

Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAPs)

Background ~~[NOT FOR RELEASE]~~:



There have been a number of reports of unauthorized and/or unidentified aircraft entering various military-controlled training ranges and designated air space in recent years. These reports are frequent and continuing. The U.S. Navy and the Department of Defense (DOD) take these reports very seriously and investigate each and every report. Any incursion into our training ranges by any aircraft, identified or not identified, is problematic from both a safety and security concern. **Safety of our aircrews is paramount.** Unauthorized and unidentified aircraft pose a risk to flight safety.

Additionally, it is vital we maintain the **security of our operations.** Our aviators train as they fight. Any intrusions that may compromise the security of our operations, tactics, or procedures is of great concern.

Media Interest

A History Channel program over the summer of 2019 on government investigations into “UFOs” highlighted several videos from Navy aircraft of UAPs. The program generated significant interest in limited-reach outlets that focus on “UFO” theories and conspiracies. These same videos were published online by the New York Times in December 2017, via an unauthorized release. In September of 2019, the Navy confirmed that the three unclassified Navy videos, one taken in November 2004 and the other two in January 2015, which had been circulating in the public domain after unauthorized releases in 2007 and 2017, were indeed copies of actual Navy videos. DOD officially announced the public release of the videos via the FOIA process on April 27, 2020. Since the release, frequent queries and FOIA requests for information from national, international, and special interest media have been received at various Navy commands. Those queries and requests continue.

DOD STATEMENT of April 27, 2020

The Department of Defense has authorized the release of three unclassified Navy videos, one taken in November 2004 and the other two in January 2015, which have been circulating in the public domain after unauthorized releases in 2007 and 2017. The U.S. Navy previously acknowledged that these videos circulating in the public domain were indeed Navy videos. After a thorough review, the department has determined that the authorized release of these unclassified videos does not reveal any sensitive capabilities or systems, and does not impinge on any subsequent investigations of military air space incursions by unidentified aerial phenomena. DOD is releasing the videos in order to clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage that has been circulating was real, or whether or not there is more to the videos. The aerial phenomena observed in the videos remain characterized as “unidentified.” The released videos can be found at the Naval Air Systems Command FOIA Reading Room: <https://www.navair.navy.mil/foia/documents>.

PA Posture

- RTQ
- **Refer all questions/requests - without comment -** to DOD Public Affairs [Sue Gough] / cc OPNAV N2N6 PAO [Joe Gradisher].

Key Messages:

- Safety of our aircrews is paramount.
- Unauthorized and unidentified aircraft pose a risk to flight safety.
- Security of our operations is vital.
- Our aviators train as they fight. Any intrusions that may compromise the security of our operations, tactics, or procedures is of great concern.
- We take reports of incursions seriously and investigate each report.

Themes and Messages

THEME: Term Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP)

- We borrowed the term from the United Kingdom.
- Definition: Any aerial phenomena that cannot immediately be identified.
- We use the generic UAP term in communications so as not to pre-judge the results of any investigation (and so our aviators aren't hesitant to report the intrusions).
- Do not refer to UAPs as UFOs. The latter term is intrinsically linked to the concept of extra-terrestrials and the associated hysteria generated by the media that cover this topic.

THEME: UAP Investigations

- As the investigation of UAP sightings is ongoing, we will not discuss individual sighting reports / observations.
- The information obtained from each individual report of any suspected training range incursion is investigated in its own right.
- The information obtained in these reports is catalogued and analyzed to identify any hazard to our aviators.
- Investigations could involve multiple DOD, Intelligence Community, and other U.S. Government agencies/organizations.
- Any report generated as a result of these investigations will, by necessity, include classified information on military operations. Therefore, no release of information to the general public is expected.
- An Interagency Task Force, led by Navy, is charged with investigating these intrusions to gain knowledge and insight into the nature and origins of UAPs, as well as their operations, capabilities, performance, and/or signatures.
- The mission of the task force is to detect, analyze, catalog, consolidate, and exploit non-traditional aerospace vehicles/UAPs posing an operational threat to U.S. national security and avoid strategic surprise.

THEME: Classification Levels of UAP Information

- The Naval Intelligence Activity has published a Security Classification Guidance (SCG) to protect the integrity of the investigations.
- Information obtained, in whatever form and from whatever source, involving UAPs, is classified.
- Imagery (including stills/videos obtained by SNOOPIE Teams) of any UAP observation is considered classified and should be handled and protected accordingly.
- Investigations into unidentified incursions into military airspace involve various intelligence methods and agencies and are not to be discussed.

THEME: FOIA Requests and Responses

- The intent of this card and the SCG is not to circumvent the normal FOIA processes conducted at the command or higher echelon levels.
- FOIA offices are requested to coordinate their proposed responses to any UAP-related FOIA request with DOD Public Affairs and OPNAV N2N6 Public Affairs before responding.
- Consistency in wording in any response for information is essential, as additional queries and FOIA requests can be expected if there are any deviations from what has previously been provided in response to query.

Questions and Answers:

Q1. What is the definition of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena used by the Navy and the U.S. Defense Department?

A1. Any aerial phenomena that cannot immediately be identified. When an unmanned aerial system (UAS) is NOT immediately identifiable, we refer to it as UAP. We use the generic term UAP in communications to avoid pre-judging the results of any investigation.

Q2. Does the Navy or DOD know how the 3 historic, released videos were put into "circulation"? Were they leaked by Navy personnel?

A2. With respect to the 2004 sighting by aircraft from the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68): That video was widely shared throughout the ship at that time. In 2007, one of those crewmembers posted the video onto the public web. In 2009, the online post of the video came to the attention of Navy officials who, in consultation with Navy law enforcement personnel, decided not to pursue the matter. Given the time since recording (approximately 5 years), the widespread distribution of the recording within the ship at the time of recording, and the size of the crew at the time (approximately 5,000), it was determined that there was no way to accurately determine who might have released the video. With respect to the other two videos, after they first appeared in the New York Times in December 2017, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) began an investigation focused on the classification of the information in the video. The AFOSI investigation determined that the videos were not classified. However, simply being unclassified does not automatically mean that information may be released to the public. An OSD internal review – not a formal investigation – determined that while a request had been submitted in August 2017 to the Defense Office of Prepublication and Security Review (DOPSR) for release of the videos to government and industry partners for research purposes, DOPSR did not grant final approval for the videos to be released to the general public.

Q3. Can we get any information (videos/analyses, etc.) from any alleged sightings since the events in these three videos?

A3. Neither the Navy nor DOD has publicly released characterizations or descriptions, nor released any hypothesis or conclusions in reference to any reported sightings/observations. As the investigation of UAP sightings is ongoing, we will not discuss individual sighting reports / observations. However, all possible sources of information pertaining to any individual sighting reports/observations are considered in the respective investigations. The information obtained from each individual report of any suspected training range incursion will continue to be investigated in its own right. The information obtained in these reports will be catalogued and analyzed for the purpose of identifying any hazard to our aviators and protect the security of our operations. This process could involve multiple DOD and Intelligence Community organizations. Any report generated as a result of these investigations will, by necessity, include classified information on military operations. Therefore, no release of information to the general public is expected.

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