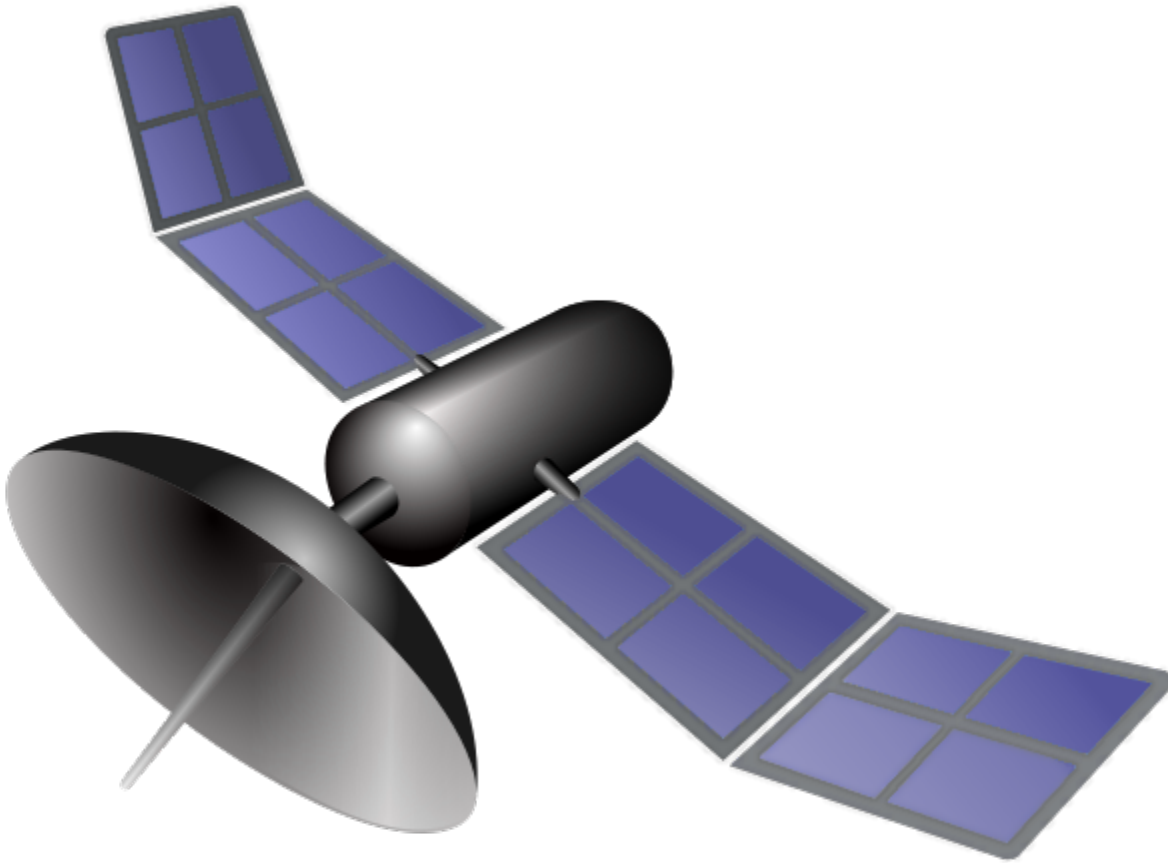


The Riverbend got struck by snow, but missed by the Chinese space lab

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – Good news! The Chinese space laboratory Tiangong-1 did not crash anywhere near the Riverbend over the weekend – just as expected.

According to a release from United States Air Force Major Cody Chiles of the United States Joint Force Space Component Command (JFSCC), the decommissioned laboratory was tracked through the Joint Space Operations Center as it reentered the

atmosphere over the southern Pacific Ocean on April 1 at approximately 5:16 p.m. local time, or 7:16 in Alton.

The St. Louis area was within a large band spanning most of the globe regarding possible landing sites of the defunct space junk based on its orbit, however the odds of landing anywhere near here were extremely slim, and the odds of it causing any damage to life or property was one in trillions.

In the release, Chiles said the satellite was tracked using the Space Surveillance Network's sensors and orbital analysis systems. The information was publicly-available on the United State's Strategic Command's website, www.Space-Track.org. The data gathered was confirmed through similar agencies in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

“The JFSCC works alongside government, industry and international partners to track and report reentries, to include today's Tiangong-1 reentry, because the space domain is vital to our shared international security interests,” Major General Stephen Whiting, the Deputy Commander at JFSCC and Commander of 14th Air Force said in the release. “One of our mission, which we remain focused on, is to monitor space and tens of thousands of pieces of debris that congest it, while at the same time, working with allies and partners to enhance spaceflight safety and increase transparency in the space domain.”

The JFSCC works with the 18th Space Control Squadron to promote a safe, stable, sustainable and secure space environment, the release stated, through space situational awareness information sharing. The command shares space situational awareness information and services with government and non-U.S. Government entities that need to transit through and operate safely within the space domain.

It also stated the JFSCC also shares such information with partners and space-faring entities to promote the responsible, peaceful and safe use of space and strengthen the cooperation within the space domain.

“All nations benefit from a safe, stable, sustainable and secure space domain,” Whiting said in the release. “We're sharing information with space-faring nations to preserve the space domain for the future of mankind.”

What happened to the Chinese decommissioned space laboratory upon reentry is anyone's guess, however, but it probably burnt to nothingness and tiny bits. The release said the JFSCC does not predict or track what happens after orbital decay and reentry. The JFSCC does provide operational information about reentries and potential threats to geographic combatant commands for national defense planning and operations.

