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Alien invasion

Soviets report more UFO landings

By John-Thor Dahlburg

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MOSCOW — A three-eyed alien with a robot sidekick landed by UFO and made a boy vanish by zapping him with a pistol, a Soviet newspaper reported Tuesday, in a second day of strange tales in the state-run media.

But as the bizarre saga of the space invasion of the city of Voronezh unfolded for a second day, a scientist whose words were used to buttress the first published report voiced doubts, and said he was in part misquoted.

"Don't believe all you hear from Tass," Genrikh Silanov, head of the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, cautioned in a telephone interview with the Associated Press from Voronezh. "We never gave them part of what they published."

On Monday, Tass — the usually staid, official Soviet news agency — told the world that scientists had confirmed that an alien spaceship carrying giant people with tiny heads

had touched down in Voronezh, a city of more than 800,000 people about 300 miles southeast of Moscow.

As many as three aliens, 13 feet tall left the spacecraft — described as a large shining ball — and walked in the park with a small robot, Tass reported. A Tass duty officer stood by the story. "It is not April Fool's today," he said.

The purported close encounter in Voronezh was only the latest weird tale to appear in the Soviet media which under the policy of *glasnost*, or openness, have recently told of other sightings of UFOs and the Yeti, or abominable snowman.

Monday's report spawned rumors in Moscow, including one that the aliens told Voronezh residents that the Earth would be destroyed by 2000 if people didn't stop polluting it.

[A Tuesday morning television show, a regular program called "120 Minutes," devoted a good portion to the UFO saga with interviews of inhabit-

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UFO

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ants of Voronezh, United Press International reported.]

However, a Communist Party paper whose avowed mission is to write about culture was the only major national daily to print anything Tuesday about the UFO, indicating that more authoritative newspapers such as *Pravda* thought the topic too hot to handle.

Sovietskaya Kultura said its coverage was motivated by "the Golden Rule of journalism: The reader must know everything."

"Of course, it's hard to believe in what happened in the town," it reported from Voronezh. "It's even more difficult to explain."

The daily quoted witnesses as saying the UFO flew into Voronezh on Sept. 27. At 6:30 p.m., it said, boys playing soccer saw a pink glow in the sky, then saw a deep red ball about 10 yards in diameter. The ball circled, vanished, then reappeared minutes later and hovered, it said.

A crowd rushed to the site, *Sovietskaya Kultura* said, and through an open hatch saw a "three-eyed alien" about 10 feet tall, clad in silvery overalls and bronze-colored boots, and wearing a disk on his chest.

The newspaper, quoting witnesses, gave this account:

The UFO landed. Two creatures, one apparently a robot, exited. A boy screamed with fear, but when the alien gazed at him, with eyes shining, he fell silent, unable to move. Onlookers screamed, and the UFO and the creatures disappeared.

About five minutes later, they reappeared. The alien had a "pistol" — a tube about 20 inches long, which it pointed at an unidentified 16-year-old boy, making him disappear. The alien went inside the sphere, which took off. At the same time, the boy reappeared.

"Children and eyewitnesses of the abnormal phenomenon have been ques-

tioned by police workers and journalists," wrote *Sovietskaya Kultura's* Voronezh correspondent, E. Efremov. "There are no discrepancies in the description of the sphere itself, or the actions of the 'aliens.' Moreover, all the children who became witnesses to this event are still afraid, even now."

It gave the names of only three witnesses, all youngsters.

Scientists from a nationwide group that investigates abnormal phenomena were looking into the landing, the newspaper said.

Silanov, who said he belongs to the group, cast doubt on Monday's Tass report that quoted him as saying the aliens left behind two rocks resembling sandstone of a deep red color that cannot be found anywhere.

"The rock they described as extraterrestrial is in fact a piece of iron oxide which could easily have originated on Earth," according to Silanov, 50.

He said there indeed was "a landing site" or something resembling one in Voronezh. But he acknowledged that could happen as well if there were an underground pipe or cable, or an underground reservoir.

Silanov also said the testimony of children between the ages of 11 and 14 who claimed that they witnessed the landing did not always correspond on how the aliens looked, and they "certainly didn't mention the tremendous height" cited by Tass.

The phone connection was abruptly cut off before Silanov could answer more questions.

Meanwhile, a Tass editor said two Moscow-based reporters had been dispatched to Voronezh to check on the report on the UFO filed by local Tass correspondent Vladimir Lebedev, a man he termed a "very serious" journalist.

[Lebedev, 59, a 20-year Tass veteran, told United Press International on Tuesday that he heard of three landings in September with the last on Sept. 27 in Voronezh. Asked whether he had seen any of the landings, he said no, and when asked how he confirmed the story, he said that he spoke to "about 10 youngsters aged 12 to 13."

["No more were needed," he said.

[Asked whether he believed in the story, Lebedev said, "One wants to believe."]

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