

BETH ROBBINS
THE GATE
VIA COUD—

THE PLAIN

CLEVELAND, OH

THE PLAIN DEALER, MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1987

Streaking mystery lights identified as Soviet rocket burning on re-entry

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Bright, fiery lights that startled viewers early yesterday in three Western states turned out to be a Soviet rocket body burning up on re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere, an Air Force spokesman said.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command near Colorado Springs, Colo., received numerous reports of sightings in the skies over northern California, western Nevada and southern Oregon, said Maj. Bob Perry.

The center, which tracks objects in space from launch time, was aware of the rocket body and

its trail of debris and burning particles as the rocket fell, Perry said.

He said the mission and payload of the Soviet rocket body were unknown.

"Our expectations are, at this point, and the command post also seems to believe, that it definitely burned up upon re-entry," Perry said. "I don't expect that any impact occurred."

Don Spangler, manager of air traffic control at the Oakland Airport, said his office had questions from pilots all the way from the equator to northern California.

"First they thought it was air traffic," he said, adding that there was one report of a possible plane crash in Dublin, about 20 miles east of Oakland. That report was determined to be false.

Marilyn Newton of Sparks, Nev., likened the object to a fireworks display and said it was "absolutely magnificent."

Newton described the object as "a large white fireball with a tail similar to a comet." She said the tail was 15 times larger than the fireball itself, and the fireball broke off into other fireballs.

OCT. 12, 1988