



Written by on November 11, 2010

Pentagon: “Mystery Missile” off California Was a Plane

Quoted in several news reports on November 10 and 11, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Col. Dave Lapan said that the elusive “mystery missile” filmed by a news crew off Los Angeles on November 8 was actually a vapor trail left by a jet aircraft.

“There is no evidence to suggest that this is anything else other than a condensation trail from an aircraft,” said Lapan.

[CBS News](#) reported a statement from Lapan that, “All of those factors together leave us pretty confident that this was a CONTRAIL caused by an aircraft.”



The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported: “Lapan said there was greater confidence that the vapor trail was created by an airplane because more information about the incident had been analyzed since late Tuesday.” [Other sources reported](#) that Lapan also said it seems unlikely that the vapor trail was left by a missile because over the past few days, the radar system had detected many planes but no missiles off the California coast.

The mystery began on Monday evening, November 8, when KCBS Los Angeles cameraman Gil Leyvas shot footage of the vapor trail over the Pacific Ocean from a news helicopter over Los Angeles. Leyvas said: “I saw a big plume coming up, rising from looked like beyond the horizon and it continued to grow.”

The British [Daily Mail](#) quoted John Pike, identified as a defense and aerospace expert who runs website GlobalSecurity.org, who is convinced the missile-like appearance of the contrail was merely an optical illusion.

Pike said: “This thing is so obviously an airplane contrail.... There’s a reason that they’re called rockets.”

The *Daily Mail* cited Pike’s opinion that the object recorded by the news crew “was moving too slow to be a missile, and footage showed light of varying intensity coming from the object, which suggested reflected light from the sun rather than light generated from an engine.”

Pike said that the footage looked like a missile launch because of an optical illusion that made the contrail appear as though it started on the ground and climbed straight up.

Those of us who have watched NASA missile launches from Cape Canaveral over the years have noticed a reverse of the same phenomenon, as spacecraft that are actually rising appear to be descending toward the Atlantic horizon as they head “down range.”

Kevin Martin, a meteorologist at the Southern Californian Weather Authority, told Examiner.com: “We see this often when the flights come at the right time, however, some people are just out to witness it at the right time.”



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[CBS News](#) also interviewed a man named Mick West, who runs a website devoted to Contrails (short for “condensation trails”), which are described in a [Wikipedia article](#) as “artificial clouds that are the visible trails of condensed water vapor made by the exhaust of aircraft engines.”

West said he knew the mystery object was an airplane the moment he saw the video, explaining: “It’s coming more or less straight towards you and it’s in level flight. It’s not climbing. It’s not descending. It’s probably around 35,000 feet.”

CBS asked West how can that be when the object appears to be climbing into space, leaving its trail behind?

“The same contrail that looks like a rocket — from the side it, just looks like a contrail passing by,” says West.

After viewing the video of the “mystery missile,” West provided an explanation.

“I’ve got a fairly good idea that it was U.S. Airways flight 808 from Hawaii,” he said. “Honolulu to Phoenix.”

CBS reported that a webcam photo of flight 808 taken Tuesday evening compared to a still frame from the mystery video shot Monday evening looked virtually identical.

Before these explanations started to surface, several theories had been advanced, including the possibility that the object was a missile launched from a submarine off the coast of California. Some theorists speculated that the missile was American, others that it might have been launched by an unfriendly nation such as China.

While a vigilant distrust of government is probably a good thing in a nation whose leaders have consolidated more and more power at the federal level, jumping to conclusions about government conspiracies concerning mysterious black helicopters, unidentified missiles off the California coast, and “chemtrails” does nothing to help the credibility of those attempting to expose *legitimate* conspiratorial power grabs. The latter are more likely to be culminated through the use of political and judicial processes than through mysterious objects invading our airspace.

In fact, given the similarity in appearance of the mysterious contrail off California to supposed “chemtrails,” this writer is very much surprised that proponents of the chemtrail theory did not jump all over this incident.

For those unfamiliar with “chemtrails,” we’ll quote from an article by Charles Scaliger, “[Real or Imagined? A Critical Review of the SPLC’s List of Conspiracies](#),” published here last August:

No. 1: Chemtrails

This, the notion that jet plane contrails are often in fact government planes seeding the skies with pathogens to lobotomize or even cull the American population, is one of the wackier beliefs in extremist circles. There is not a shred of evidence to suggest such a program is afoot. However, well-documented programs from decades past, in which the government did indeed test chemical and biological agents on human beings, sometimes without their knowledge or consent, certainly shows that the U.S. government, or elements within it, is capable of actions akin to what chemtrail true believers warn about.

Not having a keen interest in such exotic conspiracy theories, this one escaped me until fairly recently, so I did a little [online research](#) and indeed found several websites providing “[documentation](#)” to “prove” that government planes were poisoning us from aloft.



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However, being a lifelong aviation buff and having spent countless childhood hours studying many types of aircraft flying above, I failed to see any distinction between the so-called *chemtrails* and the common *contrails* (or “vapor trails” as we always called them back in the ‘50s) left behind by most jet planes. And not only jet planes, apparently, because an oldtimer who had served in England during World War II once told me that high altitude, piston-driven planes also left vapor trails behind them.

Putting this all into perspective, the lesson we might take from the mystery of the unidentified “missile” off the California coast is: Maintain a healthy skepticism, but get all the *facts* before jumping to conclusions.

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