

The Phoenix Lights - 1997

Case: The Phoenix Lights

Phoenix Arizona - March 13, 1997

The **Phoenix Lights** (sometimes called the "**Lights Over Phoenix**") were a series of widely sighted unidentified flying objects observed in the skies over the southwestern states of Arizona and Nevada on March 13, 1997.

Lights of varying descriptions were seen by thousands of people between 7:30 pm and 10:30 pm MST, in a space of about 300 miles (480 km), from the Nevada line, through Phoenix, to the edge of Tucson. Some witnesses described seeing what appeared to be a huge carpenter's square-shaped UFO containing five spherical lights.

There were two distinct events involved in the incident: a triangular formation of lights seen to pass over the state, and a series of stationary lights seen in the Phoenix area.

The first incident is widely believed to have been an actual unidentified flying object. The second event is widely believed to have been a "gaslight" maneuver by the government to confuse witnesses and lay the groundwork for plausible deniability of the initial event.

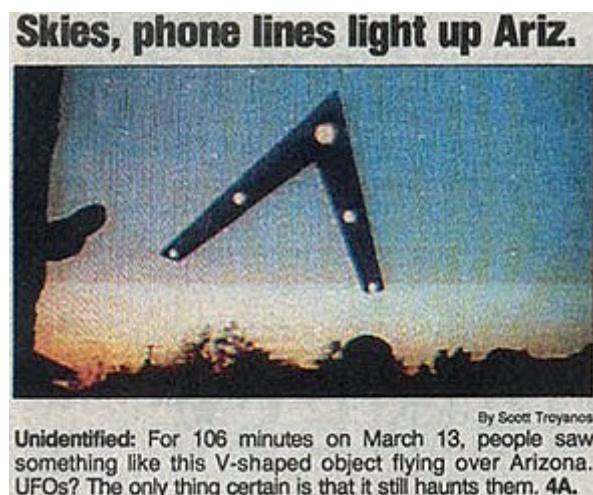
According to the Air Force, both sightings were allegedly due to aircraft participating in Operation Snowbird, a pilot training program of the Air National Guard based in Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona. The first group of lights were later allegedly identified as a formation of A-10 Warthog aircraft flying over Phoenix while returning to Davis-Monthan. The second group of lights were identified as flares dropped by another flight of A-10 aircraft that were on training exercises at the Barry Goldwater Range in southwest Arizona. This second group was conveniently sent out from the air force base hours AFTER the initial sighting. It is widely believed this was an effort by the USAF to confuse and convince the public that the whole night was nothing more than military exercises.

Fife Symington, governor of Arizona at the time, years later recounted witnessing the incident, describing it as "otherworldly."

Reports of similar lights arose in 2007 and 2008, and were attributed to military flares dropped by fighter aircraft at Luke Air Force Base, and flares attached to helium balloons released by a civilian, respectively.

1997 reports

On March 13, 1997, at 7:55 pm MST, a witness in Henderson, Nevada, reported seeing a large, V-shaped object traveling southeast. At 8:15 pm, an unidentified former police officer in Paulden, Arizona, reported seeing a cluster of reddish-orange lights disappear over the southern horizon. Shortly afterwards, there were reports of lights seen over the Prescott Valley, Arizona. Tim Ley and his wife Bobbi, his son Hal and his grandson Damien Turnidge first saw the lights when they were about 65 miles (105 km) away from them. At first, the lights appeared to them as five separate and distinct lights in an arc shape, as if they were on top of a balloon, but they soon realized that the lights appeared to be moving towards them. Over the next ten or so minutes, the lights appeared to come closer, the distance between the lights increased, and they took on the shape of an upside-down V. Eventually, when the lights appeared to be a couple of miles away, the family said they could make out a shape that looked like a 60-degree carpenter's square, with the five lights set into it, with one at the front and two on each side.



Soon, the object with the embedded lights appeared to be moving toward them, about 100 to 150 feet (30 to 46 m) above them, traveling so slowly that it gave the appearance of a silent hovering object, which seemed to pass over their heads and went through a V opening in the peaks of the mountain range towards Piastewa Peak Mountain and toward the direction of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Between 8:30 and 8:45 pm, witnesses in Glendale, a suburb northwest of Phoenix, saw the light formation pass overhead at an altitude high enough to become obscured by the thin clouds. Amateur astronomer Mitch Stanley in Scottsdale, Arizona, also observed the high altitude lights "flying in formation" through a telescope. According to Stanley, they were quite clearly individual airplanes.

Approximately 10:00 pm that same evening, a large number of people in the Phoenix area reported seeing "a row of brilliant lights hovering in the sky, or slowly falling". A number of photographs and videos were taken, prompting author Robert Sheaffer to describe it as "perhaps the most widely witnessed UFO event in history".

Frances Barwood, who was the former Phoenix city councilwoman in 1997 and who launched an investigation into the event, said that out of the more than **700 witnesses** she interviewed, "The government never interviewed even one."

Governor's response

Shortly after the 1997 incident, Arizona Governor Fife Symington III held a press conference, joking that "they found who was responsible" and revealing an aide dressed in an alien costume.

Update

Monday, March 19, 2007

Former Arizona Governor says he saw a UFO during the 1997 Phoenix Lights

In a reversal of his original public statement in 1997, former Governor Fife Symington III said that he had witnessed one of the "craft of unknown origin" during the 1997 Phoenix Lights event, but noted that he didn't go public with the information. In an interview with the Daily Courier in Prescott, Fife said:

“It was enormous and inexplicable. Who knows where it came from? A lot of people saw it, and I saw it too. It was dramatic. And it couldn't have been flares because it was too symmetrical. It had a geometric outline, a constant shape.

Fife also noted that he did request information from the commander of Luke Air Force Base, the general of the National Guard, and the head of the Department of Public Safety. But none of the officials he contacted had an answer for what had happened, and were also "perplexed."

Fife Symington in 2007 on CNN publicly admitting he also saw "the Phoenix Lights"

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