

Probe of UFO sighting closed

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THE FEDERAL Aviation Administration officially has closed its investigation into several reports of an unidentified flying object in Atlantic County this week.

Egg Harbor Township police, who were the first to receive telephone calls from residents claiming to have seen a UFO, said they are tired of the continuing reports and are laughing at what they call "sensationalism" in the press.

But one report of a sighting made by a Wildwood radio station reporter, whom an FAA official calls a credible witness, has planted a question in some minds.

Why did so many people report seeing bright lights and something hovering in the air, while radar at the FAA Technical Center, Pomona section of Galloway Township, picked up nothing but two air cargo planes heading for McGuire Air Force Base 20 minutes before the first report of a sighting?

Egg Harbor Township police received the first reports of the UFOs around 9:15 p.m. Tuesday, FAA spokesman Anthony Willett said.

Police said it is not unusual to see strange lights in the sky in that area.

"There are always jets and planes all over the skies around here," Sgt. John DeAngelis said. "It could have been someone flying into or out of Atlantic City, McGuire or Dover, Del."

As news of the sightings spread, the number of reported sightings increased and the area where they are seen grew, DeAngelis said.

"We're getting calls from all over now of

people claiming to have seen it, after they've read about it. Frankly, we're getting a little tired of it," he said.

He admitted the police department was laughing at what he called the "hype" the people and media were making of the sighting.

Southern Ocean County police departments yesterday said they have not received any sighting reports, but expect they might after residents start hearing or reading about them.

The radar at the FAA technical center showed nothing at the time of the sightings despite the clear weather and 12-mile visibility, Willett said.

Willett, who has security clearance to any secretive flights or testing at the center, said no such testing took place that night.

Because the FAA could not confirm anything on its radar, the case is closed, Willett said.

"But what made all this interesting is a call I got yesterday (Wednesday) from a reporter," he said.

"Not only did she see it and was unable to identify it, but she had a rather vivid and direct description of it," he said.

Mary Burckmyer, a reporter for WCMC-AM in Wildwood, was driving on the Garden State Parkway on her way home from work about 12:30 a.m. Wednesday when she saw what she later reported to Willett and continues to maintain she saw.

"I was driving north on the parkway . . . when I looked up and saw two very bright lights on a flying object," Ms. Burckmyer said.

The object was enormous and elliptical in shape, and was traveling north to south at a steady

speed of about 30 mph slower than her car, she said. The gray metallic-colored object was about 10 times bigger than her car, was about 80 to 100 feet in diameter and was flying 150 to 200 yards above her car, she said.

She said it had two large headlights that glowed white and several smaller white and green lights underneath that blinked intermittently. It made no sound.

"It definitely wasn't a blimp, a helicopter, a plane or a balloon. It didn't have wings or any type of propeller device that I could see," she said.

"I have never seen anything like it," she said. "I was not drinking, I was not tired and I would still swear to seeing it."

The National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, an organization supporting the existence of UFOs, said Ms. Burckmyer's description was credible, Willett said.

Ms. Burckmyer said she has been inundated with calls from people claiming to witness the same object, but is concerned about the sensationalism of the sighting and its effect on her journalistic credibility.

"Things have been a little sensational in the press, but maybe that's because I was a little excited the first day after it happened," she said. "I don't know what it was, but that doesn't mean I am saying it was a spaceship or little green men or anything like that.

"I have always considered myself a serious journalist, and it would make me sick if anything I said would hurt my credibility. But I hope because of this, people might take what I reported seriously," she said. "It is my job to report what I see and that is, in fact, what I did."