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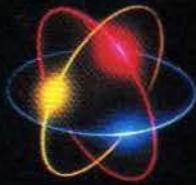
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# ANTIMATTER

## UFO UPDATE:

A commercial airline pilot saw a metallic disc streak through the atmosphere and vanish in a slight climb



Captain X was an experienced commercial airline pilot with more than 21,000 hours of flying time and a career of more than two decades. But in the summer of 1981, the UFO that "splashed into view, full-size," as he flew an L-1011 over Lake Michigan took him by surprise. As Captain X tells it, he tried to keep up with the metallic disc but finally saw it disappear behind a windshield post.

With six evenly spaced, round, jet-black portholes, it "tore through the atmosphere" ahead and to the right of his craft, made its way across the plane's windshield from right to left, and vanished, while traveling away from him, in a slight climb.

This is the kind of sighting that intrigues psychologist Richard Haines, who works for the Research Institute for Advanced Computer Science at Moffett Field, California, and investigates UFOs as a hobby. In the course of 12 years, he has amassed some 3,400 aircrew cases by culling the back files of Project Blue Book as well as a handful of UFO organizations.

Why has Haines focused on aircrew sightings? First, he explains, because the altitude precludes many prosaic explanations and hoaxes. For example, birds and small balloons can be ruled out because birds don't fly high enough and the balloons cannot perform the maneuvers that pilots sometimes report. Meteorites, satellite reentries, and falling stars are also ruled out, according to Haines, because pilot sightings generally average nearly six minutes in duration, much longer than any of these events last.

As for hoaxes, he adds, models don't fly very far or high. And while a pilot could possibly fabricate a UFO report, for a person on the ground to concoct an aerial phenomenon seen by a pilot "would be very difficult as well as very costly."

According to Haines, pilots are also credible witnesses. "Pilots see a lot of things," says Haines, "and would know what they were looking at if it were familiar." Moreover, he adds, airplanes have instruments onboard that respond to electromagnetic interference, also called EM effects. Between 1972 and 1978, for instance, Haines discovered such EM effects as simultaneous abnormal deviations of a gyro and magnetic compass, temporary navigation radio equipment malfunction, temporary failure of electrical systems, malfunctions in cockpit instruments, and, most dramatic, "failure of the weapons firing system on an American F-4 Phantom jet." Fi-

nally, notes Haines, those pilots who experience electromagnetic disturbance or see unidentified objects can ask for radar confirmation from air traffic support groups on the ground.

Still, Philip J. Klass, aerospace journalist and leading UFO skeptic, is not convinced. He says there is nothing special about pilots as witnesses. "Pilots are human beings first, and thus they are subject to misidentifications, just like anyone else." Klass even cites one case in which pilots on two different major airline flights and an Air National Guard plane—flying in broad daylight—all "reported a squadron of UFOs." But, says Klass, "it was a meteor fireball on a horizontal trajectory." As for radar, Klass says, older designs often pick up spurious targets and are unreliable.

Even so, Haines's forthcoming book will cover several hundred sightings by pilots in flight, with each chapter focusing on a particular type of UFO trajectory: hopping from one wing tip to the other, corkscrew rolls in front of the airplane, rising up from below the aircraft, hesitating, and shooting past. The list goes on. Haines has adopted this approach to show "that something is going on here in terms of flight dynamics that our traditional technology cannot duplicate." Pilots can contact Haines at Post Office Box 880, Los Altos, CA 94023-0880.—PAUL McCARTHY

