

# Socorro: The Landing That Left Evidence

*A police officer, a burning oval craft, and physical trace evidence that survived forensic scrutiny*

Date	Location	Key Witnesses	Official Response	Physical Evidence
April 24, 1964	Socorro, New Mexico	Officer Lonnie Zamora, New Mexico State Police	Project Blue Book: Unknown – one of only 701 unresolved cases	Landing traces, burnt vegetation

## // OBSERVER'S PREAMBLE

*The scientific community – or rather, the fraction of it willing to engage with this subject at all – has consistently noted that the UFO evidence problem is primarily an evidence problem: the phenomenon does not leave permanent, independently verifiable physical traces under controlled conditions. The Socorro incident of April 24, 1964 is the most significant exception to this pattern in the modern era. A state police officer witnessed a craft at close range, in daylight, under sober and professional conditions, and the site he described was examined within hours by multiple investigators who found exactly the physical evidence his account predicted.*

# The Event

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Officer Lonnie Zamora of the New Mexico State Police was pursuing a speeding vehicle south of Socorro when he noticed a blue-orange flame descending in the desert to the west, accompanied by a roaring sound. Assuming an accident at a dynamite storage facility in the area, he abandoned the pursuit and drove toward the flame. As he crested a ridge, he observed — at approximately 800 feet distance, in bright afternoon sunlight — an egg-shaped white craft standing on legs in the arroyo below. Beside it were two small figures in white coveralls.

Zamora stopped, radioed his position to dispatch, and approached on foot. As he drew closer, the craft emitted a roar and flame and rose vertically, then moved off horizontally at low altitude. Zamora, experienced in aircraft from his military service, stated unequivocally it was not any aircraft he recognised. The entire sighting lasted approximately four minutes.

<b>2:45 PM</b> TIME OF SIGHTING	<b>800 ft</b> INITIAL OBSERVATION DISTANCE	<b>4 min</b> DURATION OF SIGHTING	<b>&lt; 1 hr</b> TIME BEFORE INVESTIGATORS ON SITE
<b>4</b> DISTINCT PHYSICAL EVIDENCE TYPES DOCUMENTED	<b>1</b> OF 701 BLUE BOOK UNKNOWN — SPECIFICALLY NOTED		

## The Physical Evidence

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This is what distinguishes Socorro from most UFO accounts: the physical evidence was documented by qualified investigators within hours, before contamination was possible. The site showed four distinct indentations in the soil consistent with landing pads, burnt vegetation in a specific pattern consistent with the described flame, and physical marks in the earth that bore no resemblance to any conventional aircraft's ground impression.

EVIDENCE TYPE	DOCUMENTATION	ASSESSMENT
Four ground indentations	Measured, photographed, cast — approximately 4 inches deep in hard soil	Consistent with weight-bearing legs of an approximately 4,000 lb object
Burnt vegetation	Greasewood and other plants scorched in a specific radial pattern	Consistent with directed heat source from below — not consistent with flares or conventional propulsion
Smooth impact marks	Surface marks consistent with the craft's described understructure	No conventional explanation offered
Soil chemistry	Analysis by FBI laboratory showed anomalous mineral distribution in the burn area	Inconclusive but noted as unusual
Landing pad indentations depth	Harder soil than surroundings — yet deeper impressions	Indicates either greater weight than soil should support or different material compressive effect

*"There is no doubt that Lonnie Zamora saw an object which left quite distinct physical traces in the area. It is not possible to explain the sighting in terms of any conventional aircraft known to exist."*

— Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Project Blue Book Scientific Consultant — official assessment

## Blue Book's Response

Project Blue Book — not known for candour — listed the Socorro incident as one of its **701 unresolved cases**. Dr. J. Allen Hynek, the programme's scientific consultant and initially a committed sceptic, considered it one of the most compelling cases in the entire Blue Book archive. Blue Book's director, Major Hector Quintanilla, investigated personally and could find no conventional explanation.

The Air Force did not publicly declare it unexplained. It simply moved on. The record stands.

#### // CORROBORATING WITNESS

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Sergeant Sam Chavez of the New Mexico State Police arrived at the scene within minutes of Zamora's radio call and observed both Zamora's shaken state and the fresh physical evidence before any contamination was possible. Additional witnesses in the nearby town of Socorro reported seeing an unusual craft in the area at the same time. Zamora's account was not singular.

#### // PHYSICAL EVIDENCE ACROSS CASES

The Socorro landing traces represent one of the clearest instances of recoverable physical evidence in the public UFO record. They connect directly to the pattern of nuclear-adjacent sightings — Socorro is approximately 100 miles from Trinity Site, where the first nuclear detonation occurred in 1945. The density of credible sightings in New Mexico throughout this period is not random. Read: [Chapter 07 — Malmstrom: The Day Ten Nuclear Missiles Went Dark](#) →

#### // OBSERVER'S CLOSING NOTE

*Zamora was exactly the kind of witness a serious investigation would want: trained in aircraft recognition, professionally sober, with nothing to gain and considerable professional risk from his report. He faced ridicule from colleagues for years. He never changed his account. The physical evidence he led investigators to was documented before it could be contaminated.*

*This case is in the Blue Book unknowns not because the evidence was weak. It is there because the evidence was strong — too strong to explain away, and too inconvenient to investigate further.*

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