

JANUARY 5, 1987 - JT

Agency steps up UFO probe

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The Federal Aviation Administration has stepped up its investigation of wavering lights that dogged a Japan Air Lines cargo jet across Alaska's night sky for nearly an hour in November, an official said Sunday.

"We're looking at it to ensure that somebody didn't violate airspace we control," said FAA spokesman Paul Steucke. "We looked at it about six weeks ago, but since then we've gotten a lot of public interest, so we went back and re-interviewed the pilot."

The veteran pilot, Kenji Terauchi, told investigators that two of the lights were small, perhaps no larger than eight feet across. He said the third light was on an aircraft, a huge darkened globe with a diameter of perhaps two aircraft carriers placed end-to-end, Steucke said.

Terauchi said the large UFO showed up on his cockpit weather radar. But images on military radar screens at the time were dismissed as "clutter," and a blip that showed up on FAA screens was analyzed as a coincidental "split image" of the aircraft, Steucke said.

Radar tapes, transcribed interviews and radio messages are to be sent to the FAA in Washington, D.C., later this week for review, Steucke said.

Flight 1628, with a three-man crew, left Iceland on Nov. 17 with a load of wine bound for Tokyo from Paris.

The evening sky was clear as the jet crossed into Alaska from Canada. As the plane flew at 35,000 feet, Terauchi said he saw three lights eight miles in front of his aircraft.