



Valley Views

Al Campbell

Take me to your bureaucrat

There can be little doubt that the Japan Air Lines flight crew saw *something* unusual last November during a flight over central Alaska. The cargo crew reported the usual flashing lights, rapid movement, etc. commonly reported in UFO sightings. The Federal Aviation Administration and the Air Force have acknowledged that something unusual did appear on radar near the 747 on the evening of Nov. 17. Asked why the matter didn't come to the public's attention until media interest began in December, FAA spokesman Paul Steucke said "we didn't exactly broadcast" the incident. In an interview on television last week, Steucke said his job as spokesman entailed telling the public what good work the FAA was doing, not informing the public of such oddities in the air.

Now isn't that nice: No mention of strategic factors, no suggestion that the military wished to keep matters quiet for the national security. Just a government official deciding not to "broadcast" a sighting of real spooky goings-on by a trained, sober, professional flight crew. JAL itself is very conscious of its image over American skies. Yet the airline is not afraid to let its captain talk to the press. And for that matter, now that the UFO is out of the bag, even the FAA says something strange happened the night of Nov. 17. But the government folks were too busy flogging their "mission" in Alaska to make a report available to the public.

Steucke has always been known and respected by the press for his candid, even outspoken dealings with reporters, even when they make his superiors uncomfortable, and brings him political heat from special interests in private aviation. He has lost some of his credibility with us now.

And by the way, whose job is it now to deal with all those little green men in Carr's parking lot?