

The Cecconi UFO Incident - 1979

This incredibly detailed case study of cigar-shaped UFOs comes from Marcus Lowth's "**The Cecconi UFO Incident: Photographic Evidence Of An Extraterrestrial Vehicle?**"

The sheer amount of these encounters around the same time (1977-1979), along with the witnesses and data indicate, to me at least, what should have been considered a "UFO flap".

The Cecconi UFO Incident

At around 11:30 am on the morning of 18th June 1979, Pilot Marshal Giancarlo Cecconi was piloting his G-91R aircraft on the return to Treviso San Angelo Airport after carrying out a photographic reconnaissance mission over the Ligurian Apennines. Suddenly, a radio signal was received by Cecconi requesting he make contact with the radar crew at Istrana Airfield as they had detected an unidentified object seemingly moving at low altitude.

He contacted the radar team, who, according to an article by Antonia Chiumiento in the March 1988 edition of *Flying Saucer Review* (Vol. 33 No. 1) titled *An Italian Pilot's Sighting: And Another Italian Government Cover-Up?*, informed him that the object was "behaving strangely" and was "appearing intermittently on the radarscope".



The UFO with the airfield below

He headed toward the area, and it wasn't long before he could see the large, black, cigar-shaped object, clearly standing out against the clear blue of the late morning sky. Ceconni would later describe the object as being a "dull black" in color and reminding him of a "fuel tank" with a slight flatness to the upper part. He also picked up on what he believed was a dome of some kind, either transparent or white in color and which looked similar to a "drop of water". The object was approximately 25 feet long and around 10 feet wide and didn't appear to reflect the sun.

His plane was equipped with four VINTEN cameras – one on each side of the cockpit, one facing front, and the fourth on the underside of the plane. Shortly after first viewing the unusual object, he began snapping photographs with these cameras.

While this was happening, the staff at the control tower at San Angelo Airfield were in constant communication with Ceconni. In fact, they informed him that several personnel on the ground had the object in their sights using binoculars and that it appeared to be leaving a "bluish trail" behind it.

From Ceconni's perspective, the object had returned to the same position in the sky and he decided to turn his plane and approach it once more in order to capture more photographs.

However, by the time he had done so, the strange aerial vehicle had completely disappeared, “as though (it had) dematerialized”. At the same time, it had also disappeared from the radar screens at Istrana Airfield.

In total, the entire episode lasted around five minutes from Ceconni giving visual confirmation of the object to it seemingly vanishing into thin air.



Another photo of the UFO

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Although he was “reluctant” to speak of the incident in too much detail, he did supply Chiumiento with the basics of the incident under the promise that he was, for the time being at least, to keep it to himself. However, upon his retirement in 1983, he was much more receptive to the UFO investigator’s questions, who had continued to prod away at the case, although he still wished the account to remain private.

Following an announcement by the Italian Ministry of Defense in 1984 that all UFO data could be studied by organizations should they request permission through them, Chiumiento put in a formal request for the release of the photographs, on 24th August of that year. In the request, he would ask for “a transcript of the documentation” concerning the encounter, the “opinions of the Ministry regarding the said case” and the “opinions of the Commission appointed to carry out the analysis of the UFO documentation”.



A newspaper clipping of the UFO encounter

Within days the national press picked up on the request, and Ceconi’s identity. Ultimately, Chiumiento would reveal what he knew of the case and many articles followed, usually alongside graphic reconstructions of what Ceconi saw. Incidentally, Ceconi would later reveal his “annoyance” at the leaking of the information to the media. By November 1984, the Ministry of Defense issued their “black plastic bags” version of events.

In his 1988 article for *Flying Saucer Review*, Chiumiento revealed how “flabbergasted” they were upon receiving this official reply – a summary that did not at all match what Ceconi had informed them. For example, according to the UFO investigator’s files, Ceconi had stated clearly that it was “inconceivable that any flying object of ours could behave in such a way as that thing did”, further elaborating that based on the accepted understanding of physics, the object should not have “been able to be airborne”.

It appeared to Chiumiento that the case would be “deadlocked” and it would have to be filed away as unexplained. However, on 19th April 1985, the magazine, *Epoca*, ran an article titled *Secret UFO Report* which featured not only details of the Ceconi case, but three of the photographs the pilot

had taken. This would prompt the investigator to lodge a request for confirmation from the Ministry of Defense that the pictures published in the magazine were genuine.

By June 1985, the Ministry of Defense would respond, essentially confirming the pictures were authentic, including official copies of the three photographs in their reply. Chiumiento's investigation, however, would take a further twist.

According to the analysis he carried out on the officially confirmed pictures, they differed slightly from the picture he had witnessed in late 1979. In fact, not just slightly. He would state that they were "remarkably different" from the picture he and his fellow investigators had viewed several years previously.

He would point out that, as we mentioned earlier, the object managed to ensure that no matter where Ceconni took his photographs from, the object made sure it was always in the same position as if denying the chance to get a true shape of it. However, the investigator would state that this was "not shown by the changes of position in relation to the ground and to the horizon" that are in the officially released pictures. Whether Chiumiento is correct is perhaps open to debate.

Incidentally, at the time that Chiumiento was investigating the Ceconni Case, he was the Vice President of the *Italian National UFO Research Center*. He would go on to form the *Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici* (CISU). And it is this organization that reexamined the case in 1994, a decade and a half after it occurred.

When Ceconni first met with CISU in September 1994, perhaps one of the first things that he confirmed to the team was the three photographs published in *Epoca* were part of the 80-plus photographs he had taken on that June morning in 1979. This, then, would suggest that Chiumiento may have recalled the photograph he had seen incorrectly, and so also incorrectly suggesting the pictures published had been altered or were outright different.

It would also come to light the Ceconni no longer had in his possession the copy of the photograph he had taken on the day they were developed by the Air Force. He wasn't certain if it had become lost or had been stolen, but its whereabouts were now a mystery.

The CISU investigators would also speak with the author of the *Epoca* article, Remo Guerrini, who had seemingly obtained around 30 photographs from the Italian Ministry of Defense (with permission to print three of them) due to his "excellent relations" with the Air Force. He claimed, however, that he didn't know where the photographs were at the time of the interview.



Another picture taken by Ceconni

By August 1995, though, things took another twist. Ceconni's picture that had mysteriously gone missing just as mysteriously reappeared. Just over two weeks later, in the 19th August edition of *// Giornale*, an article on the case appeared with the recently discovered photograph. Within days, the national media published similar articles. Interest in the case had seemingly been reignited.

Despite this apparent renewed interest in the case, as well as the UFO subject, in general, many of the articles approached the case and subject with a sensationalist type of attitude, consequently, assuring that such accounts were not treated in a serious manner. Of course, whether this is very much a calculated approach, possibly due to the influence of outside forces is perhaps a subject for debate. There are several cases on record where UFO investigators have accused local and national media of toning down, over-dramatizing, or even suppressing reports of such incidents.

Italian UFO Reports Around The Same Time

There are several other sightings that are certainly worth documenting here that happened in Italy around the same time as the Ceconni incident.

On the evening of 4th June, for example, according to a *Centro Ufologico Nazionale* report, just under two weeks before the encounter at around 11 pm in Bellaria, several motorists witnessed bizarre flashing lights in the woods that lined the roadside. Many would even stop their vehicles in order to investigate.

Not long after venturing into the woods, however, they came upon a bizarre "hemispherical" object that was simply hovering around 30 feet above the ground. Witnesses would later estimate the strange object was around 30 feet across. They eventually withdrew from the scene.

The following morning, though, a number of people returned and were amazed to see that a “deep imprint” remained on the ground where the UFO was seen hovering.

Another account, that appears in *Return to Magonia* by Chris Aubeck, occurred ten days after the Ceconni incident, during the afternoon of 25th June in Adrano, Catania, when several local people witnessed two strange lights behind the car they were traveling home in after attending an expedition on Mount Etna. At first, they believed the lights were the headlights of another car and were looking to ask why this apparent other motorist was following them. However, as the lights got nearer, they realized that the lights were actually brightly glowing humanoid figures. This realization caused the witnesses to get back in their car and flee the scene.

Strange Encounters In Italy In July 1978

It is perhaps also worth our time looking at some of the strange incidents reported the following month in July 1978.

Although the exact date is not certain, an incident in Corsico in the early days of the month left a night security guard in shock at what he witnessed while conducting his rounds. As reported in *Itacat*, on the night in question he suddenly noticed a “dark form” in the middle of a clearing and immediately reached for his gun fearing thieves were on the premises.

He cautiously approached the shadowy form, noting how it was the size of a truck although it was shaped like an “upturned cup” and appeared to be resting on “several leg-like protrusions”. As he came closer, he further noted a dome shape on the top. However, it was when he saw the two “medium-sized men” moving around the object that he halted his progress.

Although the two figures appeared human, they each wore a strange, tight-fitting diver-type outfit and they moved with an apparent quickness as they appeared to be surveying the ground. Then, without warning, the two figures disappeared inside the strange object which then began to rise into the air. It originally hovered several feet from the ground before shooting directly upward and disappearing at great speed.

Strange Figures In Silver Suits

Another incident occurred on the evening of July 4th 1978, this time near Mount Etna when, according to an article by Richard Hall in issue no. 153 of the *MUFON Journal*, four Italian Navy personnel based in the region felt a “sudden compulsion” to drive up the slopes of the volcano. As they did so, they witnessed “three red pulsating objects” moving around in the skies overhead, one of which even landed.

When viewed up close, the four men could see that the object was a “domed disc-shaped craft with red and yellow lights”. Then, the incident got even stranger. In front of them, as if appearing from

out of nowhere, were two “tall golden-haired, white-robed beings accompanied by three shorter, large-headed beings wearing helmets and silvery suits”. The two robed figures began to make hand gestures toward the men. However, realizing they were witnessing something perhaps beyond their comprehension, the men turned their vehicle around and made their way back down the mountainside.

Richard Hall would write of a very similar sighting that occurred on the 18th July in Lurate Caccivio in the book *The UFO Evidence: Volume II: A Thirty-Year Report*, when a “red-orange object” was witnessed by several residents overhead. It was also noted that the object was “revolving” as it hovered and made a distinct “hissing sound” as it departed.

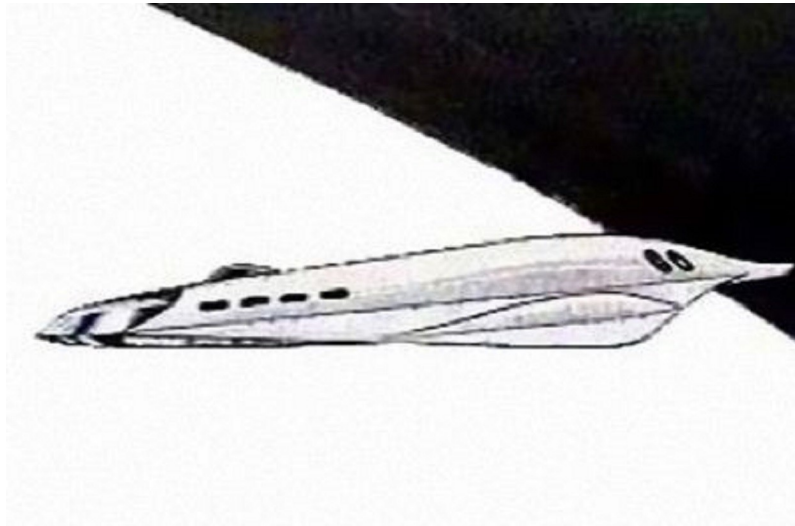
Several weeks later, at a little after 8 am on the 2nd of September 1978, according to a report made to the *Centro Ufologico Nazionale*, a resident of San Michele claimed to have seen a cigar-shaped object approximately 30 feet long. At the time of the sighting, the object was rising upward from a field of maize. When the witnesses later examined the field, there was a clear indentation where the object was seen to rise up from.

Cigar-Shaped Objects Further Afield Around The Same Time

There were further sightings, specifically of cigar-shaped objects around the same time as the Ceconni incident.

We might, for example, wish to note a sighting of an unidentified cigar-shaped object that was witnessed by a cosmonaut – Victor Afanasyev – on his way to the Soviet *Salyut 6* space station in April 1979 – only several weeks before Ceconni’s encounter. The cosmonaut would recall how the strange object “followed us during half of our orbit”. He would continue that he, and others on board, viewed it from the “light side”. However, upon entering the shadow side, the elongated object “disappeared completely”.

He would further claim that the object was made of some kind of metal, was approximately 120 feet long, and was most certainly the result of “engineering”. Afanasyev would even manage to capture several pictures of the object, although these pictures have never been made available to the public. He also reported immediately back to mission control what he was seeing. The transcript of that conversation has also never been aired publicly.



Sketch of the object witnessed by the Soviet cosmonaut

According to the one-time Soviet cosmonaut, upon returning to Earth following his mission, he was told by his superiors that he was not to speak of the encounter publicly. However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Afanasyev finally decided to speak of the incident. He would state that the sightings remained classified simply because “we have yet to identify” the strange craft.

There were other sightings, though, that while taking place very much on Earth, unfolded in various other places around the planet. It is to those encounters that we turn our attention to next.

Cigar-Shaped Object “Following” Interstate 84 In Connecticut

A little over a year before Ceconni’s encounter, at around midnight on the 1st March on the other side of the Atlantic in Middlebury, Connecticut, an incident unfolded featuring an almost identical cigar-shaped object. The incident was originally reported to the *National UFO Reporting Center* (NUFORC) over a decade later upon the arrival of the Internet.

According to the report, the witness was driving home after finishing their shift at work, heading toward Waterbury along Interstate 84. However, as they approached Middlebury, they noticed a “long, cigar-shaped object” hovering over the trees to the left of the road. He would estimate it was around 15 feet away from him.

Due to the clear, crisp night that was lit brilliantly by the moon, the witness could see the object clearly, as its dark grey exterior stood out against the sky. He would estimate it was around 100 feet long and approximately 15 feet high, and each end was rounded giving it a distinct cigar shape. He could see no wings and no visible means of propulsion. He also noted how there were “three equally spaced, large portholes”, through which he could see inside the object, although he

could only actually see blue lights.

It appeared to be moving in the same direction as he, almost “flying parallel” to his vehicle. At this point, the witness rolled their window down in order to see if they could hear the object. However, the only sound he could hear was his own vehicle. At this stage in his report, the witness noted that even though the road he was driving on was one of the busiest in the region, his was seemingly the only vehicle on it during the sighting. This is potentially an interesting detail as other UFO sightings feature similar realizations from the witness, almost as if the sighting was a targeted event.

As he continued down the road – traveling between 80 and 90 miles per hour – the object began to nudge ahead in front of him. As it did so, the witness noticed another porthole, this one on the back of the strange craft. This time, instead of a blue glow, the witness observed a green light shining out of the single porthole “in a cone shape” which stretched out behind it like a searchlight. He would further note that these lights appeared “soft” and “not difficult to look at”.

The craft appeared to be following the course of the highway, with the witness noting how it turned sharply as the road did, although the way it did so was “smooth” and perhaps not as one might expect such a rigid object to move.

It would eventually head off into the distance, remaining in sight for two to three minutes. The witness contemplated informing the police of the incident but then decided against making an official report. He did tell his wife and his family but otherwise kept the incident to himself until he finally decided to report it online.

The Intriguing Encounter Of General Hernan Gabrielli Rojas

Another encounter from 1978 (from the files of UFO investigator and researcher Scott Corrales) featuring a cigar-shaped object is particularly intriguing, not least as it involves a retired general of the Chilean armed forces, General Hernan Gabrielli Rojas.

Rojas claimed in an interview in the early 2000s that he had “squared off against a gigantic UFO” during a training flight in the north of the country. At the time of the mission, Rojas was a captain and was leading two F-5 fighter jets on the exercise. During the flight, a huge line appeared on the planes’ radar screens. Rojas would explain how usually, a cruiser would be around 1 cm in length on the screen, but this line went from one side to the other. He would later state the strange craft was approximately the same size as 10 to 15 aircraft carriers.

Assuming their radars were malfunctioning (despite how unlikely it would be that both would malfunction at the same time), Rojas radioed ground control at Antofagasta and asked them to check their radar. They too had the huge object on their screens. Only a moment later, the pilots looked out to the skies and noticed a “deformed, cigar-shaped object”, approximately 15 to 20 miles ahead of them which appeared to be “swathed in smoke”.

Although they approached the object, it somehow remained the same distance from the jets. It would eventually disappear with great speed toward Easter Island. A moment later, the line disappeared from the radar screens.

Abducted By A Cigar-Shaped Object In Brazil

Around two years earlier, on the evening of 23rd June 1976 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, an incident involving a cigar-shaped object and an apparent alien entity occurred, one that resulted in a possible alien abduction. The incident comes to us from an article in *Apex* by Mario Martins Ribeiro.

According to the report, 18-year-old Paulo Coutinho had failed to return home from a night class on the night in question. When one of his friends discovered his schoolbooks and notepads on a street and returned them to the missing teenager's parents the following morning, they began to fear the worst for their son and ultimately reported him missing to the police. Despite them carrying out searches and inquiries for most of the day, by evening, there was still no sign of the missing teenager.

Then, things took a decidedly strange turn. The missing boy's father, Jose Alves, claimed to have had a sudden feeling of certainty that his son was safe and would return shortly. Furthermore, he also had a sudden feeling that clues to his son's whereabouts could be found in their backyard. Before he could test this feeling, though, a sudden sound of a man groaning in confusion or pain was heard coming from the yard. When the family opened the gate to enter the garden, they discovered Paulo on the back steps in an obviously confused state.

He was quickly taken to a nearby hospital where he was assessed and stabilized, making a recovery to his usual self a short time later. Remarkably, several ballpoint pens that Paulo was carrying in his pockets at the time were found to have strong signs of radiation.

Paulo would eventually state that throughout the previous day he had heard a strange whistling noise, no matter where he went. Later that evening, after walking his girlfriend home after his night class at around 11:30 pm, he noticed a strange light moving in the skies overhead. By the time he realized the light was approaching him, he had become paralyzed to the spot and was unable to move. It would eventually come to a stop around 25 feet from where he stood. A moment later, a strange figure emerged.

He noted how the strange creature was "very short" with a particularly big head with large eyes. He also recalled that it had "pointed ears" and a pig-like upturned nose. It wore a tight one-piece blue bodysuit that appeared to have an emblem of some kind on the chest.

The next thing he knew he was floating in the air seemingly toward a huge, red, cigar-shaped object, which appeared to be more of a metallic grey color the closer he got to it. He would estimate the object was around 650 feet in length. Before he could take in any more detail, he had

entered the craft through an apparent door and immediately found himself laying in a “dark gray circular area” with three of the figures stood over him. When he attempted to get to his knees, the paralysis once more took over his body.

He claimed they informed him, telepathically, that he would come to no harm. The three beings then turned and headed toward a wall. Bizarrely, still on his knees, he began following them, seemingly against his own will. As they approached the wall it disappeared allowing them to enter a much larger room. Once inside several examinations and procedures were performed. The next thing he realized, he was lying on the ground outside and could his parents’ voices.

Interestingly, a neighbor of the family claimed that around 7:30 pm the previous evening, she had witnessed a “strange luminous object” hovering over the Coutinho house while she was standing on her back porch. After several moments, the object calmly moved off into the distance.

Perhaps also of interest are Paulo’s claims that he had a “numb and prickling” sensation through his body when he awoke on the steps of the yard. Many abductees – particularly those who have experienced temporary paralysis as Paulo did – report very similar feelings.

Cigar-Shaped Object Over Yuba City

The following month in Yuba City, California another cigar-shaped UFO incident ^[3] was reported. According to the report, at around 11 pm on 12th July, a courting couple returned home after an evening out when they noticed a “dark object moving slowly back and forth” in the sky. The witness estimated it was at an altitude that was just above tree level and appeared to be “a few blocks” from their location. Despite this closeness, though, the witness immediately noticed that the cigar-shaped craft appeared to be completely silent.

The witness told his girlfriend to remain where she was while he dashed inside to obtain his binoculars if only to rule out that it wasn’t a plane or a helicopter. When he got it into view, he could clearly see there were “windows down the side” very similar to the appearance of windows on a commercial airliner. However, that is where the similarity to an airplane ended, with the object having no wings or apparent means of propulsion. Every now and then a strange searchlight-like light would illuminate the trees below.

After several moments, the object began to turn and began upwards. The witness claimed it was this moment when he “became convinced that it was really from another world”, describing how the object “zoomed up (into the sky) to the size of a star”. As the witness kept watching the now faraway object through the binoculars, he could see how it flashed a red and blue light. He would explain that had he not had the binoculars, he wouldn’t have been able to follow it, and that anyone viewing it with the naked eye would assume it was merely a star or a planet.

The witness would return outside several times over the next few hours in case the object was back but it didn’t return. Following the encounter, though, the witness would spend considerably more time studying the skies than he had previously and would witness several strange lights over the

years. Whether these were other “otherworldly” vehicles is perhaps open to debate.

Cigar-Shaped “Mothership” Over Germany

Around nine months later, on the evening of 7th March 1977, a 16-year-old boy witnessed a cigar-shaped object over Jemgum, a small village in Germany close to the border with the Netherlands. The incident is from the files of MUFON investigator, Illobrand von Ludwiger.

The teenager was stood in front of his parent’s house on the day in question when he noticed a “bright spot in the sky”. He watched it for several moments before seeing “a small square” emerge from the bright spot. This small square then “glided” toward the ground.

At this point, the witness ran inside the house to grab his binoculars. When he viewed the descending object, he noticed that a “thin, bluish-white ray of light” connected it to the larger object from which it had come. He then turned his attention back to the larger object, which was clearly “cigar-shaped and surrounded by an orange-colored halo”. The witness elaborated that the exterior appeared to be reflective and that a dark “wide-band” went along the middle of the side of the object. In this band, several lights – yellow, green, red, and blue – flashed quickly.

With the teenager was his 8-year-old brother, who suddenly called out to the older boy having noticed another similar object in the south region of the sky. This object was moving at a considerable pace directly for the cigar-shaped craft. Then, it suddenly stopped and hovered.

At this point, the younger boy ran inside to shout his mother (Mrs. S) who ultimately also witnessed the strange objects when she followed her son out to the yard. After several moments, she would call her husband (Dr. S), who also came outside. With him, he had his binoculars, and it wasn’t long before he too eyed the bizarre vehicles through their magnified glare.

They all witnessed another “ray of light” which was seemingly sending another, smaller object toward the ground (although nearby housing blocked the family’s sight of exactly where the object may have landed). A moment later, another much brighter light reached the ground from the large vehicle overhead. The family watched in amazement as several small objects began rising into the air as if riding the light. These activities would continue for around 30 minutes. Then they began to turn in the sky.

Mrs. S would later recall that “everything was shimmering, as if the object itself was glowing”, adding it “appeared red-hot and vibrated” and that “colors were shining out of the heat”. The objects eventually disappeared from sight.

Sources

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