

FAA Steps Up Its UFO Investigation Of Alaska Report

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.

A JAL spokeswoman Sunday said Terauchi was on a flight to Europe and was unavailable.

Flight 1828, with a three-man crew, left Iceland on Nov. 17 with a load of wine bound for Tokyo from Paris. Terauchi and his crew boarded the Boeing 747 in Iceland for the leg of the trip to Anchorage.

The evening sky was clear as the jet, cruising at 525 knots, crossed into Alaska from Canada, just northeast of Fort Yukon. As the plane flew at 35,000 feet, Terauchi said he saw three lights eight miles in front of his aircraft.

The pilot reported the lights were yellow, amber and green, Steucke said, but not red, the international color for aircraft beacons.

"The two smaller ones moved a little bit, changed their angle. The smaller ones did not show up on the weather radar onboard," Steucke said. "The larger one did."

"It appeared to him it might be possible that the lights might be exhaust pipes, they kind of wavered but did not blink. His main concern was trying to determine whether he was overtaking another aircraft."

Steucke said the pilot reported he dimmed cockpit lights to ensure he was not seeing a reflection.

"He flew for about six minutes before he decided to report anything," Steucke said. "I can't say I blame him for that."

Terauchi radioed Anchorage FAA air controllers, who direct all aircraft traffic in the state, except for planes near airports, Steucke said. Fairbanks controllers checked their screens but saw only Flight 1628, Steucke said.

The pilot reported the object was staying with him and controllers told him to take any evasive action needed. Terauchi decreased altitude to 31,000 feet, but the lights went down with him "in formation," Steucke said.

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