

British plane crew claims they had brush with UFO

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LONDON (AP) — A British Airways jetliner made a diversion over the Soviet Union to avoid what the crew reported as an unidentified flying object, airline spokesman Alan Solloway said Saturday.

The incident occurred in April, but first came to light in a front-page article Saturday in The Times of London.

Solloway confirmed that the crew of the Boeing 747 jumbo jet reported seeing a UFO over the Soviet Union on April 22 while flying from London to Bangkok, Thailand.

He said it was the first such case in the airline's history.

"Usually, there is a scientific explanation for whatever was seen, but there doesn't seem to be a scientific explanation for this," Solloway said.

The Times said all five crew members reported seeing an object with twinkling lights fly directly toward them and then vanish quickly over the Kazhakstan hori-

zon. "It was definitely not an aircraft," the paper quoted First Officer Anthony Colin, 42, as saying. "Of that I am positive. None of us had ever seen anything like it before. We are all bitter, cynical aviators who like a scientific explanation for everything. But this has got us foxed."

Solloway said that the crew checked with Soviet air traffic control, which reported no other aircraft were in the vicinity.

Howard Miles, director of the artificial satellite section of the British Astronomical Association, told The Times that the crew could have seen a satellite re-entering the atmosphere.

He said satellites normally burn up at an altitude of about 80 miles and the aircraft was flying at about 10 miles.

"It must therefore have been an optical illusion, with the actual lights being much further away," he was quoted as saying.