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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: NUFORC Reports on the US Northwest Mass

From: **Ted Viens** <drtedv@freewweb.com>
Date: Sun, 07 Dec 1997 21:38:29 -0800
Fwd Date: Sun, 07 Dec 1997 23:16:48 -0500
Subject: Re: NUFORC Reports on the US Northwest Mass

> Date: Sat, 6 Dec 1997 10:52:08 -0800 (PST)
> From: Jim Deardorff <deardorj@ucs.orst.edu>
> To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: NUFORC Reports on the US Northwest Mass
> Sightings

> Ted,

> Earlier, the attempted put-downs of these Washington state mass
> UFO sightings tried to attribute them to a Russian rocket
> booster, SL-12 (Proton). I'm glad you also realize that it could
> not have been responsible for any of the sightings. The real
> point is that certain UFO debunkers had no qualms in assigning
> all the UFO sightings to this SL-12 booster without waiting for
> any confirmation from Russia, which of course never occurred.
>

Pointing out a reasonable explanation for 99 and 44/100 of the sightings is not a "put-down." It may be dull, may disappoint those who "need" it to be something more, nevertheless, it just is what it is, a reasonable explanation. Not absolutely, but most likely, the real explanation.

> > In fact, the disconnected paragraphs you quote may in themselves be
> > talking about two different vehicles.

> The two sentences I quoted from the U.S. Space Command news
> release of Nov. 29th (made available by Peter Davenport on the
> National UFO Reporting Center's web site) were separated only by
> the single sentence: "Aboard the booster was a spacecraft known
> as the Mars '96 probe destined for the planet Mars." Thus the
> second sentence I had quoted did refer to the same rocket
> booster.

This is where things get really weird. Another reader tipped me off that this press release was from last year. Here copied from the NUFORC site:

[begin quote.]

UNITED STATES SPACE COMMAND

NEWS RELEASE

DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, Headquarters, U.S. Space Command, 250 S.
Peterson Blvd,
Ste 116, Peterson Air Force Base, CO 80914-3190

Phone: (719) 554-6889 FAX: (719) 554-3165 DSN: 692-6889 E-Mail:
nousspaa@spacecom.af.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 41-96

November 29, 1996

Update on Russian Space Probe

Peterson AFB, COLO. -- U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) has developed new information indicating that the Russian Mars '96 spacecraft likely came down on Nov. 16 instead of Nov. 17 as earlier reported. Any debris surviving the heat of this re-entry would have fallen over a 200-mile long portion of the Pacific Ocean, Chile, and Bolivia. We now believe that the object that re-entered on Nov. 17, which we first thought to be the Mars '96 probe, was in fact the fourth stage of the booster rocket.
[end quote.]

Yes indeedly, the release is dated in 1996. What is going on here? Jim, did this just slip by you and in the flush of embarrassment are you fingers busy typing out an apology to me and our fellow readers? I humbly accept.

> > Now back to NORAD object 25047. After my last postings, I dove
> > into the web and dredged up an orbital element set for it dated
> > 13 November. Plugging this into a satellite tracking program
> > revealed that on 14 November 1997 a little after 9:00 pm Seattle
> > time object number 25047 was expected to be passing just north of
> > Seattle and very very low in orbit. With this degree of
> > corroboration, I don't see how we could fail to attribute most of
> > the reports from the Northwest that night to this SL-12 booster.

> You ought to read the UFO reports that Davenport made available
> -- in 28 pages that include the forementioned discussion of the
> Russian rocket booster launched on the 16th. Most of the reports
> are of glowing objects that moved across the sky quite slowly,
> and in formation, taking from 30 seconds to 11 minutes as
> observed from different locations. They emphasized the slowness
> (small angular velocity) of the UFOs, because by this feature
> alone it was obvious, even to non-scientists, that what they saw
> could not have been re-entry rocket or satellite debris or a
> meteor shower, either one. Others noted non-linearity in the
> UFOs' tracks.

I did go to the NUFORC page and read the many reports from witnesses. Let me quote one of the better written and more descriptive of them:

[begin quote.]

It all started as I was commencing on my usual evening stroll. The night was one of those befitting Port Ludlow and the Olympic Peninsula. Every star was in its own multi-dimensional extragalactic setting. The moon was almost full and about 1/3 of the way to its zenith. I had just finished locating the north star and the big dipper when a brilliant orange glow started growing about 30 degrees above the north west horizon. At first there was only one orange mass with a half dozen bright spots of varying size and light intensity. The largest piece was about the size of a large star but much more brilliant and emitting a pulsating white light. The others were tracking with it making a mass in the sky that appeared larger than the moon. All the pieces appeared to be disintegrating and left a huge trail that reminded me of a contrail from a high flying jet at sunset. But this contrail was multi-colored. In between the bright spots were millions of sparkling particles spewing out colored lights that reminded me of my days in physics where we had to identify metals by their color in a flame. As a background, the contrail had a cosmic glow.

[paraph relating a second, following object snipped.]

The two masses progressed across the sky, obscuring the north star and all its associate heavenly bodies in a very stately manner. Unlike a shooting star or the fireball that I saw in my youth, this bizarre light mass was moving slowly but steadily across the heavens. It must have taken 1 to two minutes for them to traverse from the western to the eastern horizon. As they went, the stream of off-gassing sparkling particles extended from horizon to horizon. As the leading edge of the light show neared the eastern horizon, each mass appeared to lessen in intensity. However, I sensed this was due to the higher air

density. Finally the leading lights disappeared below the tree line of Tala Point while the technicolor contrail persisted for a few more moments.
[end quote.]

Sounds very exotic almost supernatural doesn't it? Yet this is an excellent description of a common reentry. Yes, the Shuttle as it approaches the Kennedy Space Center, does put on this glorious show. Ah, with one significant difference. The Shuttle doesn't (hopefully) break into a string of burning pieces (although it does appear to be burning.) The bulk of the eyewitness accounts on the NUFORC page were congruent with the reentry of a crumbling booster. Most of the commentary displayed, in its conjecture and speculation, gross ignorance and misconception of what a reentry would look like.

> > Notice how I carefully say "most" above. I also happened to be
> > listening to the Art Bell show through these events. It seemed
> > to me that the witnesses may not have all been reporting the same
> > event. I had the feeling that possibly three different events
> > were being described. The most commonly reported event was
> > clearly the reentry of space debris.

> The debate then seems to be between "most" and "many." As noted
> in an earlier message, the UFO events may well have occurred near
> the time at which some booster suffered its final piece of
> orbital decay, and that need not have been any accident in the
> timing of the UFO event by the UFO intelligences. It's the
> events NOT consisting of man-made or natural events that are the
> concern of this list. Those viewers who assumed it was
> reentering space junk seem not to have supplied any estimate of
> total duration of their sighting.

> Could you help out here by supplying us with your estimate of the
> most typical angular velocity across the sky, as viewed from the
> earth's surface, of reentering space junk when it's at its
> altitude of maximal flaming brightness?

Another common misconception is that the most of the flames during reentry are from the object burning up. From the time an object hits the upper atmosphere, it creates an ionization trail.

It is glowing brightly long before it starts to burn up. And the trail lingers in the sky after the object has passed from sight. It glitters with fairy dust just as described above. As the debris rises above the horizon, it appears to be moving straight up as if being launched from only a couple of hundred miles away. As it passes overhead, it appears to be in level flight. And as it passes below the horizon, it appears to be flying straight down. These are also characteristics reported by other witnesses.

> If this altitude were taken to be 70,000 ft and if by then the
> speed of the reentry debris had slowed down to 1/2 of the
> previous orbital velocity, my rough estimate is that it would
> take 12 seconds for it to cover a 120 degree arc of the viewers'
> sky. If the factor of 1/2 were whittled down by an order of
> magnitude, then some fraction of the reports that emphasized the
> slow movement might be explained by reentering debris.
> However, they wouldn't explain the reports which emphasized the
> excessive amount of such debris that would have been required, or
> the non-linear movements, or the tails of fire that followed only
> far behind the leading glowing balls; or the formation maintained
> by the multiple objects, considering that reentering debris of
> various sizes and shapes would be moving at different velocities
> due to their different aerodynamic drags.

> Jim Deardorff

All the estimation and speculation in the world cannot substitute for the real facts and experience. A trip to <http://shuttle.nasa.gov> and following the links to the reentry profile page will answer these questions far better than I can. Houston is about 3/4's along the reentry path of the shuttle. Even here, the shuttle takes 4 minutes to pass from horizon to horizon. This is much, much longer than your preliminary estimates. It looks every bit as magical as the witness's reports on the NUFORC pages. This makes it easy to understand how popular misconceptions can sensationalize a common reentry. The many ways that a booster can break up and the many aerodynamic forces affecting the varied pieces can easily explain the various fireballs and their paths. Sadly, several of the postings on the

NUFORC page clearly described the how's and why's of this being an SL-12 reentry. Yet this did nothing to stem the mystification and glamorization of the event.

Bye... Ted..

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