

# What I Learned from the Vandenberg Missile - and Links

From: [campbell@ufomind.com](mailto:campbell@ufomind.com) (Glenn Campbell, Las Vegas)  
 Date: Sat, 18 Jan 1997 11:35:27 -0800  
 Subject: What I Learned from the Vandenberg Missile - and Links

Once again, a spectacular "unearthly" light in the sky turns out to have a reasonable explanation. If communications hadn't been as good as they are today, a lot of people would have had life-changing experiences by seeing that display. In Rachel in the dark days before email (before Dec. 1993), I might have been stumped for weeks by the contrail. I wouldn't have called it an alien manifestation, because any well-maintained saucer shouldn't leave smoke, but I would have assumed that extreme manuevers generated it, not a straight-line launch, and would have looked for a plane of some kind.

The missile is also an important illustration of how deceptive visual distances can be in the desert. When I saw it, I assumed the contrail was over the Nellis Range. I drew a line on the map based on the contrail's direction, and the line passed through the Tolicha Peak area. (I remembered the "Nellis UFO" photographed at radar sites near there.) I figured the contrail was no further away from me than US 95, bordering the western side of the range. In fact, if I had continued drawing the line, it would have taken me to the Vandenberg vicinity.

The Rachel visitor, who reported seeing the bright object above the contrail felt certain that the object was just a couple of miles away, "on this side of the mountains." This was based on seeing the object cast a glow on the snow below. As it turns out, it was more like the reflection of the sun off the ocean -- the sun being very distant. The visitors continued onward to Tonopah, and I wonder if they ever heard the missile news.

To my skeptical eye, having some experience with desert distances, I figured the contrail was far away, but 100 miles away at most, since this is about the farthest distance I have ever seen an aircraft light. In fact, the contrail was much further, more than 300 miles.

BTW...

Vandenberg AFB is one of the more neglected tourist sites for military secrecy buffs. It is situated in an area of rolling bluffs next to the thundering surf of the Pacific, about 2 hours northwest of Los Angeles. Public roads give you a pretty good view of the facilities, including one road that cuts through Vandenberg land to take you to the beach. A stroll along the shore there is highly recommended.

Glenn

=====

Here are some links for Vandenberg and the missile...

DefenseLink Press Release on failed missile test [via [steve1957@aol.com](mailto:steve1957@aol.com)]:

[http://www.dtic.dla.mil/defenselink/news/Jan97/m011797\\_mfc5.html](http://www.dtic.dla.mil/defenselink/news/Jan97/m011797_mfc5.html)

-----

"Rocket leaves spectacular trail" in 1/17 Las Vegas Sun:

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/archives/1997/jan/17/505495399.html>

(The sun also had a spectacular front page photo of the contrail in its Jan. 17 issue, but this apparently did not get on-line. The photo was exactly what I saw from Rachel.)

-----

"Missile Test Fails to Launch" from the AP on 1/17

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/archives/1997/jan/17/011700719.html>

