

Re: Missile sighting followup [4 more messages]

From: PsychoSpy@aol.com
Date: Fri, 17 Jan 1997 13:45:22 -0500 (EST)
Subject: Re: Missile sighting followup [4 more messages]

[4 more messages on missile sighting.]
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Date: Fri, 17 Jan 1997 10:14:17 -0800
From: tonydinkel@clubnet.net (Tony Dinkel)

>From: "A.J. Craddock" <craddock@ix.netcom.com>
>Subject: Re: Missile sighting from Rachel & elsewhere, 1/16/97

>
>I videotaped the missile as it passed over my house in Santa Barbara, Ca
>this evening. It was a Motorola communications satellite that they have
>been trying to launch for a week, but have kept delaying it for technical
>reasons. The first of the new generation Iridium satellites, so they say.
>This was not nearly as spectacular as the Titan they launched before
>Christmas with the \$1billion classified modified KH-11 spy satellite
payload.

I will buy that story. It would explain the strange heading. And I believe the Thor Delta is the Iridium launch vehicle.

>[These contrails were extremely convoluted, not blown by the wind.
>The ribbon was all connected and didn't disperse further, indicating
>a original erratic path. -- Glenn]

That's just the way very high altitude solid rocket booster trails disipate. Up to a certain altitude, they just blow away. But up really high they seem to maintain continuity to a point and eventually loose illumination so one can never tell what they end up looking like. Really, it started out straight as an arrow.

> It appeared wider than you described, and would have taken almost two
>hands at arms length to block out.

From my angle, while it was almost overhead, it would have taken the hands of 20 large handed truck drivers to block it out.

BTW, I just saw a launch vehicle explode from Cape Canaveral AFS on CNN. Anybody know what payload that was?

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From: "Zero" <akazero@pe.net>
Date: Fri, 17 Jan 1997 09:25:27 +0000

After witnessing the same bright light and contrail in the California sky around 1715 hours on 01/16/97. I fired off a query to "The Good Merlin" [aviation historian], his response follows:

>I ran into Gen. Forrest McCartney the other day, when he was headed up
>to Vandenberg. He said they were going to launch a Minuteman III
>missile.
>That's what you saw today. They were firing dummy warheads at
>Kwajalein atoll.

=====
Date: Fri, 17 Jan 1997 08:57:54 -0800
From: "Express, Inc." <barcode@ix.netcom.com>

The Vandenburg missile launch was visible from San Diego as well. From your description and what I've seen in the past, is it possible that the apparent corkscrew contrail could be caused by high-altitude winds? I remember watching a launch a few years ago and noticing that the contrail became more distorted as time passed. This *might* explain the pattern.

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Subj: Vandenberg-Marshall Islands
Date: Fri, Jan 17, 1997 12:00 PM EDT
From: [Withheld pending notice]

I worked at Kwajalein, Marshalls Islands for a little over a decade. Normally Vandenberg uses the Kwajalein Atoll as a target range. Occasionally, an intercept is done from Meck Island in the same atoll. It is helpful if the missile actually makes it to the Marshall Islands if you want an intercept!

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