

Democrat candidate saw UFO

WASHINGTON: In the United States election campaign's most startling revelation yet, a Democratic congressman running for president said he once saw a UFO over the home of the actor Shirley MacLaine.

Dennis Kucinich was asked during a Democratic presidential debate in Philadelphia on Tuesday about the claim in a book by MacLaine, quoted in US media in advance of publication.

"I did," Mr Kucinich said, to laughter from the audience.

Left unclear were details of the alleged sighting in Washington state, during which MacLaine says the politician saw a silent, triangular craft and "felt a connection in his heart and heard directions in his mind".

"It was an unidentified flying object, OK? It's, like, it's unidentified. I saw something," Mr Kucinich said during the debate by seven Democrats hoping to win the party's nomination to run for president next year.

Not missing a beat, the congressman from Ohio claimed that "more people in this country have seen UFOs than I think approve of George Bush's presidency". But the debate's co-host, Tim Russert of NBC television, cited data that only 14 per cent of Americans say they have seen a UFO. Mr Bush's approval ratings are in the mid-30 per cent range.

As for Mr Kucinich, polls show 1 per cent of likely Democratic voters want to see the former Cleveland mayor and fervent opponent of the Iraq war run for president. His campaign slogan: Strength through Peace.

The debate, held at Drexel University, offered by far the liveliest exchanges among the Democratic candidates so far. Hillary Clinton was the butt of most criticism.

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