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DAVIE

## Origin of flying metal that hit home remains unknown

**A chunk of metal fell through a Davie man's roof. Initial reports indicated it came from a airplane, but the Federal**

**Aviation Administration said it did not.**

**BY ASHLEY FANTZ AND INA PAIVA CORDLE**  
[afantz@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:afantz@MiamiHerald.com)

The crash happened just minutes after a couple of handymen had fixed Bob Amchir's Wilma-ravaged pool patio Wednesday.

"It sounded like a bomb," he said. "My wife screamed."

Amchir ran outside his Davie house and looked down to find a 2-inch by 3-inch, 2-pound piece of scorching metal had torn through his roof and smashed his tile. He thought it might be from a satellite. Or a plane.

Shaken, he dialed Davie Fire-Rescue, which summoned Davie police, which then called the Federal Aviation Administration.

The federal investigators arrived at the house on the 4900 block of SW 61st Avenue and took the metal part, which Amchir described as hot to the touch.

Late Thursday afternoon, FAA spokesperson Kathleen Bergen told The Miami Herald that the mystery object could not have fallen from a plane and that the agency's probe was over.

"Several inspectors who are experienced mechanics looked at the part [and] it didn't appear to come from an aircraft," she said. "There is no serial number."

Bergen said that the object could have been flung into Amchir's home from a construction site.

This turn of events incensed Amchir, who is well known throughout South Florida as an organizer of the Christmas motorcycle Toys in the Sun Run.

"How do you think that happened?" he shouted. "[The FAA] is trying to snow job and cover someone. This is absolutely absurd. I'll just have to hire an attorney to find this out now."

The FAA will hold the object in its Fort Lauderdale office until Davie police can take over the investigation.

"If someone intentionally threw that into the man's home, that is a crime," said police Lt. Bill Bamford.

As news of the mystery metal spread, those who look to the skies for a living pondered what it might be.

### SOME SURMISES

Suresh Atapattu, education coordinator at the Buehler Planetarium & Observatory at Broward Community College's Davie campus, said a meteorite the size of the metal would have likely been noticed as it entered the atmosphere.

"We are constantly bombarded by little particles," he said. "A piece of that size coming in would probably have a significant flash."

Said Jack Horkheimer, director of the Miami Space Transit Planetarium: "It didn't look like a meteorite to me."

He said meteors that fall to Earth aren't warm to the touch, like Amchir said the metal was. Horkheimer said it sounded more like a piece of "space junk" such as a piece of an old satellite.

### NO RECORD OF 'SPACE JUNK'

NASA officials said, however, that they had registered no orbital debris -- space junk -- reentering the atmosphere in the area on Wednesday.

Had it been an aircraft part, it would not have been the first time such debris has landed in a residential area.

Greg Feith, a former senior investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, who led the investigation of the 1996 ValuJet crash in the Everglades, recalls several cases of engines, wing panels and pieces of flaps falling off planes during his 21 years with the NTSB, from 1980 to 2001.

"I won't say it happens all the time, but it isn't a rare event either," said Feith, who is now an international air safety consultant. "When I was with the board, there were a handful of times -- five or six -- where someone called and said, 'I've got a piece of something in the backyard that came off an airplane.'"

Miami Herald staff writers Hannah Sampson and Evan S. Benn contributed to this report.

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