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Russia's fear of flying saucers

By John Harlow

AS THE Soviet Union modifies its stand against Star Wars, its journalists have come up with another argument for scrapping the American anti-missile system — it could accidentally shoot down a flying saucer.

The latest issue of Soviet Military Review sets out to answer a letter from a Zimbabwean worried that UFOs present a direct threat to peace on earth.

Soviet scientists regard this as a serious problem. They have been studying UFOs at the Moscow Aviation Institute since 1958.

The magazine said it believed that the "lack of information on the characteristics and influence of UFOs increases the threat of incorrect identification.

"The mass transition of UFOs along trajectories close to those of combat missiles could be regarded by computers as an attack.

Military Review notes that in 1960, bombers at an American air base were put on full alert to combat Soviet invaders, which turned out to be nothing more than "radar reflections of the Moon".

"In SDI conditions such incidents could provoke immediate reaction from computers to destroy the targets, say by X-ray laser, which means a powerful nuclear explosion."

The magazine concludes that if an alien is not to be accidentally destroyed, possibly causing an angry backlash by its colleagues "from beyond the stars" more international co-operation is needed.

An American Embassy official said: "It is a novel argument. I am sure the White House will take it on board in future negotiations."