

Lights Over Alaska Investigated

ANCHORAGE, Jan. 4 (AP) — The Federal Aviation Administration has stepped up its investigation of wavering lights that a pilot of a Japan Air Lines cargo jet said followed his plane over Alaska for nearly an hour in November, an official said Sunday.

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

The pilot, Kenji Terauchi, told investigators that two of the lights were small, perhaps no larger than eight feet across. He said the third light, which was larger, appeared to be on an aircraft, Mr. Steucke said.

Mr. Terauchi said the unidentified objects showed up on the plane's weather radar. But images on military radar screens at the time were dismissed as clutter, and an object that showed up on the aviation agency's screens was thought to be a coincidental split image of the aircraft, Mr. Steucke said.

Tapes Will Be Analyzed

He said radar tapes, transcribed interviews and radio messages would be sent to the agency in Washington later this week for review.

Flight 628 left Iceland on Nov. 17 with a load of wine bound for Tokyo from Paris. Mr. 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, northeast of Fort Yukon. As the plane flew at 35,000 feet, Mr. Terauchi said he saw three lights that appeared eight miles in front of his aircraft.

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

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

Mr. Steucke said the pilot dimmed the lights in the cockpit to make sure he was not seeing a reflection.

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

The pilot reported that the object was staying with him and controllers told him to take evasive action if necessary. Mr. Terauchi decreased the plane's altitude to 31,000 feet but the lights went down with him in formation, Mr. Steucke said.