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UFO sighting reported by JAL jet crew

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska (UPI) — The crew of a Japan Air Lines cargo jet says that a mysterious UFO with flashing white and yellow strobe lights followed them across the Arctic Circle en route from Reykjavik, Iceland, to Tokyo.

The three-man crew radioed air traffic controllers in Anchorage, reporting the huge UFO flying "in formation" with them, and the Air Force confirmed an object briefly flew near the plane, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Paul Steucke said Monday.

But, although the Air Force radar briefly picked up a second object, Steucke said, FAA controllers in Anchorage and Fairbanks did not.

The strange sight reported by the pilot, co-pilot and flight engineer of JAL Flight 1628 remains a mystery.

The incident occurred Nov. 17 but was not earlier made public until a news reporter queried the FAA.

Flight 1628 had left Reykjavik, flying over the North Pole to Tokyo with a stop in Anchorage. Following the unidentified flying object sighting, the plane landed at Anchorage International Airport and FAA security manager Jim Derry interviewed all three crewmen.

According to the FAA account, lights appeared only a mile from the plane as it crossed the Arctic Circle about 30 miles southeast of Fort Yukon.

"They said they could not see the shape, only the lights," Steucke said of the crew's account. "The lights indicated to them it may be a large aircraft or a large something."

The white and yellow strobe lights followed the Boeing 747 for 50 miles. The crew estimated they were seven miles away, and were not normal aircraft marking pattern.

When the report was made to the Air Route Traffic Control Center at 6:19 p.m., Steucke said controllers tried to locate the object on radar but "were unable to confirm a second target with our equipment. Our radar system picked up one target."

In other words, FAA controllers located only the JAL jumbo jet.

At 6:26 p.m., Steucke said the FAA contacted the Military Regional Operations Control Center at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, and "we asked them if they were receiving any radar returns."

The Air Force told the FAA it "saw a second target (object) eight miles away (from the JAL jet), but they contacted us a minute later and said they were no longer receiving any radar return (of a second object)," Steucke said.

"At 6:32 the JAL pilot requested and received permission for a descent from 35,000 feet to 31,000," Steucke said. Air controllers asked if the lights were still there, and were told, "It is descending in formation."

Four minutes later, the JAL plane received permission for a 360-degree turn. Then, at 6:39 p.m. — 20 minutes after the lights were first reported — the JAL crewmen said they no longer saw the lights.

At 6:45 p.m. Fairbanks controllers authorized a United Airlines northbound jet to make a 10-degree turn to better view the JAL plane and asked the United crew if it saw anything besides the Boeing 747. It did not. Nor did the JAL crew see the lights again.