

Space agency analyzes cylinder found in Africa

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CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Kennedy Space Center engineers are analyzing a charred metal cylinder found in southern Africa to see if it was part of a lost satellite.

The object, smaller than a human fist, was brought to the United States by an American missionary who said it seared trees and brush when it landed.

Space agency engineers said it likely was "space junk," possibly from a decayed satellite that disintegrated in the atmosphere.

Emory Pinkerton, 58, of Greer, S.C., a Baptist missionary, said native tribesmen, in a country he would not disclose, brought him the object. He said the tribesmen told him they dug it up after

watching it streak from the sky and smash into the ground.

Pinkerton said he brought it back because he believed it might have been part of the external fuel tank from the space shuttle Columbia's first mission in April. But engineers said the metal has a high iron content, leading them to believe it is from a satellite, possibly Soviet. They said the shuttle tanks broke up over the Indian Ocean, east of Africa.

Scott Pinkerton