

UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA ARCHIVE · AVIATION WITNESS SERIES

## XII

# The O'Hare Airport Sighting

*United Airlines Employees Report a Stationary Metallic Disc Over Gate C17, Chicago O'Hare International Airport — November 7, 2006*

DATE	LOCATION	WITNESSES	FAA RADAR
November 7, 2006	Gate C17, O'Hare International Airport	12+ United Airlines employees	Not captured – system limitations
OFFICIAL RESPONSE	WEATHER		
No investigation	Overcast, low cloud		

XI.01 // BACKGROUND

## *O'Hare International Airport*

O'Hare International Airport in Chicago is one of the busiest commercial airports in the world. On November 7, 2006, at approximately 4:15 pm local time, the airport's airspace over Concourse C was observed by at minimum twelve United Airlines employees — ramp workers, supervisors, and management personnel — to contain something that had no business being there.

The sighting lasted approximately five minutes. The object — described consistently as a dark, metallic disc, approximately six to twenty-four feet in diameter, with no visible lights or

markings — was stationary above Gate C17 at an altitude of approximately 1,900 feet. It did not move. The airport's normal operations continued around it.

## XI.02 // THE SIGHTING *What Airport Staff Reported*

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Multiple United Airlines ground crew members independently observed the object while working on or near Gate C17. At least one supervisor was among the witnesses. The object was metallic in appearance, did not rotate, emitted no sound audible above the ambient airport noise, and remained stationary. After approximately five minutes, it accelerated vertically through the overcast cloud layer above, leaving a circular hole in the clouds through which blue sky was briefly visible before the hole closed.

*"It was a disc, maybe six feet across. It was just sitting there above the gate. Perfectly still. Then it shot straight up through the clouds and punched a hole right through them."*

— UNITED AIRLINES RAMP WORKER, O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, NOVEMBER 7, 2006; IDENTITY WITHHELD AT REQUEST

The cloud punch-through — a circular aperture in an overcast layer created by the object's departure — was observed by multiple witnesses and was consistent across independent accounts. It is the most physically specific corroborating detail in the case: a hole in clouds is a phenomenon with identifiable characteristics, and its presence was noted by witnesses who did not compare notes at the time of observation.

## XI.03 // THE OFFICIAL NON-RESPONSE *The FAA, United Airlines, and the Press*

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United Airlines employees who wished to report the incident were told by supervisors to file no report. No formal report was filed through airline channels. The Federal Aviation Administration stated that its radar system had not detected the object, which is consistent with the object's apparent stationary position: O'Hare's radar was calibrated for aircraft in motion, not stationary

targets, and a hovering object at that altitude and size would likely not have produced a return on the system in use at the time.

The story remained unreported until January 1, 2007, when journalist Jon Hilkevitch published an investigation in the Chicago Tribune, having obtained FAA communications logs through a Freedom of Information Act request. The logs confirmed that a United Airlines supervisor had contacted the FAA tower to ask whether controllers had seen the object. They had not. No aircraft had been authorised in that airspace. No investigation was opened.

<small>WITNESSES</small> 12+ United Airlines employees, multiple roles	<small>OBJECT DESCRIPTION</small> Dark metallic disc; no lights; no sound	<small>DURATION</small> approx. 5 minutes stationary
<small>CLOUD PUNCH-THROUGH</small> Confirmed by multiple witnesses	<small>FAA RADAR RETURN</small> None — system not configured for stationary targets	<small>INVESTIGATION OPENED</small> No

XI.04 // SIGNIFICANCE *The Modern Aviation Record*

The O'Hare case is notable for the professional context of its witnesses. Airport operations personnel — ramp workers, supervisors, airline management — are among the most aviation-experienced observers available outside the military. They work in proximity to aircraft of every type, are familiar with normal and abnormal aviation phenomena, and operate in a professional environment where inaccurate incident reporting carries professional consequences. The decision by several witnesses to report the incident despite explicit discouragement from management suggests a level of conviction about what they observed.

The FAA's non-investigation was publicly criticised by aviation safety advocates who argued that an unidentified object in the immediate airspace of one of the world's busiest airports represented a potential hazard regardless of its nature, and that the FAA's institutional response — essentially to note that radar had not confirmed the object and to take no further action — was inadequate. The FAA did not change its position.

