

CARLOS DE LOS SANTOS AND THE MEN IN BLACK

Jerome Clark

I MET Carlos Antonio de los Santos Montiel in Acapulco, Mexico, in April 1977 at the First International Conference on the UFO Phenomenon. He was there at the invitation of Mexican ufologist and television personality Pedro Ferriz, to whom he had first confided his story about the mysterious strangers who had threatened him.

I had already heard of his UFO encounter of May 3, 1975, over Mexico City — surely one of the best-documented sightings in the history of that country. I had also heard vague rumours of subsequent Men in Black episodes but I knew no details. Thus I was gratified when Mimi Hynek (an excellent ufologist in her own right whose reputation has consistently—and unfairly—been overshadowed by that of her famous husband) arranged a meeting between De los Santos and me. My friend Richard Heiden, who also participated in the interview, supplied the translations when Carlos' imperfect English vocabulary failed him.

Because the MIB story rests only on the word of one claimant, it is not nearly so persuasive as the incident which preceded it. That of course, does not necessarily mean it is not true. Pedro Ferriz is sure that *something* frightened the young man very badly.

For my part, I can testify that De los Santos told his story simply and straightforwardly and seemed quite puzzled by the events he was describing. He had no answers, only questions for Heiden and me. He engaged in speculation only once, when we pressed him to tell us who he thought the strangers might have been. With some hesitation he said he thought they could be secret agents from the CIA or KGB, then added that Ferriz had suggested they might be "extraterrestrials." He concluded by saying he really had no idea who they were. He said he had hoped *we* could tell him.

Is his MIB story true? I don't know. My subjective impression—and that of others who know him either well or casually—is that he is sincere. But I could be wrong. In recounting it here I am not endorsing it, only putting it down for the record.

The affair began on May 3, 1975, when Carlos was flying to Mexico City in his Piper PA-24 and his plane started to shake for no apparent reason. When he looked to his right he was astonished to see a dark grey disc-shaped object, about 10 or 12 feet in diameter, just beyond the wing tip. On his left he spotted a similar object pacing his aircraft. But neither of these was nearly so unsettling as the sight of the third, which was coming at him head-on.

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I remember Jerry with affection as the first American ufologist to write to me to offer a contribution to *Flying Saucer Review* when I became Editor in October 1964. It was an article entitled "A Contact Claim" and it appeared in FSR Vol. II No. I (January-February 1965). Many other valuable contributions followed over the years, and this present item is doubly welcome seeing that it has ended an hiatus brought about by pressure of work in his editorial post.

CHARLES BOWEN

De los Santos yanked a lever which should have lowered the landing gear—he had hoped to touch the UFO with his wheels—but the mechanism failed to respond. But he still succeeded in touching the object; in fact, much to the pilot's chagrin, the UFO scraped the underpart of the fuselage and caused the plane to jolt.

By now, and beside himself with fear, De los Santos discovered that the controls would not operate. Theoretically at least the craft was out of control but it continued flying relatively smoothly at 120 m.p.h. That didn't make him feel any better—he was weeping as he described the encounter over the radio to the control tower at the Mexico City airport.

The UFOs no longer visible, the pilot asked for and received permission to land and was relieved to find the plane's instrumentation working normally again.

The people at the control tower took his report very seriously indeed. They had tracked the objects on radar as De los Santos was describing them. Air traffic controller Emilio Estanol told reporters, "The objects made a 270-degree turn at 518 m.p.h. in an arc of only three miles. Normally a plane moving at that speed needs eight to 10 miles to make a turn like that. In my 17 years as an air traffic controller I've never seen anything like that."

Carlos de los Santos was given a medical examination and pronounced fit, free of physical or psychological damage from the experience. However, he had no idea that events were about to

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take an even more bizarre turn, or so he would claim subsequently.

His sighting received considerable attention in the Mexican press, which for days afterwards speculated about the meaning of it all. The witness, a rather retiring 23-year-old whose ambition in life was to become an airline pilot, found all the publicity rather embarrassing, but Ferriz managed to persuade him to appear on his television programme some two weeks later.

As he drove down the freeway on his way to the interview, De los Santos claims he noticed a large black *Galaxie* limousine—it reminded him of a diplomatic car—pull in front of him. Through the rear-view mirror he could see an identical car just behind him. Both vehicles looked brand new, almost as if they were being driven for the first time.

The cars started to crowd him and soon Carlos' car had been forced over to the side of the road. Alarmed, he stopped his vehicle and was about to get out when the *Galaxies* also pulled over and four tall, broad shouldered men jumped out.

One of them placed his hands on the door as if to ensure that De los Santos couldn't get out. He spoke quickly in Spanish in a strange "mechanical" tone. "Look, boy," he said, "if you value your life and your family's too, don't talk any more about this sighting of yours."

De los Santos was too stunned to reply. The men, who were "Scandinavian" in appearance with unusually pale skin, and dressed in black suits, returned to their cars and disappeared in traffic. Frightened and anxious, Carlos turned his car around and went back home.

Two days later he told Ferriz what had happened. Ferriz told him he had heard similar stories in the past from UFO witnesses and assured him that he would be all right. Ferriz was sufficiently persuasive that the two arranged another interview, which went off without incident.

A month after the incident with the strangers in black, De los Santos met with Dr. J. Allen Hynek while the latter was travelling through Mexico. After the initial interview Hynek invited Carlos to meet him at breakfast the next morning to continue their discussion of the sighting.

De los Santos left his house the next morning at six o'clock and drove over to the Mexicana Airlines office, where he had applied for a job as a pilot. From there he went to Hynek's hotel.

On his way up the steps he was unpleasantly surprised to encounter one of the strange men who had threatened him. "You were already warned once," the stranger said. "You are not to talk about your experience."

"All I did was accept an invitation," De los Santos protested. "Dr. Hynek wants to know what I saw and I thought that maybe I could understand it better myself if I talked with him."

The stranger shoved him back several feet. "Look, I don't want you to make problems for yourself," he said. "And why did you leave your house at six this morning? Do you work for Mexicana Airlines? Get out of here—and don't come back!"

De los Santos did as he was told.

That proved to be his last encounter with the sinister strangers. Two years later, when he talked with Heiden and me, he recalled, "They were very strange. They were huge, taller than Mexicans are, and they were so *white*"

"But the strangest thing of all is that all the while they were in my presence *I never saw them blink*."

In many ways this is an archetypal MIB tale. There is little that we have not heard before, from the pale-faced men in black speaking in a "mechanical" tone to the seemingly "brand new" *Galaxie* automobiles. There are also, of course, the ultimately empty threats. The percipient is warned not to talk but keeps his silence only temporarily, and when he resumes public discussion, nothing further happens to him.

Carlos insists that he had never heard of the MIB until he encountered them face to face. That may well be true. On the other hand the old argument that certain phenomena are known "only to ufologists" has no meaning any more, since books, articles, television shows and movies about UFOs and related manifestations have spread UFO information (and misinformation) to hundreds of millions of people worldwide. There are few if any secrets that remain the sole property of the ufological community.

Still, it is significant enough that stories like Carlos de los Santos' persist. Whether they are hoaxes, psychological experiences or genuine encounters with the Phenomenon's goon squad, they deserve our careful consideration.

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ARE THERE UFOs THAT MIMIC?

Part 2

Ann Druffel

Our contributor, who lives in California and whose reports are always welcome in *Flying Saucer Review*, is organiser of Skynet and researches and writes for MUFON in addition to being a member of the Center for UFO studies.

TO those readers who might feel that this writer's preoccupation with the Glendale helicopter case of February 1, 1977, is like beating a dead horse, I offer apologies to both the readers *and* the dead horse. In UFO research, however, the essence of which is comprised of weird events, there occasionally occurs a super-weird incident that simply cannot be filed away. These occasional events worry researchers. They invite more study, and still more study, and any correlation which can possibly be made must be regarded as a clue for eventual solution.¹

We gratefully leave behind the "mimicking" speculation on this case and proceed to what is perhaps the most interesting aspect surrounding the report. I refer to the fact that the cylindrical-shaped object which manoeuvred in a precise orbiting pattern with a helicopter while being viewed from a distance of 300-500 feet by two professional and highly sceptical observers over Glendale, California, was distinctly similar to a well-known Brazilian UFO, which was involved in one of the strangest abduction stories ever recorded.²

On the afternoon of May 4, 1969 (Sunday), José Antônio da Silva was fishing alone on the banks of a small lagoon at Bebedouro, in the municipal district of Matozinhos, Brazil. José Antônio was an enlisted soldier and orderly to the Commandant of a Guards Battalion of the Military Police Force in Minas Gerais. About 3.00 p.m. on the above date, he became aware of figures moving behind him, and without warning was overcome by cramps and numbness in his legs. He was seized by two short entities dressed in shining "suits" and dull-grey helmet-like masks. The entities were soon joined by a third and José Antônio was carried some distance to a "machine", which was standing on a small dirt road.

The machine "consisted of a vertical cylinder joined at the bases by two lenticular or flattened pieces, both of them having a diameter greater than that of the cylinder. From the edges of the upper platform, at regular intervals, ran rods which were set obliquely into the base of the cylinder. In the cylinder was an opening resembling a door, some 1.30 x 0.60 metres in size. The external height of the machine was about two metres, the upper platform being about three metres in diameter and the lower platform, which rested on the ground, being some 2.5 metres in diameter. The cylinder was of a grey colour, and the two platforms were black."

To make a fascinating story very short, José Antônio was taken aboard the machine, the inside of which was quadrangular, each side being about 2 metres long and the height about the same.

This exact description is quoted from the FSR Bebedouro article to point up the similarities with the Glendale object. The colour and reported height and width were similar.³ Especially the obliquely slanted appendages, which were termed "rods" in the Bebedouro article and "struts" by the Glendale witnesses are so much the same in angle of slant, width and length in proportion to the cylinder as to be truly fascinating. The best way to view these similarities is to compare the two sketches accompanying this article. Sketch A is an artist's impression based on the description given him by José Antônio. Sketch B is a composite of the two sketches made by the Glendale helicopter witnesses. It needs to be explained here that in the February 1977 Mufon UFO Journal article, the second witness' sketch was printed upside down by mistake! In Sketch B accompanying this present article, the *entire* composite sketch is printed upside down, for, it is in this way that the correlation with the Bebedouro object is most marked. Even the faint markings seen by one of the Glendale witnesses corresponds with the height and position of the door described by José Antônio.

But is it fair, you might ask, to print a UFO sketch upside down to show correlation with another object? In this case it is more than fair for the following reason.

Continuing the Bebedouro story, the object with its three short entities and its unwilling passenger lifted off the ground and travelled for what seemed to José Antônio an "interminable" time. At about mid-point during the journey, "the machine seemed to rotate on its lateral axis. To illustrate this manoeuvre José Antônio took a tumbler, to represent the central cylinder of the machine, and laid it on its side. The seats adjusted themselves to this new position of the machine, and swung over themselves". Then, after another lengthy period, the machine and the seats reverted to the normal positions." So when we print our composite sketch of the Glendale object upside down, we are doing nothing different than the Bebedouro object was apparently able to do so.⁴

The remainder of the Bebedouro report is not of special correlative value as regards to the Glendale sighting, though the entire FSR article is heartily