

# UFOs 'in raid on Soviet space centre'

A concerted "sabotage" effort was made by alien spacecraft to shut down the giant Baikonur cosmodrome, Russia's answer to America's Cape Canaveral, during the first two weeks of last June, according to reliable Soviet scientists interviewed in Moscow.

During an anxiety and tension-filled 16 days not a single Soviet spacecraft was launched from the usually bustling Soviet multiple launch quadrangle as work crews repaired the damage which was discovered just in time to prevent a major disaster.

Scheduled launches of spacecraft including an important test flight of a new space vehicle were diverted to two other cosmodromes, the Kapustin Yar space centre, about 1,600 km to the west, and Plesetsk, some 2,400 km to the north.

One of the scientists said: "Whatever you like to call the uninvited visitors from the skies — UFOs or alien spacecrafts — two of them, flew in from a northerly direction at around 2 am on June 1.

The other UFO's attack had the effect of smashing windows along the upper floors of the town's buildings.

Some 30 seconds later the two UFOs rejoined each other near the spaceport, then headed back north. Within seconds, they disappeared from sight.

The scientists reported that witnesses found it impossible to judge the size of the craft as they were apparently flying very high.

"Incredible as it may sound," one scientist said, "the elaborate defences of Baikonour were taken completely by surprise. There was a lot of commotion the following day when the damage to Launch Pad No 1 was discovered.

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"A single launch of a smaller Cosmos satellite from an isolated pad some 64 km from the main installation was allowed to proceed on schedule, but two dozen launch sites were shut off and put under heavy guard. Within 24 hours Baikonur was totally paralysed.

"Nothing like this has ever happened before to our spaceport since 1955."

That was when the site in the Kazakhstan steppe was chosen for a space centre. The land was flat and empty of people for hundreds of miles, the sky was always clear. The remote area was considered the safest in the Soviet Union.

When it was decided to shift the site of the test launch it entailed a feat of improvised logistics involving the use of giant military helicopters, the scientist said.

It was from Baikonur that on October 4, 1957, the Soviets ushered in the space age by shooting off its 215-lb Sputnik satellite.

Baikonur was considered secure, tucked away between the Aral Sea and the Ural Mountains; Kapustin Yar was much too vulnerable to US aerial surveillance, radar and bombers. But recently the old cosmodrome underwent a total modernisation and new launch pads were installed to include one capable of handling payloads as heavy as most of those shot into space orbit from Baikonur.

"Should there be more sabotage at Baikonur," said a source, "we'll have to fall back on Kapustin Yar for help unless we agree to curtail our space programme; which we have no intention of doing."

In fact, when on June 18, Baikonur resumed operations it was to conduct a complicated "defence manoeuvre," according to US intelligence. Both Plesetsk and Kapustin Yar participated.

"On that day," said a US military source, "in a major Soviet missile programme, six to eight launchings from all three space centres were carried out within several hours.

From HENRY GRIS in Moscow

"It was a major military exercise involving rocket launchings and re-entries, a most impressive military space action."

where it is actually located, Plesetsk, officially, is simply Plesetsk.

It is just a small town on the railway line from Moscow to Archangel, 416 km below the Arctic Circle, one is told. It has no significance whatsoever.

The Plesetsk cosmodrome, a quadrangle 48 x 64 km dotted with sophisticated installations, to all intents and purposes, does not exist. To be sure, the Russian people have been denied all knowledge about it.

The only ones who have suspected that "something" is going on up there," to quote them, are the Russian civilian UFO spotters who have long pinpointed the area of Plesetsk as having had more UFO overflights than any other rural area in European Russia.

"They keep flying in and out of this region like bees around a beehive," said one Russian ufologist.

Told that Plesetsk harbours a giant, if secret cosmodrome, long photographed by US satellites, he nodded: "Makes sense!"

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It was this Plesetsk, then, that found itself working overtime to fill in for the sabotaged Kazakhstan cosmodrome while carrying out its own extensive space programme.

The sabotage of Baikonur coincided with its main launch site, used to lift 11 manned space vehicles, getting ready to shoot off the new Soyuz T spacecraft.

This latest Soviet manned transport vehicle carries a crew of three and is considered the newest, extremely efficient, workhorse of the Soviet space programme.

against the intruders, and was vandalised on the night of June 1.

"No one was killed even though people were injured by flying glass caused by unknown 'snipers' apparently shooting holes into windows. Having been to Petrozavodsk and most recently to Leningrad, I recognised the neat round holes. Similar sniping there has been attributed to overflying spacecraft."

In the morning Dr Zolotov was told that the people he had come to see were not available, and he was advised to leave the space city as soon as possible.

He was only too happy to get out, he recalled. It appeared that Dr Zolotov knew more but preferred to keep his mouth shut.

But another Russian scientist elaborated on what happened to Baikonur on that night on condition that his name be withheld:

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"People still up at 2 am when it happened saw holes mysteriously appearing in their apartment windows, and pieces of glass falling to the floor. But they never saw where the shots came from or who did the shooting. It all happened in total, oppressive silence. The window panes with the holes in them were immediately replaced on orders of the town administration.

"All I know about the events at the spaceport itself is that it was the other object that overflowed it and shot bolts and rivets out of the launch pad support structures. Again there were no casualties.



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