

On the evening of January 24, 1978, several residents of a barren area of the Northwest Territories reported a spectacular fireball over Baker Lake, a body of water just west of Hudson Bay. For several weeks U.S. tracking stations had been warning that a Soviet satellite, possibly containing a nuclear reactor, had dropped very low in its orbit and was likely soon to fall into the atmosphere. Its orbit would have taken it over northern Canada about the time the fireball was reported to have occurred. Later that same week the Russians admitted losing a nuclear-powered satellite, but added that the danger of nuclear contamination was remote. Shortly following this announcement, two geologists hiking down a river just east of Baker Lake discovered radioactive debris, of clearly human fabrication, poking out of a crater in the ice.

From all this, Canadian government officials concluded that the Soviet satellite had in fact returned to earth, burning up in the atmosphere in the vicinity of Baker Lake and showering that part of the Northwest Territories with radioactive debris.

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