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# Probe into 'aliens in backyard claims'

Walter Andrus, who spends his time co-ordinating UFO sightings, is at present collating information on the case of a Florida man who claims to have chased aliens across his backyard.

Andrus, 67, is international director of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON). His task is to determine if the encounters are legitimate or just another hoax. So far, he says, nothing in the Florida case has pointed to the latter.

"This is one of the most amazing cases I've ever seen," said Andrus, who works out of an office next to his home here.

The Florida man, known as Mr Ed (only the editor of a local paper knows his full name), says he has pursued small alien creatures across his backyard in Gulf Breeze several times since November. Despite bilingual telepathic warnings, English and

Spanish) that "photographs are prohibited", he says he took a number of pictures and even a videotape.

The excitement has taken MUFON investigators to Gulf Breeze for stakeouts with walkie talkies and cameras.

So far, they have turned up nothing.

On the other hand, they have not been able to disprove what they consider convincing evidence.

Mr Ed says he has seen a circular UFO with portholes and a large light on its underside. His most striking picture, according to Andrus, is of one flying across a country road.

A secretary at Gulf Breeze city hall said other people in the small town had now reported their own otherworldly encounters.

None of the local police, however, has seen any flying saucers "or if they have, they haven't told me about it," police Captain

Ken Hicks said.

Andrus's enthusiasm for the case is clear, but he stops short of declaring it a positive sighting.

It is not that he has any doubt about the existence of UFOs.

It is that MUFON, which with 1,500 members claims to be the largest group of people studying Unidentified Flying Objects in the world, prides itself on its professionalism and thoroughness.

Having uncovered more than a few hoaxes, the group has learned that just because somebody says they have seen a UFO doesn't mean it's so.

"We want facts," Andrus said. "We don't want anything else." Too many UFO sightings have been produced by fertile imaginations using fancy model spaceships, he believes.

MUFON gives a lengthy test to its investigators, based on a 161-page handbook written by MUFON officials, who include lawyers, aerospace engineers and former Air Force officers.