

ALASKA UFO MOTHERSHIP REVISITED

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From his Japanese Air Line (JAL) 747 cargo plane, Captain Kenju Terauchi suddenly spots a large bright light very near and almost directly in his flight path; FAA--Terauchi interview, pg. 3. Stunned, he looks very carefully at the object because of the high risk of collision. His speed is .84 Mach: 565 statute miles (s.m.) per hour--a mile every 6.4 seconds, 905 kilometer per hour (km) or 492 knots--nautical miles (n.m.) per hour. He is at flight level 350, 35,000 feet, or 10,600 meters above Mean Sea Level, MSL, assuming standard atmospheric pressure; Terauchi, Personal Statement, pg. 6. He has just crossed into the northeast corner of Alaska from the frozen Beaufort sea, heading toward Anchorage.

It is November 17, 1986; 6:10 p.m., Alaska Standard Time. In front, the sun dips into the western horizon painting the sky with a thin red strip. Dusk forms ahead. Behind, it is ink black, except for a full moon shining directly behind and below on the far horizon over Greenland.

JAL flight 1628 holds a full cargo of expensive French red wine. It is enroute from Paris to Tokyo, with necessary fuel stops in Iceland and another in Anchorage, Alaska. Terauchi boarded the plane before dawn in Iceland with the two other members of the flight crew: First officer/copilot Takanori Tamefuji and flight engineer Yoshio Tsukuba. The takeoff weight from Iceland was maximum at 770,000 lbs (350,000 kilograms). They had room for no excess fuel. They have been in the air about four hours. Fuel level is low. All three now see the unexpected light ahead.

As they watch, the light gradually becomes two separate lights. As Terauchi looks closer, each light takes the shape of a cylinder, as long as it is wide. (see Drawing A) Each cylinder has three sections. Two sections consist of multiple rows and columns, with rows of about five or six white spot lights, like stadium lights. In the center is a dark section of amber like embers, like coals from a fire, glowing and changing. This section separates the two other sections. The two cylinders appear identical to each other, and are about the size of a DC-8 aircraft (about 1/2 the size of a 747). The two now fly in formation. The sky is clear. There are only thin wispy clouds on the hills far below (25,000 feet, 7600 meters, or 5 miles below). The lights began swaying like a swing, back and forth in formation, "like two bear cubs playing with each other;" Terauchi's personal statement, pg. 8. Terauchi asks the flight engineer to bring forward his camera bag. But, because of the dim light outside, Terauchi can not get a good snapshot. The lights in the cockpit are dimmed to make sure they are not seeing a reflection off the

windshield. They still do not know what it is. The lights are still in front of them several miles, now going in their direction. On the onboard color radar, Terauchi sees a target for the object 7 to 8 miles (12 km) ahead. Confusingly, the target appears green instead of red--the color that should register for large solid targets which are this close to the 747.

Both pilots watch the lights for six or seven minutes before copilot Tamefuji calls the Anchorage Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) on the radio. He asks if there is any other reported traffic near the 747. ARTCC at first says there is no reported traffic and no other craft near the 747, then:

ARTCC

Japan Air 1628....I'm picking up a hit on radar five miles in trail of your six o'clock position [directly behind the 747]

Then, the Air Force Regional Operations Command Center (ROCC) is asked by ARTCC by radio (in this transcript) if they see any other aircraft (a/k/a target, primary, surge, return or traffic) on their radar screen near the 747, which is now 40 miles south of Fort Yukon, a village 146 s.m., 127 n.m. or 234 km north (magnetic) of Fairbanks.

ROCC

....It looks like I am getting some surge, primary return...I don't know if it's erroneous or whatever...

ARTCC

Negative, uhuh, it's not erroneous. I want you (ROCC) to keep a good track on there, and if you pick up a code, [sic] and verify that you do not have any aircraft operating in that area....

ROCC

That is affirm. We [military] do not have anybody up there right now....

ARTCC

Okay...I'm picking up a primary...right in front of [the 747] 50 miles south of [Fort Yukon].

ROCC

Okay, I've got him about his-ah, oh-it looks like about, ah, ten o'clock [60 degrees left-front of the 747], at about that range, yes. [several miles in front of the 747]

ARTCC

Alright keep an eye on that, and ah-see if-ah, any other military in that area.

Then, the lights move to the rear of the 747 as it flies over Fairbanks. At this point, the 747 requests permission (since it is on an ARTCC controlled IFR flight) to take evasive action, even though very low on fuel. ARTCC says okay. The 747 makes a turn and drops 4000 feet (1220 meters) to 31,000 feet (9500 meters) MSL

to see if the lights follow. They do. Then, ARTCC requests the 747 to take additional evasive action.

ARTCC

Japan Air 1628...request you to make a right turn, 360 degrees [a complete circle]...and advise me what your traffic does then.

ROCC

This is [ROCC] again. On some other equipment here we have confirmed [emphasis not in original] there is a flight size of two around [the 747].

ARTCC

Okay, where is--is he following him?

ROCC

It looks like he is, yes.

ARTCC

Japan Air 1628. Sir, the military radar advises they do have a primary target in trail of you at this time.

Okay (ROCC), do you have anybody you can scramble up there.

ROCC

I'll tell you what, we're gonna talk to your liaison sir about that.

ARTCC

Japan Air 1628 heavy. Military radar advises they are picking up intermittent primary target behind you in-trail. In-trail, I say again.

ROCC

Ah-I'm gonna talk to my other radar man here...he's got some other equipment watching this aircraft.

ARTCC

Roger sir, Would you (JAL 1628) like our military to scramble on the traffic?

JAL 1628

Negative, negative.

Captain Terauchi refuses the scramble because he worries about the safety of the 747 in that situation, and he does not feel it is an imminent threat at that time; personal statement, pg. 4.

The above are excerpts from the live transcript of the radio communications at the time of the sighting. In fairness, there were a number of radio transmissions during this time period (30 minutes) where controllers could not find the other target on their radar, or having once found the target, intermittently lost it.

When he does the 360 degree turn near Fairbanks, Terauchi catches a glimpse of the craft following the 747, which now appears different than before: It now appears to be two bright lights, 1000 feet apart, with a silhouette of a walnut or saturn shaped "mothership" in between which is as large as "two aircraft carriers." See Drawing "B". Note, the small 747 drawn under the right side of the larger object.

After the 360 degree turn, Terauchi immediately requests a flight path directly to Anchorage because of low fuel. The "mothership" disappears 10 minutes later, in the vicinity of Mt. McKinley/Mt. Denali. After the 747 passes Mt. McKinley, two other aircraft enroute from Anchorage to Fairbanks are asked to look for the object by ARTCC. Both say the object is not in sight. JAL 1628 lands safely in Anchorage 25 minutes later.

This story was carried in dozens of newspaper and magazine articles during the next several months. (See end note for partial list of 57) The FAA did an investigation that included recorded interviews with the crew, written statements from the crew and controllers, accumulation of radar data, transcription of the original live radio communications, and an analysis of the radar images. This together with other correspondence in the FAA file totals about 1000 pages. It is all now located at the National Archives in Anchorage, Alaska. The FAA interviews of the crew members were conducted in a courteous and professional manner with no attempt to intimidate them. An FAA Inspection and Surveillance Record states James Derry interviewed the crew immediately after the flight landed, and that they "were shook up but professional." In another report the FAA investigator who questioned the crew concluded that the crew were rational and professional and showed no evidence of drug or alcohol use. Terauchi was a 47 year old pilot with 20 years of experience at that time. There was difficulty in transcribing the interviews because the crew often spoke in Japanese and an interpreter at times translated both questions and responses. The FAA had the radar image data reviewed by the FAA's Technical Center in Atlantic City, N.J., using "identical" equipment. They determined that a second radar target near the 747 at the time of the reported sightings was not another aircraft but rather a split radar image from the 747. Apparently, this is the FAA's official explanation of what their controllers saw on their radar screen.

A more critical look, however, reveals that the FAA's official story can not and does not adequately explain the radar images seen by the controllers as reported on the live transcript. Here is the FAA's explanation, from a March 5, 1987 official release by Paul Steucke of the FAA Public Affairs office in Anchorage:

Radar data received by the FAA and used to track Japan Airlines flight 1628 on the night of the [sic] November 17, 1986, was retained by FAA. Review of this radar data by FAA experts using identical equipment at the FAA's research technical center in Atlantic City, New Jersey, revealed that the radar system was receiving what is called an "uncorrelated primary and beacon target". [sic]

This electronic phenomena [sic] is not unusual according to Steucke who said, "It is unfortunate that

the uncorrelated target phenomena [sic] occurred just when a pilot was reporting seeing something outside his aircraft.

The controller's statements, released by the FAA, indicate that they thought there might be another aircraft or object in the area of the JAL flight. Steucke said, "The controllers were doing their job right because they have to work with what is right there in front of them on the screen, especially when you [sic] have a Captain that is reporting "other traffic" [sic] in his immediate area. The radar data they had was one target, moving slowly across the radar screen. They don't have the benefit of "monday [sic] morning quarterbacking" [sic] with multiple radar images as was the case in regenerating the radar data." Review of the radar data by FAA experts revealed the "uncorrelated target" phenomena [sic].

FAA electronic technicians explained that an "uncorrelated primary and beacon target" on the radar screen occurs when the radar energy that is sent up toward the aircraft, (primary signal) returns to the radar receiver along with the aircraft transponder (beacon) signal and the two do not match up as being at the same exact location. [See drawing "C"]

This explanation implies that the controllers did not see a "real" target and therefore, the flight crew must have also been mistaken about what they saw. The problem with this official explanation is that it does not account for what the controllers reported seeing as stated in the live transcript. This is why: The official FAA explanation can only account for two targets that were within a quarter mile of each other (one radar cell apart) and only if in the same line or flight path, because the two radar signals, originating from the same target, must necessarily follow each other, since they are coming from the same moving source but with a slight timing difference. That is, the timing difference between the reception of the primary and the secondary signals while the plane is crossing from one radar cell to another is the only way an uncorrelated signal occurs.

But, in the live transcript, the controllers are talking about seeing the other target in locations more than 1/4 mile away from the 747. In one instance, the controller is talking about seeing the other target five miles or more from the 747 ("five miles in trail"), or out to the side ("ten o'clock position"); in another instance it was reported several miles from the 747 (50 miles south of Fort Yukon, when the 747 was 40 miles south of Fort Yukon just earlier). In another instance, the controllers report a flight size of two around the 747, which means a total of three targets, which cannot be accounted for by the split radar image, which can only yield two targets. Also, note above that the controllers say

they are picking up another "primary" target near the 747; they never talk about picking up another secondary (transponder) target. To restate, the primary target is the ground radar signal bouncing off an aircraft and returning to the ground receiver; it is not a transponder code coming in. This means that whatever was up there did not have an active transponder in it, which is required by FAA regulations for civilian aircraft at that altitude. The ROCC states clearly that no military craft are in the area. This fact tends to eliminate another airplane, either civil or military, as an explanation for these unexplained signals.

This is not to say controllers did not see "uncorrelated radar signals", which is a common phenomenon when dealing with a plane going 565 miles per hour and where the ground radar is located several hundred miles away. The controllers probably did see them. This is so because the plane advances into a new radar cells (1/4 mile increments) every 1.6 seconds, while the FAA radar does a sweep (updates the position of the plane by taking a new radar reading) approximately every three seconds. Rather, the live transcript confirms that the controllers saw something either separate from or in addition to these very common split returns. Furthermore, controllers are trained to recognize these split images, so that it is doubtful that this type of error actually occurred in this instance, especially by 3 or 4 different controllers.

The fact that the UFO appears intermittently and finally disappears is consistent with stealth technology, which is reported in many other UFO reports. Stealth technology means that the craft can hide itself or "cloak" itself from radar. In new conventional aircraft, stealth is achieved by making a craft out of something other than ferrous metals and by making the craft in a shape where there are no sharp angles formed by the body which will catch the radar wave and bounce it back toward the ground radar receiver. Modern stealth crafts, like the F-117A and the B-2, are built using these principles: They are made of composites (non-metals, such as Kevlar, Boron Fibers, and others) and have minimal sharp angles. A round object, a cylinder, a cigar shaped object, or a Saturn shaped disk would seem to have a shape consistent with known stealth technology.

According to an article in the Anchorage Daily News by Hal Bernton on January 6, 1987, Dr. Richard Haines, a NASA scientist at that time, working for the Ames Research Center in California said this: In the past 20 years, more than 3000 sightings of UFO's have been reported by pilots. The sightings are reported by military, civilian and commercial pilots who fly both national and international routes. Dr. Haines has done extensive studies of these 3000 pilot reports. See: Haines, R. F. "Fifty-Six Aircraft Pilot Sightings Involving Electromagnetic Effects", MUFON Symposium Proceedings 1992, pg 102; and, Haines, R. F. "Insights of Studying Groups of UFO's", MUFON Symposium Proceedings 1994, pg 154. It is

believed that these 3000 reports are only a small percentage of actual pilot sightings. Pilots do not report sightings because of the fear of ridicule, transfer, breach of military regulation, or losing a job. Terauchi, who had lived in Anchorage and owned a home in Anchorage for years, was not permitted to fly for JAL, according to the Chief Medical Officer for JAL in a statement to Dr. Haines. Dr. Haines told this medical officer that in his opinion Captain Terauchi was indeed a very good pilot: "He kept his airplane in control at all times, he followed all required procedures, he actually reported the event, and he delivered his cargo (wine from France) to his intended destination."

Dr. Haines was informed that the main reason for terminating Terauchi's flying status was something to the effect "we don't think that pilots who experience such hallucinations should be flying." Dr. Haines pointed out to the medical officer that he had not only personally interviewed Captain Terauchi but had studied many similar cases involving very large and unusually shaped aerial phenomena/objects flying at high altitude. Then, the Chief Medical Officer simply said that he would be pleased to receive any documentation of these things. Dr. Haines later mailed a rather thick package of information from his research files to JAL. Eight months later Dr. Haines learned that Captain Terauchi was returned to flying status. Dr. Haines said, "I was glad that my research might have helped someone else in a difficult situation." (Dr. Haines, personal communication)

The military, in this FAA file and as reported in newspaper articles, says it believes the secondary radar images were "clutter", and therefore, it is not interested in further investigating. In the past, the military often cites the 1968 Condon Report or 1969 Project Blue Book conclusion that UFO's do not exist as justification for not investigating further. This response by the military has become so predictable that it hardly needs any comment here. For example, there are numerous UFO reports where military jets are in hot pursuit of a UFO but the official explanation is always: we are not interested. For example, see: Maccabee, B. "Gulf Breeze UFO Photo Analyzed," MUFON UFO Journal, June 1994, pg. 3, wherein an F-15 and a UFO are photographed together over Gulf Breeze, Florida, by Ed Walters in January of 1994.

CONCLUSION

1) Captain Terauchi and the two other crew members all saw unexplained lights. They were seen many times during a half an hour. The 747 took evasive action while low on fuel in order to try to escape from the UFO. The FAA states that these men were all considered reliable, professional and showed no evidence of drug or alcohol use; they were, however, "shook up", which is consistent with an actual UFO incident. 2) The controllers, both ARTCC and ROCC, did see primary radar returns which were separated several miles from, or offset out of the flight path of, the JAL 747.

These returns could not be "uncorrelated primary and beacon (secondary) radar images" according to the FAA's own description of this phenomenon. The UFOs seen by Terauchi and his flight crew therefore were confirmed by radar. 3) These UFOs have cloaking ability, not only from radar but apparently from the naked eye. It can be inferred from this cloaking ability that these UFOs are more sophisticated than our conventional aircraft. 4) Although the military officially said the UFO image was "clutter" and therefore, it was not interested in investigating this sighting further, it appears to have considered doing a "scramble" on the object at the time. This response, of course, is the standard inconsistency supplied by the military in almost all UFO cases where they are involved. Furthermore, the military (ROCC) in the live transcript states that "on some other equipment here we have confirmed there is a flight size of two around" the 747. The transcript does not say what this other equipment is, but whatever it is the UFO's existence is not in doubt as measured by that equipment. In sum, this case presents substantial reliable eyewitness evidence and corroboration by reliable and trustworthy independent radar controllers. The original live transcript here is more reliable evidence of what actually happened than subsequent "official stories" because there is no opportunity and no motive to tell it other than the way it was.