

'Flashes' reported in four-state area

GLENWOOD, Minn. (AP) — Law enforcement officers are investigating reports of bright flashes bursting in the night-time sky over a four-state area of the Upper Midwest.

The Pope County sheriff's office, Glenwood, Minn., said it found nothing in an investigation prompted by a couple's report that a "magnificent light, with colors of blue, orange, green and red," came toward them as they drove on Minnesota 9 south of Hancock Friday night.

The couple, who asked not to be identified, said it appeared the object would hit them. The man said he stepped on the brakes when the object appeared to be heading for their car. The object was about 500 feet from the earth, he said, when it seemed to disintegrate with a "very loud boom."

The disintegration appeared to occur over Lake Emily, the man reported.

The object was large and had a long tail, he added.

In Minneapolis, the National Weather Service said the cause of the light was not known. Because of the widespread area

in which the light was observed, a NWS spokesman said, it may have been one or more meteors striking the upper portion of the earth's atmosphere.

Most reports of the sighting came from western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. In some areas, the flashes were said to be accompanied by a rumbling noise.

At Morris, reports came in from a 50-to-60 square mile area. Observers said there were two flashes, followed by the noise. The rumbling shook buildings, authorities were told.

Several sightings were reported in the vicinity of Oak Center, in Wabasha County, in southeastern Minnesota. Some of the Wabasha County people making the report said the object "lit up the sky."

Reports of the bright light shortly after 11 p.m. also came from such places as Fargo, N.D.; Thief River Falls, in northwestern Minnesota; Marshall, in southwestern Minnesota, the Eau Claire, Wis., vicinity, and in South Dakota. The Weather Service did not say where in South Dakota the flashes were noted.

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8A WORLD THE NEWS-SUN, Wednesday,

South Africa
has A-bomb,
U.S. believes

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JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (UPI) — U.S. intelligence sources believe South Africa exploded a nuclear bomb over a remote area of the South Atlantic Dec. 16, the Johannesburg Star newspaper said today.

The Star report, under a Washington dateline, quoted high-level Defense Department and intelligence sources as saying a U.S. spy satellite detected a brilliant flash of light that resembled a nuclear explosion.

The area was the same spot where on Sept. 22, 1979 a satellite detected a similar flash of light that led to an international controversy over U.S. allegations that South Africa had exploded a nuclear device.

South Africa denied it has any nuclear capabilities. South Africa does have a plant that can produce weapons-grade enriched uranium, but it said the plant is for peaceful use only.

The Star said U.S. officials strongly suspect South Africa is engaged in a full-scale nuclear testing program.

"It is perfectly logical that a test program should produce two such events 15 months apart," a U.S. source was quoted in the Star.

The Star report said U.S. officials thought the blast was too small to be set off by a sophisticated nuclear power like the Soviet Union or France.

"The blasts were small — too small for the Soviet Union or France, but about the right size for countries such as South Africa or Israel," the source said. "Our money is on South Africa, but there is still a hell of a lot of investigation and dispute going on."

U.S. diplomats in South Africa refused to comment on the suspected explosion and said any statements on the matter would have to come from the State Department in Washington.