

Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena

The Historical European Context

by Edoardo Russo

UAPs are not just an American phenomenon. It's always been a global phenomenon, with sightings and testimonies from all over the world.

Europe has always been in a central position as of sighting reports, even before the American public discovered "flying saucers" in the summer of 1947.

The first post-war wave of unidentified aerial sightings were the "ghost rockets" over Scandinavia (but also Italy and Greece) in 1946.^[1]

How Many Witnesses

And there are a lot of European witnesses: we are talking of millions of people.

Opinion polls asking "do you think you saw a UFO" in different European countries obtained a weighted average of 6.5% answering "yes", which amounts to as many as 29 millions for just the European Union.^[2]

How Many Reports

Not all witnesses are reporting their sightings: our estimates are that less than 1 witness in 100 is stepping forth and reporting his/her sighting, since the databases of case histories collected by civilian UAP organizations are presently comprising about 170,000 reports^[3], from Portugal to Ukraine, from Norway to Malta (which is a higher total than similar data collections in the USA^[4]).

Waves of Sighting Reports

Unidentified aerial phenomena are not regular in their apparitions: sighting reports are coming in waves, with rich and poor years.^[5]

The first large wave of sightings was in the spring of 1950 and was a really European one, hitting several countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain, UK). An even greater "UAP panic" took place in the autumn of 1954, with thousands of cases centered mainly over France and an unprecedented media hype. In 1967 it was the UK, in 1968 Spain, in 1973 Italy, in 1974 France, and so on: important waves of UAP sightings took place in most European countries along the last 75 years.

My own country, Italy, suffered such a strong "UAP wave" in late 1978 that fishermen refused to go out fishing, police patrols were sent photographing strange lights, Parliamentary questions were asked and the government charged the Italian Air Force to begin a formal collection of testimonies from the public.^[6]

What People Are Seeing

Even if 90-95% of all those UAP phenomena are later identified and explained with known natural phenomena and man-made objects (which is precisely the grassroots activity of us "UAP investigators"), we are left with a small (yet not negligible) residue of anomalous cases, totalling thousands of UAPs in a strict sense on a European scale.

What are people seeing? The largest part of sightings are either of distant lights in the

night sky (75%) or of distant daylight flying objects (15%), and these are the easiest ones to identify with known causes. But we also have got higher strangeness and higher credibility reports as close encounters (10%); sightings by military, civilian or private pilots in flight (1%); temporary physical effects (2%) or ground traces (1%); radar detection cases (0.1%, but a large part of those are not available to us and remain in military archives); more recently there has been a growing attention for under water objects (1.3%).^[7]

Social effects

And there are social side-effects, which have been the object of academic studies by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists.^[8]

Even if can't talk here and now of some real panic situations, we are left with a great number of people wondering what they saw, who have a right to an answer (if there is one) but cannot find anybody officially charged to give one to them, and are crushed between those telling them "you were drunk" and those believing it's all extraterrestrial visitors.

Civilian organizations

It's only the private organizations that take charge of those people and their testimonies, trying to find and offer those answers to witnesses. They are unpaid volunteers who are doing that for passion. There are a few hundreds of serious-minded private researchers who try to apply a scientific approach within the European Union. And there are dozens of rational associations of them, one in nearly every European country, some of them having been active for decades^[9], most of them cooperating within a European UFO network^[10]. What are they doing? They are collecting testimonies, they are doing field investigation trying to find a solution, they can find an explanation for the largest part of the testimonies, they are collecting and archiving documentation,^[11] offering support for study and research, and they are doing an activity of public education (conferences, congresses, interviews).

The Military

The military have traditionally been collecting UFO/UAP reports within their proper mission of controlling and defending each nation airspace. Most if not all European countries have had its own military archives of (mostly military) reports, just like in the USA. And a dozen of them declassified or opened their UAP Files in part or in total, which amounts to several thousands of reports now available.^[12]

Government Bodies

As for non-military yet government organizations collecting and analyzing UAP reports, the only one, not just in Europe but in the world, is in France: the National Space Study Center (CNES) created a Study Group on Unidentified Airspace Phenomena (GEPAN, now GEIPAN) in 1977 and it's not only still active but offering precisely that service to the French public: collecting their testimonies and trying to identify the causes, offering answers to the public.^[13]

Politics

What about politics? It has been involved, of course, since the beginning: Parliamentary questions were asked in most European countries, since at least 1950.^[14] And the European Parliament got its own share of them, too.^[15]

The most extensive involvement here was after an impressive wave of “flying triangles” sightings took place in Belgium: several thousands of reports in one month, bringing the local UAP study group (the SOBEPs, the Société Belges d’Etudes des Phénomènes Spatiaux) to publish a collection of several hundreds pages in two volumes. A Belgian Member of the European Parliament (Elio Di Rupo, later Prime Minister) obtained that an investigation was started within the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology, which charged a famous scientist and Italian MEP, Tullio Regge, to do that work and prepare a proposal, between 1991 and 1993.

His proposal for a resolution (approved by that Committee) was to give French GEPAN a European status^[16], but some political objections and too low a political interest took to no action, the legislature came to an end and no concrete involvement of the European Parliament followed.^[17]

Until now.

Conclusions

So we are left here and now with some relevant issues to cope with:

- a. Millions of European citizens have seen unidentified anomalous phenomena, are worried about that and have a right for an answer
- b. A relevant part of UAP reports come from credible or trained witnesses
- c. A small but not negligible part of those reports are concerning air safety (eg. aircraft encounters and even air-miss reports) or national security (eg. aerial intrusions, military bases, nuclear plants) which is of military competence, but policy makers should get the proper information and scientists should have access to data.

Notes and references

[1] About Scandinavia: Loren Gross, *“The Mystery of the Ghost Rockets”*, Fremont, 1974; Joel Carpenter, *“The Ghost Rockets: a Chronology”*: <https://www.project1947.com/gr/grchron1.htm>
About Greece: Thanassis Vembos, *“The Greek Ghost Rockets of 1946”*, 2012: https://web.archive.org/web/20160721183557/http://www.vembos.gr/Greek_Ghost_Rockets.htm
About Italy: Giuseppe Stilo, *“L’alba di una nuova era (1946: il fenomeno dei “razzi fantasma in Italia e nel mondo)”*, UPIAR, Torino, 2004

[2] The most recent polls asking “Have you seen a UFO?” in each European country gave the following percentages:

Country	Percentage	Year	Poller
Belgium	3,0%	1988	Inusop
France	7,0%	1981	Sofres
Italy	6,5%	1987	Doxa
Spain	10,0%	1987	El independiente
Switzerland	5,4%	1988	Link
United Kingdom	7,0%	2021	YouGov

Source: Ignacio Cabria, Michael Hudson, Isaac Koi, Bruno Mancusi, Claude Maugé, Paolo Toselli, "Inventory of Opinion Polls", EuroUfo.net, March 2024; <http://www.euroufo.net>
<http://www.cisu.org/sondaggio-cisu-doxa-1987>

^[3] A recent inventory of existing national databases of UAP reports in Europe amounted to 170,000 collected reports.

Source: Edoardo Russo, "Updated Survey of UAP reports databases in Europe", UAP Check, February 2024; <http://www.uapcheck.com>

^[4] The total of sighting reports collected from the USA in the Case Management System (CMS) of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) amounted to 105,000 as of December 2023; credit: Robert Spearing; <https://mufoncms.com/>

^[5] Jerome Clark, "Waves" in "The UFO Encyclopedia", Omnigraphics, Detroit, 1998, pp. 1004-1023

^[6] Edoardo Russo, "1978: un'ondata solo italiana?", paper presented at 33th National UFO Congress, Bologna, November 2018: <http://www.cisu.org/londata-del-1978-diventa-storia-33-convegno-del-cisu-a-bologna/>

^[7] Statistics from a national sample of 27,908 Italian reports:

Typology	No. Of Cases	% on Total Reports
Nocturnal Lights	21.172	76%
Daylight Objects	3.978	14%
Close Encounters	2.758	10%

As for special reports:

	No. Of Cases	% on Total Reports
Physical Effects	626	2,2%
Pilot reports	334	1,2%
Ground Traces	298	1,1%
Radar Detection	20	0,1%
Submerged Objects	354	1,3%

Source: Pasquale Russo, "CisuCat Update", CISU, Napoli, June 2023.

For more detailed statistics: Giorgio Abraini, "Gli UFO in Italia: 20.000 segnalazioni", in Gian Paolo Grassino & Giuseppe Stilo (eds), "Ufo e ufologia", UPIAR, Torino, 2007, pp.85-96.

For pilot sighting reports: Marco Orlandi, "AIRCAT - Catalogo italiano degli avvistamenti UFO effettuati da piloti", UPIAR, Torino, 2004

For physical effects reports: Stefano Innocenti, "EM effects in Italian UFO reports", CISU, Roma, 2022

For radar detection reports: Paolo Fiorino, "Gli O.V.N.I. dell'Aeronautica Militare Italiana", paper presented at 38th National UFO Congress, Bologna, November 2023: <http://www.cisu.org/bologna-18-novembre-lufologia-al-tempo-degli-uap/>

For unidentified submerged objects: Marco Bianchini, "USOCAT: catalogo italiano dei casi di oggetti sommersi non identificati", UPIAR, Torino, 2003;

^[8] Paolo Toselli, "University UFO Theses and Dissertations (1948-2022)", CISU, Torino, 2022:

http://www.cisu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ufotheses_by_paolo_toselli_updated_23122022.pdf

^[9] The three oldest national UAP organizations in Europe are:

- BUFORA (British UFO Research Association, UK), since 1964: <https://www.bufoara.org.uk>

- CEI (Centro de Estudios Interplanetarios, Spain) since 1958: <https://www.el-cei.org>

- SUFOI (Skandinavisk UFO Information, Denmark) since 1957: <http://www.sufoi.dk>

^[10] EuroUfo.net ("The Virtual Community of Scientifically Oriented European UFO Researchers") was promoted by six national UAP study organizations, has been active since 1998, and is presently having 97 members from 22 countries; <http://www.euroufo.net/about-euroufo/>

^[11] The largest existing UAP archives in the world are hosted in a European country: AFU (Archives for Ufology, now renamed Archives for the the Unexplained) in Norrköping, Sweden; <http://www.afu.se>

^[12] Total or partial declassification of military archives about UAPs took place in the following European countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

As of Extra-European countries, declassifications of UAP files happened in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, New Zealand, Philippines, United States of America, Uruguay.
Source: Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos, "State-of-the-art in UFO Disclosure Worldwide", Fotocat, Valencia, 2011;

https://www.academia.edu/32053531/STATE_OF_THE_ART_IN_UFO_DISCLOSURE_WORLDWIDE?ri_id=1130740

Michael Swords & Robert Powell (eds.), "UFOs and the Government: A Historical Inquiry", Anomalist Books, 2013

^[13] It was originally named GEPAN (*Groupement d'Etudes sur les Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non-identifiés*, 1977-1988), then SEPRA (*Service d'Expertise des Phénomènes de Rentrée Atmosphérique*, 1988-2005), now GEIPAN (*Groupement d'Etudes et d'Information sur les Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non-identifiés*):

<http://www.cnes-geipan.fr>

^[14] Parliamentary questions asked in E.U. countries:

Italy	18
Spain	8
Germany	5
Belgium	3
France	3
Denmark	1
Ireland	1
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	39
United Kingdom	110
EuroParliament	9

Source: Danny Ammon, Ignacio Cabria, Laurent Chabin, Juan Pablo Gonzales, Benny Christen Grandahl, Michael Hudson, Jochen Ickinger, Isaac Koi, Andreas Müller, Julio Plaza del Olmo, Jean-Marc Wattecamps, "Inventory of Parliamentary Questions about UAPs", EuroUfo.net, March 2024; <http://www.euroufo.net>

^[15] Jochen Ickinger, "UAP in the European Parliament", March 2024,

<https://www.uapcheck.com/news/id/2024-02-13-uap-in-the-european-parliament-part-1>

^[16] "Rapport de la commission de l'énergie, de la recherche et de la technologie sur la proposition de création d'un Centre européen d'observation des "OVNI" (B3-1990/90) - Rapporteur: Tullio Regge, date 02-12-1993 (document serial: A3-0389/93 PE202.202/déf. RR\241\241196 B3-1990/90);

<https://ec.europa.eu/dorie/cardPrint.do?cardId=282913&locale=en>

^[17] Tullio Regge, "UFO: La Comunità Europea vuole la verità", *TuttoScienze*, 3 March 1993; Tullio Regge, "Gli UFO e il Parlamento Europeo", *Scienza & Paranormale*, vol. 4 no. 1, May 1994, pp. 25-32

Presentation at the meeting "Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena in E.U. Airspace: Reporting and Scientific Assessment", organized by Member of European Parliament Francisco Guerreiro at the European Parliament, Bruxelles (Belgium), on March 20, 2024

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