

## Norway Spiral Light Mystery Explained, Norway Spiral Light Video

by the *Left Coast Rebel*

Anyone see the headline and picture at **Drudge**, the title being the *Mystery as Spiral Blue Light Display Hovers Above Norway?*

So I headed over to **UK's DailyMail** for the story. It seems that the light display appeared last night in northern Norway, a strange circling vortex looking phenomenon with a squiggly blue trail of light exiting it. Residents in the area couldn't believe their eyes when the spectacle began. At first a blue light came from nowhere and escalated up the sky then abruptly a giant spiral encircled the blue light and blanketed a good portion of the sky. Initially I thought that this story seemed to be a hoax, some ridiculous global warming charade spectacle to garner attention. On the other hand I was suspicious of some sort of goofy **Art Bell** sighting. Apparently it is not. I'll explaining, first some pictures of the scene from the **DailyMail**:

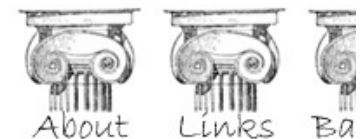


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Video shot by an onlooker:

Norwegians scrambled for an explanation, the first on the list being a connection to aurora borealis. Meteorologists denied such possibility. A Norwegian Defense official offered up the most possible scenario however - the other-worldly light display was brought on by a failed Russian rocket test launch. Researchers at the Tromso Geophysical Observatory in Norway agreed - the event was probably brought on by a missile launch gone awry, the spiral-vortex was most likely light being reflected off leaked rocket fuel.

Today the DailyMail confirmed new evidence supporting the missile hypothesis. It seems that a Bulava missile was launched from a Russian submarine in the White Sea but failed at the third stage. Russian military confirmed that they had fired a test missile but denied any connection to the light display. Scientists in Norway worked overtime to come up with a simulation/model of how the missile failure caused the amazing sight. Their findings show that the spirals in the sky were possibly created by the missile tumbling through air while leaking fuel. Picture of the model below:

[Grant Davies](#)


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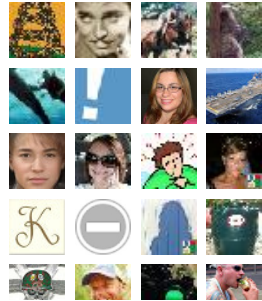
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Go [here](#) for more details of this story including a video of the simulation done by researchers and eyewitness account.

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**Bungalow Bill** December 10, 2009 at 4:09 PM

That's pretty crazy.

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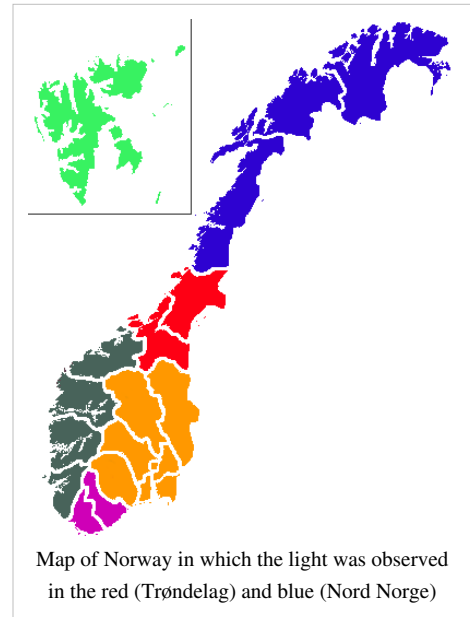


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# 2009 Norwegian spiral anomaly

The **Norwegian spiral anomaly of 2009**<sup>[1]</sup> appeared in the night sky over Norway<sup>[2]</sup> on 9 December 2009. It was visible from, and photographed from, northern Norway and Sweden. The spiral consisted of a blue beam of light with a greyish spiral emanating from one end of it. The light could be seen in all of Trøndelag to the south (the two red counties on the map to the right) and all across the three northern counties which compose Northern Norway,<sup>[3]</sup> as well as from Northern Sweden<sup>[1]</sup> and it lasted for 2–3 minutes.<sup>[3]</sup> According to sources, it looked like a blue light coming from behind a mountain, stopping in mid-air, and starting to spiral outwards.<sup>[4][5]</sup> A similar, though less spectacular event had also occurred in Norway the month before.<sup>[6]</sup> Both events had the expected visual features of failed flights of Russian SLBM RSM-56 Bulava missiles,<sup>[7][8]</sup> and the Russian Defence Ministry acknowledged shortly after that such an event had taken place on 9 December.<sup>[9]</sup>



## Initial speculations

Hundreds of calls flooded the Norwegian Meteorological Institute as residents wanted to know what they were seeing.<sup>[5][10]</sup> Norwegian celebrity astronomer Knut Jørgen Røed Ødegaard commented that he first speculated that it was a fireball meteor, but rejected that possibility because the light lasted too long.<sup>[5]</sup> He also pointed out the area over which the light had been observed was exceptionally large, covering all of Northern Norway and Trøndelag.<sup>[1]</sup> It was also suggested that it could have been a rare, never-before-seen Northern Lights variant.<sup>[10]</sup>

UFO enthusiasts immediately began speculating whether the aerial light display could be evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence proposing among other things that it could be a wormhole opening up, or somehow was linked to the recent high-energy experiments undertaken at the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Official Russian explanation

On 10 December, the Russian Ministry of Defence confirmed that a Bulava missile test had failed. According to a spokesman, "The missile's first two stages worked as normal, but there was a technical malfunction at the next, third, stage of the trajectory."<sup>[9]</sup> Russian defence analyst Pavel Felgenhauer stated to AFP that "such lights and clouds appear from time to time when a missile fails in the upper layers of the atmosphere and have been reported before ... At least this failed test made some nice fireworks for the Norwegians."<sup>[12]</sup> Prior to the Russian statement, Jonathan McDowell, an astrophysicist at the Harvard–Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, had already suggested that the unusual light display occurred when the missile's third stage nozzle was damaged, causing the exhaust to come out sideways and sending the missile into a spin.<sup>[7]</sup>

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- [12] UFO frenzy was Russian missile failure (<http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/newshome/6574426>), Yahoo!7 News

## External links



### External video

"中国气象台曝光20年前UFO绝密录像" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixLE3iuszbU>) (YouTube video). 29 April 2009. Retrieved 9 December 2009. (Video of similar event that happened in China in April 2009.) (**Chinese**)

"Spiral ejecta from tumbling rocket stage – simulation" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnIrx2MT85s>) (YouTube video). Retrieved 23 December 2009.

- Post on Russian site of official warning of a rocket test, prohibiting navigation in the area until 15 Dec. (<http://forum.flot.su/showthread.php?p=102072>)
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- New Russian missile failure sparks UFO frenzy ([http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20091210/sc\\_afp/russianorwaymilitarymissile](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20091210/sc_afp/russianorwaymilitarymissile))

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SEARCH

## Why the "Norway spiral" has the Russian government spooked

Maggie Koerth-Baker at 3:51 pm Thu, Jan 21



James Oberg at IEEE Spectrum has been following the "disaster-ridden" Russian missile program that lead to last month's spectacular spiral lights display over Norway. He offers some insight into the fascinating political story going on behind the scenes.

Designed to be the next-generation submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), Bulava has had 11 test flights since 2005--and has failed most of them, including the last three in a row. ... Beyond the threat to Russia's nuclear deterrent, the problems with the missile have become a major scandal for the Putin/Medvedev government. Hard-line Communist Party critics accuse them of letting the entire Russian military industrial complex decay to the point of danger.

IEEE Spectrum: [Russia's Ailing ICBM Program](#)

UPDATE: A commenter asked for information explaining how an ICBM could produce the phenomena seen in the video. [The Christian Science Monitor interviewed a rocket scientist](#) about this back in December. Their explanation includes a helpful video. [New Scientist also had a similar, but not quite as thorough, interview](#) with a different scientist, an astrophysicist.

---

Maggie Koerth-Baker is the science editor at BoingBoing.net. She writes a monthly column for The New York Times Magazine and is the author of [Before the Lights Go Out](#), a book about electricity, infrastructure, and the future of energy. You can find Maggie on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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hail\_diskordia

I'm not a scientist, so I don't know- how did a missile test produce a long-lasting, slowly rotating

spiral cloud with that much luminosity? And what is the long, blue conically-shaped light in the video, the contrail from the missile? I didn't see any explanation for any of this.



Maggie Koerth-Baker

Good questions. I've got some links on that and am updating the post to include them.



coaxial

The double spiral is simple. The rocket is moving away from you and begins to rotate as it begins to leak fuel. The outer spiral is a result of fuel leaking from the side, while the inner spiral is a result of the engines.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...>



prunk

i saw this a while ago and it made a lot of sense with the slowly expanding "white" spiral. however this same reasoning should stand for the "blue" spiral yet in the pictures, which look incredibly "re-touched" the "blue" spiral tends to get smaller as you would get closer to where the launch site would be.



Alex

The Dominion is invading! Someone must notify the Emissary at once!



speonjosh

Yeah, I'm with hail. I don't get it either - how does a missile test, even a failed one, produce that? Am I missing something. Is this a hoax?



Anonymous

There's no need to be CHEMTRAILS OMG TOXINS paranoid. Perhaps for a visual trace?



EH

that theme music sure isn't helping to dispel any "aliens" explanation.



Philbert42

See also [here](#) and [here](#). Phil Plait's "Bad Astronomy" blog is an excellent source for practically anything related to astronomy and/or critical thought.



hail\_diskordia

Those links explaining the phenomenon make it make lots more sense- thanks!



phisrow

Well, I for one am perversely glad that it isn't just my military/industrial complex that is choking on its own fat even as it sucks the life out of more valuable sectors of the economy.



zyodei

What I wonder, is if the rocket hypothesis is correct, is it possible to find any other even vaguely similar photos or videos?

20 minutes on youtube and google images turns up nothing. Can any of you find anything at all similar?

@7 Philbert42: you will notice that both of the videos you post don't resemble this in the slightest.

@9 davecotter: I read that article when it came out, and found it certainly an engaging read if not 100% compelling. I did find interesting this animation, of a similar spiral created by a HAARP type device (the article making the case that it was created by the similar EISCAT facility in scandinavia:

<http://wwwppd.nrl.navy.mil/wha...>

Initially, I also found this image compelling, of a power spike at the EISCAT facility right when the spiral occurred

<http://dynamite.eiscat.uit.no/...>

Until I realized that, if you look at any other day, they have power spikes all over the place and frequently operate at peak capacity, without causing crazy world eating spirals in the sky.

So, the rocket hypothesis certainly seems possible and even likely. But what I can't understand is

how it stayed in the sky statically for such a long amount of time. 12 minutes is really an awfully long time, especially glowing all the time. The youtube video presented in that CS video looks convincing, and would explain it perfectly if the spiral withdrew immediately after being created.

But what we must suppose, if this hypothesis is correct, is that the rocket stayed at exactly one place in the sky for 12 minutes without moving, discharging fuel in a perfectly spiral fashion. This seems to bugged belief, and thus that hypothesis falls short.



Anonymous

@zyodei

The vapor trail stayed in place for 12 minutes, not the rocket. Just like clouds, which is what it was, after all.



zyodei

Right, but what seems strange is how the spiral unwinds. A contrail slowly fades away over a period of maybe 60 seconds. It fades, and fades, and fades a bit more, and then finally it's gone.

If you watch a video of the Norway spiral disappearing, it disappears from the inside out very, very quickly without any visible fading. It instantly dissolves from the inside out

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...>

I may be wrong. This may simply be the manner that this type of contrail/exhaust trail dissipates (that is, all at once, after a very definite period of time). The rocket hypothesis IS possible, it just seems strange. I have read that this has happened many times in rocket launches, I am just curious if there are any photographs or videos of anything even remotely similar.



arkizzle / Moderator

zyodei,

Contrails are formed in the atmosphere, the ones we see are about 10kms up. According to the CSMonitor article, the rocket was around 100km. I'm guessing that inner atmosphere and outer atmosphere out-plumes are handled differently, wrt wind and air currents, etc.

/only a suggestion



davecotter

my comment got deleted, i do not know why.



@zyodei we know the video was taken from Tromsø, in Norway, facing southeast. if the spiral happened over the white sea as put forth by the press, that's around 970km away, right? simple math leads to a figure of about 32km/s as the velocity of the ripple in the sky. which is impossible, right? yeah. it's impossible. not to mention that everyone in northern sweden and finland and upper-left russia would have seen it. but we got exactly zero reports from those locations. so we MUST throw out that location. the nearest location, "just over the mountains" which seems more likely, that's only 9km away. however, that still makes the ripple going around 317m/s. still WAY TOO FAST to be possible. Right? Can someone please check the math?



Anonymous

zyodei: In an atmosphere, vented gas will slow down as it moves away from its emitter, because it is pushing against another fluid volume of matter. This is why airplane smoke/vapor trails can hang around for so long.

In space (or even near space), the vented material will just keep on going at the same speed with which it emerged.

The top of the spiral does seem to fade more quickly than the bottom, but I would bet that it's because the bottom of the spiral is hanging in much denser air, while the top is much closer to vacuum.



arkizzle / Moderator

"my comment got deleted, i do not know why."

It was the Government. In league with the Rooskies.



Guest

Comment removed.



zyodei

Right, you mean something like this?

<http://inlinethumb04.webshots....>

Not similar in the least.

The more I think about it, the more this rocket hypothesis seems like nonsense.

@15, 16: right, but that doesn't explain the most unusual aspect - the last several seconds, as this spiral uncoils. Instantaneously, moving tremendously quickly from the inside out, after hanging

out for 12 minutes.

@davecotter - I looked at the math when I read that article, and I couldn't find any fault with it. But, we don't know exactly how a

@23 - if it is photoshop, then a whole country is in on it, and it ranks as one of the most elaborate and successful hoaxes in recent memory. There are simply too many pictures, videos, and eyewitness accounts to chalk it up as a fake.

I mean, if you watch the original YouTube animation, it basically posits this: the rocket bursts a side valve, releasing a plume of exhaust out the side. Moving forward and spinning, this exhaust plume takes the shape of a cone, with an axis in the direction the rocket is heading. Looking at the cone dead on straight, so the axis would look like a point, the cone seems like a perfect spiral.

In theory, this is fine. But there are problems with it, even beyond those above.

For instance, for the cone to seem like a spiral, you would have to be looking at it dead on. If you were looking off center, the spiral would not be perfect. The majority of viewers would see it off center, and thus you would have many images of an imperfect spiral. And yet, you don't - all images I have seen show a perfect spiral, I haven't seen any of imperfect spirals. Was everyone standing in one place?

Even more compelling than this, if you look at a clear image of it, such as this one here:

<http://www.wired.com/wiredscie...>

you see a blue bolt coming from the right, terminating in the white spiral. The blue bolt, presumably, is the course of the rocket before this spiraling started. And yet, this blue bolt is clearly in a radically different direction to the axis of the cone - almost a 90 degree angle. Are we to presume that the rocket suddenly took a drastic turn in it's flight path, and then followed that radically different trajectory as straight as an arrow until it burned all of it's fuel? Is it a magical Russian "L shaped trajectory rocket?"

Unless these contradictions can be cleared up, and I don't see how they can, we can only presume that the "rocket" hypothesis fails and we should seek something different.

Good luck getting any popular media sources to ask these simple questions, that's not what they're there for.



davecotter

isn't anyone going to check the math? doesn't anyone \*mind\* that it seems we can \*prove\* this is not a contrail or vapor? you think it was 100km up in the air? do some trig, you'll figure out that the spirals were traveling at IMPOSSIBLE speeds.

or try this: given the known location the video was taken, the measurable distance from the horizon to the spiral, and the alleged position of the event (above the White Sea) and you can actually \*calculate\* the altitude. What do \*you\* come up with?





arkizzle / Moderator

davecotter, why don't you spell it out for me.

What numbers are you using? And for what?



ncinerate

I've seen at least one beautiful show in the sky from a missile (from an anti-ballistic missile test that succeeded actually, went outside early in the morning before sunrise and was treated to what appeared to be northern lights in central arizona).

It looked nothing like this of course (it was stationary, the result of a successful test). This video boggles my mind, the rate of spin, the illumination, I'm not sure what I think but I know I've never seen anything like it.



fergus1948

Uzumaki!!!



monstinho\_do\_biscoito

just my 2 cents, but this would be absurdly easy to fake, for example in after effects you could just track a distortion effect onto the moon to create this.



Anonymous

So to my understanding the big white spiral was caused by leaking rocket fuel as the rocket spun out of control? I can't be the only one who wants to recreate this to see if it's possible to make a big fire spiral in the sky.

Also as far as the failed missile being a cover story? A good cover story is supposed to be minimize the exposure and possible damage to credibility; the consistent failures of the Bulava ICBM's do the opposite of this.



arkizzle / Moderator

I don't have much, but: "And yet, this blue bolt is clearly in a radically different direction to the axis of the cone - almost a 90 degree angle."

It isn't 90°, it's foreshortened. If it was at ninety degrees the spiral would look like a sine wave,

but as it is we can see along the axis of the spiral.. (And its progressively wider conical shape makes it harder to read in terms of perspective).



zyodei

I think you miss my point. It is basically that the trajectories indicated by the blue trail and the white cone seem to be radically different.



Guest

Comment removed.



zyodei

That is certainly a very good explanation, and a good crack at this mystery.

However, to me, it doesn't take into account a couple things.

For one, twelve minutes. That's an awfully long time. Assuming a speed of, say, 1km a second (an uneducated guess), wouldn't the rocket be difficult to see with the naked eye, or at least visibly shrunk, by the end? On the contrary, it seems to stay quite static in the sky. At the very least, we would expect it to move laterally from our perspective, even slightly.

How could the blue part of the plume show such clear lateral movement and the white part stay absolutely still?

I suppose the white part could be caused by a warhead, that had a completely different trajectory from the missile. Does this make an sense? As it is, as nice as these computer animations look, this explanation just doesn't make sense to me.



ToothpasteSniffa

Bummer, I must remember the fine line that Maggie's humor runs. Because reading the headline I was hoping for some sort of X-Files story here. Instead, the Russian government is not spooked by the Norway spiral itself but by the too well known problems of their Bulava missile program. That's what I get for power watching The X-Files series on DVD recently.

@davecotter: Missiles fart. It's true!



cymk

I for one, have no idea what the Norway spiral was or is, but I highly doubt it is a missile.



dculberson

@Davecotter: ICBMs travel at about 7km/s. Why is 315m/s an 'impossible' speed?

@zyodei: I don't see the spiral disappearing "instantly." I see it receding rapidly, but that could be due to a lot of things. Not the least of which might be an explosion - it's reasonable to think that a malfunctioning ICBM might explode at the end of its travel.

As far as being on-axis or off, if the spiral is hundreds of kilometers up, you're going to see it pretty much on-axis from an enormous area. The further away it is, the more "on-axis" you will seem to be.



Anonymous

lol icbm's travel at 7km/s do they? thats 25,200 kmph you know. unlikely.



Anonymous

No, it's not unlikely at all:

<http://nuclearweaponarchive.or...>



Guesstimate Jones

It is uncharacteristic of the Russian government to publicize their military failures. It could have been a failed missile test, but then again, it could have been something else, and the "failed test" is just a cover story.

Maybe they have their own experimental program to deal with climate change. Maybe the Russians want to accelerate climate change...they have a lot real estate that is currently frozen permafrost, after all...



Brainspore

It is uncharacteristic of the Russian government to publicize their military failures.

It's not exactly like they could have kept it a secret after it was witnessed by thousands of people

and publicized all over the internet.



zyodei

As to your second point - yes, it's a good point, even a few hundred miles would still only be a degree or two off center. Still, why didn't people report seeing this in, say, northern russia?

As to the first point - the "receding rapidly" is 12 minutes after the effect began. So the missile exploding does not explain this.

It's similar to a plane, flying across the sky, leaving a contrail..and the contrail waiting ten minutes, before rapidly disappearing, in the same speed and direction of the jet. It's anomalous.



davecotter

if you want to check the actual math, go to this site to see where it came from. yes you can ignore the hooey, but look carefully at the math and see what you think:

<http://divinecosmos.com/index....>

skip right to the part that starts with "IRREFUTABLE SCIENTIFIC PROOF IT COULD NOT BE A MISSILE"



Anonymous

I live in Southern California and over the decades I have witnessed dozens of missile tests from Vandenberg Air Force Base. No two of them were ever the same and the vapor trails stay in the upper atmosphere for 10 minutes or more.



Guesstimate Jones

Right. But that doesn't mean that the story they're telling us is the real story...



Brainspore

Nor is there any reason to believe that it isn't the real story.

I'm satisfied that all the independent rocket scientists who have weighed in on the matter see no problem with the official explanation, especially since nobody else has provided an alternate explanation that makes any damn sense. If either of those things change I'll reconsider my position.



zyodei

Now, it's a good idea to listen to the experts, to give their opinions credibility and careful consideration.

But you should not believe them solely because they are spoken by experts, that's when it moves away from the area of science.

For instance, almost no professional economists, folks who have spent their whole adult lives analyzing the economy, predicted the derivatives crash - something many amateur commentators predicted years off. Now, this same group, with very little dissent, is proposing the same keynesian nonsense that worked so fabulously in the '30s and 70s.

The impulse to seem "credible" and to fit your statements into the generally accepted framework can be strong.

So, we should give the opinions of the rocket experts respect, and consider them objectively. However, I don't see how they explain all of the factors observed here, particularly the rocket's apparently severe change of direction, moving laterally across the sky while emitting the blue exhaust and straight away from the observer while emitting the white spiral.

I invite anyone still reading this thread to give your best explanation of how this effect could be created by a rocket.



Brainspore

With all due respect, I don't think that it's fair to compare economists' track record of predicting the future to rocket scientists' track record of accurately modelling the laws of physics.



zyodei

Touche!



davecotter

quote:

"I'm satisfied ... with the official explanation, especially since nobody else has provided an alternate explanation"

is nobody paying attention to the fact that it can easily be proven that the official explanation is physically impossible??? why are you glossing over this??



Brainspore

is nobody paying attention to the fact that it can easily be proven that the official explanation is physically impossible??? why are you glossing over this??

Because UFO nuts are the ones telling me the explanation is physically impossible, while physicists and astronomers like [Phil Plait](#) are the ones telling me that it is a perfectly plausible explanation.



Anonymous

It's the Russian government...just about any information they release is suspect. It could have been part of an atmospheric or military experiment involving a missile that they don't want to cop to, for any number of reasons, so they just call it a failed test.



Anonymous

It appears that the will to believe in is strong in this blog's readers.

Images of the spiral from other locations which include the horizon CLEARLY show the uninterrupted and unmistakable smoke trail of a rocket launch.

No matter how much you want to believe otherwise.



davecotter

y r nt thnkng fr yrslf. dd y d th mth? dd y vn d th thght xprmnt? dd y vn bthr t flw th lnk s y cn t lst prtnd tht Y knw wht y'r tlkng bt? w cn sy tht smbdy ls knws wht thy'r tlkng bt ll w wnt, bt tht jst mks s shp.



Brainspore

you are not thinking for yourself. did you do the math?

No, because I don't have a background in physics. The difference between you and I is that I know I'm not an expert in physics, which is why I generally defer to people who are experts in their fields on matters like "is this explanation consistent with the laws of nature?"

But hey, if you'd rather trust the math skills of a guy [who peddles UFO conspiracy books on "Coast to Coast AM"](#) then be my guest.





Guesstimate Jones

It's the Russian government...any information they voluntarily release about their missile program is suspect.

The "failed missile" story could easily be a cover, for something else, possibly weather-modification or missile-defense experiments, that they don't want to admit to.



Brainspore

It's the Russian government...any information they voluntarily release about their missile program is suspect.

And if the Russians' explanation was the sole reason to believe that this effect was created by a rocket then that would be an excellent point. But all they did was confirm what most experts already suspected by that point, so the only reason to doubt the explanation is if you think the Russian government is incapable of telling the truth.

The "failed missile" story could easily be a cover, for something else, possibly weather-modification or missile-defense experiments, that they don't want to admit to.

Talk about an unnecessarily complicated explanation. Why couldn't it just be a secret weather-modification missile or missile-defense missile?



davecotter

y'r still ctng lk shp. 'm nt physcs mjr thr bt cn d trg, nd sspct tht y'r cpbl f trg s wll. t sms y dd'n vn \*lk\* t th mth, thrws y wldn't b syng wht y'r syng.

ys, y shld gnr th hhh, s ny gd skptc wll. 'm skng y t mk n nfrmd dcsn. m NT trstng th mth f smn ls, dd my wn mth. d nt thnk tht y dd.



Brainspore

I don't need to look at the math to see that the two possible explanations are as follows.

1. Every respected rocket scientist and physicist in the world who has weighed in on the matter is part of some sinister conspiracy to cover up "the truth."
2. A handful of conspiracy theorists who OPENLY ADMIT that they aren't experts in physics have more knowledge of the laws of nature than the people who have studied and taught the subject all their adult lives.



jgreene

I refuse to accept the hypothesis that the spiral was the result of a failed Russian Submarine Missile test.

The colors and spiral were so PERFECT that they have never been seen in nature nor can be replicated theoretically by any known means.

We are dealing with something NEW. What? I don't know.



davecotter

"I don't need to look at the math"

no, you don't. but it means you don't have a logical argument either, just an emotional one.



Antinous / Moderator

Okay, between the rudeness and the endless repetitiveness, you're done.



JimO

No question this was weird and unearthly -- the main advantage I have is that I've been seeing and recording and analyzing these very kinds of eyewitness stories for decades. Just because they are NOT on youtube, or on the UFO websites, doesn't mean they haven't been happening.

Davecotter: "It's impossible. not to mention that everyone in northern sweden and finland and upper-left russia would have seen it. but we got exactly zero reports from those locations. so we MUST throw out that location."

This is indeed one of the first questions you should ask, but then, you have to know how to get the answers and not assume that YOUR own world-view marks the limits of human knowledge. First, you check cloud cover -- get the local metsat images (IR if at night) to determine cloud cover -- and here you find there was almost continuous cover over most of Scandinavia. Then, you check 'degree of twilight' -- how bright was the sky? You find that populated regions to the east, such as Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, were approaching full daylight, just short of actual sunrise. So the limited regions of visibility were not puzzling.

The dynamics of the spiral material are also absolutely beyond the range of a thousand generations of human experience, so do not be alarmed that your instinctive eye-brain image recognition firmware fails. Use your intellect. Realize that the spiral consists of discrete dots of material, each radiating straight outwards from the point of origin -- like water from a rotating lawn sprinkler. It is NOT a solid coil that turns mechanically and then disappears piece-wise -- it is created at the molecular level and each dot dims out at the same rate. Measuring the speed

requires measuring the angular size and rate first -- which most groundside guessers never even try.

I'm still not convinced the spiral is a manifestation of the failure, although it could be -- or it may be a 'feature', not a 'bug', of the missile. Solid-fuel missiles launch with a preset amount of fuel and burn time -- to offload excess impulse (for shorter than full-range flights, such as this one was), at some point the thrust core is vented sideways to dump unwanted velocity-gain. For stability, the upper stage can be deliberately spun. Lo, the spiral.

Spirals have been seen from Soviet-era missiles that made successful flights. They are also seen in orbit from fuel dumps from tumbling stages. Just because people on the Kola Peninsula didn't have camcorders in their pockets twenty years ago is no evidence they weren't seeing similar phenomena -- they were, and often sketched spirals afterwards. See my home page.

The world is even more wondrous and astounding than we thought when we woke up this morning. Events such as these drive the point home again and again.



Guesstimate Jones

Antinous, was booting davecotter really necessary? I didn't find his comments to be rude, or repetitive.



UncommonSense

My 6-year-old put it as well as I could. "I don't know what that is. It just freaks me out."



Guesstimate Jones

The Russian government is certainly capable of not telling the truth, when it suits their interest not to (like when telling the truth would call into question the efficacy of their nuclear deterrent).

That is not the same thing as saying I think they are incapable of telling the truth. And the "truth" in this case, doesn't make them look very good, so that is why I question the official explanation.

"Why couldn't it just be a secret weather-modification missile or missile-defense missile?" Well, yes, that's what I was getting at. That would be a rational, scientific explanation, too, right? Complicated, yes, but not entirely implausible...since when is anything done by governments simple?

Given the "nothing to see here" vibe of the media coverage, naturally the conspiratorial-minded are going to seize on it, and nothing you or I or anybody else says is likely to disabuse them of that sensibility, such as it is...the whole incident is shaping up to be the Roswell of the 21st century...



**Brainspore**

I must confess that I'm not really sure what point you're trying to make any more.

If you're saying "I think it's possible that there are details about this rocket launch that were not publicized by the Russian government" then I'd say "almost certainly." If you're saying "this was not created by any kind of rocket" then I'd say you're probably a bit too conspiracy-minded.

I don't get the "nothing to see here" vibe you claim is in the news coverage, more along the lines of "that looked really cool, but now there's not much more we can say about it."

**Rich Keller**

And Russia wants to save us all from the threat of Apophis. I hope they use different mathematicians for that project.

<http://www.spacedaily.com/page...>

**Chris Owens**

Have a look at an onboard camera from a U.S. rocket launch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...>

Pay particular attention from 2:00 to 2:30

I've seen rocket launches before, and an interesting things happens when they reach a certain point in their trajectory where the air becomes very thin. When it is in the 'thick' air, the exhaust hides some of the brightness of the engine, and stays in a rough column, resisted and slowed by the surrounding air.

Then, with surprising (to me) abruptness, the column ends, and the rocket engine is surrounded by a corona of light. Without the thick air pushing back, the exhaust streaming out of the engine can dissipate much more quickly and thoroughly.

That would explain the spiral nearer to the ground and then the disc farther up. The unconstrained gasses would spiral out much farther.

"But," you may ask, "what about the fact that the exhaust is lit by an eerie blue glow?"

Well, that part is probably aliens, but I think we've now reduced them in danger from beings that put on a mysterious but apparently-harmless light show to beings that can only take other people's mysterious light shows and make them GLOW.

**Anonymous**

The Russkies could Fed-Ex their bombs.



Guesstimate Jones

Let me spell it out for you, as concisely as possible: I think the spiral was produced by some kind of rocket, but I don't necessarily buy the explanation that it was a failed Russian submarine ICBM launch.



JimO

There's no question the images were weird and unearthly, but that's what spaceflight events often look like. Different missiles, different trajectories, different flight results, different illumination -- these create a range of visual effects much broader than people who think "I've-seen-a-missile-this-isn't-one" realize. When you try to use earthside cues such as angular size to 'guess' the range to an unknown-scale apparition, you can easily be misled by time-tested instincts.

When you realize the object is flying far away, high, and away from you with a slight drift to the left, the three different types of successive trails seen in the image become three different manifestations of a straightforward rocket ascent through different layers of the atmosphere. First, in lower, denser air, a white cloud, rapidly sheared by different wind directions at different altitudes, is left to linger until it dissipates 10-15 minutes later. Higher up, expelled burnt propellant also floats but slowly follows ballistic paths trailing the rocket, then settles back towards Earth. In vacuum, material ejected sideways to the direction of motion paints a spiral-shaped cloud as the particles fly along more-or-less even with the originating rocket stage.

Sometimes the sideways-strewn material is exhaust plumes from a tumbling rocket, or an excess fuel dump once a stable orbit has been reached [not in this case]. But it can also be a part of a nominal ascent, perhaps stage separation and fuel-settling burns, or thrust-dumping side-port plumes for a solid fueled missile. These spiral formations have been seen in space from time to time over Russia, China, and even the US, over past decades -- sadly, folks then didn't carry such nifty camcorders, but they did sometimes draw what they saw and I have a large collection I probably ought to post on my home page. That might go a long way in satisfying the question, "Why hasn't this ever been seen before?", which is really a false assertion disguised as a trick question.

Open your eyes and your mind, and you'll perceive the amazing reality of these images -- a manmade rocket launch event.



zyodei

Hmmm...yes, that first image you link does seem to be conclusive. I wonder, what magazine is that from?

And, I guess this is a question for the mods..when I click on JimO's name, I see he has posted three comments, one of which is a link to various images, the first of which is very similar to the Norway spiral. But I can't see that post anywhere on this thread..why is that? Is it a bug in the system, or some moderation against links to uploading sites? It's quite confusing...



JimO

Here are some photos and drawings of similar shapes in the sky over NW Russia:

Finland, October 25, 1983

<http://www.quickfilepost.com/d...>

Russian magazine, 1990s

<http://www.quickfilepost.com/d...>

Arkhangelsk newspaper, 1991

<http://www.quickfilepost.com/d...>

Pilot's notebook, September 1984

<http://www.quickfilepost.com/d...>

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