

UFO LANDS ON SPANISH AIR FORCE TARGET RANGE

WHAT'S MORE, THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT ADMITTED IT.

Gordon Creighton

LIKE other countries, Spain has allocated certain wild and deserted parts of the country for use as military target ranges where live ammunition can be used. The Spanish Air Force has two such polygons. One near Teruel (due east of Madrid), and the other in a particularly desolate tract of territory to the north of the province of Navarre and lying on the right (southern) bank of the river Ebro. This tract is known as las Bardenas Reales, and is several kilometres in extent. According to articles in the Spanish press, it is used for live target practice by not only the Spanish Air Force but also the United States Air Force (by virtue of the Hispano-American Agreement on Co-operation).

On January 5, 1975, the following brief but interesting Logos agency report from its correspondent at Zaragoza, datelined January 4, appeared in the Madrid newspaper *ABC* under the following headlines: *Unidentified Flying Object Over Military Zone of Las Bardenas Reales.*

and, below that: *Senior Officers from the Base come to Zaragoza to Report to Air Force Zone Authorities.*

"At about 11.00 p.m. last night, an unidentified flying object landed on the firing range. A few minutes later the device took off and vanished in the skies.

"Several of the senior military officers at the Las Bardenas Base have arrived in Zaragoza this morning to report to the Headquarters of this Air Force Zone concerning the incident.

"There was an Air Force accident at the Base in 1972. The aircraft plunged to the ground at high speed, but the two crew members were both able to escape by parachute. It was said at the time of that accident that, as the plane was falling, a strange luminous object was observed in the sky overhead.

"The affair gave rise to much talk and discussion in the surrounding districts of Las Bardenas and Las Cinco Villas."

If this report had not let a few cats out of the bag, at any rate it had permitted a small pink nose to appear, and nobody should have been surprised therefore, when the same newspaper, *ABC*, of four days later, January 9, 1975, carried a Cifra release with the following neat explanation by the Spanish Air Force under the headline: *It was due to Optical Effects caused by the Moon's Halo.*

Office of the Third Air Force Zone states that, after all necessary investigations have been made, no proof has been found to suggest that unidentified flying objects (UFOs) have flown low over, or have landed on, the firing range at Las Bardenas Reales (Province of Navarra).

"The present official notice arises out of the supposed landing of a UFO at Las Bardenas Reales on the 3rd instant, which matter has been the subject of talk and comments gathered by the news media from the region of Las Cinco Villas and the Navarran bank of the river.

"According to the reports, certain eyewitnesses of the occurrence were said to have seen the object emit vivid flashes and then take off again and vanish shortly after it had landed."

On that very same morning however, January 9, 1975, another Madrid newspaper carried a rather different Cifra agency report about the matter, which I also reproduce in full; the headlines were: *Military authorities nominate special Judge.*

Did a spy-UFO land on the firing range at Las Bardenas Reales?

"The military authorities of the Air Force Zone III have appointed a judge to preside over the enquiry in connection with the unidentified flying object which is said to have landed early in the morning of January 2 on the Air Force's firing range at Las Bardenas Reales and regarding which there are conflicting accounts.

"The report of his finding will be conveyed to the Air Ministry who, if they deem it fitting, will issue a statement about it.

"On contacting the town-hall authorities in Arguedas (Province of Navarra), a town that is near the firing range, *Informaciones* were assured that they have received no report of any local resident having seen the UFO. Pursuing our inquiry further, we finally managed to speak to the person who did see the unidentified flying object. He is Lt. Campos, an officer stationed at the firing range. He has refused to furnish any kind of information regarding the strange occurrence, because the case is at present in the hands of the authorities and *sub-judice*...

"The appearance of an unidentified flying object over the range may be related to one of the numerous exercises against electronic devices which the Air Force carries out periodically. Should such be the case in this instance (and the appointment, for the

The text of the release is as follows: "The Press

first time ever, of a special judge in this fashion would seem to indicate that it is the case) then the military secrecy in which these exercises are swathed will probably preclude the issue of any public statement on the matter. Nevertheless the possibility should not be ruled out that it may indeed have been a true UFO, an unidentified flying object. The UFOs started appearing around 1947 in our own era, although it is affirmed that they have existed for more than 5,000 years. In Spain, according to recently compiled statistics, there have been one hundred UFO landings between 1925 and 1970. In the Province of Navarre alone there has been one UFO landing (in 1969.)

"According to those who investigate these UFOs, we are at present in the sixth phase of their activity here. This phase, which began in 1954, is directed at objectives that are emphatically military; the fourth and fifth phases were devoted to ecological, biological, and geographical exploration.

"On the other hand, this is not the first time that a UFO has landed in a Spanish Military enclave: five years ago another UFO was observed on the military airfield at Reus."

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So far as I can judge from the material at present available to me no official statement was in fact put out by the Spanish Air Force about the Las Bardenas case. In his article¹ on another landing (at Burgos) which Sr Pere Redon, Deputy-Director of the Spanish Centre for Interplanetary Studies, published in their journal *Stendek* (No. 19, March 1975) he complained of the excessive secrecy of the Spanish Air Force in UFO matters (which he compared unfavourably with what he considered to be the more open policy of the Spanish Army) Where the Air Force were concerned, he said that "...it was all secrecy and denials, with attempts being made to nullify, by means of a smoke-screen, all knowledge of what had really happened. From the outset, this policy has put us in mind of the various denials issued in recent years by the U.S. Air Force. It is because of this different approach by the Spanish Army and the Spanish Air Force that we are unable — at least for the time being — to publish a study of the case which occurred at Las Bardenas during the night of January 2, 1975."

We have seen an example of the "smoke-screen," namely the statement (quoted above) which the Press Office of the Third Air Force Zone put out on January 9, explaining the UFO story as "due to the optical effects caused by the Moon's halo."

One has to give them credit. As the years have rolled by it must have become harder and harder to hit upon a fresh explanation for UFOs, and so far as I know this is the first case in which the Moon's halo has been branded as responsible for a landing on the surface of our Planet.

The next development in the Las Bardenas story (at least so far as I can ascertain) came early last year,* when on January 8, 1977, the Spanish magazine *Personas*² (no. 166) dropped a bombshell in the form of a long cover story by news reporter J.J. Benitez, in which he claimed that on October 20, 1976, he had

interviewed a highly placed official of the Madrid government, who had confirmed to him that the Spanish Government knew that UFOs exist and (like everyone else) had been quietly studying them for many years. This official allegedly handed to him 78 folio pages containing resumes of twelve of the most spectacular UFO cases in the government's files.

The title of J.J. Benitez's article is: *UFOs over Spain: There are official proofs. Documents from our Government recognize twelve cases of "Unidentified Flying Objects."*

Owing to its length, I will merely extract and quote here that portion of it which refers to Las Bardenas for Las Bardenas, after all the talk about the halo of the Moon, turns out as we now see, to be one of the best UFO cases that the Spanish Government has on its books!

It seems that on the night of January 2, 1975, some Air Force privates, a sergeant, and two poachers, were in the Arguedas-Tudela area, within the limits of the firing range, and that they say not merely one UFO but *several* which landed in the target-zone.

According to the sergeant's statement, he was on duty that night, and at 11.00 p.m. received a telephone call from the operator in charge of the telephone network, to the effect that the surveillance towers had reported that lights had been seen moving about on the terrain of the firing range. He took a pair of binoculars and got up on to a hillock, from where he was able to observe an object "... shaped like an inverted cup," with white lights on the upper and lower parts and intermittent white and amber lights on its sides. He was unable to give an exact estimate of its size, but thought that it might have been of the approximate size of a truck. The UFO remained on the firing range for about half an hour, and took off and departed at 11.25 p.m.

The weather conditions that night were fine and clear, there were no clouds, and the outlines of the nearby mountain ranges stood out sharply. The sergeant detected no sound from the UFO. When the object took off, he said its course was at first northwards, but then when it reached a point level with the second surveillance tower it began to climb steeply and veered off to the north-east and was quickly lost to sight.

While the UFO was in flight above the firing range a powerful light on its underside was directed downwards and lit up the whole area around about.

The accounts given by the other enlisted men (who were on duty on the look-out towers) bore out the statement of the sergeant. The best view of the UFO was secured by those on the main tower as it climbed past them.

Notes and References

1. For a translation of this Article, see *The Landing Near Burgos*, in FSR Vol. 23, No.2.
2. We are indebted to Sr. Russel Guérard y Holmes for the full text of this article.

* [Mr. Creighton wrote his article in 1978 — ED]