

**To:** Help\_Please@HOBART.def.gov.au

**Subject:** Please Help: 'No Duff' HMAS HOBART Hit during Vietnam UFO Encounter?

### **Genuine Query:**

Does any-one know the original author of the article below, or know of his current location? It was stumbled upon by accident, and rather than mass distribute to every-one, it was circulated thru Naval contacts but without success.

It seems that it may be bogus, or that some people have (not surprisingly) poor memories, because the incidents described have been denied by some who should/would have remembered them.

If the incidents are in fact bogus, then the author has a very convincing and very vivid imagination, and may be in need of professional help.

It is the prime reason for this and allied Networks to help the Veteran Community in every way we can reasonably do so, as all readers must be aware. You have all assisted us all (myself and other distributor's) in the past by locating missing persons (even if there has been little feed-back on a mass distributed basis).

Please put aside any differences of opinion or misconceptions you may have had with the distributors of information (that is what we are), and continue to jump in when the call for help goes out, as in this case.

I - and we - have more 'help please' requests yet to be distributed, and we would be loathe to fail to help those in need because of a few twisted idiots. Please continue to distribute requests as and when made.

## **Navy ship HMAS Hobart hit during Vietnam UFO encounter?**

**Date**

June 15, 1968

**Location**

DMZ, Viet Nam

**Summary:** *On Friday, 15 June 1968, Allied forward spotters along the eastern part of the Demilitarised Zone, a 9.6km wide strip separating North and South Vietnam, reported seeing about 30 strange slow-moving 'lights' in the night sky.*

**Type of Case/Report:** StandardCase

**Hynek Classification:** CE2

**Special Features/Characteristics:** Military, Physical Trace

**Full Report / Article**

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**Source:** *AUFORN Special Report, Issue 34, April 2003*

**HMAS HOBART HIT DURING VIETNAM UFO ENCOUNTER?**

Story by Jon Wyatt

In June 1968 Australia was dismayed by the news that the guided-missile destroyer HMAS Hobart had been badly damaged by 'friendly fire' in Vietnam: Two crew died and seven were wounded

during the USAF attack.

Officially, the Hobart 'Incident' occurred during a night operation against 'enemy helicopters' - but was it in reality a UFO story?

The evidence is very intriguing, and to find out why let's go to the beginning.

On Friday, 15 June 1968, Allied forward spotters along the eastern part of the Demilitarised Zone, a 9.6km wide strip separating North and South Vietnam, reported seeing about 30 strange slow-moving 'lights' in the night sky. At the time the belief was these were lumbering North Vietnamese Russian-built M-14 'Hound' helicopters ferrying men and materiel over the border.

After the sightings, Allied Command, fearing another Tet Offensive-style build-up, rushed more anti-aircraft guns to the border, and placed Phantom fighter-bombers at Danang Air Base on standby, and it also asked available Allied warships to patrol the DMZ coast. HMAS Hobart II one of those warships that responded.

That night, the forward spotters along the eastern DMZ again reported the 'enemy helicopters' had re-appeared, and the Allied forces sprang into action.

Details of the subsequent aerial 'melee' remain sketchy, but it is known several US 7th Air Force Phantom fighter-bombers soon arrived on the scene and began firing on the intruders; and were supported by anti-aircraft ground fire. During the Allied attack the 'enemy helicopters' were seen to move down the east coast and then out to the sea - and there things went terribly wrong.

A US Navy Board of Inquiry, which investigated the Hobart 'incident' for the Australian government, found shortcomings of the Phantom's radar system were partly to blame: to stop big targets flooding the radarscope the radar had a cut-off mechanism, so the returns from a warship and a slow moving low flying helicopter could appear similar on-screen.

After the 'lights' fled seaward, the first 'friendly fire' incident occurred shortly after midnight when the US Navy swift boat PCF-19 was sunk by three air-to-air missiles while patrolling some kilometres south of the DMZ. Five of the seven crew died (more about this later).

At about 3.30am, the Hobart was patrolling (blacked-out and maintaining radio silence) near Tiger Island, about 20kms off Cap Lay, when her radar room detected a fast, in-coming aircraft. The IFF (Identification Friend of Foe) system indicated it was 'friendly' and the ship was attempting to establish further identity when a Sparrow air-to-air missile struck her amidships on the starboard (right) side. The missile penetrated the alluminum hull and exploded killing Ordinary Seaman R J Butterworth and wounding two others.

While the crew was rushing to Action Stations, two more air-to-air missiles penetrated the starboard side and killed Chief Electrician Hunt and wounded several others - and narrowly missed a magazine. Hobart fired five rounds from a deckgun, but the swept-winged attacker escaped.

During the DMZ 'lights' operation, the guided-missile destroyer USS Edson, the guided-missile cruiser USS Boston, the US Coast Guard cutter Point Dume, and the USS PCF-19 also came under 'friendly fire', but fortunately without causing more casualties.

Eventually, the Phantom pilots involved in the operation that night and early morning, were recalled and grounded.

After daybreak, US helicopters airlifted the wounded Australian sailors to Danang and the damaged Hobart went to Subic Bay, Philippines, for repairs and was off the scene for five weeks - and that night DMZ 'lights' returned.

Whatever the 'lights' actually were remains a subject of conjecture, but it appears they were sighted for some weeks and went unchallenged. A week after the Hobart 'incident' the Melbourne Sun noted: "sightings were reported by radarmen in Quang Tri Province about five miles [eight kms] below the border zone. It was the sixth time since last Saturday that such sightings have been reported ... US command has ordered its fighter-bombers and artillery to withhold fire not wanting a repeat of the incidents in which the Allied ships were fired upon."

Also adding further to the mystery, no wreckage of downed enemy choppers was found. In August 1968 the Royal Australian Navy News confirmed: "No physical evidence of helicopters destroyed has been discovered in the area of activity nor has extensive reconnaissance produced any evidence of enemy helicopter operations in or near the DMZ".

In 1996 I interviewed the Hobart's skipper, the late Ken Shands, and he also said, "Neither before nor after the incident ... was there any report by any of the ships of a helicopter being there [around Tiger Island]. Now having said that, the captain of one of the American ships told me later at Subic Bay that he thought there were helicopters there, but the fact is he didn't report, and if he believed there was a helicopter ... it was his duty to report it at the time, but there was no report."

So what appeared over the DMZ that sparked the mission that saw Hobart hit?

The events of that night have doubtless raised much discussion - it was the RAN's costliest day of the entire war - and Australian navy history books mention 'unusual atmospheric conditions over the DMZ', 'insect swarms' or 'bird flocks' as possible sources of the sightings, but were they unidentified flying objects?

General George S Brown (1918-1978) was commander of the 7th US Air Force and deputy commander for Air Operations, Military Assistance Command Vietnam from 1968 to 1970 - and so was in command of the Phantoms involved in the snafu. In later years he rose to chair the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. In 1973, he fronted a Chicago media conference held to discuss the North American UFO flap of that year, and while airing his views on UFOs at the conference he said: "I don't know whether this story has ever been told or not [but UFOs plagued us in Vietnam]. They weren't called UFOs they were called enemy helicopters, and they were only seen at night and they were only seen in certain places. They were seen up around the DMZ in the early summer of '68, and this resulted in quite a battle. And in the course of this, an Australian destroyer [Hobart] took a hit ... there was no enemy at all involved but we always reacted. Always after dark. The same thing happened up at Pleiku at the Highlands in '69".

George Filer, today Director of the Mutual UFO Network Eastern, USA, served as a USAF intelligence officer under General Brown during the Vietnam conflict, and he has also said, "In 1968, I briefed General Brown the USAF Chief of Staff most mornings on the intelligence situation in Vietnam... a lot of times we'd get UFO reports over the DMZ".

The late Bill Cooper served as a patrol-boat captain in Vietnam from 1967 to 1969, and during a talk at the 1989 Los Angeles UFO conference he said:

"After about five months I was sent up north to the DMZ, to a place called Qua Vieaf [perhaps Qua Viet] on the Tacan [sic] river .... It was while there that I discovered that there was a tremendous

amount of UFO and alien activity in Vietnam. It was always reported in official messages as 'enemy helicopters'. Now any of you who know anything about the Vietnam war know that the North Vietnamese did not have any helicopters especially after our first couple of air raids into North Vietnam [during 1965]. Even if they had, they would not have been so foolish as to bring them over the DMZ, because that would have ensured their demise."

Cooper later recanted his belief in an alien presence and instead insisted UFOs are "technology originally developed by the Germans in their secret weapons programs during WW-II, by geniuses like Nikola Tesla and many others". However the mystery of 1968 DMZ 'lights' marched on, and the following is from another American patrol boat crew member.

Jim Steffes, ENC, USN Retired, served on the patrol boat PCF-12 on the night of the Hobart 'incident', and he confirms strange goings-on in the sky. In his article 'The sinking of PCF-19 as seen from PCF-12', he states the PCF-12 met the ill-fated PCF-19 at sea that night to fix the PCF-19's radar. At approximately 0030 hours the PCF-12 received a 'flash traffic' that PCF-19, the first 'friendly fire' target, had disappeared in a flash of light. The PCF-12 reached the scene as Point Dume was pulling the two badly wounded survivors aboard. As PCF-12 searched in vain for more survivors, she found she had company.

As he and the crew peered into the darkness, the moon sometimes behind clouds, "we spotted two aircraft 'hovering' on our port and starboard beams. They were about 300 yards away and 100 feet above the water. As the boat swung around to put the aircraft ahead and astern of PCF-12, I could hear Mr. Snyder [the Officer In Charge] requesting air support and identification of these helos. The answer from the beach was 'no friendly aircraft in the area, have contacts near you on radar and starlight scope'.

Steffes says he saw one 'helo' in the moonlight and believed "It had a rounded front like an observation helo and it looked like two crewman sitting side by side". Then, "I watched as tracers began to come toward us as this helo opened fire. The guns were from the nose of the helo. Our guns opened up and I ran back to my position as the loader on the after gun. We heard a crash of glass and a splash as one of the helos hit the water, the other helo broke contact and left the area."

Steffes says for the next two and one half hours the PCF-12 played cat and mouse with one or more helos, opening fire whenever they moved in. He also observed the Point Dume firing tracers at blinking lights moving around her in the air. All the radios were crackling constantly as friendlies were checked out. "The result was no friendlies, these had to be North Vietnamese."

Then, three and a half hours later, at about 3:30am, military jets roared overhead and after they acknowledged the PCF-19's position, he soon heard explosions and gunfire to the north (the Hobart 'incident?'). "As dawn broke, we could only see the shoreline and the Point Dume."

Steffes concluded: "We continued to monitor and track these 'lights' for several weeks after this up until September ... I know what the 'official story' is, but this is mine as true and complete as I can remember."

Jim Steffes' story of course raise many fascinating questions including:

Did the PCF-12 crew fall victim to 'cultural tracking': aliens using their advanced technology to mimick our technology to interface with humans?

If the lights were North Vietnamese observer helicopters? why did they fly around for hours with their

lights on, why weren't they shot down, and why was no 'helo' wreckage ever retrieved?

Many Ufologists believe alien visitors have long been studying human wars; and this may have been the case in 1968.

#### Paranormal Postscript:

Hobart served out three tours of duty in Vietnam, however it seems after 1968 she had an extra crewman.

A Signalman, who served on the ship during the 1990s, says that one morning at 4am when the warship was approaching Hobart, Tas., he was climbing a flex ladder to the flag deck when he felt the ladder move below him, then felt "something actually walk past/through me on the ladder". Then, when he reached the flag deck and entered the Signalmans Shelter, he sensed "someone in there with me and could hear them breathing as though they had been running or working hard".

The Signalman later learnt from the Chief Coxswain, a 15-year veteran, that "a Leading Seaman Signalman" had been killed while scaling the ladder to action stations in 1968: "Apparently, the ship took a missile hit and a piece of shrapnel took this poor man's head clean off his shoulders".

During the late 1990s when the Signalman was re-posted to the ship, he sent a young sailor up the ladder to 'test the waters', and the bloke also came down shaking.

The "Green Ghost", as the ship was also affectionately known, was de-commissioned in May 2000, and scuttled at Yankalilla Bay, south of Adelaide, in late 2002, where she is now a scuba-dive spot.

#### Main Sources:

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4. Navy in Vietnam: A record of the Royal Australian Navy in the Vietnam War 1965-1973 by Denis Fairfax (Australian Government Publishing Service 1980) pps.59-60
5. Interview with Ken Shands, Anzac Day 1996, Melbourne
6. General George S Brown, USAF Chief of Staff, Department of Defense transcript of press conference in Illinois, 16 October, 1973, found at: <http://gamegene.com/ufo.htm>
7. 'George Filer Keeps Watching The Skies' by Michael Vitez, Philadelphia Inquirer, 20 August, 2001, found at [www.rense.com](http://www.rense.com)
8. 'The Milton William Cooper Speech', 17 November, 1989, found at: <http://www.the-greys.com/pirho/speech.html>
9. 'MajestyTwelve' by William Cooper, 1997, found at: <http://williamcooper.com>
10. 'The Sinking of PCF-19 as seen from PCF-12' by Jim Steffes, ENC, USN Retired, found at [www.gunplot.net/vietnam/hobartvietnamandpcf19.html](http://www.gunplot.net/vietnam/hobartvietnamandpcf19.html)
11. Jim Steffes' Vietnam Photo Album website found at <http://www.b cres.com/river/steffes.htm>
12. Article 'Ghost At Sea' found at [www.castleofspirits.com](http://www.castleofspirits.com)