

The Belgium UFO Flap

By Bob Pratt

This report has been prepared by former *MUFON UFO Journal* editor Bob Pratt based largely on material supplied by Patrick Ferryn, co-founder of the Belgium UFO research organization SOBEPS (Societe Belge D'Etude Des Phenomenes Spatiaux).

Belgium, one of the smallest and most densely populated countries in Europe, is about a third the size of the state of Indiana and, with a population of more than ten million, has twice as many people. It is bounded on the northwest by the North Sea, on the north and northeast by The Netherlands, on the east by West Germany, on the southeast by Luxembourg, and on the west and southwest by France.

Since last October Belgium has been experiencing almost daily sightings of large triangular-shaped UFOs similar to those reported throughout the United States on countless occasions since the mid-1970s.

As of late May, the Belgium UFO research group SOBEPS had investigated about 650 cases, collecting reports from more than 900 witnesses, many of them highly competent professional people. It is estimated that at least 10,000 Belgians have seen the UFOs, described at times as being "as big as or bigger than an aircraft carrier."

In many respects the sightings have paralleled those reported in the Hudson Valley area of New York and Connecticut just north of New York City in 1983-1986, as reported in the book *Night Siege: The Hudson Valley UFO Sightings* (by Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Philip J. Imbrogno and Bob Pratt, Ballantine Books, 1987).

"It was really astonishing for us to read the preface of *Night Siege*," says Patrick Ferryn of SOBEPS, in Brussels. "Changing only a few words, exactly the same could be writ-

ten to give an account of the position of affairs here! The same goes for many entire pages and excerpts elsewhere in the book."

Unusual Cooperation

In what is probably unique in the history of worldwide ufology, the Belgium government has been assisting SOBEPS in investigating the sightings.

The Ministry of the Interior ordered the Gendarmerie Nationale (a combination of police and army, many of whose members have reported seeing the UFOs) to give SOBEPS copies of all UFO reports and to immediately advise SOBEPS of new sightings.

Among the witnesses were nearly 200 members and officers of the Gendarmerie Nationale as well as policemen, military and civilian pilots, air traffic controllers, meteorologists, aeronautical engineers and physicists.

In addition, the Ministry of Defense, through the Belgium Air Force, has authorized SOBEPS to contact radar specialists, pilots and installations. In an unheard of display of cooperation, the Air Force even had two military aircraft and their crews on standby at Bierset Airport, near Liege, to work with SOBEPS during the long, four-day Easter weekend.

"One of these aircraft, a Hawker Siddeley 748, was equipped with an impressive infrared video camera," says Ferryn, who is a television director and producer.

"We also had professional video equipment and sophisticated in-

struments. On the ground and in the whole eastern and southern part of Belgium we had teams with CB radios and mobile phones.

"Last, but not least, an important Air Force radar station at Glons was connected with our improvised headquarters in the Bierset Airport."

Briefly, this is what has been happening:

- The sightings started in October near Eupen, close to the Dutch and German border, and then progressed steadily westward to Liege, Namur, Wavre (just southeast of the capital, Brussels), Mons and finally toward the French border. The area involved is about 100 miles long.

- Most of the sightings were at night, but a few were in the daytime. Many were CE-I's and CE-II's.

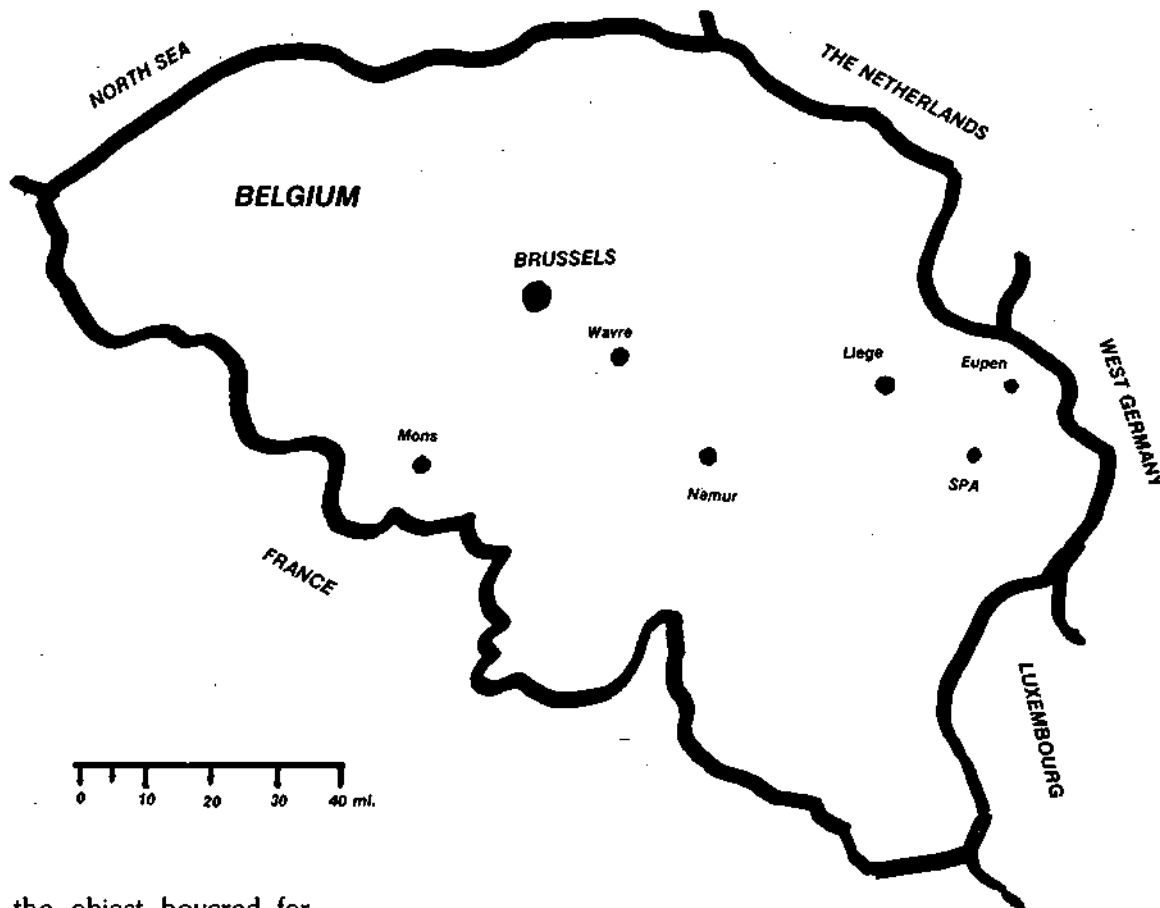
- Among the witnesses were nearly 200 members and officers of the Gendarmerie Nationale as well as policemen, military and civilian pilots, air traffic controllers, meteorologists, aeronautical engineers and physicists.

- Most of the witnesses reported seeing a dark, triangular shaped object with three bright lights and a red flashing light in the middle. Often, people saw one or more rows of scintillating lights on the side of the triangle.

- Several times highly competent witnesses used such expressions as "as big as a football field" or "huge" or "massive" to describe the UFO. Some even said it was "as big as or bigger than an aircraft carrier." When seen from the side in profile, the object was described as "very high" with large "windows."

- One witness said that "while the object was flying slowly directly overhead, one could not see the front part and the end at the same time because it was too big."

- Some triangular-shaped objects were "modest" in size, only about as large as small aircraft.



- Often the object hovered for minutes at a time. When it began moving, it usually moved very slowly, too slow to be a conventional airplane. However, at times it would suddenly accelerate so rapidly that it would be across the horizon in a second or two — and sometimes it would flash right back.

- The object was nearly always noiseless or made only a faint humming sound, like an electric engine or a sewing machine.

Slow Turns

- Many times while hovering or moving slowly it would pivot, turning 90 degrees and even 180 degrees.

- In three cases (as some witnesses in the Hudson Valley sightings also reported), people saw structures underneath “with heavy metal parts, crisscross effects, diamond-shape work, tubular things here and there.”

- Some people claimed to have seen triangles that changed shape into a round light which later opened, releasing a great number of small red

objects going in all directions, and then change into a triangle again.

- Very often, sightings occurred in densely populated areas and also near illuminated highways and expressways, just as happened in the Hudson Valley sightings. Says Ferryn: “As I visited the Hudson Valley and the Connecticut area two years ago (for archaeological purposes), I can say the landscapes are very similar to what one can see around Eupen, Liege, Namur, etc.”

- Some witnesses said they signaled with their car lights and the UFO would respond with a similar light signal or by moving at the moment the signal was made.

One of the biggest nights of sightings was November 29, 1989, when several UFOs were seen by hundreds of people around Eupen. SOBEPS collected nearly 120 reports from this night alone.

The first important sighting that night came from the Gendarmerie. Two officers in their patrol car were lit up by a beam of light coming from

a dark triangle equipped with three “projectors” and a winking red light. The object was huge and made a faint humming sound. It was hovering at an altitude of 600 to 900 feet.

One officer said the light was so dazzling “that we could read a newspaper under it.”

The object then moved slowly in the direction of the nearby La Gileppe Dam, where it hovered for 45 minutes. It then moved southwest about 13 miles and hovered over the city of Spa for 30 minutes before disappearing.

In their investigation, SOBEPS researchers learned that a number of other people had seen the UFO even earlier that evening. One was a Gendarmerie officer on duty on the third floor of the Eupen station who saw a luminous rectangular object about 65 feet long between him and the rear wall of the station 650 feet away. It was just below the level of his eyes and was moving very slowly. “It was like a big chamber,” he said.

Astounded, he watched it drift slowly out of sight and immediately radioed two officers in a patrol car who were in the area it was heading for. Several minutes later they saw it coming in their direction and they could see the underside of it. The two officers told SOBEPS it was triangular in shape and that when it moved a "balancing movement" was clearly noted, during which a sort of dome was visible on the upper side.

One of the officers said he had never seen anything so beautiful in his life, and as he spoke he was very affected and seemed about to weep.

Air Force Alert

Another important night of sightings took place on March 30. That evening, 15 members of the Gendarmerie on duty in different places around Wavre (about 15 miles southeast of Brussels) saw eight white luminous objects in the sky that were three to five times larger than a star. The objects moved away and then came back very fast, glowing red as they returned.

The commander of the Gendarmerie station at Wavre alerted the Air Force radar station at Glons and the Air Force base at Beauvechain. Two F-16s immediately came into the sighting area (and later an AWACS aircraft) and were literally guided by witnesses on the ground.

The next day newspapers reported that the F-16s "came home with an empty bag," but that was not true. After weeks of computer analysis, the Belgium Air Force Headquarters reported to the Ministry of Defense that *five* different military radars (two on the F-16s and three radar stations) had detected unidentified echoes at the same moment and in the same place indicated by witnesses on the ground. Furthermore, the report confirmed that the objects had moved with incredible speeds.

Details of that report appeared on TV and in newspapers on May 19 — coincidentally the anniversary of the 1986 overflights in Brazil when six military jet fighters chased (and

sometimes were chased by) 20 to 30 UFOs that were being tracked by air traffic controllers on radar over vast areas of that country.

The sightings on November 29, 1989 created a sensation and were heavily publicized by the press, TV and radio. SOBEPS was immediately snowed under with reports and opened a UFO Hotline — just as Philip Imbrogno and his investigative team did in Connecticut during the early heavy sightings in 1983.

"People called literally at all hours of the day and night," Ferryn says. "It is striking to see how, at one and the same time, a great part of the public and the press have reacted to these events exactly in the same way here and in the U.S. (as reported in *Night Siege*)."

Some of those calling did report what later turned out to be conventional aircraft. However, Ferryn says, most of the witnesses are familiar with civilian and military aircraft because there are many bases in the area, and they were certain they were not seeing aircraft.

"We all went through the same stages of thinking," Ferryn says. "We first thought of ultralight aircraft, then military aircraft, the mystery plane, the phantom fliers (a kind of 'Black Baron,' as we called it) and so on. Of course, some officials and specialists claimed astronomical mistakes, holograms, lasers, temperature inversions and so on. We must admit we also wondered at first if it could be some sort of sophisticated ultralight aircraft. Of course, now, none of these hypotheses make any sense."

Stealth

There were numerous rumors that the American-built F-117 Stealth Fighter was being flown in Belgian skies. The rumors were partially confirmed by the French newspaper *VSD* on April 21 in an interview with U.S. Air Force Col. Tom Tolin. He reportedly told the newspaper: "F-117s are flying in Europe during night missions, sometimes piloted by United Kingdom Royal Air Force pilots, but we are not

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authorized to tell you where."

The journalist's theory, of course, was that the UFOs that had been seen since October were actually the F-117s. If F-117s were flown over Belgium, that could account for some sightings, but not for the reports of huge triangular-shaped objects that hovered or moved slowly, suddenly accelerated and disappeared across the horizon in seconds, or released hundreds of small red objects that flew in all directions.

With so much UFO activity, SOBEPS was able to collect 25 different video tapes made during the sightings.

"Three of these are really interesting for they clearly show what is undeniably *not* a conventional aircraft or anything else known," says Ferryn. "As a professional in this field, I have enlarged and treated the interesting sequences in slow motion with sophisticated equipment.

"One film shows three important spots of light forming a big triangle having a red flashing light in the center. It flew slowly low over our capital on March 30, the same date the 15 Gendarmes of Wavre saw the eight objects southeast of Brussels." SOBEPS also has some photographs "but they are extremely disappointing because either nothing shows or what is seen doesn't correspond with the sightings," says Ferryn. "Only one of these shows what could be a triangle or a trapezoidal-shaped object, while it was observed as being rounded and ray-shaped."

The Brazilian military had a similar experience in 1977 when it was investigating a long series of sightings around the small town of Colares at the mouth of the Amazon River just north of the major city of Belem. (The sightings are discussed by Jacques Vallee in *Confrontations: A Scientist's Search for Alien Contact*, Ballantine Books, 1990.) A Brazilian Air Force team spent approximately 30 days and nights in the area, during which they shot about 300 photographs of UFOs.

In 1981 the officer in charge of the team, now a colonel, told Bob Pratt and Charles Tucker (of Nappanee, Indiana) that he and his men photographed eight different shapes of UFOs, including several that were triangular or like a pyramid. On several occasions, when the photos were printed they showed something completely different from what he and his men saw.

Once they photographed a disc-shaped object that was twice the size of a Boeing 737 and had many windows but the photo showed only a point of light. Another time a large fiery ball of bluish light about 70 meters away suddenly blinked out and all they could see was a green light and some distance below that a

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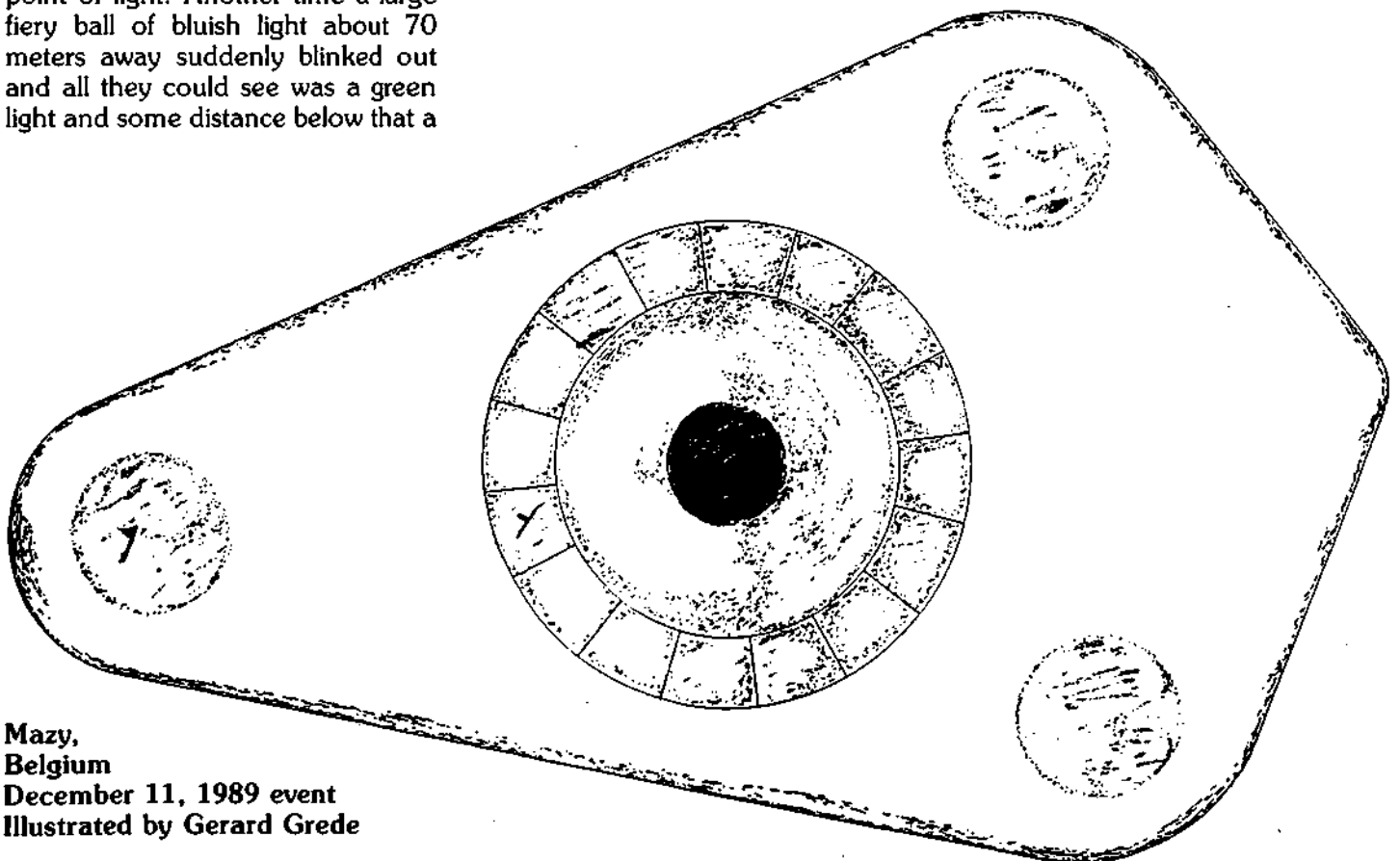
Other aspects of the Belgian sightings have been reported in other countries as well, proving once again, as we all know, that this is a global phenomenon.

One Belgian witness said that when the UFO was overhead, he could not see both the front and back at the same time because it was so huge. In the Hudson Valley sightings, a security officer at the Indian Point Nuclear

Power Reactor at Buchanan, New York, reported much the same thing. On the night of July 24, 1984, a huge triangular-shaped object hovered over the reactor for ten minutes and the officer, watching it on the monitor of a security camera mounted atop a ninety-five-foot pole had to pan the camera 180 degrees to scan the entire object from front to back.

Another point of similarity is the incredible acceleration. Some Belgian witnesses said the UFO would shoot off across the horizon in a second or two, and sometimes come back just as fast. In Colusa, California, in 1976 a witness reported seeing a UFO suddenly shoot across the sky to a far away mountain and then return just as quickly. In 1977 two Memphis policemen watching a large triangular UFO hover over a golf course said it disappeared over the horizon in two seconds.

During the Hudson Valley sightings in 1983-86, one witness saw a triangular-shaped UFO vanish across



**Mazy,
Belgium
December 11, 1989 event
Illustrated by Gerard Grede**

the horizon in seconds, and in another sighting a couple said a boomerang-shaped object "streaked from one end of the sky to the other, and then back again in a split second."

In the U.S. in the past 15 years, a number of people, including military personnel, have reported seeing UFOs shoot from near the ground far out into the sky and vanish in seconds. And similar actions were reported in the small city of Pinheiro, in northern Brazil, where sightings occurred nearly every night for four months in 1977. The mayor of Pinheiro said the UFO, a large, fiery red ball of light that often hovered about 1,000 feet above the town, would sometimes suddenly shoot so far out into the atmosphere as to be lost among the stars, and at times it would shoot straight back down to earth again.

The enormous sizes reported in Belgium have now become common and are typical of the triangular or boomerang-shaped objects reported in the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, Iran and elsewhere.

The Belgian reports are exciting for many reasons, but especially because of the numerous high quality witnesses and the official government cooperation, and because they affirm once again the reality of the phenomenon.

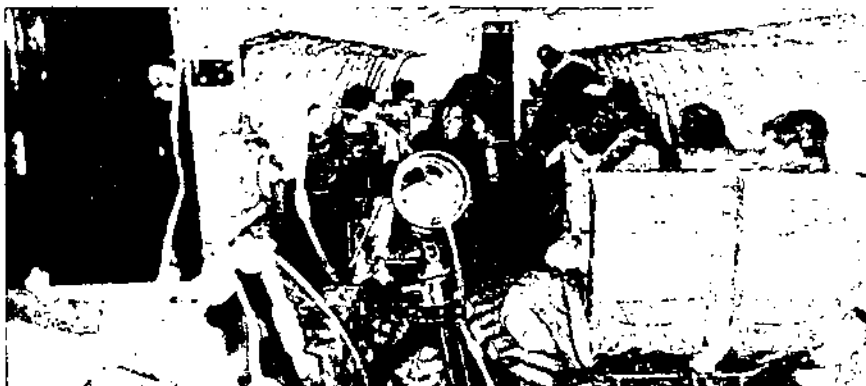
Support SOBEPS

Members of SOBEPS are very interested in learning about sightings elsewhere in the world similar to those now occurring in Belgium, and also are interested in learning more about the F-117 and B-2 Stealth aircraft. Anyone with unclassified information about these planes is invited to share it with SOBEPS.

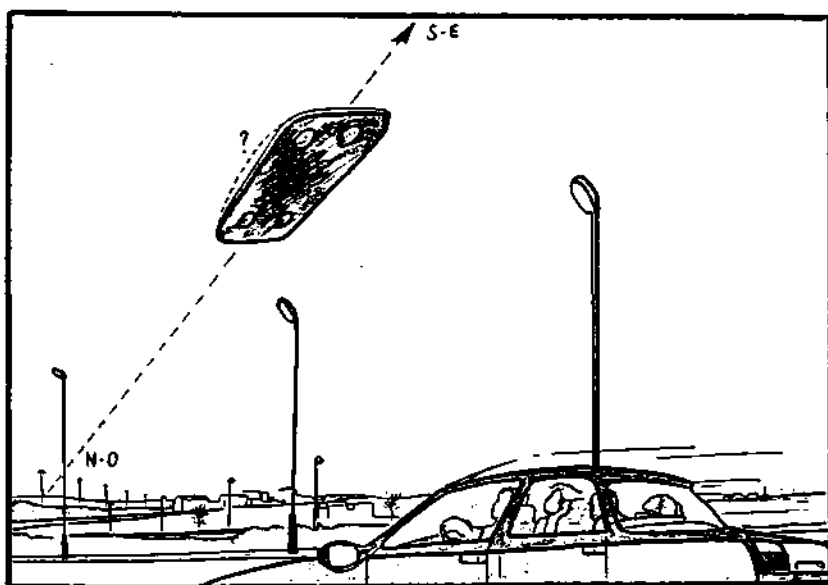
The organization is also encouraged and inviting researchers around the world to join in a greater, freer exchange of UFO data.

"I'm definitely convinced we must exchange and share information," says SOBEPS co-founder Patrick Ferryn. "And this is an encouragement and a warm request to do so. Of course, we already exchange publications and bulletins, but this is not enough." In addition to printed reports and data, SOBEPS (its reports are in French) is interested in exchanging video tapes, films and photos.

Write to:
SOBEPS
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1070 Bruxelles
Belgium



SOBEPS investigators fly on Belgium Air Force plane equipped with infrared camera to try filming UFOs.



LONCIN, November 23, 1989.
Observation by the Schmitz family.

Have a Viewpoint To Express?

The Journal welcomes clips and comments. Send to:

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