

Albuquerque, New Mexico Tribune
May 23, '86

Was it a UFO? Flash in sky baffles authorities

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Was it a UFO? Was it a meteor? Or was it just a flash of lightning playing tricks in the sky?

About 1:30 this morning, something lit up the sky over parts of New Mexico, and dozens of alarmed citizens began calling police to find out what it was.

But the police didn't know either.

"There weren't any fires, plane crashes or explosions that we knew of — just a great big flash of light," said a state police dispatcher in Albuquerque.

"I told them all to call Kirtland Air Force Base," said a Santa Rosa police officer. "I didn't know what else to tell them."

Kay Peterson, spokeswoman for Kirtland Air Force Base, said, "All we can say is evidently our base security police saw it, too. We don't know what it was."

Kirtland's public relations officers said several people called the base, including a man on Interstate 40 east of Albuquerque who claimed he saw the

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light move westward across the sky toward the city.

A spokesman for the Sandoval County Sheriff's Department said an officer was sent out to make a routine check of the area but found nothing.

So what was it?

Albuquerque physicist Paul Bennewitz, who has studied unidentified flying objects, said a flying saucer shouldn't be ruled out.

"There is not enough positive information to say one way or the other. But it is

possible that the light could have come from a saucer. The flash of light would have been made when they (space beings) accelerated and left the area."

McAllister Hull, a professor of physics at the University of New Mexico, said it's possible the flash could have been a meteor.

But Hull, who said he did not see the flash, said this is not the season for meteors.

He explained that in October and November, the Earth passes through dense meteor showers but that springtime and summertime meteors are rare.

Perhaps the light could have emanated from a bolt of lightning, Hull said:

"That is just speculation. But lighting a great distance away will glow in the sky instead of making a streak if the conditions are right," he explained.

Hull said physicists at the UNM were not observing astronomical activity late Thursday night because of the cloud cover.

Tom Wright at the National Weather Service said he doubted if the light could have come from lightning because conditions that would have created electrical activity did not exist in the area at 1:30 a.m.

Wright said the city and surrounding counties were covered by wispy clouds, not thunderheads.