Chapter 7 - Method and Results of GEPAN/SEPRA

7.1 Method Developed by GEPAN

GEPAN developed an original method for studying rare, randomly occurring phenomena. Meteorites are among these phenomena. Scientists have long refused to consider sightings of stones that have fallen from the sky, which are generally reported by rural inhabitants. Fortunately, in 1803, the physicist Jean-Baptiste Biot conducted an in-depth investigation in the village of Laigle in Orne [Department] about three weeks after it was reported that stones had fallen from the sky. Biot examined numerous stones and certain evidence (broken branches, perforated roofs, fires) and questioned many independent witnesses. He prepared a convincing report that gave scientific existence to meteorites.

The method developed by GEPAN was approved by its scientific council. It basically consists of identifying initially unknown phenomena and performing a joint analysis of four types of data concerning:

- witnesses: physiology, psychology, etc.,
- testimonies: accounts, reactions to questions, general behavior, etc.,
- the physical environment: weather, air traffic, photographs, radar data, traces left on the environment, etc.,
- the psychosocial environment: readings and beliefs of witnesses, possible influence of the media and various groups on these witnesses, etc.

Gendarmerie reports often contain sufficient data in order to be able to identify the phenomenon sighted. In many cases, the phenomenon turns out to be an airplane, a planet, a satellite, etc. In other cases, a fairly large supplemental investigation is conducted by GEPAN/SEPRA. An in-depth study can take up to two years. The analysis of traces left on the environment may result in specialized laboratories being called on for assistance (see the Trans-en-Provence and "Amaranth" cases in Chapter 4).

Finally research was conducted in collaboration with the universities in order to perfect the investigation method. CNES, out of a concern for scientific precision, adopted the term "UAP" instead of the term UFO, which is more well known but more restrictive. GEPAN is the group that studies UAPs.

7.2 First Classification of UAPs (Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena)

After a study is conducted, each case is classified by GEPAN/SEPRA into one of the following four categories, depending on the extent to which it has been identified:

- Category A: completely identified phenomenon,
- Category B: phenomenon that can probably be identified but which cannot be identified with certainty due to a lack of evidence,
- Category C: phenomenon that cannot be identified due to a lack of data,
- Category D: phenomenon that cannot be identified despite the abundance and quality of the data.

Category D UAPs represent 4 to 5% of the cases and are called UAP Ds. They include sightings of phenomena, some of which were close to the ground, within a few meters of the witnesses. The strangest and most mysterious cases in this category are generally