

curate observations. If any of the "team" had consumed alcohol at the party they were pulled from, that would make matters worse. These are factors that could have magnified errors in judgement and perception.

More right than wrong

Since 1983, Ian Ridpath has been promoting his theory that the lighthouse, a fireball, and stars were the sources for the events on those two nights. Despite complaints about it being unlikely by various individuals, there is a significant amount of evidence that has surfaced to demonstrate his explanations are correct. After thirty years, Ian Ridpath's work has withstood the test of time. As each new piece of evidence has surfaced, his theory has grown stronger and the wild exotic claims by those trying to perpetuate this case have grown weaker.

Notes and References

1. Randles, Jenny. From out of the Blue. New York: Berkley books. 1991. p.59-60
2. *ibid.* p. 60
3. "The Rendlesham Incident". Strange but true? London Weekend Television. Air date: 9 December 1994.
4. Powell, John. "Bentwaters". Paranet UFO posting. 20 September 1991.
5. Rayl, A.J.S. "Into the night". Omni magazine. Available WWW: <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/mi6/penniston.html>
6. "Special live episode". Strange but true? London Weekend Television. Air date: 27 June 1997.
7. Randles, Jenny. UFO Crash Landing? London: Blandford 1998. p. 181
8. Hendry, Allan. The UFO Investigators Handbook. London: Sphere Books Ltd. 1980. p. 28
9. Randles, Jenny. UFO Crash Landing? London: Blandford 1998. p.123-124
10. *ibid.* p.123

The rocket attack that wasn't

Probably one of the more interesting astronomy/navy stories I have to describe occurred in Groton, Connecticut in March of 1991. At the time, I was the nuclear electronics division (Reactor Controls) Chief Petty Officer (E-7) on board the USS Providence (SSN 719). Part of my duties was to stand watch in port as the Engineering Duty Petty Officer (EDPO). When in port, there is always a duty section on board standing watch and performing the routine tasks of maintaining the ship while the rest of the crew is at home with their families. Part of my responsibilities as EDPO was to make a tour of the engine room every six hours and make sure the personnel standing watch were still alert and to check on Engineering/Reactor plant conditions. Normally, that was the limit to my tours. However, at this time there was a heightened concern about all watch standers being alert and awake, so I was also required to check on those standing watch in the forward end of the ship. The duty officer also would make tours of the ship every six hours. By staggering these tours with the duty chief petty officer (the senior enlisted in charge of the forward end of the submarine), one could check up on all the ship's watch standers every two to three hours. My responsibility in the middle of the night was the 3-4AM tour.

I had started my tour around 3AM and things were pretty much routine. Everyone was alert and not much was happening until I went up the hatch to check on the topside watch. There I found a concerned topside petty officer (an E-4 or E-5), who told me he had seen a rocket attack on the submarine base from across the river! Had we been overseas, I would have been seriously concerned. However, this was Groton, Connecticut and it seemed unlikely to me. After listening to his details, I began to become

skeptical of this being a "rocket attack" of any kind. Based on my knowledge of astronomy, it sounded like he had seen a bright fireball. There was no sound from the "rocket", there were no sirens on or off base, and there was no explosion or fire visible. Across the pier was another submarine and their topside watch did not seem to be alarmed at all. I recall that the topside petty officer wanted to wake up the duty officer and I considered this for a few seconds. However, based on what I had observed, I felt there was not much to be concerned about. I stayed topside for a short period of time (maybe 5-10 minutes) just to make sure there were no "follow-up attacks" before heading down below. I tried to reassure him that he probably saw a bright fireball and I would discuss it with the duty officer at 6AM. When I saw the duty officer a few hours later, I told him the story and he seemed to agree there was nothing to be concerned about. The following day, I picked up the Norwich Bulletin (one of the small newspapers in the area) and there was a nice article about a bright fireball being seen over the northeast the morning before around 3AM (see below for a similar clipping). When I showed it to the topside watch, he still had his doubts. He still felt it could have been a rocket attack where the rocket failed to explode or missed.

This little anecdote demonstrates how the power of a preconception can cause a witness to misinterpret an astronomical event like a bright fireball. The recent Gulf War affected this individual's interpretation of a celestial event. It is not a great leap to see how airmen on security patrol late at night could interpret the same type of celestial event as a crashing aircraft. The appearance of a bright fireball at the same approximate time the airmen reported a crashed aircraft is too coincidental to ignore

Reports of fireball sighting made in 9 states

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — People from Maine to West Virginia reported a brilliant fireball in the sky early Wednesday, offering descriptions ranging from "the size of a Volkswagen" to the shape of a "boomerang on its side."

"This was big," said New York state Trooper Richard Haas. "I've seen shooting stars before, and this was nothing like that."

People in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine reported seeing the bright light, moving from west to east,

about 3 a.m.

Philadelphia air traffic controller Jim Krimm said he took three phone calls reporting it. One pilot radioed that it "appeared to be the mother of all meteors," Krimm said.

"Many witnesses said the object appeared to have a green-and-red tail and lit up the sky for about five seconds before it disappeared over the horizon."

Haas said he was driving in Danby, N.Y., when he and his partner saw the bright light in the western sky.

"It appeared to be real low," Haas said. "We opened our windows to listen

for a crash, but we didn't hear anything."

In Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Danny Fletcher, 23, said he had just returned home from work when he saw the speeding light close to the horizon.

"At first, I thought it was a Scud missile," he said.

Mark Barton, a police officer near Boston, said it looked like "a boomerang on its side. A cluster of lights with a big red fire tail behind it."

What people saw most likely was a low-flying meteor that burned brightly from the friction of entering the Earth's atmosphere, said Walter Webb, manager

of planetarium observations at the Charles Hayden Planetarium in Boston.

"It's not unusual for fireballs to be seen over an area of several hundred miles," Webb said.

Derrick Pitts, an astronomer at the Fells Planetarium of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, said the object likely broke up.

James Cornell of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Mass., said the object either disintegrated in the atmosphere or fell into the Atlantic Ocean, based on its west-to-east trajectory.

March 8, 1991 European Stars and Stripes page B-7. Some of the comments are interesting. One stated, "At first, I thought it was a Scud missile." Another stated, "I have seen shooting stars before and this was nothing like that." A police officer stated, "It appeared to be real low...we opened our windows to listen for a crash, but we didn't hear anything."