

Renaud Leclét
**THE BELGIAN UFO WAVE
OF 1989-1992**
-A NEGLECTED HYPOTHESIS-



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THE CNEGU FILES

THE BELGIAN WAVE OF 1989-1992

A neglected hypothesis

FOREWORD

Our friend Renaud Leclot is prematurely deceased, leaving this text unfinished. Considering the great interest of his work, we decided to format it for publication. We endeavoured to respect scrupulously the opinions defended by the author, and the positions expressed hereafter are thus not necessarily ours. Notably, we cannot affirm that the helicopter hypothesis explains all the cases mentioned by Renaud. It is thus not a question of putting definitively to rest the Belgian wave, but of introducing into the debate a research track that had been neglected until now. When we considered it useful to bring certain precise details or supplementary information, we made a point of clearly distinguishing our contributions from the original text. This is why, other than minor modifications of style or presentation (displacements of sentences or paragraphs, for example), the added sentences and paragraphs are identified by a grey background.

The CNEGU, through its bulletin *Les Mystères de l'Est* and its internet site www.cnegu.fr.st, will keep the readers of this document informed about the reactions it will undoubtedly elicit in the ufological milieu.

Eric Maillot, Gilles Munsch, Jacques Scornaux and Wim van Utrecht

I. PROLOGUE

It is after having read the small book by Bertrand Méheust on the Belgian UFO wave (1) that I wanted to examine more closely the sightings that were at the root of it.

I agree with SOBEPS on an essential point: most sighting witnesses did see real objects in the Belgian sky and did not invent stories. However, this does not mean that they saw truly unknown craft. SOBEPS itself explained some sightings by planes, sky tracers of discotheques, street lamps, etc. Other explanations that were proposed by various ufologists (like a microlight, an airship, a drone, an AWACS plane or Venus) were quickly rejected by SOBEPS.

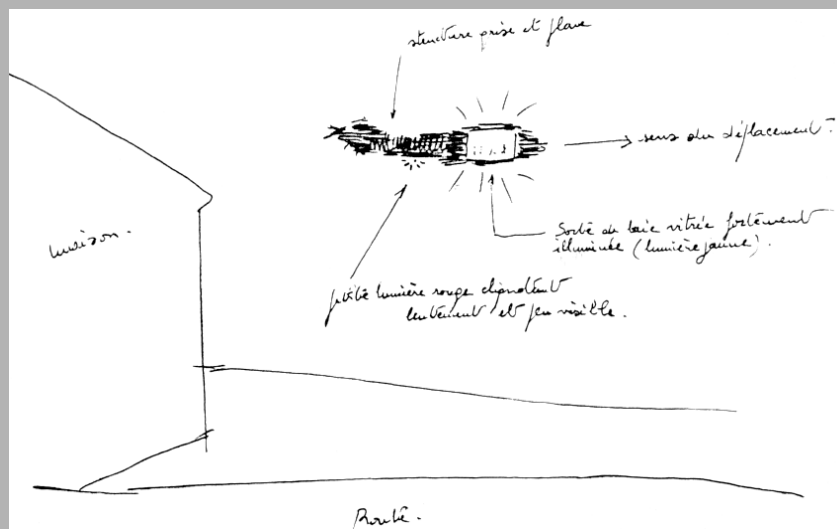
But I especially noticed that an explanatory track, that of helicopters, seemed to be left aside by SOBEPS as well as by the majority of the other searchers who looked into this wave. In this article, I propose to re-examine some sightings in the light of this hypothesis. I shall show that most of them probably are only mistakes generated by military helicopters (be they Belgian, American, German or Dutch). This article does not claim to explain all the sighting reports of alleged UFOs made in Belgium between 1989 to 1992, but only certain cases based on testimonies deemed "reliable" by SOBEPS.

Other cases undoubtedly have different causes. Does it mean that, among them, authentic unidentifiable objects are hidden? It would probably be a somewhat hasty conclusion, because the approach followed here to identify the cases that helicopters are likely to explain could be applied by other searchers to the study of cases ascribable to the sighting of other types of aircraft, to astronomical or meteorological phenomena, etc. What is sure is that the gaps Renaud highlights in SOBEPS work are to be found also in the other cases investigated by this association.

A last preliminary remark: in this article, the object distances and sizes will be quoted as they were indicated by the witnesses. It is important to keep in mind that most people are convinced they are able to estimate these parameters in a correct way though it is not the case. The figures given by the witnesses can approach reality when they see an object they identify perfectly, but very often deviate from reality when the object is not identified or misidentified.

II. THE TRACK OF THE HELICOPTERS

On October 4, 1992 around 6.45 p.m., a man and his wife were driving their car between Maransart and Waterloo. The sun had set and there was much wind. The driver noticed a strange yellowish luminous point located directly in line with the road. It seemed motionless and large (more or less the size of the full moon). At this place, the road begins to go down and the object disappeared behind the horizon. The driver decided to leave his usual road to take another one going to the place where the object had disappeared. He explained why to his wife and, a little farther, they saw the light that then appeared to them as integrated in a vast dark and elongated unit, where they could make out a tail and even ailerons. But the object speed was so slow that it could not be a plane. Finally, the two witnesses who drove then very slowly decided to stop for better observing. The object, that revealed only a greyish and fuzzy structure, as drowned in the fog, carried on moving slowly and noiselessly. The initial light seemed now to be on the side of the structure and looked like a broad elongated picture window brightly lit from inside. The driver somehow felt a "presence" behind this window. Under the structure, there was a flashing red light. The driver's initial anxiety, perhaps triggered by dreams full of flying saucers that it had made for ten years, gave way to a peaceful feeling: "it is only that", he thought. A painter with a higher education, he drew very precisely what he had seen. His sighting, illustrated by his sketch, was published in SOBEPS magazine (2), where, without the least hesitation, the investigator and the editors built a beautiful UFO case.



Drawing of the observed UFO (SOBEPS document)

We however have only to look at the picture with some hindsight to realize that it obviously represents a helicopter (3). Of course, the absence of noise seems strange. But every one of us had the opportunity, during his life, to realize that a weak wind blowing in the opposite direction is sometimes enough for weakening or even masking completely a loud noise. Now, on that day, there was a violent wind, it is clearly specified at the very beginning of the report. And it is lucky, because, as we shall see below, SOBEPS field investigations seldom give indications on this essential element that very often makes it possible to explain a complete absence of noise.

The case we have just described is typical and extremely interesting. We see that an element like the absence of noise was enough for mislaying SOBEPS ufologists and for making them believe that it was a UFO case, even if the sketch by one of the two witnesses pointed to a radically different obvious solution. This happens because SOBEPS people are deeply convinced, from the beginning, that they are faced with UFOs and because they examine and process the facts one-sidedly. All the more so for the witness whose dreams show clearly that he is so to speak impregnated with the existence of UFOs, and he will have communicated his anguish and his interrogations to his wife, influencing her in a quite precise direction.

Nobody can deny that such misidentifications of a banal phenomenon exist, taking into account the many examples found here and there in ufological investigations throughout the world. But it is more astonishing that such

evidences can remain unperceived by a whole committee of people publishing a ufological magazine considered as serious, and this makes it possible to think that other like cases, less easily identifiable, could also escape their attention. It is what Renaud will now show...



What the Maransart witnesses probably saw: a Black Hawk helicopter

III. SOME EXAMPLES

1. The lieutenant-colonel's 3D UFO

The famous case of Ernage took place on December 11, 1989 at 6.45 p.m. A lieutenant-colonel of the Army drove his car. He described a silent craft at an altitude of approximately 200 m and located at 300 m from him. The craft had three or four luminous panels, a headlight and other lights laid out in triangle on the bottom side. A red revolving light was situated about at the object centre. This craft followed an approximate north-south direction, coming from the radar tower of Cortil, and its estimated speed was 50 to 60 km/h (4). When looking at the photograph of some helicopters, one finds the four portholes on the sides.

Drawings representing the five flight phases of the craft reveal us what it more than probably was:

- The first phase shows a helicopter seen on side. It is thus logical to describe the luminous rectangular portholes.
- In the second phase, the helicopter turns on its right and lets appear its headlight with at the back a part of the rectangular portholes.
- In the third phase, the helicopter continues its turn and lets appear its three white lights and the red revolving light on the bottom side, with the headlight still visible.
- In the fourth phase, the helicopter shows its complete lower face as it moves away.
- In the fifth phase, the helicopter continues to move away and one sees nothing any more but the red revolving light (5).

The witness says that it did not hear noise even when the craft was at the nearest. It should be noted however that his wife had just asked him to start again the car engine. The engine noise and a wind direction going from the witnesses towards the craft could weaken or mask completely the helicopter noise.

If this craft made a turn on itself, wasn't it to put itself in line with the military traffic route that goes from St Géry to Corroy-le-Château, where stands precisely a beacon for pilots during a flight at low altitude? (6) To the south-east of Corroy and Ernage lie the suburbs of Namur, where are situated five medical and two civilian heliports.

The pseudo-UFO of Ernage presents similarities with another UFO that was seen at Le Thoronet, in the Var department (France) on October 28, 1975. A headlight, three lit portholes and a red flashing light on the bottom side were seen. Michel Figuet and Eric Maillot concluded independently that this UFO is probably explained by the misidentification of a French Army helicopter (7).

Did SOBEPS ask the Belgian Air Force (BAF) whether it had a helicopter around Ernage on December 11, 1989 at 6.45 p.m. before speaking about a UFO? There is no indication that it did...



On the left: phases 1 to 5 of the sighting by lieutenant-colonel Andre Amond of an alleged UFO above Ernage; computer pictures by the Centre Laïque de l'Audiovisuel (© CLAV); phase 5 added by Wim van Utrecht.

On the right: scale model of a helicopter with three white lights and a red light in the centre (luminous effects added by computer; © Caelestia, 2002).

The weather data of December 11-12, 1989 provided by the Royal Weather Institute at Uccle (near Brussels) inform us that there was fog at Bierset, Gosselies and Chièvres on December 11 (horizontal visibility lower than 200 m at the time of its maximum opacity). The presence of local veils of fog above the fields around Ernage at the sighting time cannot thus be excluded. Light sources that show through a fog layer can appear larger than they actually are. The fog can also explain why the object itself remained invisible.

The helicopter type that looks the most like the observed phenomenon is the SA-330 Puma of BAF, with its four rectangular portholes on the sides and its light laid in triangle on the bottom side. Admittedly it does not have a red light at the centre. We however know that the Belgian Puma was then equipped with an infrared detection system (8): couldn't it emit a reddish glow when on? If so, it would be a possible explanation of the strange red light so often pointed out during the wave, notably by the gendarmes of Eupen on November 29, 1989. Another possibility is that we have to do with a laser system used for topographic or altimetric measurements. Such a system produces a revolving red light. Let us also note that in some sightings, the witnesses place the red light more at the rear of the object. And let us finally specify that the number and the precise position of the lights can vary for a same helicopter type.



Puma helicopter of the Portuguese Army. The three lights laid in triangle are clearly visible (CENAP document)

Even if, in some cases, there was no helicopter having the same number of lights and in the same position as indicated by the witnesses, would it invalidate Renaud's hypothesis? We do not think so, because testimonies, even coming from serious and qualified people, are far from having always a photographic precision. Moreover, pieces of information obtained between the sighting and the testimony recording can be integrated in good faith in the account. Though it is unquestionable that little details can reveal the identity of the object that caused a misidentification, it is equally well verified that misinterpretations of one or more details exist in many recognized misidentifications as UFO. Consequently, isn't it unwise to interpret in a literal way the least details given by the witness (or their layout) and to conclude that no known phenomenon can account for the whole sighting? In so doing, the risk appears large to us that one sees an unknown phenomenon where there is perhaps none.

2. The "oared" UFO of Jupille-sur-Meuse

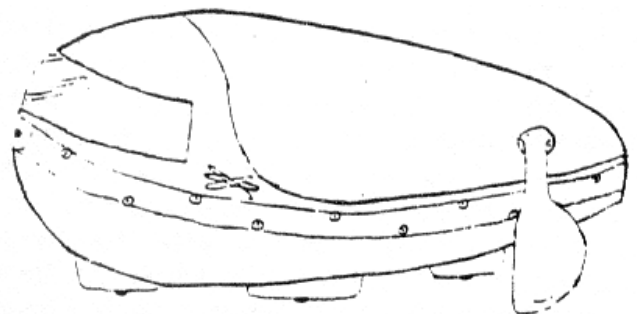
On December 12, 1989, at 2.15 a.m., an inhabitant of Jupille-sur-Meuse heard a strange noise. He went out and saw in the sky an object hovering at 10 metres from the ground above a road at approximately 80 metres from him. The sighting witness made a drawing of the craft, that was dull grey and egg-shaped with a dark-coloured window or windshield. The witness distinguished a kind of metallic grey aileron or "oar" at the rear of the windshield. Three searchlights were seen on the lower face (9).

A colleague ufologist, Eric Maillot, identified this craft as being a helicopter of the Belgian or German Air Force. Belgian Sea Kings are based at Koksijde (on the North Sea coast) and the dull grey-coloured Sea Kings with orange parts of the German armed forces are based at Kiel, that is to the north-east of Jupille-sur-

Meuse, but much farther. On photographs, the similarities with the witness' description and drawing are striking. For me too, the witness definitely saw a Sikorsky Sea King. But why such a craft would have been in the middle of the night at Jupille-sur-Meuse, hovering at 10 metres above the ground? I acknowledge that I don't know why. But there is every indication that it was really there. On the Sea King, there is indeed, as described by the witness, an aileron that is used as a wheel cover and three headlights in triangle in the front of the lower face. The badge of these helicopters usually lies on the right-hand door for entering the cockpit, that is at the precise place where the witness described three ellipses. There is, on these medical helicopters of the Belgian Army, not three ellipses but a red cross on a white background. As the witness likely saw the badge at a distance of 80 metres, it is difficult to believe than he could see of what it was really made up. Didn't he embellish a little his account? It has to be noted that he also spoke about a trace in a meadow that nobody else saw. I also add that the noise heard by the witness and other people that night (a thud noise, a noise of chains, etc...) is fairly similar to a helicopter noise. Finally and curiously, there is also the fact that military people hastened to come and make an investigation on the spot, without however questioning the witness, as if they had nothing to learn from him! Which was their conclusion on this sighting? Did they already know when arriving that the observed craft was a Belgian or German Sea King?



Sea King with red paint in its SAR version (above left) or with light grey paint (above right). Under a certain angle, the witness could not see the tail, what gives the craft the appearance of a horizontal ovoid from which protrudes the wheel cover and its oblique rod. Several details that are present on the Sea King were rightly memorized but are rather inexactly placed or reproduced on the sketch (the three headlights, the curve of the front underside, the windscreen, the badge...).



The "oared" UFO seen at Jupille-sur-Meuse. (SOBEPS document)

3. The UFO of Noiseux

On Sunday April 15, 1990 at 11 p.m., Mr. J.O..., from Noiseux, had his attention drawn by yellow spotlights laid out in triangle. The light was not blinding (10). The media described a craft flying at an altitude of 100 m that moved at a speed of 50 km/h (11). According to the witness, the craft seemed to develop a huge power. It disappeared in the night and was above the plain of Marche-en-Famenne, where there is an army ground... This ground is located exactly at the south-east of Noiseux, at about 1.7 km as the crow flies.

The hypothesis of a helicopter is to be checked for this sighting. The absence of noise could likely be explained by the distance between the craft and the witness.

Mr J.O... said he made signals to the craft with a flashlight. A spotlight winked several times in response to his calls. In an article on the A.L.A.T. (in France, Light Aviation of the Army) (12), it is indicated, concerning approach and landing, that the patrol leader asks for and checks the emission of light signals for authentication (machine-gun lamp). It would thus not be astonishing that a helicopter pilot of the Belgian Army uses the same procedure.

The newspaper *La Voix du Nord* of April 26, 1990 reports that the BAF Islander plane that was briefly put at the disposal of SOBEPS for UFO hunting, flew over the area without any result. If it is really a helicopter that was seen from Noiseux, its fast disappearance is not astonishing because it quite simply could have landed in the military camp. It would have been interesting, at the time, to have a confirmation from the military authorities. But another hypothesis can be considered: there are, close to Marche-en-Famenne, three medical heliports and a civilian heliport that are all at the south-west, less than 5 km from the army ground. Civilian helicopter flights are forbidden after 11 p.m., but a landing in one of the medical heliports is possible. Nothing indicates that SOBEPS made a check; and if it did it, it has to prove it.

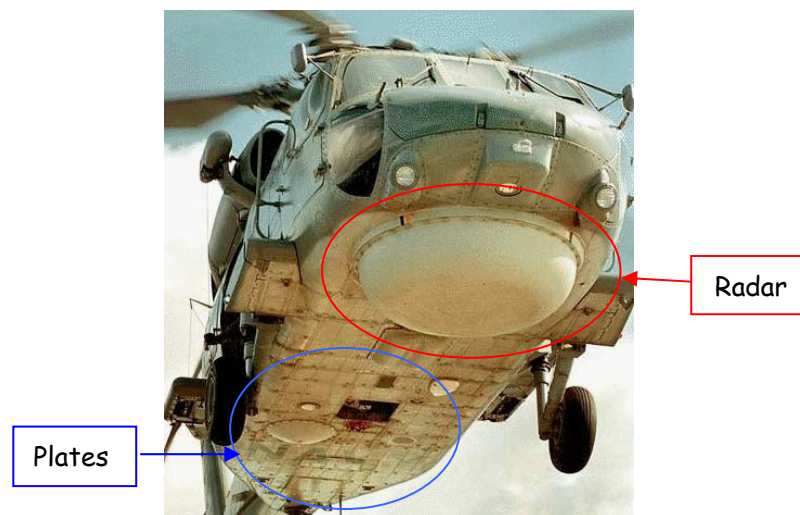
But there are also some contradictions that can enlighten us about the intrinsic value of this testimony as a real UFO sighting. The Noiseux sighting was dated, in the press, Sunday April 15, 1990. SOBEPS dates this sighting April 16, 1990. According to the media, the witness said to have seen the craft above the army ground of Marche-en-Famenne, therefore at about 1.7 km from him, and at an altitude of 100 m. He specified that within 100 metres from him, in a farm, it could see light. SOBEPS indicates that the craft was 100 metres away from the witness. Who confused the figures? In view of the precise details given in the press, it may well be SOBEPS. In the press, it is said that the craft did not make noise. On the other hand, SOBEPS indicates that the witness heard a light humming similar to a choked electric motor. The press says that the craft was big-sized. SOBEPS gives a width of about 50 m, but says nothing about the length. It speaks about a mass looking like a metal sheet, whereas in the press, the witness describes a kind of trapezoid, provided with two yellow lamps and a red one, that constituted in his opinion the craft structure. No mention of a sheet structure appears in the press of April 26, 1990. There are here many contradictions or inaccuracies, not to mention the omissions (was there wind?) detrimental to a nearly certain identification.

4. An aircraft carrier flying upside down

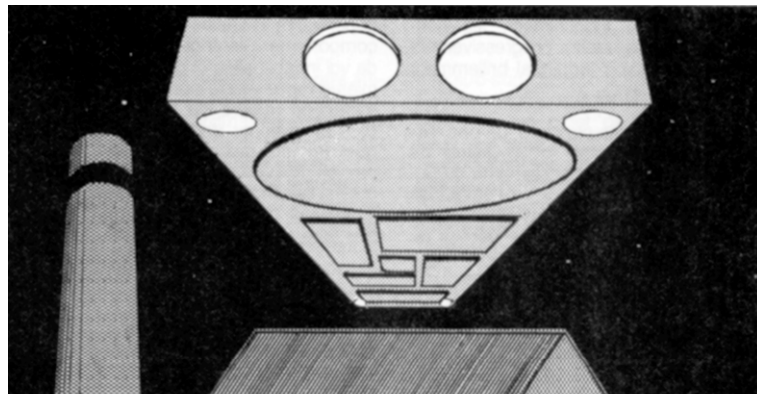
This sighting took place on April 23, 1990 around 11.45 p.m., between Tournai and Mons, above the Bataille fertilizer factory at Basècles. The night shift saw two very powerful big-sized headlights. The UFO speed was slow (between 30 and 40 km/h). Two headlights were situated on the front face of what the witnesses described as a "reversed aircraft carrier" 100 m high and trapezoid-shaped, having a 50 m wide lower base and a 30 m wide upper base. This is the most plausible description that emerges when one tries to solve contradictions between the two accounts given by SOBEPS (13) and between these accounts and the illustration. The unit was grey-coloured.

The two headlights delimited, according to the witnesses, the beginning of a rectangular platform, of which the length would have amounted to hundreds of metres! It seemed to them that there were 6 to 7 structures shaped like rectangular plates, and a big circular plate occupied almost the whole width of the lower face. This plate was accompanied by two circular zones of orange light. The witnesses did not hear any noise and there was no air displacement when the craft passed by. It left towards Tournai. The sighting lasted between 1 minute 30 and 2 minutes. The absence of noise is perhaps not significant, because the sighting place is an industrial park that is never strictly speaking quiet.

The "strange" structures seen under the UFO exist under various large carrier helicopters, like the Chinook. The position of the two headlights and the circular plate evoke the helicopter SH-60 B Sea Hawk of the American Navy.



The SH-60 B Sea Hawk



The "reversed aircraft carrier" observed at Basècles (SOBEPS document)

The two other lights, on the lower face, also exist. The large circular plate quite visible on the drawing is nothing else than a radar. The grey colour is also the colour adopted by the American Navy. Finally, the small red light is also present on this helicopter. So there are a number of similarities between the hypothetical UFO and the American Sea Hawk. Dimensions of the Sea Hawk are roughly 12.50 m in length and 5.23 m in height (depending on the versions). We are admittedly very far from the dimensions reported by SOBEPS, but experienced field investigators know or should know that the witnesses always tend to overestimate the size of an object that they do not recognize and that fascinates or frightens them. If the UFO size as it was reported had been exact, how a so huge craft would have been seen only by so few people in this area and the surrounding villages? The headlights power was surely also overestimated (just as in the sighting by the gendarmes of Eupen, over which I shall go back later on).

A corridor for military craft in low-altitude flight exists to the south of Basècles; its direction is south-east to north-west. The sighting witnesses say that the UFO went from Mons towards Tournai, therefore about from the south-east to the north-west, which is perhaps not a mere chance... At Tournai there is a zone temporarily reserved for special military activities and two medical heliports...

The same night, around 1.45 a.m., two gendarmes and night watchmen saw a triangle that emitted a horizontal white beam and another beam shedding light downwards. It headed towards Baudour at a speed of 40 to 80 km/h (14). Would this be the same craft as that seen by the factory workers in Basècles? The two gendarmes estimated the UFO size at 15 metres. The craft emitted a weak thud noise like the noise of a drier. The UFO was also seen from Ghlin around 1.55 a.m., taking the direction of the SHAPE. To the north-east of Ghlin, there is a medical heliport, as well as the SHAPE, at Maisières, that also has a medical heliport.

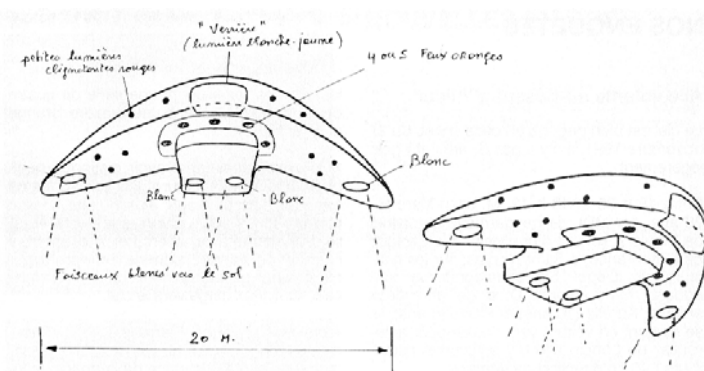
The SHAPE being a NATO body, an American helicopter seems to me to be a plausible hypothesis for these sightings. SOBEPS does not appear to have thought about it. If it did check this hypothesis, by approaching the BAF, it has to prove it.

5. The craft from out there ?

On November 27, 1991, between 6.05 and 6.12 p.m., a UFO was seen near Alleur. The sighting witness was close to the Loncin interchange, on the E 40 motorway. He pointed out that the Bierset airport was very near (15). He did not realize how close he was to the truth: the UFO was exactly in the northern axis of the Bierset runway. The drawing of the UFO, and notably the position of lights on the lower face, make think of a Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopter of the American Army. The witness says he distinguished structures under the UFO, like metal sheets, kinds of assembly plates and a square mass. All these details are visible on the lower face of the Black Hawk (16). The pattern of the anti-collision lights and the appearance of the headlights of the Black Hawk also correspond to the lights seen under the UFO.



The Sikorsky Black Hawk



The object seen at Alleur (SOBEPS document)

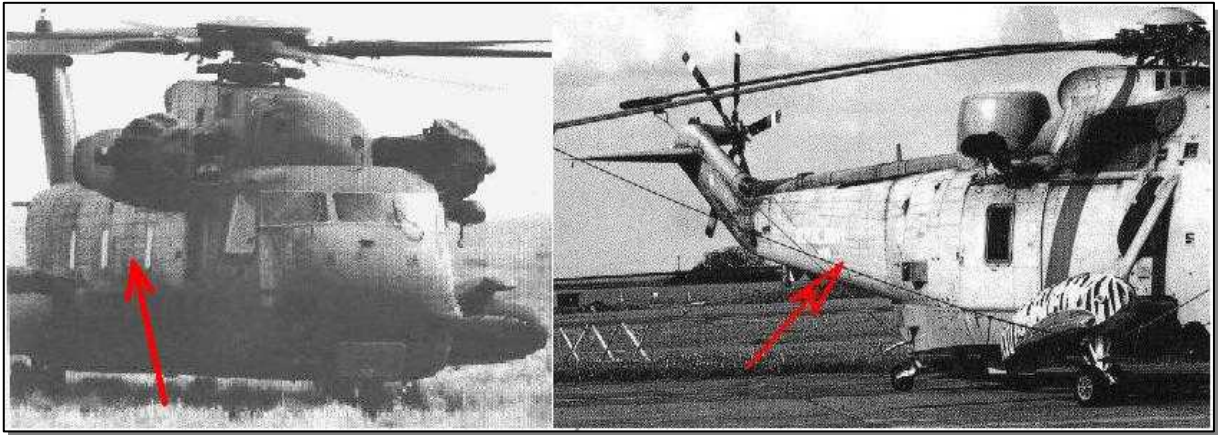
6. November 29, 1989 sightings

a) The beginning

The time is come to examine the famous day of November 29, 1989, that was the starting point of the Belgian UFO wave. I shall review the sightings and try to put them in their chronological and geographical framework (17).

The first one happened around 4 p.m.. Mrs Marie F..., from Jalhay, saw a grey object 500 metres away from her in the direction of Jehanster, at the west. It went down slowly and silently at an angle towards the ground. Some tens of metres from the ground, before “crashing”, it straightened up, as if it followed the ground relief. The object came to a halt, then restarted while going up. It moved away towards the north-east, travelling approximately 1 km within 2 or 3 minutes towards the Gileppe lake. Its estimated size was 3.5 cm at arm’s length. The craft had a cigar shape tapered at both ends. A sizeable part of the fuselage wore a “wire netting” or was made up of small “faceted” panels or mirrors. No light was visible.

I shall firstly point out that a helicopter is able to go into a dive, to straighten up at 10 metres from the ground and to follow the ground relief. Seeing it as “silver plated” can come from reflections of the sun on a grey painting and on the portholes. At 4 p.m., the sun was at a height of 3° in the 228° azimuth (south-west). The craft became dark as soon as it did no longer reflect the sun rays. The fuselage part described as a “wire netting” also reminds the aspect of some helicopters. In Bill Gunston’s book (18), we can see that this “wire netting” exists on a great number of these craft, as for example the Puma, the CH-53 Super Stallion, the CH-47 Chinook or the Black Hawk.



Examples of helicopter fuselages giving the impression of a wire netting:
 Super Stallion on the left, Sea King on the right

Concerning the sighting I have just described, it thus could be a military helicopter. Let's point out that the craft seen by the witness was around Jehanster. However there was precisely a military field north of Jehanster, exactly between Jehanster and Stembert in the Jalhay wood. Mere chance?

At 5.20 p.m., on the Verviers-Battice motorway, Mrs M... saw an object the distance of which remained unspecified. No direction was given. The UFO was elongated with three luminous rectangles laid out in its length, "like luminous windows". There was a red flashing light at one end. The three rectangular portholes are characteristic of the American Army Sikorsky Black Hawk. The red flashing light also exists on this helicopter. I however do not affirm anything for the moment. I merely note these similarities and suggest a hypothesis not explored up to now...

Around 5.50 p.m., in the Battice area, on the E40 motorway, two gendarmes of the Eupen brigade saw a very luminous motionless point in the direction of Verviers. Initially, they thought of a helicopter. The craft appeared to follow them until 6 p.m. It had two headlights and one light at the back, as well as a small flashing red light. The two white lights and the third at the back are clearly visible on the lower face of the Sikorsky Black Hawk (19). One of the witnesses reports that the craft went up towards Vaals, very close to Aachen.

Considering these descriptions, one can consider as possible that it is indeed an American Black Hawk that flew over the Verviers area at that time. Aachen is a Belgian military base that has helicopters (20) and it can be used by NATO forces during manoeuvres.

Around 6.30 p.m., a triangle-shaped craft was seen in the north of Verviers by Mr S... and his mother. It had three powerful white headlights and an orange-red revolving light. Its flight direction was again east-west. At the west of Verviers, there is the military base of Bierset. At the same hour, Mr I... also saw this craft in the south-east of Verviers, going up towards Battice. From there, a helicopter can join and follow the E40 motorway (the motorways are lit at night in Belgium), ideal for flying visually and most easily going back to Bierset or joining the German border.

Several craft were seen going up to Battice at 4.40, 5.20 and 5.50 p.m.. Between 6.30 and 6.45 p.m., the sightings at Jalhay and Baelen can be also explained by a helicopter with its headlights on. The Baelen witness distinguishes also a small red light at the top of the craft cupola, red light (anti-collision light) that is on the top of the tail rotor or of the cockpit according to the craft type. The witness also hears a noise like that of a sewing machine, noise that confirms it could be a helicopter. At Aubel, to the north-west of Baelen, another craft is seen at 6.40 p.m. It flies slowly, at low altitude, with a regular and thud noise. The flight direction is south-east to north-west. It is possible that it is the same helicopter.

I now come to the famous sightings by gendarmes of the Eupen brigade. Several distinct phases are to be distinguished in these sightings. Let us examine each one in particular...

PHASE 1

At 5.20 p.m., on the N68 road, Hubert von Montigny and Heinrich Nicoll were in their patrol vehicle near Kettenis, when they were surprised to see a craft with three lights laid out in triangle moving at low altitude. The gendarmes initially thought they were seeing a helicopter, but as they did not hear any noise, they changed their mind for a UFO... It is at least what SOBEPS tells in *VOB 1*, p.17, where it is said: “*It is the silence of the craft that astonishes most the two gendarmes, they do not hear anything that exceeds the noise of the car and of the road traffic*”. Let us notice that several vehicles overtook the gendarmes and that the noise they made would already have been enough to mask that of a helicopter.

Another witness, Mr D..., who saw the same craft above Eupen, reported that he did hear a noise. But in reading the daily newspaper *Le Soir* of December 1, 1989, one discovers another version of the facts: during the sighting, the two gendarmes were struck by the weak noise of the craft, that was only a light humming, comparable to an electric motor noise. This contradiction is of the utmost importance! Why such a change in the testimony reported well afterwards by SOBEPS? Mere error or embarrassing detail for the UFO hypothesis? The existence of a noise was also confirmed by Werner Walter, a German skeptical ufologist. During an interview given by gendarme Nicoll to the CENAP ufologist, the witness confirmed to have heard a noise “*like that of a shaver or a mower*”. According to Walter, who favours the hang glider hypothesis, that clearly points to a motorized hang glider (21). It seems to me that it can also point to a helicopter! An investigation by Mr Vantuyne on December 9, 1989 confirms that one of the two witnesses did hear a light buzz and that the structure behind the lights was dark green (22). This colour is typical of military helicopters.

And last but not least, on page 4 of *SOBEPS Flash* N°1 of February 1990, describing the sightings of November 29, 1989, it is said that gendarme Peter Nicholl (not to be confused with Heinrich Nicoll) “*clearly distinguished at the back of the craft something that revolved like a turbine and he heard a fan noise*”. The media did not speak about this turbine, nor about the fan noise heard by Peter Nicholl. SOBEPS, after having published these statements, will not make any mention of the turbine in its two books, but it will nevertheless speak about a “*shaft support for an airship propeller*”... The strange variations or disappearances of important details in SOBEPS publications are really astonishing!

The two witnesses seem to have focused on the overall structure of the craft but reported, according to *VOB 1*, that the adjacent corners at the triangle base were cut. The first report by the two gendarmes was published in the German-language Belgian daily newspaper *Grenz Echo* of December 1, 1989. However there was no mention of a triangular body behind the lights as SOBEPS asserts in *VOB 1*, p.17, where the two gendarmes speak about a platform equipped with three huge headlights.

In *Inforespace* N°83, p.11, it is said that a reconstitution of this sighting was made by an American television team. A large projector with a power of 140 000 W was used to light the road. According to the gendarmes, the light produced by the craft headlights was even stronger than this projector. How is it possible then that people who were in the other vehicles did not stop when faced with such a sight instead of overtaking the gendarmes' vehicle, as if nothing unusual was occurring? It therefore seems that we have here an exaggeration in a testimony given a long time after the facts, which is rather frequent.

The two gendarmes called the Eupen barracks to ask whether there were any manoeuvres “with special craft” in the Elsenborn camp that is at the south of Eupen. They were answered that no operation was taking place with “special craft”. The helicopter is thus not excluded, as it cannot be considered as a “special craft”, but as a perfectly conventional one, even if it had been of a type seldom used in Belgium. In any case, if these operations were secret, nothing proves that the truth would have been said to the gendarmes.

It is a pity that the gendarmes did not ask whether there were helicopters in flight in the surroundings, as they had originally believed to have to do with a helicopter. And yet this information was of major importance, because a confirmation that military helicopters operated in the neighbourhood of the Gileppe lake would

have made it possible to identify at once the craft that moved towards the northern zone of the military training camp of Elsenborn.

This camp is surrounded by :

- 1) a prohibited military area,
- 2) a danger area,
- 3) a restricted area,
- 4) a temporary military area or special activity area.

The Eupen UFO moved towards area 4 that is the largest. This area outside the Elsenborn camp is at the south of Eupen and borders the Gileppe lake to the east.

PHASE 2

From behind a window of the barracks, the two gendarmes saw around 6 p.m. a UFO in the azimuth 166° , in direction of the old slaughterhouse, i.e. of Rotenberg. Auguste Meessen (23) and, afterwards, Bertrand Méheust (24) point out that this does not correspond to the position of Venus. However a star is exactly in the azimuth 166° at 6 p.m.: it is Fomalhaut of the Southern Fish, of which the magnitude is -1,2 to -1,7 (25). Fomalhaut was one of the most brilliant stars in the sky at that time, after Venus.

PHASE 3

An explanation was also proposed for the sighting phase above the Gileppe lake, from Kortenbach: it comes from Paul Vanbrabant (26). According to him, the motionless white ball above the tower of the Gileppe lake was the planet Venus. At 6.30 p.m., Venus was at a height of 6° in an azimuth of 217° , that is to say a reasonable deviation of 11° from the site indicated by the witnesses. All the more so that the gendarmes are unsure about the exact position (one of them locates the UFO at the left of the tower, the other one just above) and that the time at which they arrived at Kortenbach is not known with certainty. Some sources lead to think that the sighting from this place began well before 6.30 p.m., and in this case Venus would have been located in the exact direction where the UFO was seen. According to the witnesses, the UFO was visible until 7.23 p.m.. However, at 7.23 p.m., Venus was setting in an azimuth of 227° and at a height of 1° in the south-west, as by chance. In their report, the gendarmes say they did not see Venus. For me, they saw Venus disappearing at 7.23 p.m. and not a UFO.

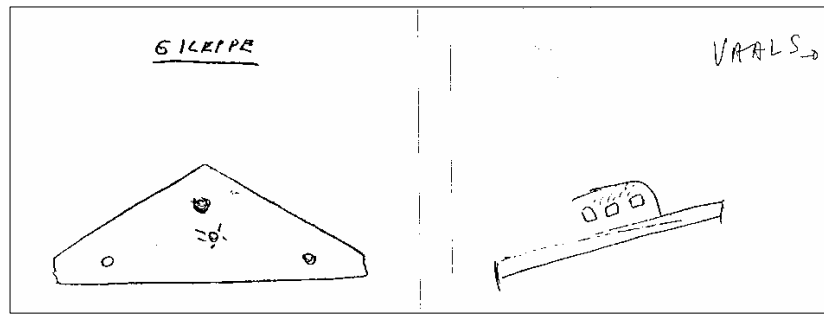
In an article sent to SOBEPS for publication and in mails with various searchers, Wim van Utrecht wonders whether the two “reddish points” that moved horizontally on each side of the white light cannot be explained by a phenomenon of atmospheric optics. The symmetry of the sight for the observers and the reddish colour seem to confirm this possibility (27). Let us also note that according to the investigation of P. Vantuyne, quoted in note 22, what the gendarmes saw was far from being as clear as it appears in Pr Meessen’s investigation (28). The question of the white ball and of the reddish beams and points seen above the Gileppe lake continues to give rise to an intense debate between ufologists and skeptics (29).

PHASE 4

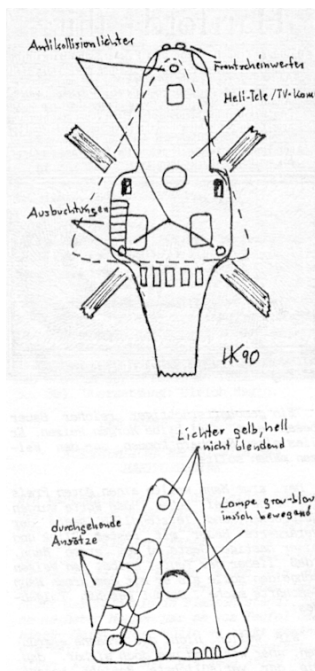
At 6.45 p.m., whereas the white ball was still above the lake, another UFO appeared above a fir wood. After a light turn, it exposed its superstructure in which the two gendarmes distinguished a cupola at the centre of a not very thick plate. The cupola was fitted with “rectangular windows” (according to von Montigny), or “round windows” (according to Nicoll), lit from the inside. Then the object moved away to the north.

In the direction from which the UFO came, there was at the time the military field of the Jalhay wood. The civilian airfield of Spa-Malchamps is in line with the axis Kortenbach – dam belvedere. It is possible that the object is the helicopter seen in the first sighting phase (or another of the same type). The cupola with rectangular portholes is typical of the CH-53 Super Stallion and other large carrier craft like the Puma, the Super Frelon and the Sikorsky Black Hawk. A likely case of misidentification of a Puma SA 330 took place in Coblenz in Germany on February 21, 1990, 115 km to the east-south-east of Eupen. In this case, the witnesses’ drawing was rather similar so what the Eupen witnesses described and drew (30).

The craft moved away towards the north of Eupen. As seen before, the objects also took this direction in the sightings of Spa-Verviers.



The UFO that suddenly appeared from a wood at 6.45 p.m.
 (drawings made by the witnesses during the interview with P. Vantuynne on December 9, 1989)



Lights on the lower face of a Puma helicopter compared with lights of a UFO seen at Coblenz in Germany (source: see note 30).
 The central light seen at Coblenz was greyish blue and came very probably from a “heli-tele” system, that is made up of a camera equipped with a high-power zoom, put on a swivelling platform under the helicopter.
 This monitoring system is able to work at night by using infrared rays.

b) Other witnesses at Eupen

At 5.30 p.m. at Eupen, Mr A... and another people saw a craft with two powerful “headlights” at the front, and another at the back. The witnesses saw the underside of the object. Its speed was slow and Mr A... estimated the altitude at 150 metres or perhaps less. According to SOBEPS, the object came from the direction of Walhorn/Kettenis to the north-north-east of Eupen and moved towards the Gileppe (31). According to *VOB 1*, pp.21-22, Mr A... thought of a “big helicopter”, like those that land regularly in the park of the Eupen hospital, located in the direction followed by the object. Other testimonies describe a light at the front and two lights at the back. Helicopters pilots can light any headlights that are on the lower face of the craft. The pattern of headlights and side-lights varies according to the helicopter model.

Like many other witnesses who initially believed to see a helicopter, Mr A... changed his mind when he realized that the craft did not emit any noise. When the object tilted, he could see its upper part in profile. Dome-shaped, it comprised 5 or 6 portholes (perhaps more) having a shape of elongated vertical rectangles, that were partly hidden by the remainder of the object structure. The colour of the portholes was orange. It happens that an American helicopter belonging to the German military forces, the Sikorsky CH-53 Super Stallion, has 5 square portholes (the one on the cabin side is rather rectangular). The witness saw the portholes when the craft turned, therefore the impression they are rectangular. The portholes can be hidden in their central part by the rather big landing gear protruding on each side.

Concerning the absence of noise, it could be attenuated by the wind (SOBEPS did not give ANY information relating to the wind for the sightings of November 29, 1989), by a temperature inversion and by the ambient street noise. The other witnesses, the gendarmes and Mr D..., who saw the same UFO at the same time above Eupen, flying at 60 to 70 km/h less than 200 metres from them, reported to have heard a light noise, but only when the object was very close to them. Mr D... did not hear this noise whereas he was driving, but he sought to check and he went out of his vehicle. He described this noise as a wind noise (wfffff), that is very compatible with the noise of a helicopter rotor attenuated by one of the causes indicated above.

Mr D... declared that the craft had strongly impressed him. What he saw was massive and powerful. The American or German Sikorsky CH-53 Super Stallion is very massive; the fuselage length is 20.47 metres and its height between 7.60 and 8.66 metres. The CH-53 is the most powerful helicopter manufactured out of the ex-Soviet Union; it can carry up to 55 soldiers. It has four lights at the front and two at the back. It also has two enormous lights on its lower part (32). Another helicopter type has six rectangular portholes on the sides: it is a French helicopter, the Super Puma & Cougar, that the Dutch armed forces bought (33). Mr D... also reported a small flashing red light in the middle of the UFO. This small light is also visible on the helicopters, its place varying according to types.

Mr A... said that the craft moved towards Eupen hospital. How is it that SOBEPS did not ask the hospital whether a helicopter had landed there on November 29, 1989 at 5.30 p.m., as witnesses said investigators that they knew helicopters used to land in this hospital? Two mails, one by Marc Hallet and the other by myself, were sent to Eupen hospital to have a confirmation that a helicopter did land between 5.30 and 5.45 p.m. on that date. No answer was received.

Another witness confirmed that the UFO did come from Germany. Indeed, this November 29, between 5 and 5.30 p.m., a gendarme at the border post of Lichtenbusch observed, coming from Germany, an object at a very low altitude, with two or three headlights. He also initially thought it was a helicopter circulating between the hospitals of Eupen and Aachen and he wondered why this one flew so low with such powerful headlights.

At 5.45 p.m., between the Belgian and German border posts, Mr J..., who came back from Aachen by N3 road, described an elongated form resembling a helicopter profile with a cupola at the front but without rotor or other external structures. The sun being set since one hour, perhaps Mr J... did not see these structures in the already black night. He reported that the craft did not make noise. But it has to be underlined that the witness drove his car and that the noise surrounding him could easily cover that of a helicopter. Let us notice that to the east of Eupen, on the other side of the border, there are German and American NATO bases (34).

Later on, around 7.20 p.m., two other gendarmes, Peter Nicholl and Dieter Plumans, saw a craft that they took for the Awacs. The Awacs plane is used as cover for fighters, bombers and... helicopters during manoeuvres or in war time. Awacs generally guides the other craft towards targets like sites to be bombed or enemy planes. In the Eupen area, many people think they have seen a UFO that resembled a helicopter and another craft that resembled an Awacs. If these craft were indeed in night operation above Belgium, it would have been easy, at that time, to find their starting bases, as the first craft seen in the Belgian sky came from Germany. It will be seen later on that there is a great confusion on this subject.

Dieter Plumans says to have "*distinctly seen a red ball leaving the triangular craft and going down before rushing horizontally at a right angle*". Auguste Meessen considers this as one of the oddest aspects of the Belgian wave. Wim van Utrecht suggested that it was merely a rather faithful description of a flare dropped from a helicopter (35).



A Dutch Cougar helicopter ejects two flares above the North Sea. This type of flare is used to deviate heat-seeking missiles (source: *Onze Luchtmacht*, vol. 51, N°3, June-July 1999, p.40)

c) Liège and its area

At 6.10 p.m., Mrs L..., at Alleur, saw successively four objects with huge white lights. They came from the east and followed the E40 motorway. The witness considered as abnormal their slowness and the headlights intensity (36). Here we have four craft coming from the east (thus perhaps from Germany), i.e. the same direction as the helicopter that was seen at Eupen this same day between 5 and 5.30 p.m.. Didn't they head for the Bierset airfield that is to the west of Liège? Wouldn't these four new "UFOs" be compatible with helicopters?

A UFO with four great rectangular surfaces (portholes?) was seen close to the Bierset military airfield, around 6.40 p.m. The witness, Mr H..., did not hear noise but he was in a vehicle running at high speed. Farther, near the Loncin interchange, he saw another craft identical to that seen close to Bierset. Back at home, He phoned to the Bierset base for having the confirmation that a landing had taken place. The answer was negative. But did Mr H... ask whether helicopters flew close to the base? I don't know!





Two sights of the movie *Lost Voyage*, by Christian McIntyre, 2001: it comprises three sequences where one sees, in computer animation, a Chinook helicopter manoeuvring, of a type close to those that were perhaps partly responsible for the Belgian wave... The first sight shows the helicopter in profile: the side portholes as well as the headlights under the fuselage can be seen. The second allows to distinguish the structure of the craft underside, that comprises a kind of square pattern.

At 6.50 p.m., near Ans to the north-west of Liège, Mrs B... heard a “soft humming” as from an electric motor. The object colour was very dull grey aluminium (like the Spa-Verviers UFO), and four large lights lit the ground. She estimated its speed at 20 km/h. A small red light flashed on its underside. The object had just disappeared when another one, certified copy of the first, appeared. At 7 p.m., Mr C... saw near the Wandre bridge, at Herstal to the north of Liège, a UFO that moved slowly at an estimated height of 150 metres. It carried a series of white lights and several “portholes” became lit at the end of the sighting.

Two other witnesses, at Rocourt and Alleur, to the north-west of Liège, had already seen a UFO at 6 p.m. (37). The Alleur witness reported that it had heard a continuous light thud noise coming from the object, which agrees well with a helicopter. Did SOBEPS ask Bierset whether the radar had picked up these craft or whether BAF was aware that military helicopters were close to the airfield? Nothing points to it.

We have here objects that too strongly resemble helicopters, with their portholes and their lights, in operation above Liège and the immediate surroundings of the Bierset military airfield, to be any other thing than what they appeared to be.

d) Helicopters and military operations

There are much too many UFOs near the Bierset base for this being a mere chance. Could military people of Bierset confirm whether there really were helicopter flights from their base with precise dates and hours to be compared with UFO sightings? An answer to this question reached me on December 13, 2002, from the Bierset military airfield, through the Belgian searcher Marc Hallet. In this answer, military people indicated that the files concerning flights older than five years are not preserved any more. It is thus now too late for obtaining this confirmation, and undoubtedly others of the same kind coming from other bases.

As far as I am concerned, I think that during the wave, some Belgian military people knew about helicopter flights, be the craft Belgian, German or American, but that they did not want to speak about it. Or perhaps didn't they establish the link, too unbelievable for them, between the helicopters and the UFOs? For soldiers, helicopter flights do not have anything abnormal and thus it could be logical that they never thought of this possibility.

Ufologists, especially in the United States, want to make believe that military people hide UFOs. But if military people (be they American, Belgian or other) really hide something, it is their own craft when they are in operation, be it secret or not. A real black out is thus possible if manoeuvres took place in Belgium with foreign craft.

At the time of the Gulf war, a secret agreement that authorized the Americans to fly over the Belgian territory without requiring any authorization was reminded. Previously, the authorities and SOBEPS had on the contrary and thus wrongfully affirmed that no American or other plane could fly over the Belgian territory without authorization.

It was even on the basis of this false assertion that SOBEPS rejected any explanation by a military origin that was proposed by skeptics.

Lieutenant-colonel Wilfried De Brouwer spoke as follows about the sightings of November 29, 1989: *"No sighting was made by military aircraft or by airliners that flew over the Eupen area (...) The BAF staff denies that the UFOs are connected with military operations that would take place in the Elsenborn area, no military plane or helicopter flew at the hours quoted by UFO witnesses"* (38). Let us notice that the colonel does not say anything that can be suspected of being false: there was indeed no UFO sighting "in the Elsenborn area"! He is careful not to speak about Eupen, Verviers or Liège-Bierset! The Bierset military airfield confirmed that there was no Awacs in flight on November 29, 1989 at the time indicated by the Eupen gendarmes, namely 5.30 p.m.. There would thus have been no risk for helicopters to be located by an Awacs radar!

It should be specified that the 17 Awacs planes based at Geilenkirchen (Germany, only 25 km from the Belgian border) belong to NATO and are thus not under BAF command. It would be interesting to know whether the Geilenkirchen base staff warns BAF about each flight of its Awacs above Belgium...

As if in view to embarrass lieutenant-colonel W. De Brouwer, the Belgian press reported that an Awacs based at Geilenkirchen had flown over the area on November 29, 1989. It has been said that this Awacs had been alerted by the Bierset base, that took advantage of its passage, but that it detected nothing. Another source reported that the Awacs had taken off from Geilenkirchen and that a spot would have appeared on a screen of the Bierset radar. The same source reported on the following day that there was no Awacs on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 November in the Eupen area (39). If one would have wanted to hide something by giving the impression that nothing was hidden, one would certainly have come to similar obvious contradictions!

Eventually, was there an Awacs in the Eupen area on November 29 and 30, 1989? Neither the Belgian press, nor BAF will bring us a certainty and even less SOBEPS that never stated an Awacs could have flown over the Eupen area on these dates. A witness said to have seen the Awacs on November 29, 1989 at Sart Tilman, close to Liège. This Awacs would have taken off from Bierset and would have headed eastwards (40). The time at which this sighting would have taken place is however unknown.

The Awacs was built in order to solve the problem of ground radars, namely that they do not detect all that flies too low. In flight, Awacs maintains a constant monitoring on friendly or enemy aircraft, within a radius larger than 300 km. This system is however not perfect: for example, its radar ignores the targets that move at a speed lower than 150 km/h.

The objects that flew over Belgium on November 29, 1989 could not be detected, neither by the ground radars (because they flew at low altitude) nor by the Awacs (because of their low speed). The extraterrestrial high technology is thus not the only one that was not easily detectable that evening.

Many UFO sightings took place in an area where there were several radars. The first thing a country would make in wartime would be to attack the radar installations and the communication systems of an enemy country by using helicopters, for example. To escape detection by ground radars and possible air radars, these helicopters would fly at low altitude and low speed. If the American or German armed forces wanted to test this technique in Belgium for the NATO, perhaps they did not ask for any prior authorization! (41)

It seems probable to me that people took the Awacs for a UFO (see the sightings of December 11 and 12, 1989) and that helicopters did everything to go unnoticed from the ground radars and the Awacs, as pilots in operation would have made. It is also possible that an Awacs guided helicopters during certain operations in order to test the NATO radars.

I think that there were helicopters in flight at low altitude in the Bierset area and that an Awacs also flew over this area at some time this November 29, 1989. I also think that the Bierset staff knew about these flights, but that they will report nothing about these operations, for obvious reasons that SOBEPS stubbornly did not want to take into account...

Is it plausible that foreign NATO craft could have flown over the Belgian territory without authorities at the level of lieutenant-colonel De Brouwer being informed? The fact is that he acknowledges in an interview he could not obtain any information from NATO neither during nor after the wave, and that the Defence Minister Guy Coëme, as early as July 21, 1990, asks the armed Forces to no longer communicate any information on the wave to the public (42). It is however Mr Coëme who had initially authorized BAF to work with SOBEPS... It is also him who a little later, in September 1990, forbade foreign craft to fly at an altitude of less than 150 metres above the Ardennes area, Belgian pilots remaining allowed to go down to 80 metres (43). This decision is officially made to prevent German pilots from coming over Belgium for training. But on December 15, 1989, Mr Coëme had ordered to BAF to investigate for trying to explain the mysterious aerial phenomena reported in Belgium and had announced on January 11, 1990 in *La Dernière Heure* that “the Air Force had definitively dismissed all the assumptions relating to the presence of military aircraft in the airspace of Belgium”. Did he therefore know in September 1990, according to the investigation results, that the UFO wave could be related to operations of German or American armed forces? Or was he in the meantime informed by NATO?

To make a penetration test in an assumed enemy territory, Belgium, as a very faithful ally of the United States, is an ideal training ground. If a problem occurs, it is undoubtedly the country where there is the least risk of protest from the authorities. Perhaps searchlights were deliberately lit, to see the reaction it would cause. The attribution of this luminous extravaganza to UFOs can constitute a perfect camouflage. It is thus not impossible that De Brouwer really knew about nothing.

IV. A CONTRADICTION THAT IS ONLY APPARENT

Of course, the helicopter hypothesis comes up against a big apparent contradiction: the absence of noise so often reasserted by SOBEPS people.

However, a lot of witnesses were unable to judge, either because they were in closed or noisy places, because a head wind probably blew, or because the helicopter was positioned above a temperature inversion layer, that reflected the sound waves upwards. For November 29, 1989, weather records indicate that there was an inversion layer of that evening (44). Alas, SOBEPS investigations are often characterized by a serious lack of information on the weather conditions.

SOBEPS also seems to forget that many witnesses heard a noise when the craft came past, whereas other witnesses seeing the same craft said the opposite. Noises were thus well and truly heard. They were described as: buzz, rumbling, repetitive noise, humming, whistle, roar, infernal noise, thud noise, wind noise, washing machine noise, vacuum cleaner noise, turbine noise, etc To consult the index of each of the two big volumes published by SOBEPS is quite enough to be quickly convinced of it. All these noises could be caused by helicopters or planes. Let us specify moreover that military helicopters often use special noise-reducing devices and that their pilots are trained with techniques aiming at minimizing the noise (45). There is also the here proven fact that some witnesses heard a noise, but that, as time elapsed, this noise disappeared from SOBEPS publications (see the case of the two Eupen gendarmes).

For information, I give here a summary table based on 500 UFO sightings published by SOBEPS :

NOISE AND VEHICLE	Number of sightings
noise heard with vehicle	24
noise heard without vehicle	50
no noise heard without vehicle	53
no noise heard with vehicle	46
noise heard; vehicle: no information	44
noise: no information; with vehicle	74
no noise heard; vehicle: no information	22
noise: no information; without vehicle	35
noise: no information; vehicle: no information	152

TOTAL: 500 cases

This table shows in an obvious way that the ground truth goes against what was asserted with insistence by SOBEPS. Indeed, a noise was reported in more than 20% of the cases. But the real percentage is probably much higher, because in more than half the cases (261 out of 500), no information is given on the absence or presence of noise. And when it is, a noise was perceived in 118 cases out of 239, i.e. about half (49,4%)! Let us also note that a noise is much more often heard (50 cases against 24, which is statistically significant) when there is no vehicle. One can thus think that the noise of vehicle engines covered the noise that the observed phenomenon might emit. Unfortunately, only 173 investigations out of 500 specify the two criteria (noise and vehicle). A great number of investigations have thus to be considered as incomplete on this subject.

V. SOBEPS STRANGE METHODOLOGY

SOBEPS did an important field-investigation work, but however came to unfortunate contradictions concerning testimonies. Before promoting their UFO wave thesis, it would have been wiser that SOBEPS staff gathers information about helicopters or aviation in general or asks for the assistance of recognized specialists in this field. They would have perhaps realized then that in many sightings, the flight of “UFOs” was identical to the operating way of helicopter pilots.

During the “*Ecran témoin*” programme of the RTBF (public Belgian television) on March 4, 2002, Michel Bougard indicated that to his mind, the series of sightings of November 29, 1989 by which the “Belgian UFO wave” began was not the best, because it was less rich in information than the series of sightings of the night of December 11-12, 1989, that was in his eyes capital.

It is to be supposed that Michel Bougard has forgotten some very important “details” of the December 11 sightings...

An article of the daily newspaper *La Meuse* of December 13, 1989 informs us that the sightings made this day at Esneux, Engis, Amay and Beyne between 6 and 7 p.m. were explained by the Awacs plane from Bierset returning from a mission. The journalist Gaston Lecocq reported among other things that in the evening, the Awacs resembles everything but a conventional plane. In fact, this identification was made by a gendarme of Amay, Mr Kinet. On Monday December 12, this gendarme who had seen the “UFO” wanted to check his intuition: “*I called the Bierset base that confirmed the Awacs had made a night flight. I obtained that the pilot takes off again to check and a confirmation was then obtained*” (46).

An aviation enthusiast, Mr Nemry, delivered his opinion on the Amay case. Here is a short passage: “*Descriptions made at Amay indicate indeed that an Awacs flew over*” (47). Mr André Dumoulin, of the GRIP (Group of Research and Information for Peace), also stated that the December 11, 1989 sightings related to an Awacs plane returning in Bierset after a NATO mission in the east of Belgium (48).

Better still: on an evening, after having observed the Awacs under a quite precise angle, the astrophysicist Pierre Magain was convinced that it had caused several alleged UFO sightings. He circulated a report on this subject (49). SOBEPS took it very badly and distributed then a text where the gendarme Kinet's explanation was described as "*absurd*". Did SOBEPS ask the Bierset airport, as this gendarme made, whether an Awacs was in the sky at the precise sighting times? If it did it, why didn't it contradict Mr Kinet, with evidence in support of its claim?

I note that SOBEPS takes the testimony of gendarmes into consideration when they believe to have seen UFOs (at Eupen on November 29, 1989 and in the Brabant Wallon the day F16 scrambled for mere stars), but when a gendarme proposes a conventional explanation founded on a true investigation and an experiment, it merely says that his assertions are "*absurd*". SOBEPS respect for the constabulary is curiously selective.

SOBEPS claims that the standard UFO of the Belgian wave was triangular and flat with white lights laid out in triangle and a red flashing light near the centre. However the craft seen by the witnesses were not all triangular. In fact, they were described as triangular, rectangular, egg-shaped, cigar-shaped, banana-shaped, etc. A dome at the top and square or round portholes on the sides were also reported, and the lights were not on the same places depending on the described objects.

How then does one dare to speak about a "standard UFO"? (50)

As for me, the standard UFO is only a SOBEPS invention intended to validate or reinforce the extraterrestrial craft thesis. In an article on the decisive sightings of November 29, 1989, Mr Meessen wrote: "*We are confronted with flying objects that attest a non-conventional technology*". For my part, I think that conventional craft did trigger the wave on November 29, 1989 but that the "research" method of SOBEPS is not at all conventional!

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Léon Brenig wondered why the witnesses of the November 29, 1989 sightings were puzzled by these craft, whereas they know what is a plane, a helicopter, the Moon, a planet or a star (51). For him, they were puzzled because they saw unknown, probably extraterrestrial, craft. The question that Mr Brenig should ask himself is: "*are the UFO witnesses able to recognize all planes and all helicopters, as well as the Moon and other celestial bodies, under all sighting conditions, and particularly at night for planes and helicopters?*" A lot of parameters can make that a sighting of a known object generates a UFO. If not, the misidentifications that even SOBEPS ufologists acknowledge would not exist. A fortiori, these misinterpretations are more numerous when people are confronted with objects they are not very familiar with, like big helicopters of an unusual model.

People inevitably know some helicopter models, but this does not imply they know all models and can definitely identify one of them every time. Moreover, the sighting of a flying helicopter or plane is not the same one in daylight and at night. Distance or reflections caused by the sunset, for example, contribute largely to make more difficult the identification of an aircraft.

If all people who see UFOs really knew all that can be in the sky, do you think that ufologists, all over the world, would concede that there is a great percentage of misidentifications by witnesses? However, within the framework of the Belgian UFO wave, SOBEPS made "as if" the misidentification percentage was low. It initially insisted loudly on the quality of the first witnesses (gendarmes), who could not be easily described as dreamers or jokers. But were they for all that excellent observers, able to recognize any type of aircraft?

According to *Air & Cosmos* N°1862 of October 25, 2002, p.9, the UFO wave of 1989-1992 in Belgium would actually have been triggered by training flights of stealth planes and helicopter gunships based in Germany. This information, that comes from a German senior official, appears me to be very plausible

today. I shall add that at the root of this huge wave of sightings, there were also civilian and military aircraft, Belgian Army helicopters and civilian helicopters, notably medical helicopters, the latter being also likely to fly at low altitude. And I do not forget to also point out the tremendous media hype orchestrated by SOBEPS, hype that pushed good people to look more at things in the sky to which they generally pay little attention or that they quite simply do not know...

On November 29, 1989, between 7.30 and 8 p.m., on the heights of Robermont, in Liège, Mr S.M... saw, in the north-west direction, three Bell type helicopters that he recognized thanks to their landing skis. They did not have any apparent marking and seemed to fly at an altitude of approximately 150-200 m, accompanying a triangular object lit by a light at its centre. In spite of the fact that it related mainly to helicopters, this sighting was done in a complete silence (52).

One of a kind since it concerns at the same time well identified helicopters and a triangular craft, this sighting was however extremely badly investigated.

Michel Bougard writes indeed that the witness saw the "true moon" at the east, on his left. However if the witness had the north-west in his visual field, the east could not be on his left! But above all, the witness could not see the moon at 7.30 p.m. that day since it had already set around 4.40 p.m., almost at the same time as the sun. Let us suppose that there was a mistake in the date. If the information relating to the moon is exact, other dates have to be considered like November 12, 13 or 14, 1989 and December 12 or 13, 1989. It is already somewhat difficult to swallow...

The triangular craft and the three helicopters moved southwards, Michel Bougard also writes. It is impossible, because if the witness saw the green light of each helicopter, that is always located on the right side, it means that the craft went from his left towards the right, i.e. towards the east or south-east and not towards the south. If the craft had moved southwards, the witness would have seen only the red light of the helicopters, unless the craft made a turn, which a good investigation should have specified.

This is what can be called a botched up investigation on a sighting of great importance. Published in *Inforespace*, it disappeared nevertheless from the detailed account of the November 29, 1989 events that appears in *VOB I*.

Yet the description made by the witness does not leave any doubt: the three helicopters actually were American or German Bell Huey (NATO). Some American Bell helicopters do not have any marking. The Belgian Army and Air Force do not have this kind of helicopters. Had they just taken off from Bierset or Beauvechain, two bases that NATO is allowed to use? Wasn't the craft they accompanied a F 117-A plane, still almost unknown at that time? Did SOBEPS search in this direction before speaking about a UFO accompanied by conventional craft?

As it can be seen throughout the present article, SOBEPS made one-sided and incomplete field investigations, that generate multiple questions and contradictions.

At the time of the counter-investigation of 1997 on the Gué d'Hossus case, close to Rocroi in the French Ardennes, a qualified observer reported that as from October 1989, he saw planes of various types and several nationalities (of which American) flying day and night, on manoeuvres before the beginning of bombings against Iraq. These planes all came from Belgium (53). In addition, the Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989. This historical event is likely to have caused some agitation within NATO. These facts are also to be taken into account when trying to understand the beginning of the Belgian UFO wave...

The ball is in SOBEPS court. Logically, the burden of proof falls indeed on those who affirm the existence of an original phenomenon. It is therefore up to SOBEPS, that speaks about UFOs, to prove that there really were UFOs and that there were no helicopters in flight at the time of the sightings. It had every opportunity to do it, since it prided itself on its good relations with military people.

Renaud Leclat

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The friends of Renaud also thank Michel Bougard, president of SOBEPS, for his kind authorization to reproduce several drawings published in *Infoespace*.

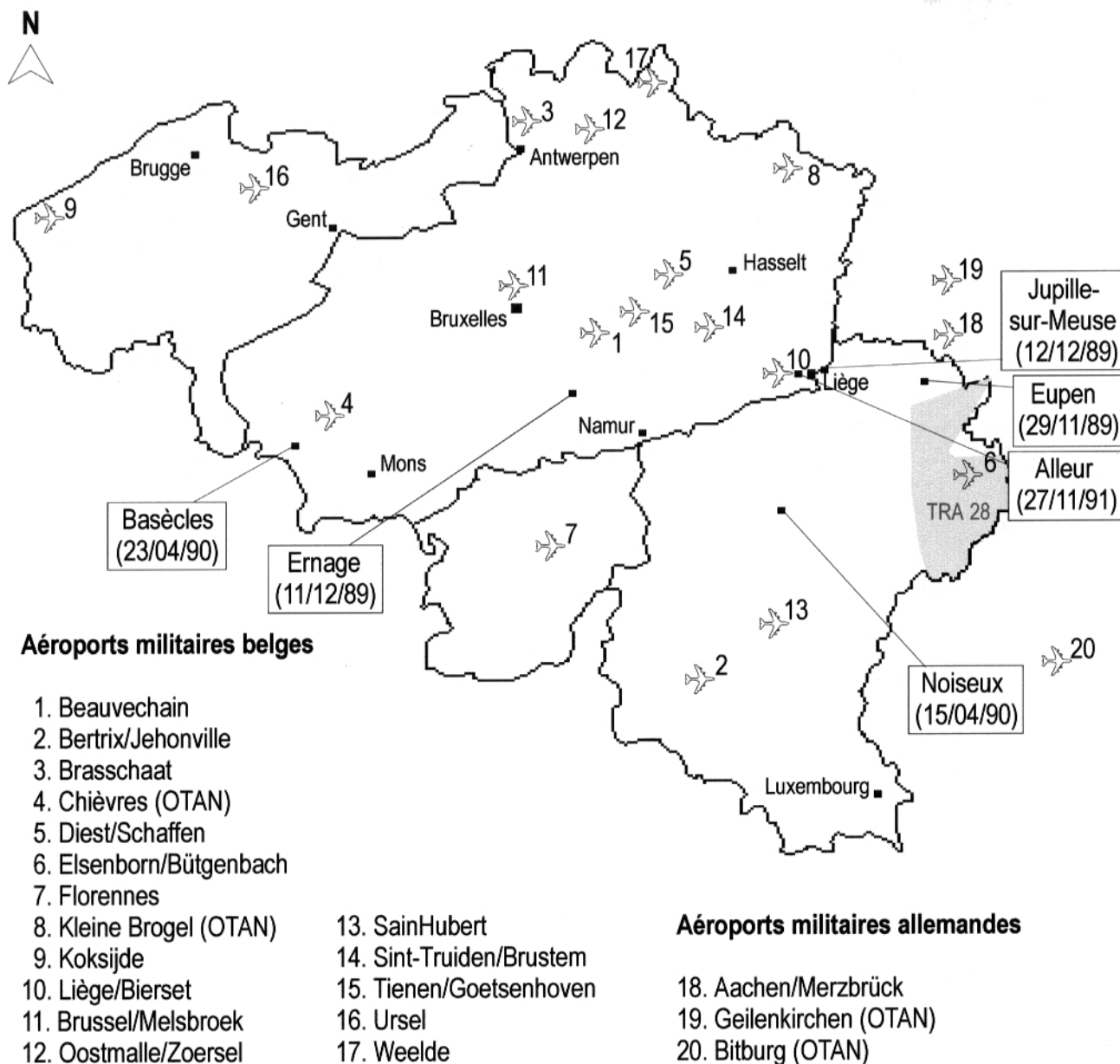
Translation into English by Thierry Pinvidic and Jacques Scornaux.

NOTES ET REFERENCES

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2. *Infoespace* N°86, April 1993, pp.31-34; *Vague d'OVNI sur la Belgique – 2. Une énigme non résolue*, SOBEPS, Brussels, March 1994 (abbreviated as *VOB 2*), pp.77-79 (without the drawing exhibited in the magazine).
3. End of September-beginning of October 1992, important military manoeuvres took place in the Belgian Ardennes. It was a joint German, Belgian, British and French operation called “Autumn Leave », that required the deployment of 6000 men and a “multinational airborne division” using “big helicopters for quickly carrying units from one place to another”. Source: *Gazet van Antwerpen*, September 19 and October 5, 1992 (note by Wim van Utrecht).
4. *La Dernière Heure*, Thursday Mars 22, 1990; *Infoespace* N°80, April 1991, pp.23-26; *Vague d'OVNI sur la Belgique – Un dossier exceptionnel*, SOBEPS, Brussels, September 1991 (abbreviated as *VOB 1*), pp.90-92; *VOB 2*, p.97.
5. *VOB 2*, plate illustration in central pages.
6. Low air flight map 1/250 000 (M534 Low Air), Belgian National Geographic Institute, 2001.
7. *Lumières dans la Nuit* N°165, May 1977, pp.20-21 et n°167, August-Sept. 1977, pp.28-29; FIGUET, Michel and Jean-Louis RUCHON, *OVNI: le premier dossier complet des rencontres rapprochées en France*, Alain Lefeuvre, Nice, 1979, pp.585-6; GUNSTON, Bill, *Hélicoptères militaires*, Bordas, 1982, pp.18-21. And personal communication from Eric Maillot.
8. Site www.polfed.be/old_site/gd/revue/143/143_07.htm consulted by Wim van Utrecht.
9. *Infoespace* N°80, April 1991, pp.35-42; *VOB 1*, pp.101-111.
10. *VOB 2*, p.200.
11. *La Voix du Nord*, Thursday April 26, 1990.
12. “Vol de nuit ou combat de nuit dans l’A.L.A.T.”, article written by the GALDIV 3.
13. *Infoespace* N°79, November 1990, pp.18-19; *VOB 1*, p.209.
14. *Infoespace* N° 79, November 1990, pp.19-20; *VOB 1*, p.210.
15. *Infoespace* N°83, March 1992, pp.13-14; *VOB 2*, pp.35-37.
16. *L’Atlas des hélicoptères*, Atlas, 2002, pp.90.
17. *VOB 1*, pp.16-49; about the sightings by the two gendarmes of the Eupen brigade, see also *Infoespace* N°95, October 1997, pp.16-70.
18. GUNSTON, Bill, *Hélicoptères militaires*, Bordas, 1982.
19. *Science et Vie* N° 882, March 1991, pp.60-61.
20. HEWISH, Mark, *Encyclopédie visuelle des forces aériennes du monde entier*, Bordas, 1981, p.92.
21. The full text of this interview, made by phone, is on the site <http://cenap.alien.de/belgien/belgien.htm> (in German).
22. VANTUYNE, Patrick, PRO-CEETI Rapport, December 1989 (in Dutch).
23. *Infoespace* N°95, October 1997, p.27.
24. MÉHEUST, Bertrand, *op cit.*, pp.114-120.
25. MUIRDEN, J., *Guide de l’astronomie*, France Loisirs, 1984, pp.43-49.
26. VANBRABANT, Paul, open letter of December 17, 1996.
27. More precisely, Wim van Utrecht thinks of “Venus dogs”, equivalent of the false suns or “sun dogs”. Although these “Venus dogs” are theoretically possible (http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2002/06may_pillar.htm), they were, it seems, never observed. But one can wonder how many people are so much fascinated by Venus that they stay looking at it during a long enough time for such a not very spectacular phenomenon being detected. Van Utrecht also notes that the two gendarmes give very different descriptions of the movements of the two reddish points: for von Montigny, they were at the end of two “laser beams” and left the white ball “very quickly” up to a distance of “5 to 6 km”, while Nicoll does not remember “beams” and had the impression that the reddish points started “slowly” up to a distance of “a few hundred metres” from the white light. If Pr Meessen had measured the angle between the white light and the reddish points when they were at the longest distance, one would have a precise element to check the “Venus dogs” hypothesis; according to laws of physics, these “Venus dogs” should be at a distance of about 22° on the left and on the right of the planet (note of Wim van Utrecht).

28. According to Vantuyne, the gendarmes only said that they “had both the indistinct impression that luminous rays sometimes shot out in all directions from the sides of the phenomenon” (translation from Dutch). Neither horizontal beams nor reddish balls or points are reported. During the conversations that the two gendarmes surely had between them on their sighting, and especially during the long interview with Pr Meessen under the influence of his precise questions, did not their testimony, in all good faith, grow richer in strange details that they did not observe in a clear way? In any event, the phenomenon of the horizontal beams and the reddish balls is unique among the cases of the wave and cannot thus be considered as characteristic of it (note by Jacques Scornaux).
29. See notably Inforespace N°95, October 1997, pp.16-70 and the sites <http://meessen.free.fr/AMeessen/Gileppe/>, <http://adelmon.free.fr/vaguebelge/Gileppe.html> and <http://ufologie.net/indexe.htm>, where the arguments of the skeptical investigators are unfortunately badly represented.
30. *Journal für UFO-Forschung*, vol.11, n°5, Sept.-Oct. 1990, p.140.
31. *VOB 2*, p.162.
32. GUNSTON, Bill, *op cit.*, pp.124-129.
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34. HEWISH, Mark, *op cit.*, pp. 85-89; Multi-authored, *La puissance militaire des USA*, Elsevier Sequoia, 1979, p. 75.
35. VAN UTRECHT, Wim, personal communication of August 29, 2002.
36. *Nord Eclair Hainaut*, December 19, 1989.
37. *VOB 1*, pp.43-44.
38. *L'Echo du Centre*, Saturday December 9, 1989.
39. *La Meuse-La Lanterne*, December 1, 1989; *La Libre Belgique*, December 1, 1989; *Le Jour-Le Courrier*, December 1, 1989; *Le Jour-Le Courrier*, December 2-3, 1989.
40. MAGAIN, Pierre and Marc REMY, “Les OVNI : un sujet de recherche”, *Physicalia Magazine*, vol.15 (1993), p.311.
41. *Raids*, special issue N°6, “Hélicoptères de combat”, p.18, 2002.
42. THOUANEL, Bernard, *Objets volants non identifiés. L'enquête, Les témoignages, Les archives, Les faits*, Michel Lafon, 2003, pp.248-250.
43. *La Meuse-La Lanterne*, September 25, 1990, quoted by M. Bougard in Inforespace N°88, November 1993, p.13.
44. Readings made by the Royal Weather Institute at Uccle, close to Brussels (see *Inforespace* N°95, October 1997, p.31), and in German weather stations (Idar-Oberstein and Essen) located not far from the Belgian border: see <http://weather.uwyo.edu/upperair/sounding.html>.
45. For further details concerning the noise reduction techniques and the influence of weather conditions on helicopter noise, see <http://avstop.com/Helicopters/91/>.
46. *L'Echo du Centre*, Thursday December 14, 1989.
47. *La Dernière Heure*, Thursday December 14, 1989.
48. *Le Jour-Le Courrier*, Friday December 22, 1989.
49. MAGAIN, Pierre and Marc RÉMY, *op cit.*
50. It is all the less possible to define a standard UFO that there was a kind of “autocatalysis” of triangular and rectangular forms. At the height of the wave, SOBEPS was so much overflowed that, according to one of its closest collaborators, it had no time to investigate all cases and dropped a good share of those where, judging by the message the witness left on the association answerphone, there were only luminous balls, spots or points, to concentrate on the structured objects (note by Jacques Scornaux).
51. *La Dernière Heure*, Thursday March 22, 1990.
52. *Inforespace* N°78, June 1990, p.22.
53. *Les Mystères de l'Est* (CNEGU magazine), N°3, 1997, p.110.

Appendix



Map of Belgium giving the location of military airports, including the German airports close to the border. We gave up mentioning the civilian heliports - medical and others - in order not to overload the map, because there are more than 50 only in the south-east of the country. On the other hand we located the main cases presented in this article, as well as the low altitude area TRA 28, that almost touches the Gileppe Lake. The TRA (Temporary Reserved Areas) are zones of temporary military activity, where the planes can fly below 4500 feet (± 1370 m). There were other ones at the time of the Belgian wave

About the author, by CNEGU



Renaud Leclet was member of CNEGU and of SCEAU/Archives OVNI (1).

He unfortunately departed this world on December 17, 2004, aged 35, after long weeks of fight and hope.

He was a field investigator in Ardennes, his home French department, and joined CNEGU in April 1997, during its 56th session, where he presented a counter-investigation of the Gué d'Hossus UFO trace case (2).

This aeronautics enthusiast (3) quickly became one of the most active members of the Committee. His field investigations, his press catalogues (4) and his articles, published in our magazine or on CNEGU Internet site, began to make him known in the ufological milieu. Notably, his study on the Kelly-Hopkinsville case (5) left nobody indifferent, to say the least!

He also was fully aware of the importance of preserving the ufological heritage and signed a contract with SCEAU. His archives will be preserved with those of CNEGU at the public Archives of the Moselle department at St Julien-lès-Metz.

He had many projects in progress and he left unfinished works that CNEGU will be very keen to complete.

Notes :

- (1) - CNEGU is the acronym of *Comité Nord-Est des Groupes Ufologiques* (North-East Committee of UFO Groups).
- SCEAU is the acronym of *Sauvegarde, Conservation des Etudes & Archives Ufologiques* (Preservation and Conservation of Ufological Studies and Archives).

Non exhaustive list of his contributions:

- (2) *Mystères de l'Est* (East Mysteries), n° 3 pages 4 to 21
"Contact avec un homme vert à Gué d'Hossus" (Contact with a green man at Gué d'Hossus).
- (3) *Mystères de l'Est*, n° 5 pages 49 to 62
"Evolution du vol de nuit dans l'A.L.A.T. et similitude avec les observations en ufologie" (A.L.A.T. [French Army Light Aircraft] night fly development and similarities with UFO sightings).
- (4) *Mystères de l'Est*, n° 8 pages 41 to 73
Press articles catalogue: "L'Ardennais (08) 1954".
- (5) *Mystères de l'Est*, n° 6 pages 53 to 71
"Kelly-Hopkinsville : un classique bien trop chouette" (Kelly-Hopkinsville: a too owlish classical case) and pages 79 to 84 : "La chouette : histoire de deux cas jumeaux" (The owl: story of two twin cases).