

Was UFO a cargo plane?

By Melinda Ryan

The Enterprise Staff

The mystery is solved. Or is it?

The unidentified flying object spotted gliding over the west end of Simi Valley at 9:45 p.m. Tuesday was apparently a C-5 military cargo plane, en route to the Burbank Airport, an airport spokesman confirmed Saturday.

The man, who asked not to be identified, said a Lockheed C-5 Galaxy—the world's largest plane second only to Howard Hughes' grounded Spruce Goose—flew over Simi Valley last week, but he would not confirm the day or time it banked this direction.

A spokesman at Lockheed in Burbank said reporting the comings and goings of the military cargo plane is prohibited as classified information. But he too confirmed a C-5 flew over the area last week.

The Enterprise received dozens of telephone calls following Tuesday's sighting of the huge aircraft described as shaped like a plate with a dome on top and bright red lights on the top and bottom.

One caller, identifying themselves as IX-7, said the craft was an interplanetary shuttle.

"I know. I was on it," she said.

Several local residents notified the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, Wash., after being referred to the center by the local police department. The reports piqued the interest of the Mutual UFO Network, an international organization based in Texas that investigates UFO reports. MUFON then dispatched its Los Angeles County representative to check out the local sighting.

News accounts of the suspect aircraft, however, also prompted several local airplane buffs to report the aircraft was indeed identifiable.

Personnel at local military air bases refused to comment whether a military plane flew over Simi Valley and reported they had no record of such an aircraft in the vicinity recently.

Representatives of the UFO organizations, however, said they are not yet prepared to entirely rule out the possibility extraterrestrials cruised through Simi Valley's skies last week.

Hotlines ready for UFO reports

In response to public demands, here is a list of UFO people telephone numbers to give out to people who think they know what flew over Simi Valley Tuesday night:

National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, Wash.: 206-725-9300.

Mutual UFO Network: 813-379-9215.

William Hassal Jr., state director for Southern California: 213-455-3803.

John Holland, Canoga Park, state section director for Los Angeles County: 818-346-3286.

John S. Weigle, Ventura County section director for Ventura County: 805-642-9643.

Maria Angela Guma Thomas, Simi Valley, translator/investigator for Mutual UFO Network: 527-5963.

"We have lots of them in this area too, so I'm familiar with them," MUFON international director Walt Andrus said of the C-5 reports. "But we had one case in San Antonio that was supposedly a C-5, but we could never really pin it down."

"Eighty to 90 percent do have a mundane explanation. It's the 10

percent that defy explanation that we're interested in, but we have to sort through a lot of others before we get to the real McCoy."

MUFON state section director for Los Angeles County John Holland, assigned by Andrus to investigate the local sighting, said he has serious doubts Tuesday's case will be worth his while.

"Unless we can find that there were absolutely no C-5s going through here at that time, there's not too much for us to go on," he said.

Capt. Tom Dolney at Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, the main source of C-5s on the west coast, said the plane is so huge that it creates the illusion it is flying much lower and slower than it truly is.

Simi Valley resident Brian Smith lived near the airport for 20 years and looked forward to watching the arrival of the homogeneous airplanes.

"They use it for transporting classified stuff," said Smith, 31.

A private pilot for seven years, Smith said he was in his backyard near the Simi Valley Drive-In feeding his dog Tuesday when he too witnessed the aircraft cruise over the west end of the city.

"Being so big, it looks like they're just hanging in the air," he said. "I would say it was flying at maybe 4,000 feet, but it's so big it looked like it was barely even moving—hovering, basically. When you see it from an angle as it's flying away, it takes on kind of a triangular shape."



ON THE UFO WATCH: Brian Smith, 31, of Simi Valley holds up a book with an illustration of a C-5 military cargo plane similar to the one that reportedly was flying over the local area last week around the time residents reported spotting a possible UFO.

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