

# Satellite photos fuel controversy about Noah's ark

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**By Hannah Elliott**

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DALLAS (ABP)—Recently released satellite images of an unknown formation or object on Mt. Ararat in Turkey have added fuel to archeologists' ongoing quest to find Noah's ark.

The "new and significant development," an image from a QuickBird satellite, is relevant because the high-resolution view shows clearer detail of a "ship-like object ... 1,015 feet in length," Porcher Taylor, a professor of national security law, told Space.com.

Taylor has spent 13 years investigating the mysterious item.

"I've got newfound optimism ... as far as my continuing push to have the intelligence community declassify some of the more definitive-type imagery," Taylor told the online science news forum.

Taken over the northwest corner of Mt. Ararat, the picture shows a long, dark object—or rock formation, some say—resting sideways in glacial ice at an elevation of 15,300 feet.

Taylor, a national security analyst for more than 30 years, works in the paralegal studies department at the University of Richmond. Associated Press reported he calls this work his “satellite archeology project” and has devoted himself to getting to the bottom of the Ararat mystery.

While Taylor says he has no agenda for his investigation, he aims to expose the irregularity in the mountain’s geography for whatever it is. And then he wants to make it visibly accessible for public, scientific and scholarly critique.

To that end, Taylor has lobbied to use previously classified satellite imagery and systems like QuickBird, GeoEye’s Ikonos spacecraft, and Radarsat 1 in order to prove or disprove the ark rumors.

“We’ve got three new birds (satellites) that are going up,” Taylor said in the online article. “I’m using all my clout, rapport and lobbying to, hopefully, have them at least fly calibration runs over Mt. Ararat.”

Despite some enthusiasts’ conviction about the object’s history, others hesitate to declare it the biblical ark—or any kind of manmade object.

“My gut instinct is that it’s natural phenomena,” said Bill Crouse, president of Christian Information Ministries, who twice has led archeological expeditions to the mountains of southern Turkey.

“What I find when I analyze these photos is that this is naturally occurring,” he said, but then added, “of course, you never say never.”

Christian Information Ministries is an organization that gathers information for Christians. Headquartered in Richardson, Texas, it specializes in Noah’s ark research, cults, the occult and other non-Christian worldviews. Crouse recently contributed to *The Explorers of Ararat*.

Founder and former editor of *The Ararat Report*, a newsletter recording

progress in the search for Noah's ark, Crouse said the geology of the region could create something resembling a ship.

"What we have here is a natural caldera," Crouse said. "The caldera gathers ice and rock. When it breaks off, given the right conditions with ice and shadows, it can resemble a box-like shape."

Not only does Crouse doubt the biblical correlation of the oblong shape that has perplexed explorers since the 19th century, he thinks current investigators have got the wrong mountain entirely. He said the mountain known as Ararat today "didn't become the traditional landing spot of the ark until about 1200 A.D."

Instead, Crouse said, someone made a "geological mistake" and labeled a single mountain as Ararat, instead of a region.

"The Bible says the ark landed in the Ararat mountains, plural," Crouse said. "In short, my conclusion is that the ancient authorities are pretty much uniform that the ark landed on a mountain about 200 miles south of Ararat."

Called Chudi Dagh, that mountain overlooks the entire Mesopotamian plain and the borders of Iraq and Syria. While Crouse believes several historical references to the ark—most notably from ancient historians like Josephus—help prove that it did exist in modern record, he said modern satellites and the Turkish army, which tramps through the area often, have found nothing to irrefutably prove the ark theory.

Plus, Crouse said, the economic incentives to keep travelers searching the Turkish highlands continue to prompt dubious eyewitness reports of the ark.

Still, the new intelligence and satellite imagery are sure to lend Taylor a hand with the object's verification. And that keeps him motivated, he told

Space.com.

“I maintain that if it is the remains of something manmade and potentially nautical, then it’s potentially something of biblical proportions,” he said.

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