of the night before. I had only seen one video, the formation shot by Chuck Rairden from Apache Junction. I told them that in a few minutes I would have a second video for all of us to see, because this lady had caught the event, too. The news programs broke the story with their 4:30 p.m. edition. From that time on, the phones never stopped ringing and the news people kept coming.

I started to collect all the videos I could find and interviewed other witnesses. The first videos I obtained were of lights that appeared to be over the city of Phoenix and it was those videos that made the news programs. It would be some days later before I could obtain the only video of five lights flying to the south taken at 56th Street and Carefree Highway. I have been involved in the collection of data, returning calls, and doing the interviews, which now number over seventy witnesses, of which I found 53 to be credible. The real investigating doesn't start until the last reports come in. One of the best investigation tools was a two-hour talk show I did with Bill Strauss on KTAR radio. Mr. Strauss is a very fair talk show host and allows the callers to tell their stories.

It was during that show that I realized that the people who saw the V formations flying overhead out-numbered the people who saw the lights near the Estrella Mountains by a very high ratio. The V formation lights looked like stars with the brightness of Sirius, whereas the lights over the Estrella Mountains appeared as super bright landing lights. This was very puzzling, because I had the video of the flying V formation where the lights are barely noticeable. So, why did 98% of the sightings

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*Raw video by Mike Krzyston from top of Mt. Ridge.*

The final key to the solution was also the biggest mystery. Why did all videos of 3-13-97 at 10:00 p.m. have a different number of lights, different order of starting and decay, and shapes?

It was really dependent upon the observation point of the witness in the Phoenix area and, most important, how high their viewing point was. It turned out that the lights were not over Phoenix, but near the Estrella Mountains to the southwest. This determination was made after viewing all the video tapes and going to all but one of the sites and shooting 35mm film in daylight. Using the point marked by the pilot, I drew a line from each of the sites where the Estrella lights were taped. On the Rairden tape there are nine lights, but only eight lights on the Moon Valley footage. I re-ran the Moon Valley footage and just in the early part you see a light form briefly which then goes out, but did it really? No, something must have blocked it out, but it was still there in the Rairden footage. As the lights drifted downward, some lights were blocked out by the many small peaks making up the Estrella range.

In the videos that I acquired, there were two people who had been recording these Estrella lights for months. What I wanted to find was footage where a tripod was used and the zoom lens was left in one spot. To

my surprise there were several clips that met these specifications. What I did next was to mark at the end of each segment the ground position on a monitor and the ending position of each light. When I ran the editor video deck in reverse, I could see each light rise in altitude and drift to the right or to the left. In all the video clips the results were the same. Just before each light went out, there was an increase in the descent of each light.

**S**o what did this prove? Going back to the first newscasts, they ended by saying the Army National Guard said that just before 10:00 p.m. on March 13, 1997, they shot off target flares for training. We had dismissed this at first because the witnesses felt certain these lights were in front of South Mountain and over the city. This caused the early confusion of the V formation with these lights. The flares are very bright even at a distance of 50 miles and will overload a camcorder chip. They also have a parachute attached to them. As the flare is positioned and ignites, the heat from the flare heats the air above, which is trapped in its parachute, causing it to slow down its descent. Toward its final phase, before extinguishing, the heat output decreases and the flare will start to fall faster. It will also have a lateral motion due to its

**Toward its final phase, before extinguishing, the heat output decreases and the flare will start to fall faster. It will also have a lateral motion due to its delivery system, either hindered by the prevailing winds or accelerated. All the videos that I tested for that night or other nights showed this feature.**

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delivery system, either hindered by the prevailing winds or accelerated. All the videos that I tested for that night or other nights showed this feature. Even the control tower people at Sky Harbor Airport said they saw smoke emanating from the flares.

Let's quickly review the evidence for the case for flares behind the Estrellas.

1. These events have been going on for some time, three months or more.
2. The color is bright amber.
3. Smoke was seen by some.
4. The on to off time of each light is very consistent.
5. The general time lines and dates are repeated (for that night they occurred at 8:30, 9:25, and 10:00 p.m.)
6. Mostly week nights.
7. The Gila Bend Gunnery Range hours match the time line.
8. All drop vertically and move in a lateral direction consistent with flares.
9. All video tapes that have the complete cycle, that is, from start to finish, show this.
10. Two videos, shot at close range, seem to show smoke flowing around them.
11. On one of the tapes, the person asks if they are flares.
12. The Army National Guard said they shot-off these flares.
13. Six news programs announced that the military said they were flares and two reports were from military pilots who located them at the Gila Bend Gunnery Range behind the Estrella Mountains.

**D**ue to the multitude of events that night and the confusion of these lights with the V formation, I didn't concentrate on this event. In fact, if these nine flares hadn't been fired off that night, the real big story—the one that needs to be solved—would not have made the TV news. The reason is that there is only one video, so far, that has been brought forward, and even though it was shot with a Sony Hi 8, the lights can barely be seen. I had to stretch the light scale in Adobe Premier for it to be used on the first *Strange Universe* show.

Flares, then, appear to be the answer for the lights near the Estrella Mountains. *Journal* readers may have seen these videos on the national TV news coverage. However, they cannot be the answer for the V formation.

What was this V formation seen by so many across the state of Arizona the evening of the 13th? If you use the 42 sec-

ond video clip to make a judgment, you will see the last light on the western side move to the rear and maintain its alignment. If you drew lines through the points to make a five-point V, the sides appear to be slightly bowed to the outside. You hear no sound but only the person taking the video and his comments. The night was hazy at that location so no stars appear in this video clip.

Luke AFB floated four stories about the V formation:

1. It was a flight of Blue Angels coming from Nellis AFB in Nevada. (Linda M. Howe said that a formation of five was also seen over Las Vegas heading southwest. The Blue Angels were not due for another day.)
2. It was a squadron of A10s on a night-training mission heading back to Tucson.
3. None of ours!
4. A private plane with a skilled pilot flying between restricted air corridors with a string of lights a mile long. I like that one myself — yeah, right!

The question is why did Luke AFB change their stories? The Army National Guard didn't.

Even though the V formation may or may not prove to be a real UFO after a thorough investigation, the other so-called "sightings of the decade" may well fade into history.

As Paul Harvey says, "Now you know the rest of the story." In the meantime, the real investigation is still going on . . .

Please see the map which shows the directions in which the witnesses were observing the flares beyond the Estrella Mountains. Thomas R. Taylor, State Director for Arizona, supports this investigation and preliminary report.

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