DECLASSIFIED

D-2025-00040 B-00002704105 "UNCLASSIFIED" 1/14/2026

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MRN:	81 ISLAMABAD 1515
Date/DTG:	Feb 04, 1981 / 040000Z Feb 81
From:	AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
Action:	WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*; NEW DELHI, AMEMBASSY *ROUTINE*
E.O.:	Unknown
TAGS:	MOPS, MMOL, UR, AF
Reference:	n/a
Subject:	CLOSE ENCOUNTERS IN AFGHANISTAN

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PAGE 01 ISLAMA 01515 051212Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-12 SS-15 CIAE-00 ICA-11
DODE-00 H-02 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-07 PA-01 OES-09
SP-02 SPRS-02 /088 W
----------020143 081152Z /10
R 041134Z FEB 81
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2792
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ ISLAMABAD 01515

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION ISLAMABAD 2/4/81 BEING REPEATED
FOR YOUR INFO. QUOTE:

PESHAWAR 0047

E.O. 12065: RDS-4 2/4/01 (ARCW
RD, D.B.) OR-M
TAGS: MOPS MMOL UR AF
SUBJECT: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS IN AFGHANISTAN

1. (~~C~~) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. I AM CONVINCED THAT THERE IS SUBSTANCE IN THE MANY TRAVELLERS' REPORTS FROM AFGHANISTAN THAT THE RED ARMY IS USING A TYPE OF VERY POWERFUL, HIGH INTENSITY LIGHT THERE. THE LIGHT MAY BE USED IN CONNECTION WITH PERIMETER DEFENSE AND/OR ROAD SECURITY.

3. WE HAVE HEARD AND REPORTED ACCOUNTS OF THIS PHENOMENON SINCE SEPTEMBER, PRIMARILY FROM FRENCH JOURNALISTS AND

Declassified in Full/Released in Full
John Powers, Acting-Director
US Department of State
12/10/2025

DECLASSIFIED

D-2025-00040 B-00002704105 "UNCLASSIFIED" 1/14/2026

ADVENTURERS. THESE HAVE DESCRIBED STRANGE LIGHTS ILLUMINATING LARGE PORTIONS - TYPICALLY AS MUCH AS OR MORE THAN ONE QUARTER - OF THE AFGHAN SKY. THE LOCATIONS OF THE SIGHTINGS REPORTED TO US HAVE BEEN GHAZNI (AUGUST, 1980), GARDEZ,
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PAGE 02 ISLAMA 01515 051212Z

NURISTAN(SEPT., 1980) AND KHOST (JAN., 1981).

4. ACCOUNTS HAVE IN COMMON THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE LIGHTS, THE DISTANCES FROM WHICH THEY ARE DISCERNIBLE, AND THE SIZE OF THE AREAS THEY APPEAR TO ILLUMINATE (MORE - PERHAPS MUCH MORE - THAN 5 MILES IN DIAMERTER). ACCOUNTS DIFFER IN THAT SOME SPEAK OF NARROW BEAMS, WHICH ARE COMPARED WITH LASER OR SEARCH LIGHTS, AS A PART OF THE PHENOMENON. MOST, THOUGH, SPEAK OF MORE DIFFUSED ILLUMINATION. ACCOUNTS DIFFER AS TO WHETHER LIGHTS SLOWLY WAX AND WANE, OR REACH MAXIMUM INTENSITY AND TURN OFF INSTANTLY.

5. I HAD BEEN SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE STORIES, WHICH HAVE A UFO CAST, UNTIL NBC PRODUCER JOE DE COLA RETURNED FROM PAKTIA LAST MONTH. I HAVE GOTTEN TO KNOW DE COLA WELL AND CONSIDER HIM AN ACCURATE, CAREFUL OBSERVOR. WHILE HE WAS PASSING NEAR KHOST (MATUN) ABOUT JAN.1, DE COLA AND HIS CREW "SAW THE LIGHT". AT THE TIME, THEY WERE ABOUT 12 MILES SOUTH OF THE KHOST GARRISON. WHEN THEY BECAME AWARE OF IT, THE LIGHT SEEMED TO BE AT FULL INTENSITY.

6. THEIR FIRST IMPRESSION WAS THAT IT WAS BORNE BY A HELICOPTER WHICH WAS SEARCHING FOR THEM. IT DID NOT MOVE, HOWEVER, NOR WAS ANY AIRCRAFT (OR OTHER) MOTOR NOISE DISCERNABLE. THEY LEFT THE AREA AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE BUT WERE SURE THAT THE LIGHT REMAINED VISIBLE AND STATIONARY FOR AT LEASE 20 MINUTES.

7. DE COLA'S IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE LIGHT WAS GENERATED FROM AN AIRBORNE SOURCE AT AN ALTITUDE OF SOME HUNDREDS OF FEET. BECAUSE IT DID NOT MOVE, AND THERE WAS NO MOTOR NOISE, HE THINKS IT MAY HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED FROM A BALLOOON. LIKE OTHER WITNESSES, HE REPORTS BEING UNNERVED BY THE INTENSITY AND MAGNITUDE OF THE LIGHT AND WONDERS IF IT IS INTENDED PRIMARILY
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PAGE 03 ISLAMA 01515 051212Z

TO FRIGHTEN POTENTIAL ATTACKERS.

8. I ASKED DE COLA IF THE LIGHT MIGHT HAVE COME FROM SOME-THING LIKE THE HAND-HELD MAGNESIUM PARACHUTE FLARES SUCH AS ARE USED BY THE U.S. ARMY. HE WAS QUITE SURE NOT, AS THERE WAS NO MOVEMENT AND THE DURATION WAS MUCH TOO LONG. AS FOR MORTAR-LAUNCHED FLARES, THERE WAS NO EXPLOSION AND AGAIN NO DRIFT.

RELEASED IN FULL

9. ANOTHER MORE SPECIFIC STORY CAME FEB. 3 FROM FRENCHMAN DOMINIQUE VARGAS BASED ON A SIGHTING NEAR ASADABAD, KUNAR, IN SEPTEMBER. VARGAS, A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER WHO SEEMS TO HAVE SOME SCIENCE AS WELL AS MILITARY BACKGROUND, CLAIMS THE LIGHT HE SAW WAS "COLDER AND WHITER" THAN THAT FROM A TUNGSTEN SOURCE "WHICH WOULD BURN AT 3,500 DEGREES KELVIN". AT FIRST SIGHTING, THE LIGHT ILLUMINATED A MINIMUM DIAMETER OF 5 TO 10 KILOMETERS, IN WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS A PERFECT AND CLEARLY OUTLINED HEMISPHERICAL SHAPE. THE PERIOD OF ILLUMINATION WAS ABOUT 15 MINUTES, WITH THE PERIOD OF GREATEST INTENSITY BEGINNING INSTANTLY AND LASTING TWO OR THREE MINUTES. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE SIZE OF THE ILLUMINATED HEMISPHERE EXPANDED DRAMATICALLY, WHILE THE INTENSITY OF THE LIGHT WITHIN IT DIMINISHED GRADUALLY TO NOTHING. VARGAS THOUGHT THE LIGHT SOURCE WAS NOT AIRBORNE, AS THIS WOULD HAVE PRODUCED A MORE THAN HEMISPHERICAL SHAPE. AS WITH DE COLA, VARGAS HEARD NO NOISES ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIGHT.

10. INTERESTINGLY, A NIGHT LIGHT PHENOMENON OVER ISLAMABAD'S MARGALA HILLS WAS SEEN BY DIPLOMATS AND OTHERS A FEW MONTHS AGO AND REPORTED IN THE PRESS. WE THINK THIS WAS PROBABLY OF THE MOVING LIGHT, CLASSIC UFO SCHOOL, AND NOT RELATED TO THE AFGHAN SIGHTINGS. ARCHARD UNQUOTE. KING

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NVVZCZ

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

RELEASED IN FULL