

FAA says UFO on radar screen was just a double image of jet

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ANCHORAGE — Federal investigators say a review of radar tapes failed to show a UFO shadowing a Japan Air Lines cargo jet, contradicting reports made by the crew and the air-traffic controller who handled the plane.

The Federal Aviation Administration's examination of the tapes shows what appears to be a second object near JAL Flight 1628 on Nov. 17, but investigators now think it is a double image from the Boeing 747, FAA spokesman Paul Steucke said yesterday.

On Dec. 29 the FAA released details of the UFO sighting, revealing the flight controller handling the jet saw an object on radar five miles from the plane. The Anchorage Air Route Traffic Control Center directed the crew to take evasive maneuvers, including a

4,000-foot drop and a 360-degree turn.

Co-pilot Takanori Tamefuji, 38, said yesterday he did not know why the FAA first confirmed a nearby object and now dismisses it as an image of the 747.

In his second interview with the FAA Tuesday, Tamefuji reiterated that he saw lights, and Steucke said, "The co-pilot's testimony supported the pilot's."

Although the FAA is satisfied with the double-image explanation, the inquiry is continuing with interviews of the crew and a review of data, Steucke said.

Steucke said the pilot, co-pilot and flight engineer have told the same story: Blinking yellow, amber and green lights appeared too close to their plane for comfort.

The FAA says the controller apparently misinterpreted what he

saw on his screen. But Steucke defended the controller's response, saying, "He had a pilot tell him he was seeing something right there. This is not something where he can take a risk even if it is a double image."

The radar image seen in the JAL cockpit and by the controller also appeared intermittently on Air Force radar. Air Force spokesmen dismissed it as "random clutter."

Steucke said the FAA will complete its inquiry and send a report to its Washington headquarters, but he said he doubted whether the mystery of the lights over the arctic that November night will be solved.

"The bottom line," Steucke said, "is that this tells us that we don't have any radar confirmation of the object that the pilot said he saw."