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Space Debris?

From: "Greg Sandow" <gsandow@prodigy.net>
Date: Fri, 20 Feb 1998 10:46:59 -0500
Fwd Date: Fri, 20 Feb 1998 15:20:21 -0500
Subject: Space Debris?

The following is from the Internet's leading gossip column, the Drudge Report:

(And no, it's not about Monica Lewinsky!)

REPORT: US MISSILE COLLIDED WITH SPACE JUNK

Thursday's BOSTON GLOBE is fresh with the details of a Minuteman missile on a test flight over the Pacific Ocean last month being destroyed in a collision with a piece of space junk.

Reporter Dave Chandler outlines what may be the first known case of space collision that "analysts fear could befall the space shuttle or other spacecraft with crew amid thousands of untracked pieces of rocket debris orbiting the Earth."

The missile was soaring 240 miles above the Marshall Islands in a test of "Star Wars" tracking systems when it suddenly disappeared from radar screens.

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Lehner, spokesman for the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization: "There seems to be really no proof, but the consensus is that it looks like it may have been struck by some space debris."

Over 7,000 pieces of space junk has been cataloged and is being tracked by the US Space Command.

Debris in orbit moves at high speeds, more than 17,000 miles per hour.

According to the National Research Council, almost all of the debris that could inflict 'critical damage' on the space shuttle is likely too small to be tracked. Any impact would come without warning, as in the Jan. 15 Minuteman collision.

Greg Sandow

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