

NATIONAL

Air Force Alters Texas UFO Explanation

JANUARY 24, 2008 · 1:00 PM ET

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By

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PLAYLIST



An F-16C Fighting Falcon flies by during a U.S. Air Force firepower demonstration at the Nevada Test and Training Range in September. Air Force officials are now saying that there were nearly a dozen F-16s over Stephenville the night of a UFO sighting.

Ethan Miller/Getty Images

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The Air Force is changing its story on what happened on a recent night in Stephenville, Texas, when dozens of witnesses say they spotted a UFO.

Two weeks ago, witnesses reported seeing a large aircraft with white lights hovering for about five minutes before being chased away by jet fighters.

The Air Force Reserve in nearby Fort Worth initially scoffed at reports and denied the possibility that it had fighters in the area. Air Force officials reversed course Wednesday, however, and admitted there were nearly a dozen F-16s over Stephenville that night.

Does this new revelation bolster or cast doubt on the witnesses' stories?

The night of the supposed UFO sighting, just after 6 p.m., Claudette Odom, her husband and two other friends, were clearing brush near her house. They were standing on top of a hill with visibility that extended more than 20 miles in every direction. From out of the west, Odom saw an object approach in the darkness.

"I've never seen anything that fast. Maybe a rock or a missile or something," she says.

Odom says they watched in wonder as the aircraft approached Stephenville and then silently hovered outside the outskirts of town. The lights flickered then went solid, shaping into a massive arch, she says, before forming a single bright vertical line that

split into two.

"They were extremely, extremely bright. Like an arc on a welder, they were that sharp," Odom says.

As they watched the object hover in place, they were startled by the explosive sound of two F-16s, screaming directly over their hill at low altitude, heading toward the UFO, she recalls.

The Matter of the Jets

Whether there were military jets in the area that night was the first substantive doubt that was cast on the UFO witnesses' credibility.

When contacted, the Air Force at Carswell Field near Fort Worth stated that they definitely didn't have any fighter jets over Stephenville that night. The officials suggested the UFO witnesses might have seen an optical illusion.

When Odom heard the Air Force's response, she says she knew that something was amiss.

"I don't know what they're trying to cover up. We saw what we saw. I knew they were fighter jets," she says.

Now, two weeks later, in a plot line that's out of the *X-Files*, Air Force officials are saying that there was a communications error. They concede that they had F-16s flying over Stephenville, Texas, on the evening of Jan. 8.

Major Karl Lewis attributes the change in response to an internal communications mistake.

"There was an error that was reported and we corrected that error as soon as possible," he says.

Could Jets Have Been Mistaken for a UFO?

Angelia Joiner, the reporter at the *Stephenville Empire-Tribune* who broke the story, says that none of the UFO witnesses believe they mistook the F-16s for the massive object that put on a dazzling lights show. The Air Force's belated admission that it did indeed have F-16s there — the exact fighter jet that was described by several of the UFO witnesses as giving chase to the UFO — only bolsters the witnesses' story, she says.

"It just makes it seem like something's going on. The military coming out with this at this point is just going to fuel the fire," Joiner says.

Still unanswered is whether any F-16 pilots saw bright lights and a massive, incredibly fast aircraft. Major Lewis says that as far he knows, nothing unusual was reported. But he also says that he wouldn't want to speculate about what the pilots might have seen that night and that, as far as he knows, the pilots have not been interviewed.

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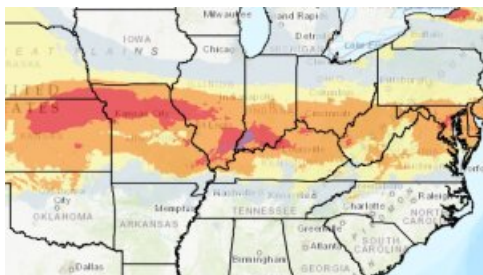
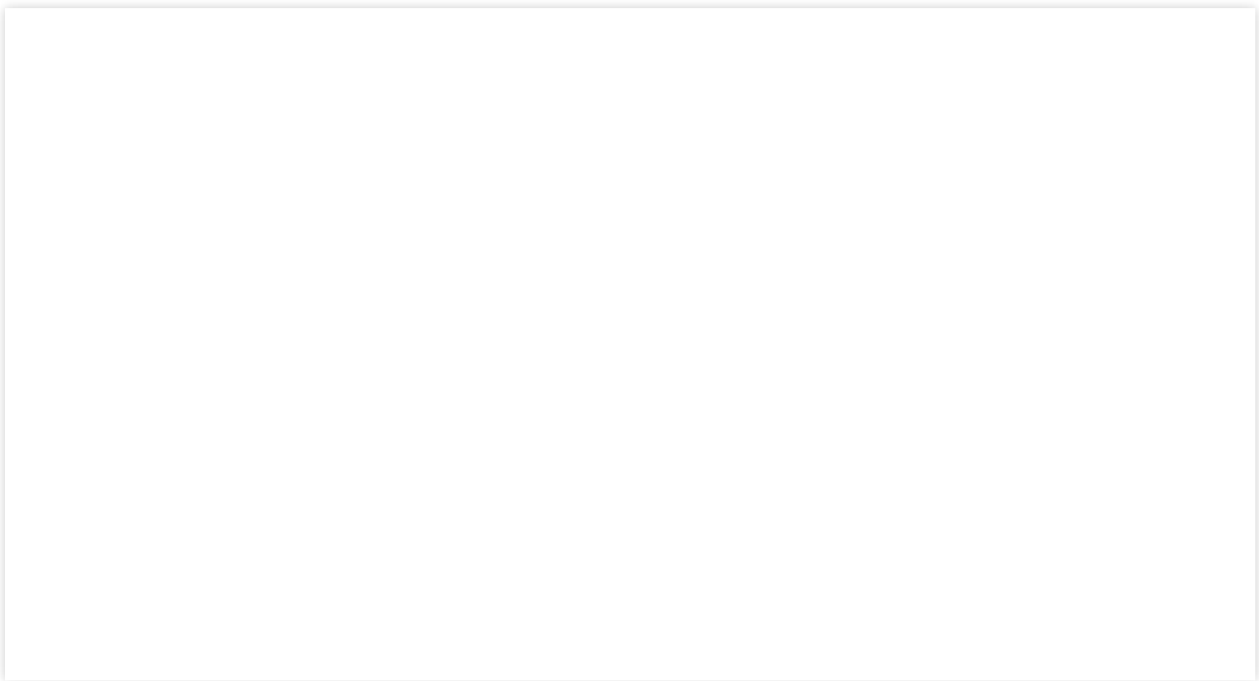
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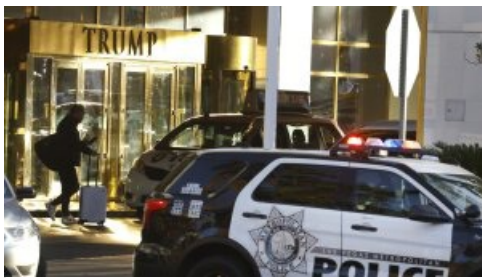
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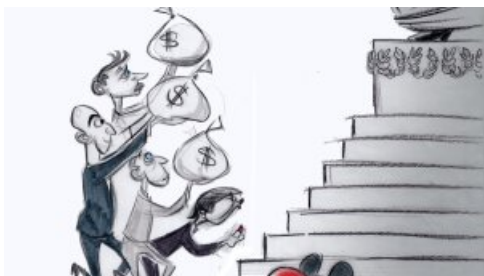
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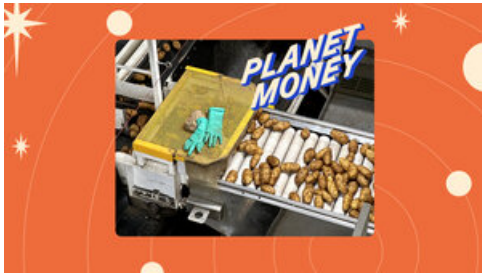
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