

SEKRIT MEMO: IX-NAY ON THE ARTIANS-MAY

A mere two days ago, we got tantalizing news of sentient life in space.

An international team of scientists from the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) is investigating mysterious signal spikes emitting from a 6.3-billion-year-old star in the constellation Hercules—95 light years away from Earth. The implications are extraordinary and point to the possibility of a civilization far more advanced than our own.

The unusual signal was originally detected on May 15, 2015, by the Russian Academy of Science-operated RATAN-600 radio telescope in Zelenchukskaya, Russia, but was kept secret from the international community. Interstellar space reporter Paul Gilster broke the story after the researchers quietly circulated a paper announcing the detection of “a strong signal in the direction of HD164595.”

[snip]

The signal’s strength indicates that if it in fact came from a isotropic beacon, the power source would have to be built by a Kardashev Type II civilization. (The Kardashev scale is used to determine the progress of a civilization’s technological development by measuring how much energy was used to transmit an interstellar message.) An ‘Isotropic’ beacon means a communication source emitting a signal with equal power in all directions while promoting signal strength throughout travel.

This created quite the tizzy among space

watchers and had me warning it was a Russian plot to steal the election.

Oh, sure, there were warnings.

"The signal may be real, but I suspect it's not ET," Seth Shostak, senior astronomer at the SETI Institute, told GeekWire. "There are other possibilities for a wide-band signal such as this, and they're caused by natural sources or even terrestrial interference."

Nick Suntzeff, a Texas A&M University astronomer, agrees. "God knows who or what broadcasts at 11 GHz, and it would not be out of the question that some sort of bursting communication is done between ground stations and satellites," he told *Ars Technica*, explaining that the signal was observed in the radio spectrum used by the military. "I would follow it if I were the astronomers, but I would also not hype the fact that it may be at SETI signal given the significant chance it could be something military."

But nevertheless, last we heard – two whole days ago – America's ET watchers were going to monitor that location *permanently* and telescopes in our hemisphere were turning their eye to watch the signal.

Still, he adds, "the signal is provocative enough that the RATAN-600 researchers are calling for permanent monitoring of this target."

[snip]

In the meantime, the SETI Institute, based in Mountain View, California, directed its Allen Telescope Array toward HD 164595 on Sunday night, while METI International (Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence) did the same with the Boquete Optical SETI

Observatory in Panama.

Turns out, two days into that permanent monitoring, the ET-watchers have decided it's not ET.

We cautioned readers that, because the signal was measured at 11Ghz, there was a "significant chance" it was of terrestrial origin, likely due to some military activity.

Well, it apparently was. First, astronomers with the search for extraterrestrial intelligence downplayed the possibility of an alien civilization. "There are many other plausible explanations for this claimed transmission, including terrestrial interference," Seth Shostak, a senior astronomer with SETI, wrote.

Now the Special Astrophysical Observatory of the Russian Academy of Sciences has concurred, releasing a statement on the detection of a radio signal at the RATAN-600 radio astronomy observatory in southern Russia. "Subsequent processing and analysis of the signal revealed its most probable terrestrial origin," the Russian scientists said.

Or, to put it differently, after secretly monitoring this site 95 light years away for 15 months, the Russians have suddenly figured out that this is terrestrial origin.

Maybe even some kind of military activity.

All of which would seem to raise a bunch of other questions. Like who wrote the memo telling all the ET-watchers to Ix-Nay their stories of Artians-May? Or, if this is previously unseen military activity that Russians couldn't identify for 15 months (but were mighty attentive to, mind you), whose military activity

that might be? And what that previously unidentified military activity might be?

It probably means Russian martians aren't going to steal our election. But the more interesting question is what this really was...