HELPS EXPLAIN
TARGET DATA
IN PHOTOS.
UNCORRELATED RADAR SIGNALS

Radar data received by the FAA and used to track Japan Airlines flight 1628 on the night of the 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".

This electronic phenomena is not unusual according to Steucke who said, "It is unfortunate that the uncorrelated target phenomena 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 have a Captain that is reporting "other traffic" 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 morning quarterbacking" 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.

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.

#  #  #
UNCORRELATED RADAR SIGNALS

An "uncorrelated primary and beacon(secondary) return on a radar screen occurs when the radar energy that is sent up toward the aircraft (primary signal) returns off the surface of the aircraft at a slightly different moment than the beacon (secondary) transponder signal and the two do not match up as being at the same place or same computer radar cell.

Drawing by Paul Steucke
March 5, 1987
Memorandum

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Subject: INFORMATION: Description of Radar Split Image; AAL-5 Memo of 2/5/87

From: Manager, Airway Facilities Division, AAL-400

Date: FEB 27 1987

To: Public Affairs Officer, AAL-5

This letter transmits our analysis of the radar targets associated with JAL flight 1628, on November 17, 1986, and supplements discussions we have had regarding what has been referred to as "split images".

We concur with the interpretation provided to you by the Alaskan Region Air Traffic Division.

The attached Analysis of Uncorrelated Primary and Beacon Targets by Dennis Simantel covers the subject in more detail, and addresses the questions raised in your letter.

Paul, I appreciate the team approach you have taken to more fully understand a complex issue. The issue is an excellent example of how "interdependent" we are. If we can provide any more information, please do not hesitate to call.

David F. Morse

Attachment
Approximately 61 minutes of data was extracted from the EARTS CDR printouts relating to the November 18 incident involving JAL-1628 and the alleged UFO sighting.

Review of the data involving this incident did not show any abnormalities that could be associated with any type of target as indicated by the pilot of JAL-1628.

Radar returns from the aircraft and surrounding terrain vary with the different segments of the flight, but are considered normal for the area.

Returns relating to the incident can be categorized as three types: primary radar reinforced by a beacon reply (primary radar returns and beacon returns are both evident in the same 1/4 mile range cell), beacon only reply and beacon with an associated radar reply. Seventy-two percent of the replies were radar with beacon reinforcement (same range cell) which is normal for the Murphy dome radar system.

Approximately 25 percent were beacon only and of those that registered as beacon only, 90 percent of those had a primary only reply within 1/8 of a mile, either ahead or behind the beacon target (.5 behind, .1 ahead).

These uncorrelated primary returns are not uncommon, due to the critical timing associated with the delay adjustments in the aircraft transponder for beacon systems and the target correlation circuitry within the radar equipment.

When an aircraft is being interrogated as it passes through the beginning of adjacent range cells the intricate timing between the two systems very often is off just enough to declare both a beacon and a radar target in different range cells, resulting in uncorrelated radar replies.

The data derived from the JAL-1628 flight is representative of the data from another aircraft in the same general area and is considered normal.

February 25, 1987

Dennis R. Simantel
ZAN-AAL-ARTCC

Concur: David F. Morse, AM-400
ENCOUNTER OVER ALASKA

THE UFO
THAT CAN'T BE EXPLAINED.

BY MARGUERITE DEL GIUDICE
THE UFO THAT CAN'T BE EXPL

For nearly an hour, a huge, unrecognizable something, performing amazing maneuvers, followed JAL Flight No. 1628 over Alaska. Veteran pilots saw it. Three different radar scopes tracked it. And once it disappeared, it still wasn't gone ...
people had just held a banquet and every single one of them was there, accounted for—so that blew that theory.

It was a nightmare, until some FAA employees with teenagers started coming up to the public affairs guy, Paul Steucke, saying things in the hallways like, "Uh, Paul, my kid tells me..."

It turns out that the teenagers had devised an inventive way to amuse themselves in the biting, dry, desperately uneventful Alaskan winter at 20 below. They would take those flimsy bags from the dry cleaners and fashion a contraption involving thin cardboard with a votive candle stuck to it and soda straws strung together in the shape of an X. If you light the candle and breathe into the bag, the thing will fill with light and float in a wavy glow all the way up to 5,000 feet. The teenagers would send up six of these over half a mile, confounding the adults with manufactured lightballs.

The news was a huge relief. Some bags finally turned up hanging off telephone wires—Paul Steucke took pictures—and that was the most captivating event to emerge from the vast Far North in many years.

Until news broke last Christmastime that would prove far more troublesome to explain:

A veteran Japan Air Lines pilot in a jumbo jet reported being shadowed for almost an hour by something that looked and behaved like nothing he had experienced in his 32 years in the skies. His report began, Two thousand years ago, if a hunter saw a TV, how did he describe it to other people? My experience was similar to this.... It created many questions that a human being cannot answer.

His name was Capt. Kenju Terauchi.

The crew was shaken but stable—and convinced they had seen something that could be neither ignored nor readily explained. But no harm had been done, and as first all the FAA appeared to have on its hands were highly credible people reporting highly incredible things—fascinating, but inconclusive. The scant files on the matter dropped quickly to the bottom of the investigation heap, and the sighting seemed destined to go down as just one of those crazy Alaskan things.

Of course, that's not what happened.

For Capt. Terauchi had unwittingly set in motion a sequence of events that would subject him to international attention—to excited curiosity and gawking and ridicule—and absorb the FAA in probably the biggest UFO controversy to be aired in the public domain since the Air Force got out of the UFO business in 1969.

Let's backtrack to that baffling Monday in November, around suppertime in the northern skies of Alaska, where the sun disappears until the middle of March....

MARGUERITE DEL GIUDICE is an Inquirer staff writer.

They did see what looked like navigational lights, strobe lights.

Hershey Roger, sir. Say the color of the strobes and beacon lights?

JAE: The color is white and yellow, I think.

Now that was odd. White and yellow, but no red, the international color for aircraft beacons.

THERE WERE THIN AND SPOTTY clouds near the mountain below the plane. The air current was steady, the sky was clear as a windshield, and Terauchi thought the flying conditions were quite pleasant.

Then the two lights started maneuvering like too few bore holes playing with each other. It was as if the UFOs wanted to be noticed. He had to try to take a picture of this—maybe someone else would know what it was.

Flight Engineer Tsukuba handed Terauchi his camera bag, and a comedy of errors began. Terauchi's Minolta Alpha 700 was loaded with ASA 100 film, intended for outdoor daytime scenery on the ground, and here he was flying night missions. The shutter wouldn't release. Then the plane started to shudder, and he couldn't hold the camera still.

I placed my camera back in the camera bag and concentrated on observing the lights.

The crew was fixated on these objects, not knowing what to think. Then the experience turned hairy—the things came at them, stopped in front of our face, shooting off lights....

The inside of the cockpit shone brightly upon us, a small world we overflew, and Terauchi felt warmth on his face. These things were big, at least the size of a DC-8. He thought he might be flying into the rear end of some aircraft, into a midair collision.

The lights appeared to hover in front of the jumbo jet, then flew in level flight at the same speed, slightly higher, 1,000 feet away—a stone's throw by the distance rules of the sky. Terauchi could see what looked like exhaust pipes, and rotating rows of amber and white lights in the middle of these flying nozzles.

Something about them reminded him of a character in a Japanese noh play.

No manmade machine could do what these objects were doing. Terauchi thought. Flying in tandem around a jumbo jet hurtling through space at 550 miles an hour? It made no sense.

For three to five minutes, the ships stayed in formation with the jumbo jet, then moved forward and off to the left. Honestly, we were simply breathless.

The fear of a midair collision had passed.

We probably would have felt more in danger if the ships had been spread out in space—there had been unconfirmed reports that they were some 40 miles away, the only thing airmen had to base their reports on. They're moving about 1,000 feet above us, one mile about. A little too close for comfort.

Henley wanted to know if it was military or civilian, but the crew couldn't tell.
S O NOW YOU SEE WHAT the captain and the FAA had gotten themselves into.


Public response was so great that the FAA decided to interview the JAL crew a second time and review the radar tapes. And Steucke started thinking strategy. What was the FAA's role and responsibility? What did it know?

The first officer and the flight engineer again corroborated the captain's dramatic report. But the FAA decided that the radar tapes did not — necessarily. The object on radar was now thought to be an accidental split image of the JAL 747, Steucke said, and not a separate object — a familiar radar quirk. The people at Elmendorf, meanwhile, emphasized that their radar signals hadn't lasted long enough to be confirmed, and they attributed the apparent hits to coincidental electronic clutter.

The calls kept coming. Steucke kept getting new bits of material, and the thread of the story kept wandering. He felt as if he were "blowing up a balloon" — each time he dialed out a bit of information, the story got bigger. He was constantly looking for holes in the data and trying to stay ahead of the reporters — not always with success.

Hal Bernton, for one, of the Anchorage Daily News.

After the FAA explained its double radar signal as a "split beacon," Bernton tracked down controller Sam Rich, who told him that three controllers had seen a radar image of an object near 1628 that night, and "all three of us thought there was a track," or aircraft. (That would be Rich, Henley and John Aarninck, who had stepped in to help out.) The track may not have been very strong, Rich told Bernton, but none of the controllers at the time thought it might be a split image of the 747.

Steucke called Rich in for a chat. He made Rich aware of the awkward position he had put the other controllers in — speaking for them without their knowledge. And from then on, Rich referred interview requests to Steucke's office, where reporters were informed that Rich didn't want to talk. A message also went out over the FAA employees' "code-a-phones" at work, warning that reporters would hound them on this story and that FAA policy required them to go through public affairs.

Steucke worried that this mix-up made him look bad. One day he's saying only one controller had handled 1628, and now he finds out there were five, counting supervisors, and they seemed to be disputing the FAA's publicly stated position: What in the world was everybody going to think? At least he wasn't handling an air crash. The subject matter was fascinating, and things kept happening. Early on Jan. 11, for instance, Capt. Terauchi again reported seeing unusual lights while flying over Alaska. Once he landed and learned the location of a reported temperature inversion, he provided an explanation: As he flew near Arctic Village, the town lights had gotten distorted by bouncing off ice crystals created when cold air got sandwiched between two layers of warm air. Not a rare phenomenon. But, initially, the information was presented as if the FAA had come up with the explanation. Terauchi complained to reporter Hal Bernton, aware that it made him look like a crackpot.

Hank Elias, the Alaska air-traffic manager, felt bad for the captain. A pilot is always seeing things in the sky, he says, because that's where he's looking all the time. "You see things," he says, "and you rationalize." That's a star, that's another airplane, that's a navigational beacon. So the captain sees something, and it doesn't look like anything he's seen in 29 years of flying. Then, says Elias, he's "got to look at everything else real critical from now on ... the poor guy's got to take a real hard look and say, 'Is that another one?'" Inside the FAA offices, meanwhile, the attitude was, I can't believe it. What is all this interest? But the sighting also generated wonder. For all anyone knew, the United States or the Soviet Union was testing some advanced experimental craft — what better place? Or maybe there was a physical explanation, beyond our current awareness, as meteors once were, and radioactivity, atomic fission, the anomalous motion of the perihelion of Mercury. And it was likely that in all the vast universe, only Earth would be singled out for life?

"We all carry with us the seed of the possibility that what Capt. Terauchi described could actually have been there," says Steucke. "The debunkers are trying to keep us honest. At the same time,
ROUND RADAR HADN'T registered anything near 1628, so nothing was likely to show up on the cockpit's weaker X-band weather scope. But the captain set the distance range to 20 miles — and to his surprise, something popped up. A large, green, round object, seven or eight miles away, in the direction of the thing outside his window.

Henley: Japan Air 1628. Do you still have visual contact with the traffic?

JAL: Affirmative ... we have radar contact ... And then, so did Henley — a radar hit about five to eight miles from 1628.

He radioed Elmendorf Air Force Base, and the controller there reported picking up something, too — a weak return about eight miles ahead of 1628, at 10 o'clock. It lasted a minute, minute and a half. Radio interference, and an object seeming to register on three different radar scopes.

What was this?

JAL: It's, ah, I think, ah, a very quite big, ah, planet.

Elmendorf: Fort Yukon, was diagonally below to the right of 1628, and the setting sun put an umbrella of reddish stripe. The east side, the side where the objects were, was still pitch dark.

We had no fear so far but began to worry, since we had no idea for their purpose. ...

Up ahead they could see lights from Eielson Air Force Base and Fairbanks. The lights were extremely bright to eyes that were used to the dark. How bright it was! We were just above the bright city lights, and we checked . . . behind us. Also! there was a silhouette of a gigantic spaceship. We must run away quickly!

JAL: Japan Air 1628. Ah, request desc — request three one zero.

Henley: Japan ... 1628 heavy. Descend at pilot discretion ... Do you still have your traffic?

JAL: Still, ah, coming, ah, ah, right formation.

Henley: Japan Air 1628 heavy ... deviations approved as necessary for traffic. When we checked our rear, there was still the ship following us ... We had to get away from that object. A globular craft with a lip around the middle, the colossal size of two aircraft carriers laid end to end.

What could it possibly want — the Beaujolais?

Henley: Japan Air 1628 heavy. Sir, I'm going to request you to make a right turn, three six zero degrees, three hundred and sixty-degree turn. And advise me what your traffic does then.

JAL: Right turn, three sixty. We ... set to turn right on a 30-degree bank. We looked to our right forward but didn't see any light. It had disappeared.

We were relieved ... We returned to level flight. But when we checked to our rear, the object was still there — in exactly the same place.

On the ground, Carl Henley was glued to his radar scope. You're not supposed to have unknowns in air traffic control.

There isn't much room for error, and the system relies on an unquestioned mutual trust between controller and pilot. A controller has feelings about an airplane, even though it's just a little splash on a scope. When he's talking to a pilot, he's inside the cockpit with him. This 747 was reporting unidentifiable aircraft, and Henley's job was to get him safely away. He and the other controllers assumed they were tracking a second aircraft.

"I never thought of it as a UFO," he would say later.

VETERAN CONTROLLER SAM RICH returned from a lunch break and took over communications with the military so Henley could devote all his attention to 1628. Elmendorf radioed over that: "On some other equipment here we have confirmed there is a flight, size of two," around 1628.

Rich: Is he following him?

Elmendorf: It looks like he is, yes. Oh, God ... Henley radioed the news to JAL and asked if the crew wanted the military to scramble on the traffic.

JAL: Negative, negative. Uneasy as he was, the pilot didn't want to chance someone else getting hurt trying to help him and his crew. Even the F -15 with the newest technology had no guarantee of safety against the creature with an unknown degree of scientific technology. We flew toward Talkeetna, ... The spaceship was still following us, not leaving us all.

The FAA shift supervisor, Erland Stephens, a lean, older fellow with a graying reddish beard who is given to string ties and cowboy boots, thought a lost aircraft might be following 1628's lights into Anchorage.

"His radio navigation might have come quit," Stephens figured.

So he followed procedure and alerted the U.S. Customs office at Anchorage International, and somebody called Hank Elias — the transplanted Oklahoman who's in charge of the FAA's air traffic division in Alaska.

Elias couldn't know whether it was a system failure or a life-threatening situation. And the proximity of the Soviet Union was always a factor — it could be an exotic experimental craft, or a deflecting jet. The U.S.S.R is so close to the United States up there that two guys in eight months had illegally snuck across the frozen Bering Strait from the Alaskan island of Little Diomede to the Soviet island of Big Diomede. The Soviet Union likes to send its Bear bombers into Alaskan air space, carrying electronic snooping devices and sometimes missiles, and the United States likes to send its latest F-15s to intercept and escort them off. They listen to each other's radio transmissions, obtain radar frequencies, try to determine the capabilities of each other's aircraft. Sometimes, a Soviet fighter will tuck in so tight behind the tail of a commercial airliner that the pilot never even knows. And if the Soviet jet shows up on radar, he'll register a split, only as a little dot — looking just like a "split beacon," an accidental split image, of the airliner. Shadowing, it's called.

Over the phone, Elias grilled the fellow who called: What did the pilot do, say,
WHATEVER HAD SHOWN UP ON the military radar wasn't there anymore. And Henley, either. He had never really gotten a good track on whatever it was. United Airlines Flight 69 had just taken off from Anchorage; it was in the same air zone as 1628. Henley radioed the pilot to go take a look around 1628, and a Totem C-130 military flight with extra gas offered to fly over as well. Up in the JAL cockpit, 1628 could make out the United airliner. The two planes flashed landing lights at each other, and the United pilot advised ground control that he could see 1628, set against a light background.

We were flying the east side of Mount McKinley, . . . We knew that we were watching us. When the United plane came by our side, the spacecraft disappeared suddenly, and there was nothing but the light of the moon.

Neither United nor the Totem C-130 saw a thing, other than the JAL jumbo jet. Whatever—imam —instantaneously, it seemed to the crew — toward the east, toward Canada.

For weeks, nothing happened. The FAA inspectors already had their hands full with far more pressing cases, crashes in which people had died, and the JAL sighting got buried at the bottom of the investigation pile. Out of sight, it was out of mind — until the day before Christmas, when Paul Steucke got a phone call from Shokihi Kibe, an Anchorage restaurateur and correspondent for the Kyodo News Service of Japan.保罗, Steucke had a reporter in JAPAN — someone had told him — to 1628, somewhere out in the east, toward Canada. And a thing, other than the JAL jumbo jet. News Service of Japan.

Captain. "But what they were was. United.

It was. United was. United taken off from Anchorage; Flight 6R at Anchorage Intemal Hotel, a JAL haunt, 1628 was. United the east side of the East Coast, and word of the honchos' uneness made him yawn to go paint pictures — his avoation. He stmed to wonder where he was theater, how far he should go.

Like Capt. Tasrauchi, Steucke had entered the dangerous arena into which are cast, all those who dare to publicly involve themselves with unidentified flying objects. UFO indicates just that, a flying object that is simply unidentified, regardless of speculation about its origin. But to many people, there has come to be a proliferation of flying saucers of supermarkets tatholdis. Those who show interest risk being labeled as believers in visits from outside space, intellectual flyweights, or just birdbrains with plenty of room upstairs to raid. To avoid ridicule, most researchers have retreated to the shadows and keep their mouths shut about what could be going on in the seemingly infinite universe.

Capt. Tasrauchi probably would have been wiser to do that; he could have spared himself the phone calls, the ruberbernecking, the mockery. But by all accounts, he is an honest and forthright man. By doing his duty, he drove up in his automobile, and went to meet Kibe. Kibe wanted to know if it was true.

Steucke looked back five weeks in his files and told him, "Yeah." It had completely slipped his mind. Kibe was welcome to come over — Steucke would give whatever information was available. After all, this was Alaska. You ask a straight question up here, you tend to get a straight answer.

Steucke had no idea what he was about to get into after the holidays, even after Jeff Berliner of United Press Interna-
tional in Anchorage called, wanting to know about this JAL sighting that was making the papers in Tokyo. Steucke got the file out again. Berliner talked to Jim Derry, and Derry held the nose, plugged the holes of different generations of the Robertson Panel — to examine whether the sightings threatened national security. After 12 hours of study over three days, the panel concluded that the real danger didn't seem to be the UFOs. The real danger was the UFO reports — seemingly more credible because of the Air Force's sustained interest in them — that could expose the public to "psychological warfare" and "skillful hostile propaganda" that might be targeted for social behavior.

The flying-saucer business was the biggest public-relations headache in Air Force history. Finally, the Condon Com-mitee, an academic group convened in 1966 to come up with a nonmilitary read on the situation, said exactly what the Air Force wanted to hear — that whatever was involved wouldn't be advanced by further study, and Project Blue Book should be put to sleep.

It was, in 1969, and the examination of UFOs passed into the hands of independent researchers and private organizations such as MUFON and CUFOS — the Mutual UFO Network based in Seguin, Texas, and the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies in Glenview, Ill. The vanguard of current research centers on increasing reports of abductions that involve traumatic medical examinations on members of different generations of the same families — hair-thin needles inserted up the nose, plugs of skin taken from backs, arms, legs. No — the FAA had no interest in arousing history's tendency to repeat itself. The government had learned its lesson well. The emotional, uniquely issues related to unidentified flying objects were in now no way conducive to bureaucratic control.

Ground control: Do you still have the traffic? JAL: Affirmative. Nine o'clock.

Project Blue Book had been preceded by Project Sign, Project Grudge, Project Twinks, with the high point of Air Force involvement in 1952. There had been a tremendous number of UFO reports that year — including radar scope sightings, later deemed inaccurate, that led the Air Force to scramble jets to intercept UFOs above the nation's capital. So the CIA convened a panel of five distinguished nonmilitary scientists — the Robertson Panel — to examine whether the sightings threatened national security. After 12 hours of study over three days, the panel concluded that the real danger didn't seem to be the UFOs. The real danger was the UFO reports — seemingly more credible because of the Air Force's sustained interest in them — that could expose the public to "psychological warfare" and "skillful hostile propaganda" that might be targeted for social behavior.
Every time the public affairs guy doled out information, the story ballooned.

The inquiries kept coming — mostly from the media and some from independent UFO investigators like Richard Haines, a compact, precise, polite California scientist in wire-rimmed bifocals who still pulls out chairs for women. When people called Steucke with scientific questions, or wanting to know about other pilot sightings, he sent them to Haines.

During the day, Haines works at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View as chief of the Space Human Factors Office — they're helping design the interior of the space station as well as new space suits. At night and on weekends, however, he tries to keep track of and explain high-altitude sightings like Capt. Terachi's — his hobby for 20 years.

He thinks pilots make good subjects: highly stable, highly trained, highly motivated, scientifically inclined, and unlikely to make casual reports of strange sightings, because of the potential to be embarrassed among their peers. Plus, an airplane comes with instruments that can record phenomena — "a flying laboratory," says Haines.

Over the years he has looked into 1,000 pilot sightings and explained 2,500 of them as illusions or misidentifications of atmospheric phenomena. "But nonetheless," he says, "I have quite a few that are very unexplained, I would say 500." The Alaska sighting is one of them — but he says the only really unusual thing about it was the publicity. "People tend not to know about the others.

Like the dozen or so UFOs that six Brazilian jet fighters chased for half an hour last May after the objects registered on radar in Sao Paulo. Or the young Australian pilot Haines has just written a book about — who in 1978 reported a strange craft in his vicinity, then disappeared, while flying in a Cesna to buy some crayfish for a party.

Haines heard about the JAL sighting and proceeded to educate himself about the relevant radar systems and the dynamics of the Boeing 747. He got hold of wind aloft charts and weather photography. He worked the phones: Elmendorf, Steucke.

Derry, JAL, the pilot and first officer of the United jet. And he interviewed Capt. Terachi for three hours by telephone with the help of a Japanese friend who is a pilot with a Ph.D. in engineering.

When Haines asked Terachi how the two objects he first saw had moved in space, the captain said, "They move together as if they have a common center of gravity, and they oscillate slightly with a random wavelike motion."

The instant he flashed his landing lights at the United jet, whatever was following him disappeared.

"Which means, disappeared?" Haines asked. And Terachi said, "The lights went out."

IT WAS SOMETIME AFTER Haines spoke with the captain that Philip Klass, another noted independent UFO investigator, advanced a widely published theory that the captain had actually been looking at Jupiter, and maybe Mars. It was late in January by then.

For many years, until his semi-retirement last June, Klass had been the senior avionics editor of Aviation Week and Space Technology Magazine. And for more than 20 years, his hobby has been to investigate "seemingly mysterious or famous UFO cases," he says.

"I have emerged — it sounds immodest, but I think it's true — as probably the leading skeptical UFO investigator in the country, if not the world," he says. "After 21 years, I haven't yet to find a case that I did not believe could be explained in prosaic or earthly terms. Because of this position, if there is an important new UFO case, I cannot afford to ignore it. If you will. It's sort of as if Sherlock Holmes were a real person living today, he couldn't afford to ignore Jimmy Hoffa's complete disappearance."

Klass didn't interview the pilot, because after hearing him on Larry King's late-night radio show, he says, "it was evident that he is not too skilled in English, and I don't speak Japanese."

But his FAA contacts enabled him to "read and make extensive notes" of a transcript of the taped conversation between the cockpit and the ground. Then he approximated the southeasterly direction in which the captain and crew were looking, consulted "a professional astronomer," and worked out a theory:

Jupiter was extremely bright and visible in the direction of the reported UFO, and Mars was just below and to the right of Jupiter, which could explain the pilot's initial report of two lights. "Jupiter was only 10 degrees above the horizon, making it seemingly mysterious, but you could have a very close approach to an impact," he said.

"They're helping design the new space suits. At night and on weekends, his hobby has been to investigate "seemingly mysterious or famous UFO cases," he says.

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BY THIS TIME, ALL THE MATERIALS
rel ated to the Nov. 17
sighting were trickling into Paul
Steucke's office from half a dozen
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The pilot was adamant—whatever had tailed him was no planet.

trol and the JAL ($500), or incrustable 2-5x-10 glossy blow-ups of radar signals ($10). The deluxe package cost $194.50—the ultimate inside look at this increasingly bizarre little incident. A story about it ran over the wire.

There were hundreds of requests for various parts of the package. More than a few wanted the whole thing. And everybody wanted it right away.

quests for various parts of the package. More than a few wanted the whole thing. And everybody wanted it right away.

The full and final news conference that was intended to kill this story once and for all was an anticlimactic event at which the FAA released two pounds of documents and no conclusions. It took place in a spacious room with an American flag in a corner, and unfathomable diagrams of airplanes and radar signals up on the white boards that lined the room. Steucke was the only FAA person available to answer questions. He had called up the Air Force people, and "they told me three things to say": Their radar signal was clutter, there was no scrapable, and there is no investigation.

And none of the FAA's technical people would be there to answer questions, he said, because, "frankly, they're gun-shy as hell about it."

Besides, the FAA was not in the UFO business, would not be in the UFO business in the future, and did not intend to conduct a scientific investigation, he said. "We purged this, and what I would call an operational systems view. ... We were out to determine if there were aircraft there, which were not able to do one way or the other."

He did receive a couple of other unusual, far less-dramatic pilot sightings above Alaska, but the bottom line on this one was that the safety of the air traffic control system had not been compromised—case closed.

Epilogue

Richard Haines has moved on to other sightings by pilots. The Alaska sightings "will go down as a good case," he says. "Not the best. But a good solid case for which "there is no logical explanation." But he's afraid the publicity it generated will discourage people from reporting unusual phenomena—if they realize that whatever they tell
REGENERATED RADAR IMAGE
OF NOV. 17TH, 1986
JAL #1628, ALASKA
PHOTO BY P. STEUCKE, 1-7-87
(Distance between dots, bottom of photo
is 1/8 to 1/4 mile apart)