
Kecksburg UFO incident

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http://ufo-movies.com/components/com_fireboard/uploaded/images/01.jpg The Kecksburg UFO incident of Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, USA occurred on December 9, 1965. A large, brilliant fireball was seen by thousands in at least six states and Ontario, Canada. It streaked over the Detroit, Michigan/Windsor, Ontario area, dropped reported metal debris over Michigan and northern Ohio, and caused sonic booms in western Pennsylvania. It was generally assumed and reported by the press to be a meteor.

However, eyewitnesses in the small village of Kecksburg, about 30 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, claimed something crashed in the woods. A boy said he saw the object land; his mother saw a wisp of blue smoke arising from the woods and alerted authorities. Others from Kecksburg, including local volunteer fire department members, reported finding an object in the shape of an acorn and as large as a Volkswagen Beetle. Writing resembling Egyptian hieroglyphics was also said to be in a band around the base of the object. Witnesses further reported that the military secured the area, ordered civilians out, and then removed the object on a flatbed truck. At the time, however, the military claimed they searched the woods and found nothing.

The nearby Greensburg Tribune-Review had a reporter at the scene; the headline in the newspaper the next day was "Unidentified Flying Object Falls near Kecksburg — Army Ropes off Area."

The official explanation of the widely-seen fireball was a mid-sized meteor, however, speculation as to what the Kecksburg object had been (if there was one — reports vary) also range from it being an alien craft to the remains of an unmanned Soviet Venera 4 atmospheric probe, also known as Kosmos-96, originally destined for Venus. (However, see below where this was recently ruled out by NASA's chief in charge of tracking orbital debris.)

Similarities have been drawn between Kecksburg and the Roswell UFO incident, and as such, is known as "Pennsylvania's Roswell".

Scientific articles

Several articles were written about the fireball in science journals. The February 1966 issue of Sky & Telescope reported that the fireball was seen over the Detroit-Windsor area at about 4:44 p.m. EST. The Federal Aviation Administration had received 23 reports from aircraft pilots, first starting at 4:44 p.m. A seismograph 25 miles southwest of Detroit had recorded the shock waves created by the fireball as it passed through the atmosphere.

A 1967 article by two astronomers in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (JRASC) used the seismographic record to pinpoint the time of passage over the Detroit area to 4:43 p.m. In addition, they used photographs of the trail taken north of Detroit at two different locations to triangulate the trajectory of the object. They concluded that the fireball was descending at a steep angle, moving from the southwest to the northeast, and likely impacted on the northwestern shore of Lake Erie near Windsor, Canada.

The JRASC trajectory was at nearly right angles to a trajectory that would have taken the fireball in the direction of western Pennsylvania and Kecksburg. Thus, if the calculation was correct, this would rule out the fireball being involved in any way with what may or may not have happened in Kecksburg. The JRASC article negative result is often cited by skeptics to debunk the notion of a Kecksburg UFO crash.

However, a recent reexamination of the JRASC article points out that it contained no error analysis. The triangulation base used by the astronomers in their calculations was very narrow. As a result, even very small errors in determination of directions could result in a very different triangulated trajectory. It was found that measurement errors of slightly more than one-half degree would make possible a straight-line trajectory towards the Kecksburg area and a much shallower angle of descent than reported in the JRASC article. It was also pointed out that the photos used actually show the fireball trail becoming progressively thinner, indicating motion away from the cameras or in the direction of Pennsylvania. Had the trajectory been sideways to the cameras, as contended in the JRASC article, the trail would have remained constant in thickness. Thus, the contention that the JRASC article conclusively ruled out any connection between the fireball and the Kecksburg events is now open to question.

New Developments

2003: Sci Fi Channel reinvestigates case

<http://www.debunker.com/images2/KecksburgArtifact.jpg>In 2003, the Sci Fi Channel sponsored a scientific study of the area and related records done by the Coalition for Freedom of Information. The most significant finding of the scientific team was tree damage dating to around 1965 at the site where some eyewitnesses said they saw the object. This provided physical evidence that something had possibly landed in the woods there at the time, which would contradict the military's official story of finding nothing. (However, one of the scientists instead suggested ice damage to the trees.)

Further, no significant soil disturbance was found. This might support a controlled soft landing and rule out other proposed crash objects such as a meteorite or other large object passively striking the ground, which would have created a large crater and extensive damage.

There was also a push for NASA to release pertinent documents on the subject. Some 40 pages of these documents were released on November 1, 2003, but were unrevealing. (see External links) However, there are Air Force Project Blue Book documents indicating that a three-man team was being sent from an Air Force radar-installation near Pittsburgh to investigate the Kecksburg crash. They reported back to Blue Book that nothing was found.

2005: NASA changes story to "Russian satellite"

In December 2005, just before the Kecksburg crash 40th anniversary, NASA released a statement to the effect that they had examined metallic fragments from the object and now claimed it was from a re-entering "Russian satellite." The spokesman further claimed that the related records had been misplaced. According to an Associated Press story:

The object appeared to be a Russian satellite that re-entered the atmosphere and broke up. NASA experts studied fragments from the object, but records of what they found were lost in the 1990s.

"As a rule, we don't track UFOs. What we could do, and what we apparently did as experts in spacecraft in the 1960s, was to take a look at whatever it was and give our expert opinion," Steitz said. "We did that, we boxed (the case) up and that was the end of it. Unfortunately, the documents supporting those findings were misplaced."

This new explanation from NASA contradicts the official Air Force explanation in 1965 of the fireball being from a meteor and of nothing being found.

Furthermore, the claim contradicts what journalist Leslie Kean was told in 2003 by Nicholas L. Johnson, NASA's chief scientist for orbital debris. As part of the new Sci Fi investigation, Kean had Johnson recheck orbital paths of all known satellites and other records from the period in 1965. Johnson told Kean that orbital mechanics made it absolutely impossible for any part of the Cosmos 96 Venus probe to account for either the fireball or any object at Kecksburg. Johnson also stated there were no other manmade satellites or other objects that re-entered the atmosphere on that day.

Thus, this raises the question as to what "Russian satellite" could account for the debris that NASA now admits they examined. Furthermore, Kean and others deem it highly questionable that NASA could actually lose such records. As of December 2005, new court action was planned to get NASA to search more diligently for the alleged lost records.

Tourism

Unlike Roswell, New Mexico, Kecksburg does not seem to have fully exploited its UFO heritage. About the only monument to the UFO incident was a large bell-shaped metallic object made by Unsolved Mysteries to be used as a model for a story that they did on the incident. After the story aired, the show donated the model to the town, and it was placed upon a three legged wooden pedestal at the local fire department. The model was taken indoors for a time, however it is now back outside on a new metal pedestal lit with spot lights.

External links

- * www.unsolved.com
- * Summary of case
- * Copies of released NASA records
- * Summary and many links to Kecksburg articles
- * 2005 International UFO Reporter (IUR) article by journalist Leslie Kean on latest scientific finds
- * Skeptic Robert Sheaffer comments on the Kecksburg case
- * Greensburg Tribune-Review article on the UFO sighting

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