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U.S. judge looks askance at claims in UFO lawsuit

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A federal judge indicated he is looking askance at a case brought by two women who say the U.S. government is liable for injuries they allegedly received in an encounter with an unidentified flying object.

U.S. District Judge Ross Sterling declined Tuesday to set a trial date in the 1984 lawsuit filed by Vicki Landrum of Dayton and Betty Cash of Birmingham, Ala.

Sterling said he will first study a motion filed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Frank Conforti asking that the lawsuit against the government be dismissed.

"I strongly suspect at this point that this case is almost over," Sterling said.

Conforti has argued that it cannot be proved that the federal government is responsible for the UFO the two women contend they sighted on Dec. 29, 1980, as they traveled on a country road from New Caney to Dayton.

The women, who were returning from a restaurant with Landrum's grandson, Colby, say they saw a diamond-shaped object in the sky about the size of a city water tank. They say the UFO had flames shooting out of the bottom and hovered briefly before "lifting off" in the

company of 23 military helicopters.

The women filed a \$20 million lawsuit in January 1984, contending that the sighting has caused serious skin, vision and other health problems. Cash, 55, who later moved to Alabama and has had cancer and heart problems, was not present at the brief hearing Tuesday.

Landrum, 61, said she was discouraged at the judge's comments.

"I feel like we're being treated unjustly," she said.

She said she does not intend to drop the matter if the lawsuit is dismissed.

"Regardless of how it goes, it's not over," she said.

Her lawyer, William Shead, said the plaintiffs are contending that the U.S. government is responsible for the UFO or knew about its existence and should have warned the public about it.

Shead said he is prepared to produce six witnesses who saw something out of the ordinary in the New Caney vicinity that night.

Landrum said she still has skin and vision problems that have prevented her from working as a waitress or grocery clerk, as she formerly did.

She said Colby, now 11, started back to school Tuesday and is doing "much better." The lawsuit charged that he had nightmares after the incident.