

JUST CAUSE

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FIRST OFFICIAL FOO-FIGHTER RECORDS DISCOVERED

In January 1992, CAUS launched an effort to locate documentation relevant to the Foo-Fighter phenomenon of World War 2. This has led to the first release of unit records giving specifics on these incidents.

For those unfamiliar with what Foo-Fighters were, we will explain. During the later part of World War 2 pilots on both the allied and axis sides reported seeing strange balls of light flying with them while they were engaged in bombing and air defense missions in the European and Pacific theaters. The balls were generally about a foot in diameter, bright, of varying colors and able to maneuver with ease in and about aircraft formations.

Word of the phenomenon leaked to the press in December 1944 and became widely known in America on January 2, 1945, through numerous newspaper reprintings of a wire service story summarizing pilot descriptions of what they saw. In the press coverage it was assumed that the balls were Nazi secret weapons. However, they did not seem to affect aircraft in any way, except to be a nuisance. Reports persisted until the end of January 1945, when the activity abated, though not completely. Further mention of Foo-Fighters (which in fact was a nickname given to the strange balls by pilots of the 415th Night Fighter Squadron, based upon a frequent phrase used in the "Smokey Stover" comic strip of the day) disappeared from the press until December 1945, when the American Legion Magazine carried accounts by pilots of their experiences (see "The Foo Fighter Mystery" by Jo Chamberlin, American Legion Magazine, Dec. 1945). From then on the Foo-Fighter reports surfaced much after the fact in various UFO publications over the years.

Clues as to the existence of wartime records of the Foo-Fighters appeared in declassified Air Force Intelligence files from 1947 and 1952. As a result of UFO waves in those years several former bomber crew members had contacted the Air Force to advise them of their experiences with Foo-Fighters in the hope that this would somehow shed light on the flying saucers being sighted. One record, an April 23, 1952 letter from Lt. Col. W.W. Ottinger of the Directorate of Intelligence's Evaluation Division, said that an evaluation of Foo-Fighters was done at the end of the war. It was concluded that there was nothing to the phenomenon at all, though to this day the study has not been made public.

A majority of the published accounts of Foo-Fighters seemed to emanate

from pilots of the 415th Night Fighter Squadron. The 415th's job was to intercept and destroy Nazi aircraft flying under the cover of night. The fighters would be directed by Army radar stations which tracked the enemy aircraft. The squadron logged an impressive record of kills through the skill and determination of its pilots.

Knowing that the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB, Alabama was a storage site for histories of old aircraft units, we had sent a detailed inquiry asking for the location of bombing mission reports, for definitions of acronyms given by witnesses attempting to direct Air Force Intelligence to citations of Foo-Fighter sightings, and of particular interest, the unit history of the 415th NFS.

Unfortunately, after telling us that a researcher would contact us in several months with results, a follow-up informed us that they didn't have the staff or the time to answer questions (some research center!). Nevertheless, we were given the number of a microfilm roll containing the 415th's unit history. Upon receiving it we soon learned that the Foo-Fighter sightings of the 415th were indeed documented, albeit briefly, by the squadron's historian.

We are concerned with two portions of the history - a unit summary, which gives an overview of the 415th's activities, and the "War Diary," which chronicled the day-by-day events. Both had been classified "Secret." Frame 1515 of the microfilm roll's summary touched upon the Foo-Fighters in this way:

"Another outstanding feature occurred late in October. While flying an intruder mission in the Rhine Valley, Capt. Edward Schlueter and Lt. Don Myers experienced contact with the first FooFighters, referred to as such by Lt. Myers for the lack of a better name and because of the eerie feeling it gave the crew. At first these two officers were taunted by their buddies and began to wonder if they had developed combat fatigue. However other crews began to report seeing FooFighters in the Rhine Valley at night, thus the FooFighters were definitely established as an existing phenomena."

A few remarks are needed here. The summary makes reference to Capt. Schlueter and Lt. Myers encountering a Foo Fighter in late October. But as we will see in the War Diary, the first report was in late November 1944 and no incident is listed for October. Also one sees reactions very much reminiscent of later flying saucer stories in that the witnesses were ridiculed and began to doubt themselves until others reported the same thing. The result in this case was that "Foo Fighters were definitely established as an existing phenomena."

On to the War Diary. The 415th operated under what must be regarded as stressful conditions. Certainly the stress from time to time had to be relieved. The 415th was no different than any other unit in this respect. A little insight into their pasttimes is reflected in the War Diary entry for November 24, 1944:

"The Squadron had a dance at the Cafe du Lark. Both WACs (Women's Army Corp, Ed.) and French girls were invited. A gay time was had by all until the WACs left at 1100 hours and then a very gay time was enjoyed."

I hope the reader understands that "gay" had a different connotation then than it does now. Also, were WACs that bad or were French girls that much better?

Frame 1611 begins coverage of the first Foo Fighter incident from an intruder mission out of Longvic Air Base in France:

November 27 - "The following weird excerpt comes from Lt. Schlueter's report of an intruder mission: 'Upon returning to base saw a red light flying through area about 35 miles ENE of Pt. A. Came in to about 2000 feet off starboard and then it disappeared in a long red streak.'"

Comment: Interestingly, unless the War Diary omitted other incidents in late November, this account is quite different from the "first incident" reported in American Legion Magazine. This told of Schlueter and "Meiers" encountering eight to ten orange balls moving at terrific speed which disappeared, reappeared, stayed in view five minutes and then once again vanished.

About two weeks passed before the next encounter. This time the 415th had been moved to Ochey Air Base, France. Frame 1613 relates:

December 15 - "The following is an excerpt from the operations report: 'Saw a brilliant red light at 2000 feet going E at 200 MPH in the vicinity of Ernstein. Due to AI (Air Intercept radar) failure could not pick up contact but followed it by sight until it went out. Could not get close enough to identify object before it went out.'"

A few days later there was more:

December 18 - "I quote from the operations report: 'In Rastatt area sighted five or six red and green lights in a 'T' shape which followed A/C thru turns and closed to 1000 feet. Lights followed for several miles and then went out.' Our pilots have named these mysterious phenomena which they encounter over Germany at night 'Foo-Fighters.'"

The encounters continue on frame 1614:

December 23 - "More Foo-Fighters were in the air last night. The Ops report says: 'In vicinity of Hagenau saw 2 lights coming toward A/C from ground. After reaching the altitude of the A/C they leveled off and flew on tail of Beau (Beaufighter - their aircraft, Ed.) for 2 minutes and then peeled up and turned away. 8th mission - sighted 2 orange lights. One light sighted at 10,000 feet the other climbed until it disappeared.'"

December 24 - "The Foo-Fighters were active again according to the pilot's report: 'Observed a glowing, red object shooting straight up. It changed suddenly to a plan view of an A/C doing a wing-over and going into a dive and disappearing.'"

December 28 - "The Ops report says: '1st patrol saw 2 sets of 3 red and white lights. One appeared on port side, the other on starboard at 1000 to 2000 feet to rear and closing in. Beau peeled off and lights went out. Nothing on GCI scope at the time.' And then again: 'Observed lights suspended in air, moving slowly in no general direction and then disappeared. Lights were orange, and appeared singly and in pairs. These lights were observed 4 or 5 times throughout the period.'"

Comment: We can see how the level of activity escalated to such a point in December that it would be hard to keep a lid on the matter. Thus the leak and press coverage in January. The incidents of December 23-24

do agree with accounts in the American Legion Magazine article to the extent that the author must have seen the Ops report or War Diary without citing one or the other as a source, perhaps for security reasons. However, the aircraft occupants were named in the article but not in the War Diary.

A final entry in the 415th's War Diary appears on frame 1619:

January 30 - "Foo-Fighters were at it again last night. This is the operations report: 'Halfway between Wissenbourg and Langau sighted amber lights at 2000 feet. One light was 20 to 50 feet above the other and of about 30 seconds duration. Lights were about a foot in diameter, 1000 feet away and following Beaus. Lights disappeared when Beaus turned into them.'"

What were Foo-Fighters? Hallucinations? Alien ships? Natural phenomena? The official records do not suggest what they were except that they were no threat to the aircraft of either side.

On February 21, 1952, Air Force Intelligence received a letter from one Albert Rosenthal of Washington, D.C. (in CAUS files):

"During the winter of 1944-45 I was a fighter controller with the 64th Fighter Wing supporting the 7th Army in France and Germany. Flying under our control was the 415th Night Fighter Squadron, flying Beaufighters. When there was no enemy air activities, they would engage in intruder sweeps into southwestern Germany. We repeatedly received reports from the Beaufighter crews of similar phenomena, which they named 'foo-fighters.' At times they seemed to be associated with concentrated flak, and at other times were reported to explode when pursued. It was also asserted that they caused a slight response on A.I. radar."

"We never did solve the problem of what they were. Theories propounded included 'St Elmo's Fire'(a form of static electricity); German barrage balloons; meteors; and gremlins from the Black Forest nearby. And of course we suspected the possibility of some new secret weapon."

A previously unknown account has surfaced. Connecticut resident Louis Kiss has advised CAUS of his own experience with Foo-Fighters. Kiss, then a Staff Sergeant, was a tail gunner on the "Phyllis Marie," a B-17 bomber of the 390th Bombardment Group, 3rd Division of the 8th Air Force.

In late 1943, while on a daylight mission over central Germany, Kiss observed an odd-looking sphere approach the B-17 from behind and below. He said it was about the size of a basketball and of a shimmering gold color. The ball reached the aircraft and hovered just above one wing after slowly moving from the rear. Soon it passed over the top of the aircraft to the other wing where it again hovered. Sgt. Kiss was tempted to shoot at it with his machine gun but, considering the proximity of the ball to the B-17's gas tank, he thought better of it.

As Kiss watched, the ball moved toward the rear again, became caught in the B-17's backwash and rapidly disappeared into the remainder of the B-17 formation. He never knew if anyone else in the group had seen the ball but he did officially report it to his intelligence officer. Curiously, Kiss had never heard of Foo-Fighters until we had mentioned them to him. His report does parallel several sources. The War Diary of the 415th for December 23 told of Foo-Fighters climbing from below, much the same as Kiss described. And the American Legion Magazine article

told of a daylight sighting by a P-47 pilot of a "gold-colored ball with a metallic finish," again something reported by Kiss.

If one has questions about the credibility of Mr Kiss, we have included an extract from the 390th Veterans Association Foundation Newsletter, Fall-Winter 1991, attesting to his excellence as a combat flyer.

We hope that this is just the beginning of a flow of information on Foo-Fighters. It was a peculiar footnote to World War 2 to say the least and far too little has been available on it.

Based upon the reports we have seen, we are inclined to think that Foo-Fighters were some form of rare electrical phenomenon related to ball lightning. How they form in clear air is not understood. Odd as well is the lack of reports in winters prior to 1944-45, with a few occasional exceptions. Accessing new information from historical files may reveal more reports than we realized existed. Could, for example, have Foo-Fighters been related to possible earthquake activity in southwestern Germany during this period with the balls of electrical energy having been attracted to the large formations of fighters and bombers overflying the territory? Remember the reports of the balls flying up from the ground and the fact that there is no evidence that either side in the war had any such devices in their arsenals?

We will update this story as it develops.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS OVERFLY U.S./CANADIAN BORDER - IN 1915!!!

Apparently the overflights of UFOs along the U.S./Canadian border in 1975, which we had discussed extensively in CLEAR INTENT, were not the first. A much earlier incident has surfaced from the year 1915 and it created quite a stir in Canada.

The story goes like this. The New York Times (Feb. 15, 1915) reported that three or four "aeroplanes" had crossed the border near Morristown, New York the previous evening. The aircraft headed in a northeasterly direction over the towns of Gananoque and Brockville in Ontario. Witnesses had reported seeing the aircraft drop "fireballs or light balls" as they crossed the St. Lawrence River. The Brockville mayor was among the first witnesses in Canada to see the aircraft. The lights that were visible had to have been those carried by aeroplanes, officials said.

Concern erupted in Ottawa, the provincial and national capital. Upon hearing that unknown aircraft were heading in their general direction, Lt. Col. A.P. Sherwood, Chief Commissioner of the Dominion Police and military officials ordered the blackout of important government buildings: The Royal Mint, Parliament, and the Governor General's residence. Europe was embroiled in World War 1 at this time and the Canadians some-

*The 390th Veterans Association
Foundation Newsletter
Fall/Winter 1991*

On an 8 October 1943 raid over Bremen, Germany, SSGT. Louis Kiss established himself among the outstanding gunners of the 390th Bombardment Group by shooting down three enemy planes within five minutes. He accomplished that achievement from his position as a tail gunner on the flying fortress "Phyllis Marie."

In describing the action, Sergeant Kiss reported, "I never saw the luftwaffe more bloodthirsty. They dove through their own flak to drive home their attacks. I waited until they were within three hundred yards before I fired at them. I couldn't miss."

Assigned to the 568th Bombardment Squadron, Sergeant Kiss later scored his fourth kill over Emden. When he later returned to the states, he brought with him the distinguished flying cross and the air medal with eight oakleaf clusters for his achievements over the German homeland.

how felt threatened by possible German sympathizers flying from the U.S. side of the border. No aircraft appeared over Ottawa and no one knew what had happened to the ones that had been sighted previously.

Through the daylight hours of the 15th Canadian authorities contacted Washington, D.C. officials in an effort to determine a U.S. source for the aircraft. No luck on this. In the meantime more information about the Brockville overflight was revealed (see Montreal Daily Star, Feb. 15, 1915). The first border crossing was at 810 PM. Witnesses could hear the noise of machinery and many noticed a searchlight flashed onto the town, illuminating a half a block at a time. Weather conditions were poor with rain falling, but despite this the light was still described as "blinding."

The second aircraft followed the first after a space of twenty minutes, appearing very much like the first sighting. On the northern end of Brockville, one of the aircraft flew within 50 feet of the ground, frightening one woman into hysterics. The objects disappeared but returned at 130 AM on the 15th, moving back towards the United States.

Additional reports (Syracuse, N.Y. Post-Standard, Feb. 15, 1915) asserted that there were four lights in total that had moved at intervals of five minutes each. Each carried a red light and sent down searchlight beams to the ground.

A possible explanation for the sightings became known when reports of fire balloon launchings from Morristown, N.Y. reached the press. The reason for the launchings? It was to celebrate 100 years of peace between Canada and the United States! Wreckage of two balloons were found in the border area. The problem was solved.

Or was it?

Both the police and military in Ottawa discounted the fire balloon reports. The aircraft traveled toward the northeast. Dominion Observatory reported that prevailing winds were from the east, forcing the balloons westward. It was not considered possible for the balloons to have passed over Brockville heading northeasterly. Also Brockville witnesses said that sometime after the aircraft had passed over they returned from the opposite direction (Montreal Star, Feb. 15), i.e. against the prevailing winds once again. How long might a fire balloon last in dismal, rainy conditions?

The answer may never be certain as to what overflowed the U.S./Canadian border in 1915. But we do know that strange aerial objects alarming government officials can no longer be considered as characteristic to the post-Arnold UFO era.

My thanks to Steve Zalewski and Christian and Angela Page for very helpful assistance in uncovering details of this story.

EXCITEMENT IN OTTAWA OVER 'PLANES SCARE'

*Extinguish Lights in Parliament Buildings and
Ridau Hall—Two Aeroplanes With Powerful
Searchlights Fly Over Brockville*

SCARE IN OTTAWA OVER AN AIR RAID

**Parliament Buildings Darkened
on Report That Three Aero-
planes Crossed the Border.**

EDITORIAL

Recently several persons have expressed their dissatisfaction to us about UFO research. "It seems like everyone has their own ideas about what UFOs are and it is all very confusing," said one. "There is so much controversy that it is difficult for an outsider to tell fact from fiction," said another. "The politics of UFO research seems to be incredibly bizarre," added a third.

The fact is that there are new people taking an interest in UFOs who are not familiar with the rather convoluted history many of us have lived with for decades. And it is a chore for one to comprehend not only the phenomenon but the people in it. The best sources of information tend not to be easily available anymore and costs have risen to a point where some UFO books make one decide whether having it is worth a week of meatloaf for supper or a weekend of the Three Stooges on TV instead of going to a ball game.

It is beyond the scope of this commentary to launch into a primer on the UFO field. However a few suggestions can be made without involving a reference work or quoting a prominent person with a history of UFO interest.

1) There is no such thing as a "UFO EXPERT." If one says he/she is, doubt it. If someone says he/she is, doubt it. How can one be a UFO expert if they do not know what UFOs are, who's in them, where they come from, or why they are here? If they do claim to know any one or all of these things, they are either careless for not being able to offer proof of their extraordinary statements, preaching from a religious viewpoint instead of a scientific one in choosing to "believe" rather than considering information on its merits, or just plain lying for personal gain, self-gratification; etc. Judge UFO information by how logical and sensible it is, not by who says it. Don't be so overwhelmed by emphasis on one's credentials or affiliations that you accept their statements at face value, without question. Often a close examination of information from a supposed authority reveals that it is no more credible than your Aunt Hortense's speculations on Relativity Theory (unless your Aunt Hortense has done a lot of reading!). Flawed information from self-appointed authorities become ingrained in many individual minds from sheer force of personality, personality that shields their failings behind a facade of intellectual superiority.

2) Carve your own niche. If you decide to pursue an interest in UFO research, make sure you learn much about the world around you first. Handled properly, a UFO interest can motivate self-education in astronomy, meteorology, psychology and a host of other areas. Unlike what some pundits have said in the past, being into UFOs doesn't always send people off onto wrong pathways. In fact it probably generates as many people who become channeled into serious, hard-knowledge fields as it does ding-a-lings. Ideally, a society that is increasingly inclined to one-dimensional thinking and stereotyping will recognize that being interested in space mysteries does not always equate with eccentricity and instability. It is up to you how others will eventually perceive it:

3) You are not a "little person." You come into the UFO subject with a great deal of enthusiasm. You desire to contribute to the resolution of a long-standing mystery. Confronting you are prolific authors, "Whirling-Dervish" investigators, high-intensity personalities and groupie-like hangers-on, all from the high and low end of the likeability scale. Trying to fathom all of this seems impossible and you question whether you can after all contribute anything in such a marketplace of obscure and fantastic

information.

Remember that they all started the same way, from a complete lack of knowledge of the UFO phenomenon. You have to build your background slowly, patiently. You must regard yourself as being as good as anyone else in pursuing UFOs. As previously stated, there are no experts so don't idol-worship UFOlogists. Respect them if they are honest and truth-seeking and follow such an ideal yourself. Hold untruth, chicanery, exaggeration, pretentiousness, pomposity and greed in great disregard and express such in a way that will discourage others from wanting to pursue those negative attributes. Then you know you will be an important contributor to improving our knowledge.

Welcome to the UFO field!

UPDATE ON A BELGIAN STORY

In March 1991, we had run a story on a 1987 UFO incident from an airliner over Belgium (see Just Cause, March 1991, page 4). We have recently heard from Wim Van Utrecht, editor of the SVL Newsletter in Belgium and a well-known investigator there, regarding this sighting.

"A careful study of the pilots' sighting described in this document provided me with a possible explanation for the strange lights that were reported. In fact, there is little doubt in my mind that the "upright cylinder of very intense orange light nearer to the ground" was nothing else but a combustion flame from chemical works in one of the bigger industrial zones of our country. The "bright orange, slightly flattened circular light" which was "pulsating at irregular intervals" and appeared "very intense in the center with diffusion around the edges" was probably nothing more than a reflection of this flame on ice crystals which formed around smoke, cloud and dust particles. Note for a start that one of the pilots involved in this sighting compared the phenomenon to "the intense flame he had seen associated with oil derricks in south Texas."

"Accidentally or not, only six days before their sighting, on January 11 to be precise, a huge flame from the petrochemical works in the port of Antwerp created such a stir that local newspapers, as well as the harbour police and the fire-brigade, had to answer dozens of telephone calls from people who thought that there was a big fire in progress (I was a witness to this extremely bright phenomenon myself, but only for a couple of seconds because I was inside a car and my view was limited by city buildings)."

"In addition I can quote a weather report which was printed in a local newspaper from January 8, 1987, and which confirms that during the first half of January 1987 there was a complex weather situation in Belgium, causing warm air to go on top of a basis of very cold air. An inversion layer of this type creates the ideal circumstances for a ground-based pulsating flame to reflect upon ice crystals and appear as a bright circular patch of orange light. The optical anomaly described here occurs quite frequently in and around Antwerp city, but rarely the flames are reflected so vividly as in January 1987."

Our thanks to Mr. Van Utrecht for what seems to us to be a plausible explanation for the sighting. We have noticed a piece in the American Meteorological Journal for February 1887, titled, "Aerial Reflections Over Burning Gas Wells," which describes the phenomenon of "gas comets." These are reflections of flaming oil wells that appear to be "bright streaks or bars of light, always measuring on an average one-quarter of a degree in width and from 5 to 15 degrees in length." The bars were said to hover vertically between 4 and 6½ miles above the surface of the earth in each particular circumstance and never reach down to their point of origin.