

Last September, reporters at a Japanese press conference were startled by an offhand comment from a mild-mannered man named Akira Hirano. Without even being asked, Hirano announced, "We frequently see unidentified objects in our skies. We are quietly investigating them." A clamor went up in the conference lounge of Tokyo's New Otani Hotel, for this remark differed sharply from official statements by the Japanese government—and Lt. Gen. Akira Hirano just happens to be Chief of Staff of the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF).

The uproar seemed to jolt Hirano. Normally a relaxed figure with a quiet sense of humor, he became flustered. Abruptly, he shifted to the subject he'd intended to discuss—Japan's plan to purchase the U. S. F-15 fighter.

Next day, when I telephoned Hirano's office to confirm his remark, I was given a traditional Japanese apology, "*Moosiwake wa zen zen gozaimasen* (There is no excuse)." The Japanese Air Defense Commanding General, it seemed, had "misspoke." When Dr. Hachiro Kubota, editor of

Cosmos magazine and a leading authority on UFOs, tried to follow up, Hirano's staff denied that the general had talked about investigating flying saucers.

Why the sudden about-face?

UFOs are a touchy subject in Japan. Since 1974, rumors have been rife in Tokyo that mysterious intruders are harassing military bases, tangling with jet fighters, and endangering lives. UFO activity around military installations has increased dramatically. In one instance, a UFO actually "shot down" an armed Japanese jet!

As in the U. S., authorities seem concerned that public knowledge of UFO activity might lead to panic. So Japan's defense chiefs are doing exactly what our Pentagon has done since the 1950s—investigate UFOs in secret while denying it in public.

"We're afraid there could be trouble," says a Tokyo official who spoke to me privately on the condition he not be named. "Nobody knows whether UFOs are aliens from another planet, or what. If they're hostile, we want to have a full explanation before we upset the general populace..."

The "trouble" has already begun.

It started on the night of June 9, 1974, when two F-4EJ Phantom jets were scrambled from Hyaku-ri, near Tokyo, to intercept an intruder. One of the jets aborted almost immediately with mechanical problems. Alone, the second jet hurtled skyward in pursuit of an unidentified object.

An hour later, a man was dead, a \$2.7 million airplane had been transformed into twisted wreckage, and the survivor was shaken to the marrow of his bones by an incident which still—three years later—terrifies him.

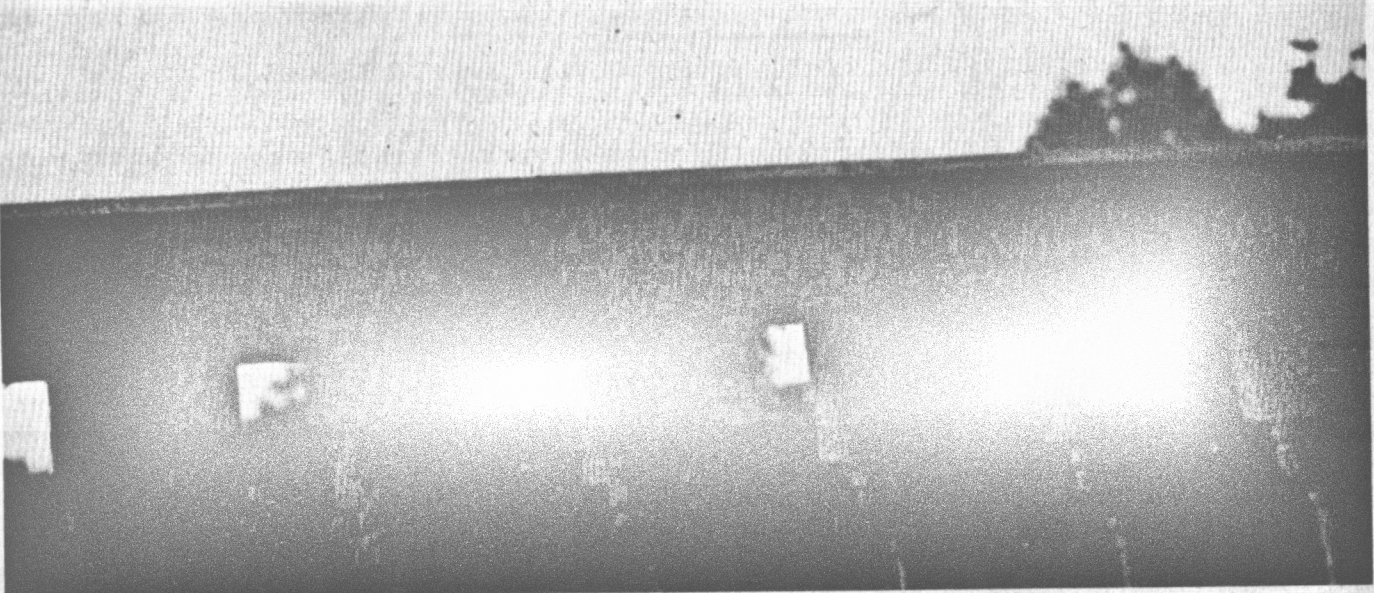
I talked to this survivor. Grim-faced, 40-year-old Maj. Shiro Kubota met me in a coffee house in Tokyo shortly after the incident. Later, Kubota retired from active duty rather than heed orders to remain silent about the death of his closest friend, 42-year-old Lt. Col. Toshio Nakamura. By the time I interviewed him for a second time last September, Kubota was bitter—convinced that authorities are covering up an encounter with a hostile craft from beyond Earth. He remains credible, and his memory is vivid.

"We thought at first we were going up to intercept a Soviet bomber, of the type which sometimes tests our north-

Frightened witnesses. Fighters scrambled to intercept unidentified radar blips. Leaks from military leaders that we are not alone. These are just a few of the elements to

JAPAN'S SECRET UFO PROBE

By Richard Draper



ern air defenses. After Toshio got us airborne, our Ground Control Intercept (GCI) explained to us that we were going upstairs to check out a bright-colored light reported by dozens of observers and showing on radar. Several minutes later, we broke out of the clouds and leveled off at 30,000 feet on a clear, moonless night. That was when we spotted the light a few miles ahead.

"Even at first, I felt that this disc-like, red-orange object was a flying craft, made and flown by intelligent beings. It appeared to be about 10 meters (39.5 feet) in diameter, with square-shaped marks around its side which may have been windows or propulsion outlets. Toshio aimed us straight toward it and, as it grew larger in our gun sight, it dipped into a shallow turn, as if sensing our presence.

"I remembered the stories I'd heard from other Japanese pilots who'd encountered UFOs. Always, these men had spoken privately out of earshot of superior officers, and in hushed syllables. We have a legend of an ancient creature, the *inu-ningen* (man-dog) which, some say, was actually an astronaut who landed in Japan 6,000 years ago. Our present-day reluctance to talk about UFOs is based on unwillingness to get into trouble. . .

"Toshio armed our 20-mm cannon and closed in on the UFO.

"Suddenly, the object reversed direction and shot straight at us. I cried out. Toshio threw the stick to the left and forced us into a sudden, violent dive.

"The glowing red UFO shot past—missing us by inches. Then it made a sharp turn and came at us again!

"This was a stunning reversal of roles. We were supposed to be the hunter—prepared to shoot at the UFO if it acted hostile. We became the

hunted. The UFO began making rapid, high-speed passes at us, drawing closer and closer. Several times, the strange object narrowly missed us. While I reported to GCI by radio, Toshio struggled desperately to evade each new onslaught. . .

Kubota never really believed the UFO would collide with his Phantom jet—until it happened.

There was a gut-wrenching crash. The night exploded in Kubota's face. Toshio Nakamura cried, "Eject, eject!"

Kubota went out of the aircraft first. He remembers the loud blast as the Phantom's ejection seat hurled him into the night.

His chute snapped open. Shaken, he scanned the night sky. The UFO had vanished—or disintegrated. The F-4EJ was spinning out of control, in flames. To his relief, Nakamura's chute popped open above him to the right.

But Nakamura's parachute was on fire!

To this day, no one knows what happened when airplane and UFO collided together in midair. The plane's wreckage was recovered, but what about the UFO? No one will say.

Was this an actual fight—perhaps the first in history—between a man-made aircraft and an alien craft. Japanese Air Defense authorities reportedly are into their fourth year of investigating the incident, but have released no findings. Officials will say only that F-4EJ serial number 17-8307 was downed, and Nakamura killed, after a collision with "an aircraft or object unknown."

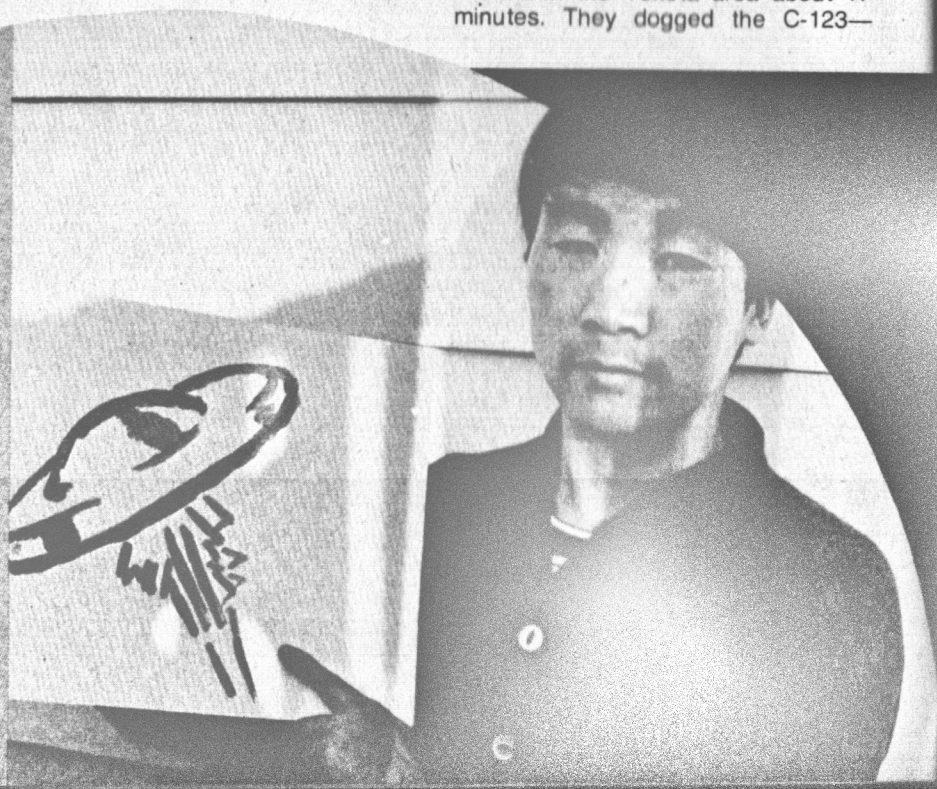
The alarming fact about that night's F-4EJ loss is that it represents only one example of military-related UFO inci-

dents in Japan in recent years. In fact, an official in Japan's Defense Agency told me that military officers are "on edge" about the hostile behavior of UFOs. Each of the following incidents has been reported in the Japanese press and is known to the general public:

• On Apr. 11, 1975, four F-104J Starfighter jets from a base on the northern island of Hokkaido were "buzzed" by four saucer-like objects at 26,000 feet over open water. A pilot reported that the strange craft matched the jets' maneuvers. The UFOs gave off the traditional molten-red color, suggesting that their metal surfaces may have been heated by entry into the Earth's atmosphere. Japanese television station NHK carried a brief account of the incident, and suggested that the UFOs may have been hostile, but authorities have provided no explanation.

• On the nights of Sept. 11-12, 1975, and again on Sept. 14-15, UFOs were spotted all over western Japan. Dozens of people telephoned police and military authorities to report brightly colored lights cavorting through the skies, alone and in groups numbering up to 12. Luminescent, reddish-gold colored saucers were seen near the U.S. Marine Corps airbase at Iwakuni. Others "latched on" to a Japan Air Lines DC-8, arriving on a routine flight from Hong Kong. The *Mainichi Daily News* quoted DC-8 pilot Tetsushi Toda as saying that reddish-orange lights hovered off his wing tip for more than 20 minutes.

• On Dec. 1, 1976, a U. S. Air Force C-123 cargo plane about to land at Yokota, near Tokyo, was chased by the ubiquitous reddish-orange lights. The UFOs were tracked on radar and remained in the Yokota area about 17 minutes. They dogged the C-123—



terrifying its crew—for more than 10 minutes. I talked to a crew member who'd been instructed to remain silent about the incident. "It was hairy," he said. He believed U.S. and Japanese authorities were cooperating in both an investigation and a cover-up.

Other military incidents keep occurring in Japan, and it's generally known that records are being maintained at the Defense Agency—under lock and key.

An anthropologist at Tokyo National University, Dr. Takafumi Narahara, believes there may be more to the Japan UFO story than even some UFO researchers suspect. Dr. Narahara notes the legend of an *inu-ningen*, or man-dog creature (see "Japan's Man-Dog Mystery," UFO REPORT, Fall 1974) which suggests that Japan was explored by extraterrestrial creatures just after the dawn of history. "There is strong reason to believe that 'ancient astronauts' have been here, and are now returning again." Narahara feels the extraterrestrials may be checking up on the progress made by mankind over the past few thousand years.

Despite an apparent government campaign to ridicule their efforts, private researchers in Japan are actively probing the appearance of UFOs around military installations. They feel they're close to unraveling the mystery, and intend to go ahead—even if it means embarrassing the government.

The most active private research group is that of *Cosmos* editor Hachiro Kubota (he is not related to F-4EJ pilot Shiro Kubota). A desire to learn whether UFOs are hostile or not is the driving force behind Kubota's Japan Get Acquainted Program (JGAP), a group of researchers who investigate UFOs and are also inquiring into a

possible link to mental telepathy. Kubota feels that if alien creatures are spying on Uapanese military bases from the skies, they may be extremely advanced practitioners of telepathy.

Another private research group, Saucers In Japan, is headed by a Todai University physicist, 41-year-old Dr. Ichiro Sunabashi. This group holds monthly meetings at different locales in the Japanese islands and maintains a computerized, central records file covering 750 UFO sightings which, after at least preliminary investigation, could not be explained away.

At least one active UFO researcher in Japan is an American. John Fenton is an ex-GI who settled in Yokohama and works as a translator. While in the Air Force in 1969, Fenton spotted a molten-red light flying through the night sky which seemed to him to defy explanation—and his interest was sparked.

Mild-mannered, bespectacled 31-year-old Jack Fenton has interviewed dozens of UFO witnesses and corresponds with UFO buffs around the world. He shares a widespread view that Tokyo authorities know much more than they're saying.

It was Fenton who uncovered an account of a UFO buzzing a jetliner carrying Vice President Walter Mondale!

"I'm just interested in airplanes and I asked around," he says.

Fenton interviewed a U. S. Air Force crew member of a VC-137C jet of the 89th Military Airlift Wing—the red-carpet version of the Boeing 707, known as "Air Force One" when the President is on board. This aircraft brought Mondale to Tokyo on Jan. 29, 1977 for meetings with Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. "The crew member claimed that a dome-like, glowing red object stalked the VC-137C for several minutes while it circled to land at Tokyo's Haneda Airport." Fenton showed me a notarized affidavit, signed by the crew member, giving his name, rank, serial number.

Serious researchers have long believed that Prime Minister Fukuda personally authorized the Japanese government's hush-hush investigation into UFOs. Accounts like Fenton's, however, give ammunition to critics who

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research at the San Antonio-based Mind Science Foundation.

Braud tested 10 experienced practitioners of transcendental meditation. Each subject was individually tested by Dr. Braud and his assistant, Janice Hartgrove, to see if they could use psychokinesis to disrupt the function of a random-number generator. (This generator has an internal oscillator that can switch to either of two positions. For convenience, these positions are labeled +1 and -1. The generator sometimes oscillates a thousand times per second. Fifty percent of the time it will switch to the +1 position, and 50 percent of the time to the other.) Each subject was instructed to meditate for 20 minutes while just keeping in mind that they were being tested for PK at the same time. While the subjects meditated, Braud activated the generator. He instructed half of his meditating subjects to try to make the generator oscillate to the +1 position more than 50 percent of the time, while he had his other experimental subjects

try to influence the scoring on the -1 position. Braud then tested 10 non-meditators with these same procedures. Unfortunately, he found no difference in the scoring between the two groups.

Perhaps it is ironic, in light of the fact that none of Braud's TMers did well on this simple psychokinesis test, that in May 1977 the founder of the TM movement, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, announced that his techniques can help meditators learn how to levitate. As reported in the June 13th issue of *Newsweek*, the Maharishi's biographer and a spokesman for the TM movement, Robert Oates, has even announced to the press that several TM teachers have already mastered this rare ability. To date, though, not one single TMer has publicly levitated or been photographed while floating in the air. The Maharishi, they say, doesn't want them to do it in public!

In short, whether or not meditation and

solicited reports from the public on UFOs. "This was in the late 1950s and we were, frankly, imitating your own Project Blue Book. But we were deluged. Interest was so great, and so many reports poured in, that we were unable to separate the 'good' reports from the *garakuda* (junk). We had to give up. It simply was not working."

General Komura would not disclose any action being undertaken today by intelligence or defense personnel. Asked about the report of saucers harassing the Mondale plane, however, he grinned and refused to deny it. Nor would he rule out a possibility that investigating UFOs "might be in our national interest." He dropped a hint which seemed to me to tell a tale:

"We cooperate very closely with your government. Remember how we invited your Foreign Technology Division officials here to examine the MIG-25 jet we received from a defecting Soviet pilot? The Foreign Technology Division is the outfit under which Project Blue Book once operated. We have cooperated many times on other issues, and visitors from another planet would certainly be a legitimate subject for inquiry."

Occasional leaks. Fragmentary hints. A general's grin. Circumstantial evidence.

It's not a happy situation. But on the UFO scene in Japan, it's all we have. And it seems enough to compel us to draw three conclusions:

First, responsible people in positions of authority are concerned about UFOs harassing military bases in Japan. And these persons have not ruled out the likelihood that UFOs are hostile intruders from another world.

Yoga can help a person develop PK abilities is still an open issue. There certainly has not been nearly enough laboratory work done into the question, nor has anyone tried to determine if only certain types of meditative practices seem linked to psychic development. In this respect, such practices as Mantric Yoga, (the practice of chanting a phrase over and over again) and Kundalini Yoga have sometimes been specifically used by Yogic practitioners for psychic development. Swami Rama, for instance, used a form of Mantric Yoga during Green's PK test. Allegedly, there even exist "secret" mantras which, when chanted, are supposed to make PK phenomena happen.

Research into the relationship between meditation and psychokinesis is only in its infancy. Hopefully, future research—both with gifted Yogis and Sunday-morning meditators—will shed more light on this mystery. Until that time, however, it is up to each of us to experiment ourselves and make our own discoveries. ★

Second, Japanese authorities are investigating UFOs and, apparently for fear of alarming the public, are doing so in secret.

Third, there is a cover-up going on.

That brings us full-circle, to the man who deviated from Japanese policy by speaking out on UFOs at a press conference—Air Defense Chief Lt. Gen. Akira Hirano.

Hirano, 56, another World War II veteran and Japan's top air officer, is certainly no crackpot. He is, in fact, a dedicated and studious man, particularly skilled in the ways of government, who would be exceedingly unlikely to make an accidental slip-up before an audience of journalists. Since there has been no follow-up on his admission of quiet UFO investigation—and it was not possible to interview him—there can be only one conclusion: Hirano's comment was a "trial balloon," aimed at testing the public's reaction to news of extraterrestrial visitors.

A similar "trial balloon" was floated in Washington recently—an official hint that President Carter is reviewing secret documents on UFO activity and plans major disclosures soon. It's possible that leaders in Washington, Tokyo, and other capitals urgently recognize that the UFO mystery is too important to keep under wraps, and that some kind of announcement will be coming soon from several governments, including that of Japan.

If so, a mystery that all mankind deserves to be aware of may finally be free of the shroud of governmental secrecy. ★

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would like to discredit UFO research. "Only one witness, at least only one who'll talk. No corroboration. No photos. That's murder for us," another UFO researcher told me. "Personally, I believe the story. But it's not like dozens of thoroughly documented, corroborated incidents we could use to force the government out into the open."

Poking around in government offices, I found a tentative confirmation of the Mondale UFO story, as well as evidence that Japanese authorities know more about UFOs than they'll publicly admit.

A jovial, broad-faced Defense Agency officer, Maj. Gen. Hideki Komura, proved the highest-ranking Japanese official who would speak with me on the subject. Komura, 55, looks more like a sumo wrestler than a military man—a hulking, 310-pound giant who shot down four American planes during World War II and today is an advisor to Prime Minister Fukuda's Cabinet Research Organization (CRO), the Japanese equivalent of the CIA. "We are aware of the rumors," he told me when we met at Tokyo's Sanno American Club. "You will excuse me for my point of view? I think you should find out about secret investigations in Washington before turning to Tokyo..."

Komura told me that the Japanese Air Self-Defense force had once openly