

Klass Strikes Out - Again

By Ronald S. Regehr, Senior Specifications Analyst (Ret.)

Phillip J. Klass, retired Senior Aviation Editor for the prestigious trade journal Aviation Week & Space Technology and author of several books debunking UFO and related phenomena, once again suffers from terminal pendoritis, aka foot-in-mouth disease, with his recent summarization on the characteristics of atmospheric attenuation as relates to remote sensing by U.S. "spy" satellites. In the July 1999 edition of SUN (the Skeptical UFO Newsletter) Klass states the following as "truth."

In reality, most of DSP's infrared sensors that look down from its 22,000 mile high altitude operate at a wavelength approximately 2.5 microns so that the earth's atmosphere will heavily attenuate infrared energy emitted by military aircraft (unless flying at very high altitude), forest fires, electric power plants and other hot objects which would otherwise generate thousands of false alarms. If/when ET craft visit Earth, if they use propulsion systems which involve high temperatures, then they can be detected by DSP satellites prior to descending to low altitudes where the atmosphere heavily attenuates their infrared radiation. However, if ET craft use exotic propulsion techniques, such as "Zero Point Energy," as Joe Firmage believes, then they will NOT be detected by DSP's infrared sensors."

Let's examine Mr. Klass' statement, sentence by sentence. "In reality" A trite and unnecessary phrase designed to lend credence to whatever follows. Why not make the statement itself credible? "most of DSP's infrared sensors that look down from its 22,000 mile high altitude" Since the DSP is one contiguous unit, all of the DSP infrared sensors look down from geosynchronous orbit—approximately 22,300 miles. There is no separate unit in any other orbit. "operate at a wavelength approximately 2.5 microns" One can refer to almost any book on the atmosphere and readily see there are several "gaps" in the atmospheric transmissibility spectrum. These "gaps" are the ones used by any and all devices that wish to view the Earth using the infrared portion of the spectrum. "so that the earth's atmosphere will heavily attenuate infrared energy" The reason we use specific wavelengths is to avoid as much atmospheric attenuation as possible - precisely the opposite of the claim made by Mr. Klass. "emitted by objects which would otherwise generate thousands of false alarms." Mr. Klass has stated, quite correctly, that false alarms are a potential problem. Further, in the very early days of the DSP there were some false alarms that led to "interesting" events. However, in order to assess low-intensity targets, Aerojet designers strove (quite successfully, I might add) to make the detectors as sensitive as possible, relying on the time/intensity profiles of the targets to differentiate "real" targets from "false" targets.

"If/when ET craft visit Earth, if they use propulsion systems which involve high temperatures" I believe they not only have visited Earth, they continue to do so. In addition, there is no requirement for their "propulsion systems" to "involve" high temperatures. Almost any source of moderately intense infrared (IR) energy is detectable under proper viewing conditions. "they can be detected by DSP satellites prior to descending to low altitudes where the atmosphere heavily attenuates their infrared radiation." As noted earlier, the DSP does not rely on the target being at high altitude; if so, it would have failed it's primary mission-the one for which it was ultimately designed-the detection and reporting of missile launches! Launches occur at ground level, not at "very high altitudes"!

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