

Upon examination of what he said in a local radio interview and newspaper articles written just after the event, we can piece together what he actually said he saw. At around 5:50 p.m. on April 24, 1964, he was just pulling over a driver suspected of speeding, when he heard what sounded like an explosion and saw flames and smoke in the air in the direction of a local dynamite shack that was behind a hill. He turned around and drove toward the shack. When he got about a half mile away, the shack came into view, and he also saw a white object that he thought may have been an overturned car that had been in an accident. As he drove closer, another hill obscured his view. Once he got to the top of that hill, he could see what he described as a white, egg-shaped object with some red markings on the side, and two figures in white coveralls about the size of people near the object. He quickly got out of the car and started on foot in that direction when there was another loud boom. At that point, he covered his eyes and knocked off his prescription glasses, and ran toward the back of his car for cover. He was not close enough or didn't have enough time to identify if the two figures were people or something else. Without his glasses, he saw the object apparently rise and then slowly move away from him. He also saw orange and blue flames, although the exact chronology of what happened was a little unclear.¹ In a radio interview he said, "It happened so fast that I started running. I was

¹ US Air Force, Socorro 1964 UFO Incident, Project Blue Book, available through *The Black Vault*, 128, <https://documents2.theblackvault.com/documents/projectbluebook/ProjectBlueBook-Socorro-NewMexico-04-24-1964.pdf>; "Socorro, New Mexico, April 24, 1964. Officer Lonnie Zamora is interviewed by Walter Strode on KSRC R," interview conducted on April 24, 1964; video uploaded to YouTube by *UFO History*, October 7, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3dpJBC_IRk. (Zamora discusses the indentations on the ground at 05:30-05:51.) See also: Associated Press (AP), "Whatzit Touches Down Near Socorro," *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 26, 1964, 1.

scared,” and that right after the thing took off everything became very quiet and he claimed, ”You could hear a pin drop.”²

He got back to his cruiser and called his friend, state policeman Sam Chavez, to come immediately, which only took about three minutes. When Chavez arrived, the white object was still visible far in the distance traveling away, but it remained very close to the ground. It quickly disappeared from sight.

Immediately afterward, Zamora and Chavez noticed some burning brush which was still smoking and four impressions in the ground. Over the next few days, the military/**Air Force** came in and examined the area. A typical media frenzy ensued, with implications that he had witnessed extraterrestrials, something that Zamora never believed. In fact, he said he was sorry he ever reported it, because of all the attention it was getting and how this interfered with his job.³

After learning some more recent information, we couldn't agree more with Zamora. Years later, an individual who was a student at the local university in Socorro (the New Mexico School of Technology) in 1964 came forward with a humorous story. On the day of Zamora's and Chavez's sighting, Bruno R., who later became a mining engineer working in California, / **he (we will abbreviate his name to “Bruno R.,” who later became a mining engineer working in California)** and another student were bored and drove their white car out to the dynamite shack. Once at the dynamite shack, they put on white coveralls and launched an oil drum into the air by lighting a stick of dynamite under it. After the first explosion, they decided to do it again. The

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³ Charles Richards, “UFO Witness Sighs At Reports Of What He Supposedly Said,” *Albuquerque Journal*, April 27, 1964, 1, 12.

dynamite fuse for the second explosion had been lit when they saw a police cruiser pull up on a nearby hill. This was the last thing they wanted to see, because they knew they'd be expelled if caught. So, they jumped in the car and drove in the opposite direction just as the second explosion happened.⁴ Zamora could blurrily see the white car driving up another hill away from him, and as the car drove away, it was intermittently visible, because of the hills. If the dynamite story is correct, Zamora's account would make some sense, as opposed to being a strange outlier story, even for a UFO report. Also, for physical evidence, the explosions would have left four impressions, with two of them smoking, and two simply being dents in the ground.

[Add a myth-building conclusion]

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[Betty and Barney Hill website] Zamora reported that he was pursuing a speeding car two miles west of Socorro at 5:50 p.m. on April 24, 1964 when he heard a loud explosive sound near the Mayor's dynamite shack. He pulled off to the side of the road to investigate. At the top of the hill and from about 100 feet away, he saw a white egg-shaped object the size of a car resting on four legs. Zamora said he also saw two humanoid figures in white overalls near the object. The object then made a loud roaring sound as it ascended and emitted a bluish-orange flame. Terrified that the object was going to blow up, he began running towards his car and dropped his glasses. He hid behind his car until the roaring noise stopped about 10 seconds later. As he looked back to where the object was, he saw it rise 15-20 feet. He was then able to make out red markings on the object. The object hovered briefly then moved horizontally towards the dynamite shack. It barely avoided collision with the shack as it continued traveling across the gully and eventually disappeared into the distance. Soon after, Sgt. Chavez arrived in response to

⁴ Robert Sheaffer, "Famous Socorro 'UFO Landing' A Student Prank?" *Skeptical Inquirer*, vol. 34, no. 2, Mar.-Apr. 2010, <https://skepticalinquirer.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2010/03/p25.pdf>.

a call for back-up radioed in by Zamora. The incident was thoroughly investigated by local law enforcement officials, the Air Force's Project Blue Book, the FBI, U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), and several civilian UFO researchers like Ray Stanford, and received a significant amount of media coverage. Although investigators did not find any trace of the object or unusual levels of radioactivity at the site, they did discover scorched vegetation. They did not, however, find the four imprints on the ground that Zamora claimed to have seen that he said were 10 inches wide, 6-8 inches deep, and 19 feet apart.⁵

While the Socorro UFO incident has long been considered among the most compelling cases, a student at the nearby New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech) confessed that he was responsible. Bruno Renns, who was studying to become a mining engineer at the time, told [source of info] that he and a friend had played a prank due to boredom at the remote university. The two students allegedly placed two sticks of dynamite under an upside-down oil drum and ignited them, sending the oil drum into the air. They ignited two sticks of dynamite in two separate explosions: The first was the explosion that initially caught Zamora's attention, and the second was what Zamora interpreted as the object departing. The figures in white overalls, according to Renns, were the two students in protective overalls, and not wanting to get caught by the police or expelled from their university, they quickly fled the scene after Zamora arrived. The indentations on the ground were burn marks from where the oil drum had been exploded.⁶

⁵ US Air Force, Socorro 1964 UFO Incident, Project Blue Book, available through *The Black Vault*, 128, <https://documents2.theblackvault.com/documents/projectbluebook/ProjectBlueBook-Socorro-NewMexico-04-24-1964.pdf>; "Socorro, New Mexico, April 24, 1964. Officer Lonnie Zamora is interviewed by Walter Strode on KSRC R," interview conducted on April 24, 1964; video uploaded to YouTube by *UFO History*, October 7, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3dpJBC_IRk. (Zamora discusses the indentations on the ground at 05:30-05:51.)

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