

On the 2021 UAPTF Classified Report

By V.J. Ballester-Olmos

On June 25, 2021, the US Department of Defense released a 9-page “Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.”^{1,2} It was a public version of a longer classified report prepared for US Congress. Thanks to the good efforts of John Greenwald (The Black Vault), this complementary, 17-page report has been released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).³ The UAP report is sanitized, that is, certain words, lines and entire sentences have been redacted by being blacked out to hide information such as military systems and operational details. By comparing both documents chapter by chapter, a number of inferences may be made, both about the document itself and about the differences between the two versions. That is the purpose of this article.

Firstly, we must emphasize that the aim of the original report was “to provide an overview for policymakers of the challenges associated with characterizing the potential threat posed by the UAP.” For me, this is a misguided objective from the very beginning. The association of materiality is a preconceived notion that adds unnecessary dramatism and fantasy to the subject. Obviously, this has happened because of the active pressure of lobbying ufologists and promoters of alien ideas, mainly from the political and intelligence sectors. Therefore, I will be collating the public, unclassified report with the classified version (eight pages longer), to see what observations may arise.

Christopher Mellon is the primary architect of the push for this legislation, with the assistance of Luis Elizondo. The justification for the Pentagon’s Advanced Aerospace Weapon System Applications Program (AAWSAP) and its successor, the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP) was allegedly: “The objective of this program is to understand the physics and engineering of these applications as they apply to the foreign threat out to the far-term, i.e., from now through the year 2050.” Portraying UFOs as a national security issue is the only way to get the military interested, and was the motivation for the US Air Force investigating flying saucers from the 1940s to the 1960s.

[REDACTED]



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

(U) Preliminary Assessment:
Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

25 June 2021

Classified By: [REDACTED]
Derived From: [REDACTED]
Declassify On: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SCOPE AND ASSUMPTIONS

On page 2, the input organizations for the report are described. In the third paragraph, a 3-letter word is redacted. Can it be CIA? But if FBI, DIA or NSA are already cited in the open, why hide the Central Intelligence Agency?

To calm overexcited UFO enthusiasts, let me highlight this statement from the “Assumptions” sentence: “...some UAP may be attributable to sensor anomalies.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We read on page 3: “As a result, the UAPTF concentrated its review on [missing space for 12 letters] describing incidents that occurred between 2004 and 2021.” The redaction could correspond to XXX reports, for instance. As the number of handled reports is estimated further down in the report as 144, the question arises whether the actual figure is different. But why censor this? Perhaps because the source is other than human testimony, obtained by space monitoring systems?

Then the report mentions that “In a limited number of incidents, UAP *reportedly appeared* (two cautious weasel words—from now on, added emphasis to several quotes is represented in italics) to exhibit unusual flight characteristics.” The classified version expands on this writing and adds: “...including several in which the [65 mm redacted] involving [123 mm redacted].” The censored words probably refer to certain aircraft, vessels and/or sensitive operations. To me, the important thing is what both texts say next: *These observations could be the result of sensor errors, spoofing, or observer misperceptions and require additional rigorous analysis.* I could not agree more. I hope they are starting to learn, although their reinvention of the wheel will cost a lot of money defrayed by US taxpayers.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i)

(U) AVAILABLE REPORTING LARGELY INCONCLUSIVE

(U) Limited Data Leaves Most UAP Unexplained

(U) Limited data and inconsistency in reporting are key challenges to evaluating UAP. No standardized reporting mechanism existed until the Navy established one in March 2019. The Air Force subsequently adopted that mechanism in November 2020, but it remains limited to USG reporting. The UAPTF regularly heard anecdotally during its research about other observations that occurred but which were never captured in formal or informal reporting by those observers.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) After carefully considering this information, the UAPTF focused on a dataset of 144(c) 144(c) probably describe 144(c) that involved UAP largely witnessed firsthand by military aviators and that were collected from systems considered to be reliable. These reports describe incidents that occurred between 2004 and 2021, with the majority coming in the last two years as the new reporting mechanism became better known to the military aviation community. In only one instance, the UAPTF was able to identify the reported UAP with high confidence. In that case, we identified the object as a large, deflating balloon. The others remain unexplained.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) 144 reports originated from USG sources. Of these, 80 reports involved observations with multiple sensors including 144(c) and 144(c). The remaining 144(c) observed incidents were captured by 144(c). (See Tables 1 and 2.) 1.4(a)

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) Of the 144 USG reports, 144(c) originated from Navy “Range Follower”² reports which provide basic information, such as the time, date, location, description, and what occurred during the event. 144(c) reports were from a combination of Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and other USG agencies. UAP were described in most reports as objects that interrupted pre-planned training or other military activity. 1.4(a)

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) Only 144(c) of the 144 reports contained 144(c)(g). 1.4(a)(g)

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) 144(c) Although these reports 144(c) the descriptions of unknown targets 144(c)

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) 144(c) as in a limited number of instances, 144(c)

² (U) U.S. Navy aviators define a “range follower” as an activity or object that interrupts pre-planned training or other military activity in a military operating area or restricted airspace.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) 144(c)

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i)

AVAILABLE REPORTING LARGELY INCONCLUSIVE

This chapter title on page 4 is most educational and, taking into account that it is the first UAPTF report, it states, “Limited Data Leaves Most UAP Unexplained,” which further suggests the authors believe that better information would lead to more identifications of the objects reported. Larger portions of sanitization commence here. In the second paragraph, the public report reads: “...the UAPTF focused on reports that involved UAP...witnessed...by military aviators,” while the classified text writes “...the UAP focused on a dataset of [redacted] probably describing [redacted] that involved UAP...witnessed...by military aviators.” It seems they do not wish us to know the exact number of UAP cases under study. Also, the original, unabstracted version labels as “probably describing” when referring to the UAP.

Next, the public report says that “**144** reports originated from USG sources. Of these, **80** reports involved observation with multiple sensors. Most reports described UAP as objects that interrupted pre-planned training or other military activity.” The copy to the Congress has a 7-character blank space before the figure of 144. I am inclined to think it says something like Of XXX, actually giving the total number of incidents collected. Following “multiple sensors” it adds “including [71 mm redacted] and [27 mm redacted]. The remaining [18 mm redacted] observed incidents were captured by [28 mm redacted]. (See Tables 1 and 2.)” Obviously, the type of used sensors is secret information. It also confirms that another set of reports is not included in the count of 144, those that were probably captured from orbiting satellites and/or foreign intel devices that DoD is not reasonably willing to disclose to those who do not have a need to know. The classified report includes four new lines, mostly readable, plus three footnotes (6 more lines) indicating a significant number of reports were from military operations and exercises. “Of the 144 USG reports, [number redacted] originated from Navy ‘Range Fouler’ reports...” (“U.S. Navy aviators define a ‘range fouler’ as an activity or object that interrupts pre-planned training or other in a military operating area or restricted airspace.”) It is followed by nine new lines, largely blacked out where supposedly “the description of unknown targets” was discussed. Tables 1 and 2 appear at page 12, to be commented on later.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i)

(U) UAP Collection Challenges

(U) Sociocultural stigmas and sensor limitations remain obstacles to collecting data on UAP. Although some technical challenges—such as how to appropriately filter out radar clutter to ensure safety of flight for military and civilian aircraft—are longstanding in the aviation community, while others are unique to the UAP problem set.

- (U) Narratives from aviators in the operational community and analysts from the military and IC describe disengagement associated with observing UAP, reporting it, or attempting to discuss it with colleagues. Although the effects of these stigmas have lessened as senior members of the scientific, policy, military, and intelligence communities engage on the topic seriously in public, reputational risk may keep many observers silent, complicating scientific pursuit of the topic.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) The sensors mounted on U.S. military platforms are typically designed to fulfill specific missions, often (U) As a result, those sensors are not generally suited for identifying UAP which can be (U)

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) (U) (S) (U)

- (U) Sensor vantage points and the numbers of sensors concurrently observing an object play substantial roles in distinguishing UAP from known objects and determining whether a UAP demonstrates breakthrough aerospace capabilities. Optical sensors have the benefit of providing some insight into relative size, shape, and structure. Radiofrequency sensors provide more accurate velocity and range information.

(U) But Some Potential Patterns Do Emerge

(U) Although there was wide variability in the reports and the dataset is currently too limited to allow for detailed trend or pattern analysis, there was some clustering of UAP observations regarding shape, size, and, particularly, propulsion. UAP sightings also tended to cluster around U.S. training and testing grounds, but we assess that this may result from a collection bias as a result of focused attention, greater numbers of latest-generation sensors operating in those areas, unit expectations, and guidance to report anomalies.

50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) The most common shape described by military personnel in their reporting was a (U) (See Figure 1). Military aviators described many of these (U) objects as (U) or (U) that (U) Several sightings were (U) and resembled (U) shapes like a (U) or a (U).

On page 5 there is an inset for “UAP Collection Challenges.” The public version has three bullet points, while the classified one has four. One contains 145 mm of censored space on the topic of “sensors mounted on military platforms” where specific purposes or functions are probably named. Interestingly, the report says: *As a result, those sensors are not generally suited for identifying UAP* and it is followed by this brief new text “which can be [38 mm redacted],” where some class of identification might appear. The fourth bullet point has five and a half lines completely censored.

The section below, “But Some Potential Patterns Do Emerge,” contains two more paragraphs in the classified version. One (five lines) establishes “The most common shape described by military personnel...” but all descriptions of the shapes are redacted. Another (five more lines) describes the altitudes at which “Observed UAP usually traveled,” as well as some other dynamics, but every detail is censored.

The section that follows on page 6 is important as far as new input in the declassified document. Titled “And a Handful of UAP Appear to Demonstrate Advanced Technology” (let me affix here a great *sic* because of its likely inaccuracy), the public release hardly had 10 lines, while the Congressional version has 34 lines. What are their contents? There are many portions redacted but it suggests that it covers “UAP behavior,” “radio frequency (RF) energy associated,” and “radar displays.” Three specific Navy UAP sightings are also depicted but precise details are lacking. Later, when the report refers to a “small amount of data that appears to show UAP...acceleration...or signature management,” a continuing, redacted line in the full report starts with “However, this...,” with the qualifying dubitative verb “*appears*” and the adverb “*however*.” Clearly, the report at this stage says that “Additional rigorous analyses is necessary...to determine the *nature and validity* of these data.” Then, 15 new lines follow on page 7 of the declassified report, describing three UAP incidents not included in the public version: one airborne observation, another from 2004 that “reportedly demonstrated” something censored, and a Navy report involving “a helicopter pilot and two weapon systems officers (WSOs) visually observed several [redacted] objects moving approximately [redacted] five [redacted] objects, which [redacted]. The WSO reported he [redacted] but [redacted] the pilot and the other WSO [redacted] the [redacted] objects.” Time, date, location and situation data have been blacked out here. This missing information evidently prevents an external case study.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] from the aircraft. [REDACTED] shows the object [REDACTED]. A 2004 UAP event reportedly demonstrated [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] According to U.S. Navy reporting, during [REDACTED] hours in [REDACTED], a helicopter pilot and two weapon systems officers (WSOs) visually observed several [REDACTED] objects moving approximately [REDACTED]. One of the WSOs [REDACTED] [REDACTED] objects, which [REDACTED]. The WSO reported he [REDACTED] the pilot and the other WSO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] objects.

(U) UAP PROBABLY LACK A SINGLE EXPLANATION

(U) The UAP documented in this limited dataset demonstrate an array of aerial behaviors, reinforcing the possibility there are multiple types of UAP requiring different explanations. Our analysis of the data supports the contention that (U) and when individual UAP incidents are resolved they will fall into one of five potential explanatory categories: airborne clutter, natural atmospheric phenomena, UNG or industry developmental programs, foreign adversary systems, and a residual “other” bin. With the exception of the one instance where we determined with high confidence that the reported UAP was airborne clutter, specifically a deflating balloon, we currently lack sufficient information in our dataset to attribute incidents to particular explanations.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Airborne Clutter: These objects include birds, balloons, recreational unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or airborne debris like plastic bags that muddle a scene and affect an operator’s ability to identify true targets, such as enemy aircraft. This category can also include [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] We recognize that [REDACTED]. With the [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

numerous governments around the world have closed their UFO desks, and released and declassified their UFO archives on the conviction that during all these years (1947 to the present day) UFO sightings have posed no risk to national security. Reinventing the wheel again?

This classified chapter has twice the length of the public copy, but most of the new text is redacted. In the “Ongoing Airspace Concerns” section, the only words that are released say: “We have documented flight safety concerns and...” followed by a mostly censored 3-line sentence on a (date missing) sighting where “a pilot briefly observed [redacted]. However, a [redacted].” Again, the adverb with the adversative sense. The public assessment establishes: “The UAPTF has 11 reports of documented instances in which pilots reported near misses with a UAP.” In this respect, excuse me if I express my particular doubts about the accuracy of such close, near-miss incidents.

But it is in the “Potential National Security Challenges” section here that a complete 15-line added paragraph is censored. It is after writing that “We currently lack data to determine any UAP are part of a foreign collection program or indicative of a major technological advancement by a potential adversary.” I am at loss to know what this new text may voice, but I cannot imagine that the United States needs the UAPTF to determine what its adversaries do or don’t do in terms of intelligence collection.

EXPLAINING UAP WILL REQUIRE ANALYTIC, COLLECTION AND RESOURCE INVESTMENT

In the initial section of this chapter on pages 10-11, “Standardize the Reporting, Consolidate the Data, and Deepen the Analysis,” five lines are added, almost complete: “Given the [120 mm redacted] the UAPTF also plans to explore how best to leverage the capabilities of non-DoD departments and agencies to enable effective and efficient transfer of data and [redacted] among the DoD [redacted] and the law enforcement community.” Good if they are thinking of consulting with NASA, NOAA, etc. on UFO sightings. The section headed as “Expand Collection” shows a censored 11-line paragraph as well. Towards what lines the data collection will expand is only subject to speculation.

(U) Expand Collection

(U) The UAPTF is looking for novel ways to increase collection of UAP cluster areas when U.S. forces are not present as a way to baseline “standard” UAP activity and mitigate collection bias in the dataset. One proposal is to use advanced algorithms to search historical data captured and stored by radars. The UAPTF also plans to update its current interagency UAP collection strategy to order bring to bear relevant collection platforms and methods from the DND and JC.

(U) Increase Investment in Research and Development

(U) The UAPTF has indicated that additional funding for research and development could further the mission objectives defined by a Deputy Secretary of Defense Action Memo (23 JUL 2020). Such investments should be guided by a UAP Collection Strategy, UAP R&D Technical Roadmap, and a UAP Program Plan.

Table 1. USG UAP Reports by [redacted] (144 total)

[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Table 2. UAP Detected by [redacted]

[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

APPENDIX B

Page 15 is for the “Federal Bureau of Investigation Support of Attribution Efforts.” After the sentence “Given the national security implications associated with potential threats posed by UAP operating in close proximity to sensitive military activities, installations, critical infrastructure, or other national security sites, the FBI is positioned to use its investigative capabilities to support deliberate DoD and interagency efforts to determine attribution,” 25 new lines with details are blacked out.

Once more, national security seems to be at stake. Listen, we have had flying saucer and UFO sightings for 75 years, seen from the air and from the ground. Even alleged humanoids beside their touched-down spacecrafts. Observations by civilians and military personnel. Even people who reported being kidnapped by aliens. Everything that might happen has already happened. Or so they say. What are the national security implications? None. Now they appeal to national security concerns because most of the report’s sightings occurred during military operations, in protected areas, and from highly sophisticated aircraft or vessels. So, the concern is not by the target itself but because of the situational environment.

I also doubt the practical help local FBI agents can provide when a UAP has been recorded close to a missile silo, from a *Stealth* aircraft or a Navy ship, or during a secret military exercise. It will be extremely limited.

APPENDIX C

Page 16 repeats the contents of what was listed as Appendix A in the public document: “Definition of Key Terms,” i.e., UAP, UAP Event, UAP Incident, and UAP Report. Four censored lines appear in the classified version of the report to Congress.

APPENDIX D

Page 17. It is identical to the public version’s Appendix B, and it enumerates the eight intelligence information requirements dictated from the Senate in line with the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021.

Speaking in general, the major flaw of this report (both in the full and the summarized forms) is the confession that out of (at least) 144 sightings examined, occurred between 2004 and 2021, with the majority coming in the last two years, “in only one instance, the UAPTF was able to identify the reported UAP with high confidence” (it was a large, deflating balloon). This inability to discover the real nature of things flying in the sky is amazing. I just keep my fingers crossed that Vladimir Putin or Kim Jong-un do not decide to attack the United States with drones or similar unconventional weapons, otherwise, America, you are lost!

For further insight into the UAPTF report, I recommend seeing the files presented at the US Navy’s FOIA Reading Room, “Case-Files: UFO Info,” which contains some of the files that went into the UAPTF’s evaluation.⁴ One particular file is of interest, a UAP reported in a “Range Foulter Debrief Form.” While not explicitly labelled, it seems to be the UAPTF’s lone object that was able to be identified with “high confidence.”⁵

Additionally, the form may give insight to redacted information from the UAPTF report concerning “Common Shapes” for UAP. On the form, there’s the section, “Please check all that apply,” which gives twelve check boxes for shapes and characteristics, as follows:

Round

Square

Balloon-shaped

Wings/Airframe

Other Shape

Apparent Propulsion

Moving Parts

Metallic

Markings

Translucent

Opaque

Reflective

Lastly, it would be most convenient to briefly discuss the US military’s usage of UFO terminology. A good source is US Navy spokesman Joseph Gradisher’s interview published back in 2019 by *The Washington Post*.⁶ To summarize, Gradisher explained that “The ‘Unidentified Aerial Phenomena’ terminology is used because it provides the basic descriptor for the sightings/observations of unauthorized/unidentified aircraft/objects that have been observed entering/operating in the airspace of various military-controlled training ranges.” Gradisher told *The Post*, that UAP was not a new term, that Navy preferred to eliminate the cultural stigma that might discourage pilots from reporting “UFO” incidents for fear of being labeled “kooky.” “Gradisher said one possible explanation could be the rise of unmanned aerial systems... such as quadcopters, a kind of drone easily available to the public.” When the Navy says UAP, they essentially mean unidentified aircraft, but the public hears *UFO*.

The Navy is no longer in charge of the investigation and “UAP” was removed from the name of the new organization. On November 23, 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense announced the establishment of “the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) as the successor to the U.S. Navy’s Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force.”⁷ The announcement stated the “preliminary assessment report submitted to Congress in June 2021... identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP.” The further details promised about the office have yet to be announced.

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Notes

(1)<https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Preliminary-Assessment-UAP-20210625.pdf>

(2) V.J. Ballester-Olmos, "The UAP Pentagon Report - Commented Abstract" (June 26, 2021), http://fotocat.blogspot.com/2021_09_14_archive.html

See also this special feature in Spanish:

<https://factorelblog.com/2021/06/29/pentagono/>

(3) <https://documents2.theblackvault.com/documents/odni/DEOM-2021-00006.pdf> (see Enclosure 2).

(4) <https://tinyurl.com/4futvc5t>

(5) File name: "RANGEOFULERDeflatedBalloon":

<https://www.secnav.navy.mil/foia/readingroom/CaseFiles/UFO%20Info/UAP%20DOCUMENTS/RANGEOFULERDeflatedBalloon.pdf>

(6) Kayla Epstein, "Those UFO videos are real, the Navy says, but please stop saying 'UFO,'" *The Washington Post* online, September 18, 2019,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2019/09/18/those-ufo-videos-are-real-navy-says-please-stop-saying-ufo/>

(7) <https://tinyurl.com/yckkaba2>