

# *Long-tailed fireball not meteor shower or UFO; just old Soviet rocket*

By **ANDREA ROWAND**  
*The Associated Press*  
**MIAMI** — Florida residents who witnessed a long-tailed fireball that whizzed down the length of the state Sunday night thought they'd seen a meteor shower or a UFO, but a U.S. air command official says it was a Soviet rocket falling to earth.

"It looked like a big ball of fire with a tail . . . less than two miles into the air. It was bright orange-red," said Theresa Rines, a disc jockey

at radio station WARM-WRAV in Venice, on Florida's southwest coast.

Ms. Rines said the object was visible for about 30 seconds as it flew overhead. Residents from Jacksonville to Key West, a distance of over 500 miles, reported seeing the spent rocket.

"I thought it was a meteor or comet," Ms. Rines said of the Sunday night sky show.

But a spokesman for the North American Aerospace Defense Command, located

near Colorado Springs said people who called to report citing such natural phenomena were wrong.

"It was the rocket body used in the launch of a Soviet satellite . . . designated Cosmos 1746," said Del Kind-schi, a NORAD spokesman.

He said that experts at the underground surveillance center in Cheyenne Mountain had expected the spent rocket to begin falling to earth just north of Cuba at around 10 p.m. He confirmed that the satellite traveled down the coast of Florida.

He said the rocket body hit the atmosphere near Jacksonville and was last seen near Cuba. However, he said he didn't know where it touched down.

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