



Flying Saucer or Fly: The Case UFO Skeptics Have Been Dreading?

On March 13, 2012, the well-known UFOlogist Leslie Kean wrote a story for the *Huffington Post* titled "UFO Caught On Tape Over Santiago Air Base" (<http://tinyurl.com/KeanChile>). Kean is also the author of the 2011 *New York Times* best seller *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go On the Record* (see my review "Unexplained" Cases—Only If You Ignore All Explanations," SI, March/April 2011, now online at <http://www.debunker.com/texts/kean.htm>). Kean's most recent article describes a supposed UFO caught on video during a November 5, 2010, air show at the El Bosque airfield in Chile (although nobody at the air show saw the supposed UFO until it was spotted in the video afterward). CEFAA—the Chilean Air Force's equivalent of the USAF's disbanded Project Blue Book—provided the video. The El Bosque video was said to have been subjected to "intense scrutiny" by a panel of "scientists from many disciplines, aeronautical experts, and Air Force and

Army photogrammetric technicians," all of whom found the video unexplainable. (Kean is very impressed by panels of supposed "experts" no matter what foolish things they might say, like the French COMETA, which fellow UFO proponent John Alexander called "an embarrassment . . . [that uses] unsubstantiated data from questionable sources.") Kean asks provocatively, "Is this the case UFO skeptics have been dreading?" She obviously thought she had an extremely strong UFO case here considering that she provided the video exactly as released by the Chilean CEFAA (<http://tinyurl.com/ChileUFO>).

Kean claims that the object was captured on seven different videos by seven different people, each from a different vantage point. However, the video released seems to represent just one of the seven videos, and even that one video is not complete; instead we see only some carefully chosen snippets. (She later cautioned, "You can't draw conclusions from looking at only one tape.") More-

over, the video was released only in a highly compressed ten frames-per-second version instead of the standard twenty-four frames per second. Somebody seems to have been "stage managing" this case to let us see only certain portions of the "evidence." Kean said, "Each video included three different, mainly horizontal loops flown by the UFO within seconds of each other. The object made elliptical passes either near or around each of three sets of performing jets. It flew past the Halcones, F5s, and F16s at speeds so fast it was not noticed by the pilots or anyone on the ground below." She continued, "This extraordinary machine was flying at velocities too high to be man-made. Scientists have estimated the speed, depending on the size of the object, to be at least 4,000–6,000 mph." Kean should have realized that speed estimates are only valid if one knows for certain the distance from the "UFO" to the camera, which in this case we obviously don't.

Kean continued, "Images show it as



Figure 1. "UFOglobe" posted a video frame [with close-up] of a swarm of bees.



Figure 2. The Chilean "UFO" close-up from Leslie Kean's article.

a dome-shaped, flat-bottomed object with no visible means of propulsion. The rounded top reflects the sun and appears metallic; the bottom is darker and flat, emitting some form of energy which is visible in photo analysis. Infrared studies show the entire object is radiating heat, just like the jets.” She did not explain how it would be possible to do an “infrared study” of the object captured by an ordinary video camera with no infrared capabilities; indeed she seemed to not even realize that this claim is absurd.

Almost immediately, I am happy to say, many people began critically examining this supposedly game-changing video and its analysis, even in places like the conspiracy-oriented Above Top Secret forum. Many noted the object’s resemblance to an insect flying wildly close to the camera. Poster UFOglobe (<http://tinyurl.com/7mx7muz>) compared the close-up of the UFO in Kean’s article with that of bees in a swarm (compare Figures 1 and 2). The resemblance is easily seen.

A detailed discussion and analysis of the CEFAA video appears on the website of The Hoax Killer (<http://tinyurl.com/7acu9x6>), who did excellent work exposing the recent Jerusalem UFO video hoaxes. He downloaded the highest-resolution version of the video from the *Huffington Post* site. He writes, “After studying the videos

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very closely I discovered the objects are passing in front of the hills a couple times. I was also looking for other insects that might be flying around closer to the ground and found what I think is one that is visible for a moment.” He posted a thirty-second video to YouTube, highlighting the UFO as it is seen not only flying in front of the distant hills but also *in front of the nearby ground*. Case closed: this UFO is a flying insect.

UFO skeptic Tim Printy notes, “What this demonstrates is that the original video that was posted was edited in a way so one could not see the UFOs with the ground in the background.” In other words, somebody—presumably someone within the CEFAA—edited the video with the deliberate intent to

deceive the audience. Otherwise, it would have been obvious that the UFO was a bug. Blogger Kentaro Mori noted how the CEFAA recently released another supposed UFO photo touted as the “best evidence” yet for a UFO, which turned out almost certainly to be a light reflection (<http://tinyurl.com/7tqkymy>). He also noted that the CEFAA was then, as now, unwilling to release any additional images or information regarding the supposed UFO. Clearly, any future UFO claims from Chile’s CEFAA must be viewed with great suspicion.

As one might expect, this case was widely discussed on the Internet in the weeks afterward. Even many who are favorably inclined toward UFO claims dismissed the El Bosque video as a flying insect. But instead of giving up and admitting the obvious, on March 24 Leslie Kean doubled down on the case, writing on her Facebook page,

Have patience folks. More info will be presented soon. You can’t draw conclusions from looking at only one tape. And please remember, these images have been analyzed by experts in Chile. Didn’t I emphasize that enough in my *Huffington Post* story? They too thought the footage was a bug at first, until they collected the other tapes. It is an insult for you to carry on about this being a bug, when obviously if you can figure that out so easily, the Chilean experts would have done the same. (<http://www.facebook.com/lesliekean>)



A strange metallic flying object?

Like I said, she *really* is trusting of so-called experts who make proclamations about UFOs. She seems to have forgotten that experts just like these, many with PhDs, also analyzed the Petit-Rechain UFO photo from Belgium and concluded that “the picture was not faked” (p. 30 of her book *UFOs: Generals, Pilots and Government Officials Go On the Record*). Yet it’s now a confessed hoax (see this column, SI, January/February 2012). It seems that “experts” do not have a very good track record when it comes to authenticating a UFO photo or video.

So either UFOs infest the El Bosque airfield in Chile—or flies do. Perhaps the airfield’s name should be changed to El Mosca—“The Fly.”

But the story doesn’t end there. You Tube user Stiverinmypocket analyzed a longer video of the same November 5, 2010, airshow on the Chilean website Aviacion Total, independent of the video of the CEFAA (<http://tinyurl.com/c45npv6>). It, too, is filled with fly-like UFOs buzzing in front of the airplanes. However, on this video the UFO moves in an opposite direction with respect to the jets than in the CEFAA video. Stiverinmypocket wrote, “My intention was to show that the object in the CEFAA video can NOT be a UFO, because the respective object in this old video travels in the opposite direction. It is probably another bug close to Olave’s camera, who was shooting simultaneously from another vantage point.” I’m sure that there are plenty of bugs to go around.

In a March 25, 2012, posting on his UFO-Blog.com, Michael Naisbitt noted that a March 2010 video of an air show

at El Bosque, shot eight months before the now-famous one, shows similar fly-like UFOs zipping around (<http://tinyurl.com/cgkjgda>). So either UFOs infest the El Bosque airfield in Chile—or flies do. Perhaps the airfield’s name should be changed to El Mosca—“The Fly.”

Clearly stung by the criticism even from many in her own camp, Kean kept promising an update on her Facebook page but then kept delaying it. On the afternoon of April 13, exactly one month after her initial story, she finally posted to the *Huffington Post* her promised update

on the Fly Saucer. Unlike Kean’s initial story, there does not seem to be any link to it on the *Huffington Post* homepage. However, the update appears prominently on Kean’s Facebook page. It almost seems that she did not want to bring any new readers into this controversy. Her new piece is titled “Update on Chilean UFO Videos: Getting the Bugs Out” (<http://tinyurl.com/7qcg6k3>). Surprisingly, this update changes almost nothing: we don’t really learn anything that we didn’t know before. She complains that “Skeptics caused quite a stir by taking it upon themselves to do their own ‘analysis’ of the video clips and then to declare, with bravado, that the object of concern was simply a bug.” How dare we take it upon ourselves to question her? She proclaims that “[General] Bermúdez [of the CEFAA] isn’t going to prematurely toss the videos out onto the Internet to be played with by unqualified peo-

ple”—meaning us skeptics—and she exhorts us to wait patiently until the “experts” finish their analysis.

Michael Naisbitt replied with a blistering rejoinder to Kean on his UFO-blog.com (<http://tinyurl.com/832lj23>). He pointed out that Kean had originally written that the CEFAA “had commissioned scientists from many disciplines, aeronautical experts, and air force and army photogrametric technicians to subject the videos to intense scrutiny. They all came to the same conclusions.” Now she was claiming that the analysis was ongoing: “now a mere four weeks later we are told that the earlier analysis wasn’t really complete and if that is the case then what of the earlier conclusions, were they incomplete as well?” Naisbitt concludes that Kean and General Bermúdez of the CEFAA both “do a bang-up job of contradicting themselves.”

At this point, Kean is clearly wishing for the whole matter to simply go away. Clearly we are waiting for Godot to finish his analysis, and until that happens, “we all have to wait for further information, and be respectful of that process”—even though it’s already been shown that the “UFO” is a fly. You don’t need a photometric scanner and a PhD to see that the “UFO” is sometimes between the camera and the nearby ground.

“Is this the case UFO skeptics have been dreading?” asked a hopeful Leslie Kean. As a skeptic, I don’t dread any such thing. I would welcome *solid* evidence that something extraordinary is flying around openly in Earth’s skies. But it’s been said many times that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof, and UFO proponents will have to present a far better video than a fly buzzing around to prove their case. Indeed, the very fact that a video of a fly doing loops is being cited by some of the world’s top UFOlogists as among the best UFO images of all time reveals how utterly lightweight even the best UFO photos and videos are. ■