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Lights over China explained

NEW YORK (UPI) Strange lights over China last month may have looked like a UFO to some people, but it was just a rocket spewing fuel.

That explanation came Wednesday from James Oberg, an aerospace engineer at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, who said such fuel spurts cause UFO scares all over the world.

Oberg said the strange lights in the evening sky over Shanghai Aug. 27 were caused by excess fuel dumped from the second stage booster rocket of a Japanese satellite launched three hours earlier.

The Chinese news agency Xinhua reported the lights looked "like a comet with a tail like an umbrella" and a "flying orange," according to a report from the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, which released Oberg's findings.

"In the current Chinese case we have a complete correlation of the sighting with the second launching of a new model Japanese rocket called the H-1," Oberg said in the report.

He said the booster rocket, during its second orbit around Earth, spewed excess fuel that was burned up in the atmosphere. At that moment the rocket was visible from Earth because it was illuminated by the sun, even though it was dusk below.

He said the coincidence of a rocket spewing fuel at a point where it is still in sunlight, even though it is dark on Earth below, happens occasionally with launches.

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