

Pilot Reports 2nd UFO Sighting Over Alaska

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A Japan Air Lines pilot who said his cargo jet was shadowed by a huge unidentified flying object over Alaska in November has reported another encounter of the eerie kind.

Capt. Kenjyu Terauchi and his co-pilot reported the sighting of lights Sunday morning while on a flight from London to a refueling stop in Anchorage.

"His statement to the controller was 'irregular lights, looks like a spaceship,'" said Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Paul Steucke. But Steucke said there may be an easy explanation for Sunday's sighting: light reflecting off ice crystals in the atmosphere.

Terauchi, a veteran pilot, told the FAA he saw the lights twice Sunday, once for about 20 minutes and again for about 10 minutes as his plane flew at 37,000 feet, Steucke said.

The plane's co-pilot reported seeing the lights, Steucke said, but the flight engineer, who sits farther back in the cockpit, "indicated he was uncertain whether he saw any lights at all."

Terauchi did not immediately return a tele-

phone message left for him at the JAL office in Anchorage.

Both the November sighting and the Sunday sighting were near Fort Yukon, but there were few other similarities, Steucke said. "The second sighting doesn't seem at all like the first one," he said.

On Nov. 17, Terauchi reported two bright lights and an object as wide as two aircraft carriers placed end to end followed his JAL Boeing 747 cargo plane for more than 300 miles as it flew to Anchorage from Iceland. The lights stayed with the plane even when Terauchi changed altitude and took other evasive action, Terauchi had said.

In the sighting this weekend, the pilot said in both cases, the lights approached from the front of the Boeing 747, went beneath the aircraft and reappeared to the rear.

In November, the object showed up on the plane's weather radar and may have appeared on FAA radar, but there was nothing shown on radar Sunday, Steucke said.

At the time of the November incident, Anchor-

age air traffic controllers spotted what they believed was a split image of the JAL aircraft caused by a minor problem with the plane's radar transponder, Steucke said earlier. He said it was coincidence the split image was located where Terauchi reported seeing the objects.

The military dismissed the blip as radar clutter.

Steucke said FAA officials and experienced pilots speculated Sunday's sighting could have been caused by light bouncing off ice crystals in an inversion layer. In a temperature inversion, a layer of warmer air traps a layer of colder air closer to the Earth's surface.

Lights from below could have reflected off ice crystals in the inversion and appeared to be hovering in midair, Steucke said. As the plane approached and passed over villages, the reflected light would appear to go under the aircraft and reappear behind it, as Terauchi described, Steucke said.

Steucke said the crew appeared in good condition Sunday. "They seemed fine, professional," he said.

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Another 'UFO sighting' prompts a probe, but pilot says natural phenomenon likely

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (UPI) — Another sighting of mysterious lights in the sky over Alaska, the second in two months, prompted the government to expand a probe that began after a Japan Air Lines crew reported UFOs tailing them.

Capt. Kenju Terauchi, the veteran JAL Boeing 747 cargo pilot who reported both occurrences, the latest on Sunday, said he believed there may be a natural explanation for the latest phenomenon.

Unlike the apparent objects sighted in mid-November, the lights reported during the weekend did not show up on radar, officials said Monday.

Terauchi said the lights Sunday were very different from ones he saw on Nov. 17, which he described as one huge object and two smaller ones that trailed his cargo jet through arctic skies.

Despite Terauchi's willingness to accept that the second lights may have been a trick of nature, caused by lights from a village bouncing off ice crystals 5 miles up, the Federal Aviation Administration said Monday it has broadened its inquiry into the strange lights over Alaska's vast northeastern arctic expanses.

The FAA maintained its expanding investigation was not a UFO hunt but a safety probe of the region's airspace.

"The Federal Aviation Administration is not in the business of looking for or identifying unidentified flying objects, commonly called UFOs," FAA spokesman Paul Steucke said.

"We are involved in investigating these reports because the unknown lights or objects or whatever, as

reported by the captain, created a hazard to the use of our national airways, which we use to direct and control aircraft so they will not hit each other.

In the incident Sunday, Terauchi, this time flying with a different crew, was taking the cargo plane across the Arctic Circle on a Paris-to-Anchorage flight when he and his co-pilot spotted the lights, he said.

They radioed the FAA that amber and white lights appeared 12 miles in front of the big jet and lower than its 37,000-foot cruising altitude. Then the lights went under the jet and behind it.

FAA investigators again met Terauchi and his crew at Anchorage International Airport when they landed Sunday.

Steucke speculated that lights from two small settlements in the area bounced off ice crystals and gave the crew an impression of lighted objects nearby. But Steucke said the FAA will not issue any conclusions until it investigates.

Terauchi said he at first thought the lights may have belonged to an object similar to those sighted in November so he radioed the FAA.

Now, he says, he accepts the FAA theory that they may have been caused by an unusual combination of ground lights, extreme cold, a temperature inversion and high altitude ice crystals.

An FAA inquiry was already under way into the Nov. 17 incident, in which Terauchi and two crewmen said lights trailed their 747 cargo jet for nearly an hour and an object appeared on FAA and Air Force radar screens.

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