

Jumping Jupiter, is that a UFO over Alaska?

By Mark Holmberg
Times-Dispatch staff writer

Now more than cold air hovering over Alaska. There's, Japan Air Lines pilot Kenji Terauchi was flying a load of wine from France to Tokyo when he saw a strange light from the cockpit of his Boeing 747 cargo jet, according to an Associated Press story.

Three lights followed his craft for 55 minutes as it flew through clear skies over Alaska. One of them appeared to be part of a gigantic darkened globe with a diameter roughly as large as two aircraft carriers placed end to end.

Terauchi, concerned he was overtaking another aircraft, reported the lights to air traffic controllers, who told him to take any evasive action needed. After a change of elevation, Terauchi flew in a complete circle, but the object stayed with the cargo jet throughout the maneuver, and then vanished, heading east.

The pilot said the large object, initially eight miles away, registered on his cockpit weather radar. Military screens only revealed "clutter." The Federal Aviation Administration's screen showed a blip that was later considered a "split-image" of Flight 1628. Once on the ground, Terauchi sketched what he saw.

Last Sunday, Terauchi again saw lights in approximately the same air space over Alaska, only this time the lights appeared from in front of the aircraft, passed underneath, and reappeared to the rear.

According to John Leyden, news chief for the Federal Aviation Administration, there was no radar contact.

"I wasn't the wise, so what's going on up there?" "I am quite sure the object was extraterrestrial, and far more gigantic than the airline pilot reported," said Philip J. Klass, a professional UFO skeptic, with mild sarcasm.

"In fact it was so gigantic it was the size of Jupiter." Based on preliminary information he has received, Klass believes the object was Jupiter, which he found was particularly low, 14 degrees, at the time of the first sighting.

Klass, the author of the book "UFOs: The Public Deceived," added: "When I heard about the second sighting I was not in the slightest bit surprised, and do you know what? He's going to keep on seeing them." "He [the pilot] will flatly deny that what he saw was Jupiter. If he admitted it he would be the laughingstock of all the other pilots."

Holding an opposing view is Walter H. Andrus Jr., international director of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON).

"It was a significant sighting," he said of the November incident. "No one questions that they indeed saw what they saw, they are a very competent, rational, trained crew. I think they had a total of 47 years flying time, the captain had 27 years with JAL."

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pressed. The circular evasive maneuver the pilot made was "... pretty clever," FAA spokesman Paul Stoucke told an Associate Press reporter. "It allowed him to eliminate any natural phenomenon which would have stayed stationary."

Andrus said the sighting would've been even more significant if there had been more substantial radar confirmation and photographic evidence, but noted: "They talked to the [air traffic] controllers for 50 minutes [during the sighting]. All of the people up there were pretty sure they had a signal."

As part of their investigation, MUFON spoke with Stoucke and will try to contact the pilots as well as the traffic controllers on duty during the sighting. Their findings will be released in the February issue of the MUFON UFO Journal, a monthly magazine that goes all over the world.

MUFON is an international group of men and women "trying to resolve the phenomenon we call UFOs," said Andrus. The not-for-profit organization, based in Seguin, Texas, takes "utology" very seriously. Field investigators must pass written examinations and their advisory board contains 75 highly trained men, all with doctorates in varying fields.

But Andrus said MUFON is not the only organization that takes UFOs seriously. "We have 7,000 documents that show every military agency in our government, and every intelligence agency, has been involved in the study of UFOs and collecting of data from 1947 to the present day."

"Even our astronauts receive training because they know someday they are going to run into extraterrestrial life. Their instructions are: smile, walk forward slowly with your hands outstretched and your palms up. Don't make any menacing motions or do anything hostile."

Where did he get that information?

"We've got a lot of NASA people [in MUFON], our deputy director and several of our consultants work at a space center in Houston," said Andrus. Their last big sightings? "During the month of August we were getting sightings in the state of Michigan that were the size of a football field. Big triangular and diamond-shaped objects moving very slowly with lights and practically no sound," said Andrus, 66.

"Then in October we started getting those same kinds of

What one pilot saw

reports in Wisconsin, we're still investigating those." Were the large objects heading for Alaska? Andrus, a retired manufacturing executive for the Motorola company, only laughed.

Andrus also explained that "of the raw reports we receive on the UFO hotline, after a very thorough investigation, we find that 80 to 90 percent can be explained as something mundane ... such as satellites, advertising planes, falling stars, planet shifts, the moon, aircraft, seen under unusual conditions."

He noted that the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle (1-286-725-3006, not a toll free number) gets about a call a day.

Another UFO investigative organization is the Center for UFO Studies in Glenview, Ill. Sherman J. Larsen, chief executive officer, said the labeling of the blip by the FAA as a "split image" during the first sighting "looks like a cop-out. Not only did they say they were tracking it, they told him [the pilot] to evade it."

"If it took them that long to figure out it was a split image," continued Larsen, "I'd hate to be up there when the missiles start flying."

Andrus couched his comments more diplomatically, but agreed: "It raises the question: just how effective is our radar?"

"There are enough spurious blips on radar," explained Klass, "if you look hard enough, you can find one." Klass is the chairman of the UFO subcommittee of the Council for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP, pronounced sycop).

After 35 years as senior avionics editor for Aviation Week, Klass now pursues his hobby, UFO debunking.

He said if a person who sighted a UFO is offered a promise explanation of what he saw, "99 percent of the time the observer rejects it. He wants to believe he had an extraterrestrial experience."

He said many pilots have been fooled by bright celestial bodies, including World War II pilots who actually fired on them.

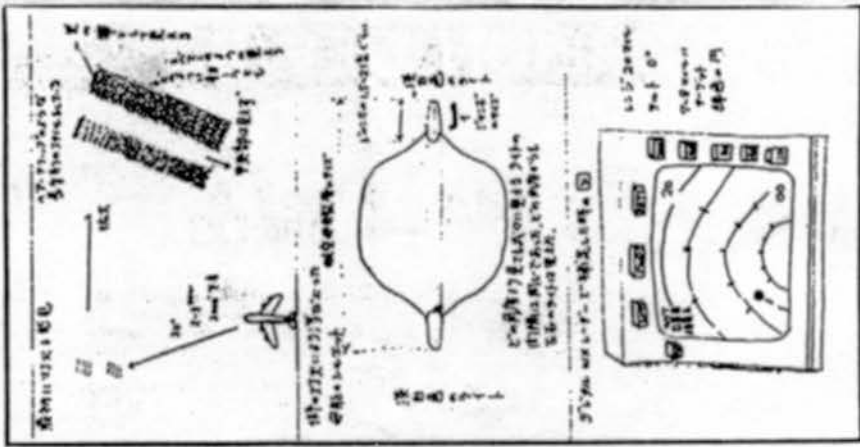
"To my knowledge, in nearly 40 years of UFO reports there has not been a single physical artifact found [from a UFO] that could stand rigorous scrutiny."

"If extraterrestrial landed on the moon they would find a Hasselblad camera that was left behind, scientific equipment, trash ... they would know somebody had been there before them."

He is so confident in his debunking that he has a special contract offer: He agrees to pay you \$10,000 if an honest to goodness extraterrestrial craft lands or crashes on Earth, or if a physical artifact is found that can stand the scrutiny of the National Academy of Sciences.

But every year none of the above occurs, you must pay him \$100, for a maximum of five years. He has had about a dozen takers over the years and still has one contract outstanding.

Did he lose any sleep over the recent Alaskan sightings? The Washington D.C. resident replied: "Not a wink."



United Press International

WHAT PILOT SAW — Japanese Air Lines pilot Kenji Terauchi drew what he saw over Alaska in November. In the top picture, Terauchi shows the UFO lights nearly in front of the plane and a closeup of the lights. In the middle is the UFO in silhouette. The bottom photo shows where the UFO first appeared on the plane's radar.