

# The UFO Problem and Why It Matters

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The UFO problem is this: A close examination of the best evidence reveals a mix of ordinary physically real characteristics but also characteristics that are difficult to categorize as physically real. And further, the oddball characteristics are truly weird such as, for example, an apparently physically real hovering "vehicle" that disintegrates before the witness's eyes or splits into two identical "vehicles" that then zip away or an apparent telepathic voice from a UFO "heard" within the witness's head or an apparent healing of a longstanding illness shortly after being within the presence of a UFO and so forth.

An ontological problem in our Western conception of reality is that we are an either/or society. Phenomena are either real or they are not. They are either reducible to atoms and physical energy in their essence or they are not. If they are not reducible, then they must be unreal and essentially honest errors of some kind or maybe intentional misdirection and misinformation — mirages, hallucinations, physiological misperceptions, hoaxes, lying, optical illusions, etc. There is no middle ground.

But some ufologists (I'm among them) argue that these oddball characteristics are not just honest errors or intentional misdirection. Most mainstream scholars argue that these oddball characteristics have the kind of reality that dreams, mythology, legends, religious phenomena, etc., have — a kind of "soft" reality that many people believe is very close to ordinary physical reality. "Hard" scientists, of course, reject this kind of reality. However, I'm with the transpersonal psychologists. They believe that in addition to physical reality there is an ontologically real second reality that interpenetrate ordinary reality. In fact, all of reality is a mixture of these two related but distinct realities. The UFO exists variously both here and there. This is a long story and won't be gone further into here. But you should know that recognition by all of our society is the ultimate solution to the UFO problem.

In fact, these oddball characteristics were recognized as early as 1975 by two ufologist scientists J. Allen Hynek and Jacques Vallee in their book *The Edge of Reality*. This book is a conversation between Hynek and Vallee and moderated by a transpersonal psychologist, Arthur Hastings. Big ideas take time to develop, percolate, solidify, and eventually become the "truth". I believe this is what is happening now in our society.

But first things first. The first hurdle that the UFO problem must overcome is simply to be understood as a real phenomenon. The key to this is to concentrate on the ordinary physically real characteristics. But here again there is a problem and that is that the vast majority of the UFO sightings data in the hands of the public is gathered from the

public itself. This inevitably results in “soft data” since people are not trained observers. They are just regular folks. So, how can we get “hard data”? That requires time, money, and expertise. Though ufologists have done lots with the “soft data” they have, they cannot go further since gathering “hard data” demands time, money, and expertise. Citizen-based ufology has precious little of that. We just can’t deliver the “hard data” that establishment science demands and deserves (and rightly so).

But, who routinely observes the physical environment with a vast array of physical sensor systems using all manner of electromagnetic devices sensing in the radar, infrared, visible light, etc., bands? It is the U.S. military. (The military also uses sound detection in water — sonar — in submarines.) So observational data — the “hard data” that science wants — is routinely collected in training exercises and wartime situations by the military.

Well, it turns out that we now know as a matter of public record that the U.S. military has recorded lots of “hard data” about UFOs, at least in specific instances in recent 21st history. The New York Times revealed this inadvertent hard data collection by our military during a routine military preparedness exercise. This revelation has kicked off a “flurry” of activity that could lead to honest, open, longterm investigation of UFOs by the scientific (and scholarly) establishment. This is all ufologists have ever wanted.

I have highlighted for you a few important events in this on-going story involving the Pentagon, Congress, the responsible journalistic establishment, and even the scientific establishment. Note how much time passed between the New York Times story and significant action by the Pentagon. There was lots of pressure from many different people to encourage the Pentagon to come clean about UFOs. The list includes former U.S. Senator Harry Reid, journalist George Knapp, billionaire businessman Robert Bigelow, government CIA operative Luis Elizondo, longtime Congressional staffer and government national security administrator Chris Mellon, aerospace business executive Steve Justice, and even a punk rocker(!) Tom DeLonge. This story is told in Ross Coulthart’s *In Plain Sight*.

## **NY Times Publishes Major Story Implying UFOs are Real**

On *December 17, 2017*, America and the world experienced a watershed moment. The New York Times, America’s newspaper of record, published a front-page, “above the fold” story about some confrontations that U.S. Navy pilots had with UFOs during a training mission in 2004 off the coast of Southern California. The training mission included the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and many combat support vessels. Hundreds of enlisted men and officers were involved. Most were on board the support ships monitoring the UFOs and F-18 fighter jets as they maneuvered around the UFOs. The ships employed the latest electronic warfare sensing equipment using radar, infrared, and other sophisticated modalities of battlefield awareness.

The extensive story about all this even included a long interview with Commander David Fravor, one of the pilots who engaged the UFOs. It was as if the UFOs were toying with the F-18 fighter pilots for extended periods of time. The UFOs would zip from thousands of feet in altitude above the fighter jets to just above the surface of the sea in

seconds. In addition to other “impossible” maneuvers, a few of them appeared at the “cap” point of at least one of the fighter jets *before* it got there. The UFOs were waiting for the jet. The “cap” point is a prearranged rendezvous point in airspace after normal training exercises are over. The “cap” point is only known to the pilots and the commanding officer in charge of a given exercise.

The Pentagon’s response to the extensive Times article was silence. There was no Pentagon press conference to “walk back” the facts or implications of this watershed article. Over the next few years, the Pentagon authenticated the now famous military UFO “cockpit” videos of a tiny portion of the events surrounding the USS Nimitz and a few other military UFO/fighter jet encounters from the 21st century over both the east and west coast military operations areas of the U.S. These are the famous “tic tac”, “gimbal”, and “go fast” videos.

Why is this important at all? First, it establishes the apparent physical reality of some UFOs. If the military thinks UFOs are physically real, perhaps the rest of us should, too. (Ufologists have long known through leaked information about serious engagement of UFOs with the U.S. military starting in World War II on through the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and even into the 1980s and 1990s to some extent.) Second, this is the first time the New York Times has treated a serious military/UFO incident as a reality. Always before, the Times had followed the lead and encouragement of the U.S. government to downplay and minimize the UFO subject. The Washington Post and the influential [politico.com](https://www.politico.com) news site also treated the USS Nimitz encounters as a breaking story at the same time.

This event was a signal to the various elite factions of America (and world) that UFOs just might be real after all. This story began a chain of events that has led to the first establishment of a permanent Pentagon and national intelligence establishment group to deal with the UFO problem. It goes by the unwieldy name of Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group.

Also, since December 17, 2017, the scientific establishment is starting to make real efforts to get to the bottom of the UFO problem. And additionally, Congress has gotten involved. It has requested and received classified briefings from the military. What ufologists have long wished for is coming to pass — real engagement with the UFO problem by the military, political, and scientific establishments of America.

I have enumerated below for your interest important dates and events during the last four years leading to real engagement by the elite levels of our society with the UFO problem.

## **Pentagon Confirms UFO Videos Are Real**

On *April 29, 2020*, the Pentagon finally confirmed the authenticity of three videos (“go fast”, “tic tac”, and “gimbal”) showing “cockpit” footage of UFOs taken on at least two different combat training exercises. Previously, skeptics argued that the UFO videos from the USS Nimitz UFO encounters were faked and not real.

## **Pentagon Establishes a Study Group for UAP Encounters**

On *August 4, 2020*, the Pentagon established an office to study and analyze the USS Nimitz and other UFO encounters. The office is to be called the Unidentified Aerial

Phenomena Task Force. The mission of the task force is to detect, analyze and catalog UAPs that could potentially pose a threat to U.S. national security

## **Pentagon Releases Congressionally Mandated Preliminary UFO Report**

On *June 25, 2021*, as mandated by the U.S. Congress, the Pentagon released to the public an unclassified UAP/UFO report from its UAP Task Force and a classified one to the U.S. Congress. The report examined 114 UAP reports collected by the U.S. military of military-only events occurring in the 21st century. It stated that only one of the 114 could be positively identified. It was a balloon. The events occurred mostly over the coastal waters of the east and west coasts of the U.S. where the military maintains MOAs (military operating areas) so that it can conduct war-time readiness exercises. Eighteen of the 114 exhibited very unusual flight characteristics making ordinary aircraft an unlikely fit. (Note that ufologists usually say that around 10% of sightings remain unidentified after close, competent examination. The report's 18% "unknowns" is reasonable.)

## **Harvard University Professor of Astronomy Forms UFO Study Group**

On *July 26, 2021*, Avi Loeb, until recently the chair of Harvard University's astronomy department, initiated the Galileo Project, whose stated purpose is to use the scientific method to find out the nature of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAPs) in addition to oumuamua-like interstellar objects. (Oumuamua-like objects are unusual but probably ordinary asteroid-like objects. Loeb wrote an entire popular book about the singular Oumuamua object that floated through our solar system recently: *Extraterrestrial: The First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth*.) What is important is not Oumuamua, but the UAPs. (UAPs are what our government is now calling the recent spate of UFOs plaguing the U.S. military in the 21st century. They are called Unidentified Aerial Phenomena to avoid all the baggage that the term UFO has collected throughout the 20th century.)

## **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand Introduces Amendment Supporting Even Stricter UFO Reporting Requirements for the Pentagon's UFO Study Efforts**

On *November 4, 2021*, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand introduced an amendment to this year's military spending authorization bill that will put real teeth into the Pentagon's UAP/UFO investigative efforts going forward. Oddly, in these days of severe political disfunction, Congress is united — both Democrats and Republicans — in its wish to get at real UAP/UFO information held by the military. They do not like the possible threat to U.S. national security that UAPs/UFOs might pose.

## **UFO Discussion Event in the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.**

On *November 10, 2021*, at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., a discussion of humanity's future in space occurred. Five people presented material: Harvard astronomer Avi Loeb of The Galileo Project, NASA Administrator Bill Nelson, business tycoon and Blue Origin founder Jeff Bezos, theologian and astrophysicist David Wilkinson of Durham University, and U.S. Director of National Intelligence, Homeland Security, Avril Haines. The presentation was titled "Our Future in Space". This was

not particularly noteworthy except for where the presentation occurred and the inclusion of especially Avril Haines, head of U.S. intelligence operations, and David Wilkinson, a theologian with training in astrophysics.

The Washington National Cathedral was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1893 and its foundation stone was laid by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907. The structure was completed by the placement of its final finial with President George H.W. Bush in attendance in 1990. This cathedral is physically the second largest in the U.S. and is considered symbolically the nation's church.

So, gathered to discuss our nation's future in space at a nationally important church, we have five prominent people: (1) recent head of Harvard's astronomy department, (2) the head of NASA, (3) a business tycoon with his own space program, (4) a well-known astrophysicist and theologian, and (5) the head of our nation's intelligence establishment. OK, the other make sense, but what does Avril Haines have to do with our future in space? Why was she invited to give her ideas and opinions? What has our intelligence establishment to do with space? Haines has devoted her life to serving our government mostly in intelligence jobs. She was Deputy Director of the CIA under Obama and under Biden promoted to the top job in the intelligence world.

We'll have to wait to see if this discussion of humanity and space in a special church is just business as usual, but it may not be.

### **Pentagon Forms New Permanent UFO/UAP Study Group**

On *November 23, 2021*, the Pentagon announced the formation of a new permanent UFO study group called by the unwieldy name of Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group. Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said the group would coordinate the gathering and study of all UAP/UFO reports over military facilities, installations, operational areas, etc. Reports were to be gathered from all intelligence and military agencies.

Ufologists speculate that within the Pentagon there are completing factions fighting about how much to allow or even whether to support at all UFO/UAP openness for the public. But so far Congress is not letting up. They have received classified briefings from the Pentagon and they are concerned about national security, perhaps even on many levels if what ufologists know is widely known for certain in the public sphere.

Time will tell if we've reached a tipping point or whether the genie can be stuffed back into the bottle.

### **Some Thoughts on Your Assigned Background Reading**

Bader, Mencken, and Baker's *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and other Curiosities in Religion and Culture*. This is a misleading, debunking book about the reality of paranormal phenomena. It leads you astray. There is lots of good statistical stuff about the behavioral, social group, and other characteristics of "believers", but the authors' "why they are this way" interpretations are lacking in sub-

stance because they don't understand that UFOs are absolutely real in some of their aspects. People who've seen UFOs up close and personal know UFOs are real. The authors don't because they are not UFO investigators or real students of the subject. But on the upside, these days they can just talk to the Pentagon before writing their next book. They fit the mold of most academics who attempt UFO studies. But at least they are trying. Better academic books to help you understand the paranormal are James McClenon's *Wondrous Events: Foundations of Religious Belief* and David J. Hess's *Science in the New Age: The Paranormal, Its Defenders and Debunkers, and American Culture*.

David Halperin's *Intimate Alien* is a good example of too much speculation and not enough boots on the ground UFO research. He's on the right track with Jung's ideas — UFOs are definitely from the transpersonal/spiritual world — but pays short shrift to most of the hard reality (physical evidence) stuff that must be accommodated in any good UFO theory. Thus, his silly, fanciful ideas such as his UFO sighting analysis beginning on page 36.

When I read Henri Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious* long ago, I learned about the beginnings of dynamic psychology/psychiatry with Anton Mesmer's "discovery" of animal magnetism (hypnosis). Then followed a long period of research and speculation about consciousness culminating in the late 19th century with more and more refinements to hypnosis-based treatments of neuroses and psychoses. Unfortunately at this juncture, Freud abandoned hypnosis to create his castles-in-the-sky speculations about the id, ego, and superego consciousness constructs. Jung, thanks to his esoteric researches, helped right the ship a bit by recognizing larger forces were at work in the mind.

But Freud had done his damage. This stunted progress in understanding consciousness throughout much of the 20th century till the transpersonal psychologists arrived in the 1970s. They found that some elements of the transpersonal/spiritual world manifest as physically real effects. The UFO is one of these elements, psychic surgery is possibly another, along with bigfoot, Loch Ness type monsters, chupacabras, vibhuti, etc.

Catherine Albanese's *A Republic of Mind and Spirit* is a magnificent contribution to the scholarship of the metaphysical branch of the American religious tradition. There is too little of this. Scholars in general have too often shied away from esoteric studies, but this is where the true gold is for a real understanding of the human mind and of reality itself. I'm thinking about getting a copy for myself.

## **A UFO Reading List For Serious Students**

I've gathered together a few resources for you. Note that wikipedia is a decent first source for many UFO-related topics. However, you should be aware that the articles have been scrubbed to heavily represent the debunking side of most UFO topics. Look up Susan Gerbic ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan\\_Gerbic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Gerbic)).

The best books for the nitty gritty of the recent positive UFO events are the following:

Ross Coulthart's *In Plain Sight*. Investigative journalist Coulthart's book gives the details surrounding the events in the time line I've given you here plus a lot more.

Lacatski, Kelleher, and Knapp's *Skinwalkers at the Pentagon*. Lacatski, et al's book lays out the inner workings of the Pentagon's recent semi-secret, UFO/paranormal investigations: AAWSAP and AATIP, which I barely touched on. The history of these programs is complex, but these two programs are very important to understand the public events.

Other general books that won't steer you wrong in this confusing area:

For the history of UFOs, Richard Dolan's two volumes of his *UFOs and the National Security State*.

For the history of UFOs specifically concentrating on the U.S. military/government involvement, Michael Swords, Robert Powell, and others' *UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry*.

For a succinct summary of the UFO evidence, Richard Hall's *The UFO Evidence, Vol. II*.

For a very early understanding of the UFO/paranormal connection, J. Allen Hynek and Jacques Vallee's *The Edge of Reality*.

For a full blown understanding of UFO abduction in the transpersonal world context, John Mack's *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*.

For an encyclopedic approach to UFO history, Jerome Clark's *The UFO Encyclopedia*.

Lots of other respectable books written by scholars and scientists wait for you at [oregonmufon.com](http://oregonmufon.com) in the Books link.