

THE IN A HURRY SERIES

UFOs *in a Hurry*

Sightings, secrecy, and what is actually out there

Max Brocklesby

BOOKSINAHURRY.COM

Contents

The Whole Thing in One Page 4

Why You Should Care 6

The Core Ideas 8

How It Actually Works 21

What People Get Wrong 31

Use It 36

Terms 41

Go Deeper 46

Notes and Sources 48

Bibliography 56

The Whole Thing in One Page

A UFO file may begin with a point of light, a blurred camera image or an unexplained radar return. The light seems too fast, the blur gains shape, the track appears to stop dead. By the time an observation reaches a news report or congressional hearing, it may have acquired a speed, a story and perhaps occupants. Yet the first question remains: what was far enough away, bright enough or reflective enough to produce what was recorded?

That is what a UFO is. It is not a species of machine. It is a status in an identification process. The modern term, unidentified anomalous phenomenon, widens the category, but it does not change the logic. An event is seen by eyes or instruments, turned into a report, reconstructed from incomplete information and assigned to a class. At each step, detail can be lost, false precision can be added and decisive context can be withheld.

The sky is unusually good at causing this trouble. A light against an empty background carries little reliable information about distance or size. Without distance, apparent motion cannot establish speed. A moving observer creates parallax. Infrared cameras translate radiation into processed images. Radar systems filter echoes, join tracks and discard clutter. Multiple sensors can strengthen a case, but only when they are calibrated, time-synchronised and shown to concern the same object.

People add another layer. Sincere witnesses can misidentify Venus, aircraft lights, balloons, birds, satellites, meteors, drones and camera effects. Memory then becomes more orderly as an account is repeated. Culture supplies familiar forms: saucers after Kenneth Arnold's 1947 sighting, occupants in the contactee era, abductions after the 1960s, black triangles and secret bases later. This does not make every report imaginary. It means observation and interpretation arrive together.

Secrecy is the subject's central contradiction. Governments have hidden reconnaissance aircraft, test ranges, sensor capabilities and intelligence methods. Roswell's changing official story protected a classified balloon

programme and helped create the suspicion that every later denial concealed something larger. U-2 and OXCART flights generated sightings that could not be explained publicly at the time. Secrecy produced mundane UFOs, then damaged trust in ordinary explanations.

The strongest modern cases deserve neither worship nor mockery. The 2004 Nimitz encounter joins credible testimony, military context and an infrared recording from a later sortie, but the public record lacks the event-wide data needed to verify the most dramatic performance claims. AARO modelled GoFast's display geometry and assessed ordinary performance under stated assumptions while leaving identity open. Authentic footage proves where it came from. It does not prove what it shows.

Current official investigations contain many reports, many resolved cases and a smaller residue limited by poor data. Balloons, birds, aircraft, drones, satellites and sensor effects account for the identified cases. Some events remain open. No public investigation has verified an extraterrestrial craft, body or reverse-engineering programme. That leaves room for discovery, but no licence to convert missing information into a preferred answer.

The UFO story is therefore about what is in the sky and what happens between the sky and a claim. Better observation shrinks some mysteries while creating more reports. Classification protects capabilities while feeding suspicion. The unresolved residue is partly a property of events and partly a product of the system that records them. That is the book.

Why You Should Care

On 6 February 2025, the United States office charged with investigating unidentified anomalous phenomena issued its resolution of GoFast, one of the Navy videos that helped revive public interest in UFOs. The short infrared clip seemed to show an object racing above the ocean. AARO used numbers visible on a public 34-second copy to place it at about 13,000 feet and model a range of ordinary speeds. The original file, accompanying metadata, exact aircraft heading and aircrew accounts were unavailable, so this was a conditional agency assessment rather than a complete reconstruction. The identity remained open; the agency assessed the performance as ordinary.

That distinction changes the subject. UFOs are often sold as a contest between believers who take witnesses seriously and sceptics who explain everything away. The better question is what each piece of evidence can carry. A pilot may establish that an unusual event was seen. A video may establish bearing, duration and image behaviour. Radar may add range or velocity, provided the track belongs to the same event and the system's settings are understood. Secrecy may establish that information has been withheld. None of these facts, alone, identifies an extraterrestrial vehicle.

This is worth understanding because the category contains several different public problems. An unknown object near an aircraft can be a safety hazard. A drone near a base can be an intelligence or security problem. A bright satellite flare can waste investigative time. A classified test can create rumours that survive long after the project is revealed. A report dismissed through ridicule can hide a useful warning. A poor report promoted as proof can bury the same warning under spectacle.

The subject is therefore a compact lesson in evidence under pressure: public importance can be high while identification remains low, and responsible action may begin before a complete explanation exists.

The history also shows how institutions manufacture the evidence they later inherit. Project Blue Book received 12,618 reports and left 701 unidentified.

That residue sounds impressive until the categories are examined: some cases remained open because records were weak, witnesses could not be recontacted or a plausible explanation could not be proved. Decades later, new reporting channels produced a fresh rise in military cases. The higher count did not by itself mean more visitors. Events once left in conversation were now being captured by a standard process.

UFOs matter for another reason. They expose a rare collision among national security, science, journalism, folklore and personal experience. Governments cannot disclose every sensor capability. Scientists cannot test claims without data. Witnesses resent being told that nothing happened when they know they saw something. Journalists need a clear story from material whose defining feature is uncertainty. Online communities can compare records at speed, but can also turn compression artefacts into engineering diagrams by breakfast.

The alien possibility remains intellectually serious in the broad sense that life elsewhere is a scientific question and interstellar technology is not a logical contradiction. This book does not calculate the odds of life, survey exoplanets or explain SETI. It asks the narrower question raised by UFO reports: has any public case crossed from unidentified observation to verified extraterrestrial visitation? The answer so far is no. That answer is not a sneer, and it is not permanent. It is a statement about the evidence now available.

By the end, you will be able to look at a sighting without forcing it into belief or dismissal. You will know why distance matters more than drama, why a sensor image is a measurement rather than a window, why secrecy can be both rational and corrosive, how the modern UFO story developed and what an unresolved case does and does not establish. The sky will still contain unknowns. They will be harder to misuse.

The Core Ideas

Core Idea 1: Unidentified Is a Status, Not a Species

Project Blue Book closed after receiving 12,618 reports. The number that endured in popular memory was 701: the cases left unidentified. It is tempting to imagine 701 matching machines, each belonging to the same hidden fleet. The files contain no such category. They contain reports that ended at the same administrative label for different reasons.

An event begins in the world: a light, return, sound, shape or movement. A person or instrument samples part of it. Someone then makes a report, selecting words, times and estimates. Investigators reconstruct the geometry and compare possible causes. The final label reflects how far that process got. Identified means the evidence supported an explanation. Unidentified means it did not. The label describes the state of the inquiry, not the nature of the object.

This seems like a small correction, but it prevents the largest error in the subject. Balloons, birds, aircraft, planets, satellites, drones, meteors, rocket exhaust, reflections, sensor effects, hoaxes and events with no recoverable cause all enter through the same door. A case can remain unidentified because it was extraordinary. It can also remain unidentified because the observer gave the wrong time, no range was measured, the video lost its metadata or the relevant records were classified. Those possibilities do not carry equal excitement, but the file label does not choose among them. Nor do they deserve equal investigative priority: a report near restricted airspace may demand rapid security action even when its eventual cause is ordinary.

Modern agencies try to separate these outcomes. France's GEIPAN distinguishes cases that are identified, probably identified, unidentified for lack of data and unidentified after investigation. The latest American system separates an active archive from a much smaller set sent for further technical analysis. Its public imagery adds sharper distinctions: an unresolved file may contain an unattributed physical object with ordinary behaviour, a video too weak to determine its subject, or a signal whose

physical source is uncertain. These are open categories, but they do not describe one kind of thing.

The word anomalous can cause another slide. In ordinary use it suggests that something has broken the rules. In an investigative system it can mean that an observation has not yet been matched to a known cause, or that it was reported as unusual. A narrative saying that an object made an instant turn is not the same as a calibrated track proving that it did. The first establishes a claim to investigate. The second would establish a physical performance.

Keeping these levels separate is not a trick for making mystery disappear. It protects mystery from premature explanation in both directions. The believer does not get to rename missing data as alien technology. The dismissive investigator does not get to assign a convenient balloon without enough evidence. A sound classification may end with “unknown”. It should then state what is unknown: identity, distance, speed, origin, or whether several observations concerned one event.

The foundational condition is therefore administrative as much as physical. The unknown residue depends on what was observed, what was recorded and what standard was used to close the file. That condition is causal, not merely descriptive: institutions alter the number and kind of unknowns they appear to discover.

Core Idea 2: The Sky Removes Scale

Hold a coin at arm's length and it can cover the Moon. The coin is small and close; the Moon is vast and distant; the angle at your eye can be similar. In daily life, furniture, roads, shadows and other people provide scale. In an empty sky, those references vanish. A witness may see direction, colour, brightness and apparent movement while having almost no secure information about size or distance.

This is why many impressive UFO calculations contain a hidden guess. Linear size requires angular size and range. Linear speed requires angular movement, range and elapsed time. If the assumed distance is ten times too

large, the inferred size and transverse speed can also be about ten times too large. A light that seems to cross kilometres in a second may be a small nearby object moving modestly. A large distant aircraft can appear almost stationary. The same retinal motion supports different physical stories.

Parallax adds movement that belongs partly to the observer. Look sideways from a moving train and a nearby fence races past while distant hills barely shift. An aircraft sensor looking down at a slow object can create the same impression. The ocean below supplies texture, so the object seems to streak across it, although much of the apparent motion comes from the aircraft and the changing line of sight. The GoFast video became a famous lesson in this geometry.

Night makes the problem worse. A bright aircraft landing light seen head-on can appear fixed, then move abruptly as the aircraft turns. Venus can look like a hovering light because it is bright and lacks nearby reference points. Autokinesis makes a stationary light in darkness seem to wander after prolonged staring. Haze can hide a body while preserving its lights. Atmospheric turbulence can make stars change colour. None of these effects requires a foolish witness. Aviation training warns pilots about visual illusions because trained eyes remain human eyes.

Estimation under surprise is fragile. Witnesses often report an object as “the size of a football pitch” without a measured distance. That phrase may encode an impression rather than geometry. The same problem affects altitude. A civilian pilot can confidently place a light above the aircraft when it is a satellite far beyond the atmosphere. In its latest annual analysis, AARO resolved many reports of high, bright orbs as satellite flares, reflections visible only from particular angles.

The correction is not that vision is worthless. A detailed observation can establish timing, bearing changes, colour, relative position, duration and interaction with known landmarks. Two separated observers can supply triangulation. A radar range or laser measurement can fix distance. Star fields, terrain, flight records and camera specifications can constrain reconstruction. The sky stops being scale-free when independent

coordinates are added.

This also explains why some close encounters deserve different treatment from distant lights. A witness who reports an object metres away, with ground traces or interaction, has supplied claims that can be tested locally. Those claims may fail, remain disputed or point to a conventional cause, but they do not suffer the same distance ambiguity. Socorro in 1964 remained interesting to investigators partly because police officer Lonnie Zamora reported a nearby structured object and physical traces, not a remote point of light. It still did not yield a verified origin.

The rule is plain: apparent size is an angle, apparent speed is a changing angle and brightness is not distance. Until range is known, the most dramatic number in a UFO story is often the least secure.

Core Idea 3: A Sensor Is an Interpreter

Military footage feels harder than testimony because a machine recorded it. The machine did record something, but no sensor offers an unprocessed copy of reality. It selects wavelengths, samples them through optics and electronics, applies filters, compresses data, stabilises or tracks the image, overlays symbols and presents a display designed for an operator's task. Understanding the result requires understanding that chain.

An infrared system measures radiation within particular bands. Its display can show hotter objects as white or black, adjust contrast and change field of view. A bright source may spread beyond its physical outline through glare. Rotation in the optical assembly can make that glare appear to rotate even if the source does not. Automatic tracking can keep a target near the centre while the background moves, hiding which motion belongs to the sensor platform. A clipped video removes the moments before and after the striking sequence that might reveal the target's ordinary behaviour. The display is evidence of the signal after processing, and the processing is interpretable only when its design is known.

Digital cameras add familiar effects. A point of light outside proper focus becomes a disc or polygon shaped by the aperture. Compression produces

blocks, halos and false edges. Digital zoom enlarges pixels, not information. Rolling shutters can distort fast movement. Image stabilisation can make the background jump. None of this proves that a given video is an artefact. It defines questions that must be answered before shape or acceleration is inferred from the pixels.

Radar appears more direct because it can measure range and radial velocity. It is still an engineered interpretation of returned energy. Weather, birds, sea clutter, side lobes, anomalous propagation, electronic interference and filtering choices can create or erase tracks. Software may merge detections judged to belong to one object or split one track into several. A radar operator's recollection of an extraordinary track matters, but the recorded data, system mode, calibration and processing history determine what can be demonstrated later.

Several sensors can transform a weak case into a strong one. They must first be shown to be independent and co-referential. A pilot, wingman and camera all looking along the same bearing may share the same mistaken range. A radar cue can direct eyes and optics towards a region without proving that every return and light is the same object. Conversely, two separated calibrated radars, an optical track and environmental records aligned in time would sharply reduce ordinary options.

Recent official case work shows why sensor literacy resolves claims in layers. In one AARO analysis, apparent wakes behind objects were attributed to sensor effects rather than physical exhaust. In the Puerto Rico case often described as a craft entering water and splitting, AARO reconstructed two objects remaining over land and travelling at about 8 miles per hour with the wind. It assessed the absence of anomalous or transmedium behaviour with high confidence, and their identity as a pair of sky lanterns with moderate confidence. Behaviour was resolved more strongly than identity.

A sensor image is therefore neither sacred nor disposable. It is a measurement with a lineage. The useful questions concern frame rate, field of view, platform position, pointing angle, range source, tracking mode,

environmental conditions, original file and metadata. A case strengthens when those pieces agree. It weakens when a cropped copy is treated as if the missing instrument record never existed.

Machines extend perception, yet they do not remove interpretation. They move it into hardware, software and geometry, where confidence can sound technical before it has been earned.

Core Idea 4: A Report Becomes a Story

Kenneth Arnold did not merely see nine objects near Mount Rainier in June 1947. His account entered a media system searching for a name. He compared their motion to saucers skipping across water and also described flat forms. “Flying saucer” compressed those details into an object category. Within days, people across the United States knew what to look for. Reports multiplied, and the new label travelled abroad.

This does not mean newspapers invented every sighting. It shows that perception is reported through available concepts. Before 1947, strange wartime lights were called foo fighters and post-war objects over Scandinavia were called ghost rockets. In the 1950s the saucer acquired occupants. Contactees such as George Adamski described benevolent visitors with warnings for humanity. By the 1960s, the encounter could include medical examination, missing time and abduction. Later decades supplied secret underground bases, black triangles and hybrid programmes. The sky stayed broad; the story grammar changed.

Memory helps that grammar settle. An unexpected event is encoded under stress, often without reliable duration or sequence. Retelling can stabilise an account while increasing detail. Questions from investigators, friends or broadcasters may offer possible shapes and motives. Later information can become difficult to separate from the original perception. Confidence may rise because the story has become coherent, not because the first observation was complete. A timestamped first account has special value because it preserves uncertainty before retelling rewards a cleaner narrative. Contradictions in that early record may be informative rather than

discrediting.

The 1961 experience of Betty and Barney Hill became the model alien-abduction narrative. They first reported a strange light and a disturbing drive through New Hampshire. Betty later had vivid dreams. In 1964 both underwent hypnosis, during which detailed accounts of capture and examination emerged. Hypnosis can increase recall quantity and confidence, but it can also increase suggestion and confabulation. The Hills' distress and sincerity can be respected without treating every recovered detail as a recording played back from storage.

Groups complicate matters further. Multiple witnesses can provide independent corroboration, or they can influence one another before statements are taken. A formation reported after discussion may reflect several views converging on a shared description. An interviewer who separates witnesses, records exact words promptly and asks open questions preserves more evidence than one who begins by asking whether it was a triangular craft. The social history of a report starts minutes after the event.

Ridicule damages this process. For decades, pilots and military personnel feared that reporting a strange observation would harm their reputations. Silence removed potentially useful cases. Mockery also encouraged witnesses to seek communities that promised immediate belief, where weak claims could harden without challenge. A better system neither laughs nor certifies. It records the account quickly, protects the witness from punishment and keeps the identification question open.

The distinction to hold is between experience and explanation. People can undergo frightening, baffling experiences with lasting effects. Sleep paralysis, dreams, memory errors, misperception and social suggestion are not accusations of dishonesty. Nor do they explain every report. They show why an honest account can become more specific as its evidential connection to the first moment becomes harder to trace.

A UFO report is a human document. Its words preserve observations,

estimates, expectations and later reconstruction in the same container. Reading it well means taking the witness seriously enough to separate those parts.

Core Idea 5: Secrecy Creates Real Shadows

The United States Army airfield at Roswell issued a press release on 8 July 1947 saying that it had recovered a “flying disc”. The claim was replaced within hours by a weather-balloon explanation. Decades later, the Air Force concluded that Project Mogul, a classified programme using high-altitude balloon trains to detect Soviet nuclear tests, best fitted the ranch debris. That is the best documented terrestrial account, not a reconstruction accepted in every detail. The first correction protected a secret and created the perfect structure for suspicion: officials had changed their story because officials had something to hide.

They did. The question is what.

States conceal aircraft, sensors, flight routes, sources, methods and vulnerabilities. A clear infrared frame can reveal less about its target than about the camera’s range and resolution. Radar data can expose where a system looks, what it filters and how accurately it tracks. Test schedules can reveal a new platform before it is operational. Secrecy around such information is ordinary national-security practice, even when the image itself looks harmless.

Classified aircraft have generated UFO reports. U-2 reconnaissance flights operated at altitudes that many observers did not associate with aircraft, catching sunlight after the ground below had darkened. The CIA later assessed that U-2 and OXCART flights accounted for a large share of investigated reports in the late 1950s and 1960s. The exact proportion is the agency’s retrospective estimate, but the mechanism is secure: people saw real secret machines that investigators could not identify publicly. The A-12 OXCART, tested at the Nevada site later bound to Area 51 mythology, flew higher and faster than familiar traffic.

Official efforts to manage public belief deepened the damage. After the 1952

Washington sightings, the Robertson Panel worried that a flood of reports could clog defence communications and be exploited by an adversary. It recommended public education and debunking, along with monitoring of UFO groups. That response was shaped by Cold War risk, not proof of alien visitors. Yet an institution that sets out to reduce public interest cannot later expect every dismissal to be read as neutral inquiry.

Compartmentalisation adds ambiguity. An official may be denied access because a programme lies outside their role, because it does not exist or because the requested label is wrong. A witness can truthfully say that information was withheld without knowing its content. A document can be classified because it reveals a sensor, not because it reveals a craft. Redaction proves that text is hidden. It does not identify the missing nouns.

This is why disclosure rarely ends the argument. Declassified records reveal secret balloon projects, reconnaissance flights, test ranges and internal uncertainty. For some readers, each release supports a conventional history. For others, every missing attachment indicates a deeper layer. The history of partial explanations makes both reactions psychologically intelligible, but only one rule keeps the evidence usable: infer secrecy from evidence of secrecy, then assess the content separately.

There is also room for misconduct. Agencies can mishandle records, protect embarrassment, overclassify material or give misleading cover stories. AARO's 2024 historical review reported no verifiable support for a non-human recovery or reverse-engineering programme, while documenting proposals and rumours that had been mistaken for one. Its conclusion is an evidence assessment, not a guarantee that every compartment has always behaved well. Institutional fallibility cuts both ways. It can hide facts, and it can create legends from paperwork, hearsay and misunderstood access.

Secrecy is therefore neither a universal solvent nor irrelevant noise. It explains why some UFOs were secret human technology and why later witnesses distrusted accurate explanations. The shadow is real. Its shape cannot be read from the darkness alone.

Core Idea 6: Extraordinary Performance Has to Be Measured

The 2004 Nimitz encounter is powerful because the witnesses were experienced naval aviators operating within a military exercise. Commander David Fravor described a white, oblong object moving above disturbed water, responding to his descent and accelerating away. Other personnel reported unusual radar tracks. A short infrared video, commonly called FLIR1, was recorded by another crew on a later sortie and became associated with the event. The case contains serious testimony and a record with military provenance. It remains publicly unresolved.

That last sentence is narrower than many retellings. The public video does not show the whole encounter described by Fravor, and the most dramatic radar data have not been released in a form that independent analysts can reconstruct. Different observations occurred at different times. The video authenticates a naval recording of an unidentified target. It does not, by itself, measure the instant acceleration, extreme altitude changes or impossible manoeuvres attached to the wider story.

Performance is a physical claim. To establish speed, investigators need position over time, including range. To establish acceleration, they need a reliable track with enough temporal resolution. To claim a turn that would crush occupants, they need to show that the track represents one object rather than a tracking switch, display effect or mistaken association. To claim absence of propulsion, they need imagery capable of detecting the relevant signatures under the conditions. Adjectives cannot replace those quantities.

GoFast demonstrates the trap. The 2015 infrared clip appears to show an object racing just above the sea. Viewers often treated the name and moving background as measurements. NASA illustrated the geometry with an estimate near 40 miles per hour. AARO later used display data from the public 34-second copy and modelled possible aircraft headings and winds, producing wind-corrected bounds of about 5 to 92 miles per hour rather than a single literal speed solution. The original file, accompanying metadata and

aircrew accounts were unavailable. AARO nevertheless assessed with high confidence that the target showed no anomalous performance; its identity remained open.

Gimbal presents another interpretive problem. In the 2015 clip, a bright infrared image appears to rotate while aircrew react to a formation reported nearby. The footage is authentic, but a bright infrared image can include glare and need not preserve a solid outline. The public clip and incomplete data chain cannot establish how much of the apparent rotation belonged to the source, the optical system or both. Confident claims in either direction outrun the available record.

None of this makes pilot testimony worthless. Skilled observers can notice operational anomalies, compare an event with known aircraft and report cockpit context that a clip omits. Their testimony can justify investigation. Expertise is strongest within the conditions it was trained for. A pilot can identify a traffic conflict under normal visual cues while still lacking range to a featureless light or access to how a particular sensor processed an image.

The extraterrestrial hypothesis carries two separate burdens. First, the evidence must establish an object or event with properties not explained by known sources or artefacts. Second, it must establish non-human origin rather than secret human technology, an unknown natural process, data error or some other cause. A recovered device with traceable custody and independently tested materials could do this. Reproducible communications or calibrated multisite tracks with distinctive engineering signatures could also change the case. Public UFO evidence has not reached that threshold.

The disciplined position is not that extraordinary craft are impossible. It is that extraordinary performance must exist in the measurements before it exists in the conclusion. A case can be compelling, important and unresolved while remaining far from proof of visitation.

Core Idea 7: The Residue Is Made by the Pipeline

In June 2021, the American intelligence community reported 144 military cases gathered from 2004 onwards. Eighty involved observation by more than one sensor, yet only one had been identified in the initial assessment. The figures looked like a sudden accumulation of mystery. They also reflected a new reporting system. The Navy had established a standard mechanism in 2019 and the Air Force followed in 2020. Events that might once have stayed in a ready room or logbook entered a central file.

A reporting pipeline controls what becomes visible. Who is allowed to report? What fields must they complete? How soon after the event? Are original files preserved? Can investigators access flight plans, weather, satellite positions and classified programmes? Does the system punish embarrassment? Does it count duplicate accounts as one event? Change those rules and the number of UFOs changes even if the sky does not. The same office can appear to discover a wave by importing a backlog, widening eligibility or lowering the cost of reporting.

The latest AARO annual report makes the process visible. With information cut off on 30 May 2025, the office held 1,870 reports. It had received 319 during the covered period. It resolved 114 from that intake and 256 older cases, including a large batch identified as satellite flaring after a new analytic capability became available. Nine incoming cases merited further specialist analysis. Another 191 went into an active archive because the available data could not establish whether their behaviour was conventional.

Those numbers do not form a ladder from ordinary to alien. They form different exits from an investigation. Resolution can arrive years later when a catalogue, model or sensor record becomes available. Active archive means that the trail is too thin at present. Further analysis means the trail is strong enough to spend more effort on. A report near a military site may matter because it could involve a drone or surveillance platform even when nobody suspects another planet.

France offers a useful comparison. GEIPAN has collected public reports

since 1977 and publishes classified case files. Its live statistics in August 2026 placed roughly two-thirds in identified or probably identified categories, about 30 per cent as unidentified for lack of data and just over 3 per cent as unidentified after investigation. The result depends on its definitions, evidence threshold and public intake. It cannot be compared directly with a military database, which is the point. The residue belongs to the method as well as the events.

Collection bias shapes location and form. AARO receives more reports where American military sensors and personnel are concentrated, so maps cluster around operating areas and the United States. Bright lights and spheroidal objects dominate the reported morphologies. Those categories are shaped partly by observation, since many distant sources collapse to points or discs. A surge in satellite constellations can create a surge in reports. Improved satellite modelling can then close old files in batches. The database records changes in the sky, attention and analytic capability at once.

The opening distinction now acquires its mechanism. “Unidentified” is a status, and systems manufacture statuses. Better forms, rapid reporting, calibrated sensors and shared data will initially produce more cases because more events are captured. Over time, they should produce better resolutions and a smaller insufficient-data category. Greater secrecy, stigma or fragmented records do the reverse. They leave a large residue that cannot answer the question placed upon it.

There may be rare events within that residue that would transform science or security if measured well. The rational response is to improve measurement, not to declare the residue empty or fill it with visitors. The unknown is partly what happened above us. It is also what our institutions failed to preserve.

How It Actually Works

Before the saucer

Pilots were reporting strange objects before anyone called them UFOs. During the Second World War, Allied aircrew used the name foo fighters for lights that appeared to follow aircraft. Investigators considered enemy devices, electrical effects, misidentified stars and other causes. No single explanation covered every account. In 1946, reports of “ghost rockets” crossed Scandinavia. Some resembled meteors or aircraft; others remained uncertain. The names fitted the technology people feared.

The conditions for a modern mystery were already present. Aircraft had made the upper sky a place of machines. Radar had created tracks that no eye could see. Rockets suggested speeds and altitudes beyond familiar flight. Nuclear secrecy made hidden programmes plausible. Science fiction had given visitors from other worlds recognisable vehicles. A strange light could therefore be interpreted as an enemy weapon, an experimental craft, a natural event or an extraterrestrial machine without changing the observation itself.

Earlier cultures had recorded comets, celestial battles and religious signs. Those accounts cannot be translated cleanly into modern UFO files because their categories, records and expectations were different. The modern phenomenon began when industrial states acquired air forces, mass media and technical investigation at the same moment that the public acquired a ready image of advanced visitors. The sky had always contained surprises. Now it contained paperwork.

1947: a label takes flight

On 24 June 1947, private pilot Kenneth Arnold was flying near Mount Rainier in Washington State while helping search for a missing military aircraft. He reported nine objects moving in formation at extraordinary apparent speed. His descriptions included flat, unusual forms and a motion like saucers skipping across water. Newspapers compressed the comparison into “flying saucers”. A category was born before any object had been recovered.

Reports surged through the summer. The new label made separate experiences legible to one another. It told editors what counted as a story and witnesses what details mattered. Some reports were hoaxes or jokes. Some were aircraft, balloons, astronomical objects or poor estimates. Others lacked enough information. Together they created a public event larger than Arnold's sighting.

Two weeks later, Roswell Army Air Field announced that personnel had recovered a flying disc from a ranch in New Mexico. The statement was startling because the 509th Bomb Group was associated with America's atomic force. A second account followed quickly: the debris came from a weather balloon. Photographs showed officers with foil, rubber and sticks. The story then receded. The modern Roswell myth, with alien bodies and a vast recovery programme, developed much later from interviews, books and disputed recollections.

The Air Force faced a practical problem. Even if most reports were ordinary, an unfamiliar aircraft could be Soviet. In late December the Air Force began the effort often called Project Saucer; in January 1948 it formalised the work as Project Sign. The flying saucer had moved from newspaper novelty into an intelligence system.

Roswell: the half-life of a cover story

The weather-balloon explanation was incomplete. The Air Force's later historical inquiry concluded that the ranch debris was consistent with Project Mogul, a classified effort to use balloon-borne instruments to detect Soviet nuclear tests. That account supplies a documented terrestrial source for unusual balloon materials and a reason for secrecy, though it does not settle every later recollection. The first official correction concealed the equipment's purpose, leaving a gap that later accounts could fill.

Roswell returned to public attention in the late 1970s and became the centre of UFO culture during the following decade. Former personnel and residents offered memories of unusual debris, military recovery activity and bodies. Accounts changed across interviews, witnesses disagreed and some stories concerned events years later. The Air Force's 1997 follow-up argued that later body narratives had absorbed memories of test dummies and accidents from the 1950s. That explanation has been criticised because those events did not occur in July 1947. The stronger point is narrower: no contemporaneous record establishes alien bodies, while the documented balloon programme explains why unusual material and secrecy were present.

Roswell survives because it binds three facts that are easy to fuse. Officials issued a sensational statement. Officials replaced it with a cover story. Officials ran secret programmes in the region. None of those facts identifies extraterrestrial wreckage, but together they make later testimony feel pre-confirmed. Every missing document appears to belong to the recovery; every inconsistency appears intentional.

A useful investigation asks what each record dates from and what it can support. A 1947 press release proves that the field issued the phrase "flying disc". A later recollection proves that a witness later held a memory or belief. A classified project proves a reason for concealment. The alien conclusion requires evidence that joins those facts to a non-human device. That joint has not appeared in public material.

The Air Force files the sky

Project Sign evaluated 243 reports and ended without a decisive conclusion. Project Grudge followed with a more dismissive posture, treating reports as misidentification, fabrication or hoax. UFO reports continued, and Cold War pressure kept the strategic question alive. In March 1952, the Air Force established Project Blue Book under Captain Edward Ruppelt, who standardised terminology and sought more systematic investigation.

The timing mattered. During July 1952, radar operators and witnesses reported lights or returns around Washington, DC. Interceptors were launched. Some episodes were associated with temperature inversions, stars, aircraft and radar effects, but no explanation satisfied every participant. The sightings made front pages because they occurred near the capital while nuclear war and Soviet penetration were live fears. A mystery over Washington could not remain a hobby.

The CIA convened the Robertson Panel in January 1953. Its scientists found no direct evidence of a threat or extraterrestrial craft. Their larger concern was the volume of reports. A flood of false alarms could burden defence channels or provide cover for an attack. The panel recommended public education and debunking, and suggested monitoring civilian UFO groups. The logic was security management. The consequence was a documentary basis for later claims that authorities had decided what the public should believe.

Blue Book continued through changes in staff and purpose. Its files contain strong reports, weak reports, photographs, radar claims, newspaper clippings and repeated attempts to match observations with astronomy, weather and aircraft. Lonnie Zamora's 1964 report from Socorro, New Mexico, remained one of the harder cases: a police officer described a nearby egg-shaped object, figures, flame and ground traces. Investigation found no agreed conventional cause. It also found no material that established origin.

By 1966, public criticism had grown after J. Allen Hynek, Blue Book's

astronomical consultant, suggested swamp gas as a possible explanation for some Michigan lights. The phrase became a symbol of perfunctory dismissal. The Air Force commissioned a University of Colorado study led by physicist Edward Condon. Its 1968 report concluded that further extensive investigation was unlikely to advance science, although individual case analyses varied and some remained unexplained. A National Academy panel accepted the study's technical approach. Critics argued that the conclusion was broader than the case work justified.

Blue Book ended in December 1969. Its official record contained 12,618 reports, 701 classified as unidentified. The programme's closure removed a government office. It did not remove the sky, the reports or the distrust created by years of mixed seriousness.

The witness becomes the subject

During the 1950s, the story moved from objects to occupants. George Adamski said he had met a visitor from Venus in the California desert in 1952. His photographs and accounts were disputed, but the contactee model spread: advanced beings arrived with spiritual or political warnings, often about nuclear weapons. The witness was no longer a person who had glimpsed a machine. He could be an emissary.

The 1960s changed the tone. Betty and Barney Hill reported a disturbing night drive in New Hampshire in 1961 after seeing a light that seemed to follow them. Betty later described vivid dreams. Under hypnosis in 1964, both gave detailed accounts of being taken aboard a craft and examined. The case became widely known through a 1966 book. It established features that later abduction narratives repeated: missing time, medical procedures, small humanoid beings and recovered memory.

Researchers split over what such consistency meant. Some treated recurring details as evidence of a shared external cause. Psychologists and sceptical investigators pointed to suggestion, sleep phenomena, cultural exposure and the reconstructive nature of memory. Hypnosis was especially troublesome because it can produce confident detail without separating

accurate recall from confabulation. The experiences could be sincere and distressing while their interpretation remained uncertain.

Hynek tried to rescue a narrower field of inquiry from both official dismissal and contactee excess. His “close encounter” categories ranked reports by apparent proximity, on the theory that nearby cases should offer more information. The scheme became famous through cinema, but its useful feature was investigative: a trace, measurement or interaction can be checked in ways that a remote light cannot.

By the 1970s, civilian groups, magazines and researchers in Europe, Latin America, Australia and elsewhere held the subject together. They preserved records that states ignored or kept unevenly, but standards varied. A case could be investigated carefully, promoted before verification or absorbed into a growing belief system. No common gatekeeper existed across countries or organisations. UFO culture became both archive and amplifier.

Classified aircraft and Area 51

While public investigators debated visitors, American engineers were building machines designed to avoid notice. The U-2 flew above ordinary commercial traffic and could remain sunlit after observers below were in darkness. Its height made familiar speed and size estimates unreliable. The CIA later assessed that reconnaissance flights explained a large share of the reports it investigated during the 1950s and 1960s.

OX CART pushed the mismatch further. The A-12 could fly above 90,000 feet at more than three times the speed of sound. Tests took place at a remote Nevada site whose existence was kept out of ordinary public discussion. The site later known as Area 51 became an ideal container for every rumour about recovered craft because secret aircraft were present and accurate explanations were unavailable.

The alien association hardened after Bob Lazar appeared on Las Vegas television in 1989 claiming that he had worked near the site on extraterrestrial vehicles. The broadcast supplied a location, programme structure and insider role for a belief already shaped by Roswell. No publicly

verifiable craft or technical record accompanied the claim. Area 51 entered popular culture as the place where the missing evidence must be stored.

Secret technology does not explain every report. It explains why blanket official denial was never a neutral act. A government could tell the truth about aliens while withholding the human aircraft that caused the question. The listener received one denial and sensed a second secret behind it. Often there was one.

The military sensor returns

In November 2004, the carrier group centred on USS Nimitz was training off Southern California. Personnel aboard USS Princeton reported unusual radar tracks. Commander David Fravor and other aviators were directed towards one location. Fravor later described a white oblong object above disturbed water, with no visible wings or exhaust. As he manoeuvred, it appeared to respond and then depart with striking speed. A later flight recorded the infrared clip known as FLIR1.

The encounter differed from a lone civilian sighting. It involved trained personnel, military systems and operational context. It also reached the public as separate layers: recollections, summaries, a short video and claims about radar behaviour. The raw sensor record needed to connect every layer was not released. The case therefore remained strong enough to deserve study and too incomplete to carry the performance claims often placed upon it.

Two further Navy clips from January 2015 became known as Gimbal and GoFast. They showed unidentified infrared targets while aircrew reacted in real time. In December 2017, reporting by The New York Times revealed a Pentagon-funded aerospace study and brought the videos into mass attention. In April 2020, the Department of Defense authorised release of the three clips, confirming that they were Navy footage. The release settled provenance. It left identification open.

This distinction was often lost. Claims that the Pentagon had admitted UFOs were real sounded like a reversal, although the department had admitted

that the videos were authentic and the targets unidentified. Authentic footage can show a balloon. Unidentified footage can later be resolved. GoFast was eventually assessed as lacking anomalous speed. Gimbal remained debated in public because the short clip could not settle how the optics, glare and source contributed to the apparent rotation.

Military reporting also carried a practical change. Pilots were encouraged to record unusual objects without career stigma. That improved safety and intelligence collection. It also raised the case count and shifted public attention towards sensor displays whose interpretation required data that remained classified.

UAP becomes an institution

The name changed from UFO to UAP, first commonly expanded as unidentified aerial phenomena and later as unidentified anomalous phenomena. The new term aimed to loosen the alien association and cover events reported in air, sea, space or across domains. Renaming did not make the category more exotic. It made the reporting brief broader.

A Pentagon UAP Task Force preceded the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, created in 2022. The intelligence community's 2021 preliminary assessment reviewed 144 military reports from 2004 onwards. Eighty involved more than one sensor, but inconsistent records and missing data prevented firm conclusions in most. The report listed ordinary clutter, atmospheric phenomena, government or industry programmes, foreign systems and an “other” category rather than naming one cause.

NASA convened an independent study team and published its report in September 2023. It found no conclusive peer-reviewed evidence of extraterrestrial origin and stressed poor data quality, calibration, metadata and the need for multiple measurements. NASA's role was not to reopen old case files. It was to ask how better civilian and scientific collection could make future reports testable.

Congressional attention brought testimony from military witnesses and allegations of hidden recovery programmes. In July 2023, former

intelligence officer David Grusch testified that he had been told of a long-running crash-retrieval and reverse-engineering effort. His public claim was serious and made under oath, but the central evidence presented publicly was second-hand. No craft, material or test result accompanied it. AARO's 2024 historical review said it found no empirical evidence of an extraterrestrial reverse-engineering programme and traced several allegations to misunderstood projects, proposals or hearsay.

Official conclusions did not end suspicion, partly because access remained classified and partly because the subject had accumulated decades of earned distrust. They did change what could be claimed responsibly. A recovery programme was no longer a rumour nobody had examined. It was a contested allegation investigated by an office authorised to receive highly classified information, with no public confirming evidence found.

What is out there now

The current files contain familiar things seen under unfamiliar conditions. AARO's fiscal year 2025 report covered 319 incoming reports and described a total holding of 1,870. During the period it resolved 370 cases, including older files. Identified causes included balloons, birds, aircraft, drones, satellites, a rocket launch and a manned jet pack. A new modelling capability allowed 238 reports across its holdings to be resolved as satellite flaring. One striking change in the modern sky is a new population of lights rather than a new kind of vehicle. Satellite constellations, launch trains and brief specular reflections place bright moving points where pilots and civilians may not expect them. A changing sky and a new model can alter the archive together: more objects above us can create more genuine observations without creating more anomalous technology.

Nine incoming cases were sent for deeper technical analysis. Another 191 entered an active archive because available information could not establish whether the event behaved conventionally. This is the present residue: a small set with enough interest to examine further and a much larger set whose evidence ran out. Some narrative reports near sensitive sites described performance beyond known systems, but arrived without

technical data capable of validating the description.

AARO's public imagery makes the open category concrete. One European case is assessed with high confidence to show a physical object whose form and behaviour are unremarkable, but its attribution remains unknown. A 30-second phone video is too weak to determine its subject. In two infrared cases from the Middle East, analysts cannot tell whether the apparent thermal contrast came from a physical source or the sensor. Unresolved can therefore mean unknown identity, inadequate recording or uncertain signal provenance. None of those labels certifies anomalous performance.

Outside the United States, systems differ. France's GEIPAN takes civilian reports, works with police, meteorologists and aviation bodies, and publishes case classifications. Most of its holdings are identified or probably identified. Many remain open because data are missing. A few per cent remain unidentified after investigation. Different intake rules produce different residues.

What is out there, then, is a crowded technical sky: aircraft, balloons, drones, birds, planets, satellites, launches, debris, atmospheric effects, secret systems and observations that cannot be reconstructed. There may be phenomena not yet recognised. There is no publicly verified extraterrestrial vehicle, body or material. The unknown category remains legitimate. Its contents remain plural.

How we know

The history rests on Air Force case files, intelligence assessments, declassified programme histories, congressional records, witness statements, contemporary reporting and later interviews. These sources do different jobs. A dated memo can establish what an agency recorded, not whether its explanation was correct. Testimony can preserve experience, not supply missing range. A declassified aircraft history can explain why secrecy existed without matching every sighting to a flight.

Modern sensor cases are limited by public access. Short released clips rarely include original files, complete metadata, platform tracks, radar

settings or all observations from the event. AARO's GoFast paper used a public 34-second copy because the original and accompanying metadata were no longer available; it could not fix the aircraft's exact position or heading and did not obtain aircrew accounts. Its high-confidence performance assessment is therefore conditional on stated assumptions, not a complete reconstruction.

Official reviews deserve weight because they can access records unavailable to the public. They are not infallible, and their absence findings cannot prove that no concealed fact exists anywhere. Their importance is narrower: repeated investigations have not produced verifiable public evidence of extraterrestrial craft or reverse engineering. The remaining cases should be described at the confidence their data permit, no higher and no lower.

What People Get Wrong

“UFO means alien spacecraft”

The term arrives with a built-in picture: a metal disc from another star. That association became powerful because “flying saucer” preceded the more neutral acronym and because films, contactee stories and Roswell supplied occupants. In official use, however, UFO and UAP are intake categories. They include observations later identified as balloons, birds, aircraft, satellites, drones, planets, optical effects and sensor artefacts. They also include cases that cannot be identified.

Calling something a UFO says that identification has not been completed. It does not say that the object violated physics, was a craft or came from elsewhere. This matters because language can smuggle the conclusion into the first sentence. Replace *a UFO flew past the aircraft* with *the crew reported an unidentified light*, and the questions become visible again: range, duration, bearing, motion and corroboration.

The category is also unstable across institutions and decades. One database may accept a witness account; another may require military

relevance or sensor data. One investigator may close a probable satellite; another may retain it as unknown because the individual satellite was not proved. A count of UFOs is therefore a count of reports processed under stated rules. It is not a census of one class of vehicle. The word unknown carries no probability distribution. It cannot tell us how many causes are mundane, secret, natural or new.

“A trained pilot cannot be mistaken”

Pilots are valuable witnesses because they understand aircraft, cockpit workload, relative motion and operational context. Training also teaches them to act on uncertain hazards rather than wait for perfect identification. Neither skill grants a direct measurement of distance to an isolated light.

Aviation manuals warn about autokinesis, false horizons, loss of depth cues and other visual illusions because professionals encounter them. A pilot viewing a target through infrared optics may know the platform and display better than a casual viewer while still lacking the engineering data needed to interpret glare or tracking behaviour. Expertise narrows some explanations; it does not remove human perception or instrument limits.

The operational purpose of an observation matters. A pilot does not need to identify a possible traffic conflict before avoiding it or reporting it. Conservative safety judgement can be correct even when later reconstruction changes the object's distance or speed. Respecting a pilot means preserving the account, cockpit context and uncertainty, then testing each physical inference. Turning professional status into an infallibility claim places a burden on the witness that no profession can carry.

“Several sensors make a case conclusive”

A case described as seen on radar, infrared and by four pilots sounds like four independent proofs. It may be. It may also be several dependent views sharing one wrong assumption. A radar cue can direct pilots and cameras towards the same region. If range is uncertain or tracks are associated incorrectly, every observer may inherit the same error.

True multisensor evidence requires time synchronisation, calibration, known sensor modes, preserved metadata and a demonstrated match to one event. Separated vantage points are especially useful because they can fix range through triangulation. Different failure modes matter more than a raw sensor count. One calibrated track with position over time can establish more than ten sincere descriptions of speed.

Common-cause errors deserve special attention. The same database can feed several displays. The same bright source can trigger a radar investigation and then be found by pilots who expect an unusual target. Later interviews can make independent memories converge. None of this makes the evidence worthless. It changes how much new information each source adds. “Multiple sensors” should open the data chain, not close the argument.

“The Navy videos show impossible motion”

The three released clips are authentic Navy footage of targets that were unidentified at the time of release. That is what official authentication established. It did not certify alien origin or every performance claim attached to the encounters.

GoFast appeared to race over the sea, but AARO's model found ordinary performance across stated assumptions while leaving identity open. Gimbal's bright infrared image is not a secure outline of a solid object, and the public clip cannot establish how much apparent rotation came from the source, the optics or both. FLIR1 was recorded by a later crew within the wider Nimitz event and does not display all the manoeuvres described in testimony.

The clips are short products of longer events. Viewers usually lack the original file, complete telemetry, radar record, sensor settings, platform track and the minutes before and after the selected sequence. For GoFast, AARO did not possess the original file or its metadata. A dramatic radio call may refer to information outside the frame. A label can become a measurement by repetition. The correct treatment is case by case: separate what the

pixels show, what the display numbers permit, what witnesses recall and what later graphics claim.

“Government secrecy proves an alien programme”

Secrecy makes hidden programmes possible, and governments have lied or used cover stories to protect them. Roswell's weather-balloon account concealed Project Mogul's intelligence purpose. U-2 and OXCART flights produced sightings that could not be explained openly. Classified sensors still limit what can be released. Suspicion did not arise from nothing.

The error is to treat evidence of concealment as evidence of one particular concealed thing. A redaction may protect radar capability, an informant, a test route or bureaucratic embarrassment. A denied access request may reflect compartmentalisation. A witness may know that a programme exists while misunderstanding its purpose. The normal architecture of secret government produces gaps, code names and contradictory partial knowledge without requiring an alien centre.

AARO's historical review said its record search and interviews did not substantiate an extraterrestrial recovery effort, despite finding proposals, rumours and secret human projects that had been associated with one. A stronger claim would need records whose provenance can be checked, witnesses with direct and mutually consistent access, or material with a traceable chain of custody and independent analysis. Secrecy raises the need for scrutiny. It does not choose the hidden noun.

“Every famous case has been debunked”

Some sceptical accounts replace investigation with a mirror image of belief. A plausible conventional cause is announced as a solved case even when the evidence cannot distinguish it from alternatives. This creates brittle explanations and teaches witnesses that investigators are interested only in closure.

Cases such as Socorro and Nimitz remain publicly unresolved. That status

should survive unless stronger evidence appears. Other celebrated cases have lost their central claim without yielding a precise identity. GoFast remains unidentified, yet AARO assessed its supposed extreme speed as ordinary under a geometric model. A case may contain several observations that later reporting merges into one event; resolving one layer does not resolve the rest.

Partial resolution is normal. Investigators can establish that a photograph is out of focus without identifying its light source, or identify a balloon class without proving the exact balloon. Identity, behaviour and origin are separate questions. “Debunked” often compresses those distinctions into a victory word. Keeping a case open is not surrender. Assigning certainty that the file cannot support is. A candidate explanation should be called probable only when it matches the case's clock, geometry and recorded behaviour.

“Unresolved cases are the best evidence for visitation”

A residue can look persuasive: explain ninety-five cases conventionally and the remaining five appear purified of ordinary causes. That inference works only if each remaining case has enough evidence to exclude those causes. Often the opposite is true. Hard cases survive because key information is absent, not because every mundane option failed.

The residue is selected by failure to close, so it is enriched for missing times, lost originals, uncertain ranges, dead witnesses, unavailable records and incompatible accounts. This is a form of survivor bias. The cases that remain longest can be those least capable of producing a verdict. Age may increase fame while reducing testability.

The evidential value of a case depends on the quality and discriminating power of its data, not on the time it has remained unsolved. A calibrated multisite track with recoverable signals would matter even if identified within a week. A light described decades later may remain unresolved for ever and establish little. The extraterrestrial hypothesis needs positive features that point towards non-human technology, together with custody or

reproducibility. Ignorance is a gap in explanation. It is not a sample of alien origin.

Use It

Separate the event from the account

Suppose a UFO claim arrives. Write three sentences instead of one. First state the reported observation: *A pilot saw a bright object at two o'clock for twelve seconds.* Then state the reconstruction: *The pilot estimated it was a large craft moving at extreme speed.* Then state the proposed explanation: *The object was extraterrestrial.*

Those sentences may all prove correct, but they rest on different evidence. The observation can be strong even when the reconstruction is weak. The reconstruction may require an assumed range. The explanation may require evidence of manufacture and origin that the sighting cannot supply. News reports often fuse all three, turning “seemed to accelerate” into “accelerated” and then into “used unknown propulsion”.

This separation protects witnesses. You do not need to deny that they experienced something unusual in order to question the later model. It also protects inquiry from cheap dismissal. Explaining one inference does not erase the event. The method works best when the wording stays close to what was recorded before discussion, publicity or retrospective calculation added detail.

Ask for the missing coordinate

Most dramatic sky claims have one absent variable carrying the conclusion. For size and transverse speed, it is often range. For acceleration, it may be a continuous position track. For a supposed silent craft, it may be distance and the ambient noise level. For a transmedium claim, it may be proof that the same object crossed the boundary rather than disappearing behind it.

Ask which measurement would collapse the range of explanations. A second separated camera can fix distance. Original metadata can provide

time and lens settings. Platform position and sensor pointing angle can turn apparent motion into geometry. Weather records can test balloon drift. Satellite catalogues can test flares and trains. Air-traffic data can test aircraft routes.

The question is more useful than demanding “better evidence” in general. It identifies what the current evidence cannot decide and what a future observation should preserve. An exciting case may become ordinary once one coordinate is known. It may become more important. Either outcome is progress.

Compare failure modes, not sensor counts

Treat each sensor as a witness with specialised strengths and characteristic mistakes. A visible-light camera records colour and angular position but may lose range. Infrared can reveal heat contrast through darkness but introduces glare, polarity and tracking effects. Radar may supply range and radial speed but can suffer clutter, propagation effects and track-association errors. Human observers supply context and adaptive attention but estimate poorly under surprise.

A second source adds the most when it can fail differently. Two cropped copies of the same video are one source. Two people who discussed the event before recording statements are partly dependent. Two radars at separated sites, using different frequencies and preserving raw data, are more valuable. A camera and radar become powerful when their clocks, bearings and target identity align.

This lens stops “multisensor” functioning as a magic word. It also prevents a single known artefact from being used to dismiss every instrument. The question is whether the combined evidence removes alternatives, not whether the case can list impressive equipment.

Treat secrecy as a competing cause

When a government withholds material, add secret human activity to the explanation set before adding aliens. Classified aircraft, drones, electronic warfare, surveillance systems and sensor capabilities are known reasons for concealment. Historical cases show that such programmes can generate strange observations and misleading cover stories.

This is not a command to trust official denials. It is a way to stop secrecy from counting twice. In weak arguments, a missing file first proves that evidence is hidden and then proves that the hidden evidence must show a non-human craft. The second step has no support. Ask what kind of secret each institution has the incentive and ability to protect, and what observable consequences each candidate would produce.

Time matters. A current military case may remain opaque because the collection system is still operational. A case from seventy years ago should have fewer legitimate barriers, though records can be lost. Declassification can reveal a mundane cause without resolving every witness detail. Secrecy broadens uncertainty. It does not automatically make the most sensational option more probable.

Preserve the unknown category

People dislike unfinished files. Believers may fill them with visitors; sceptics may fill them with balloons. Both moves purchase emotional closure by spending evidence they do not have. Keep “unknown” available as a disciplined result.

Then make it specific. Is the object unknown but its motion ordinary? Is the motion uncertain because range is absent? Is the event well documented but origin open? Is there too little information to decide whether one or several objects were present? These labels retain more knowledge than a single unexplained bin.

Partial identification is common and useful. An object's identity can remain open after a dramatic motion claim has been reduced to ordinary

performance. A satellite flare can be identified as a phenomenon even when the individual satellite is uncertain. A witness can be reliable about direction and duration but not size. Preserving these distinctions avoids the false choice between solving everything and knowing nothing.

Count the reporting system

A rise in UFO reports can mean more unusual events, more observers, less stigma, a new form, better sensors, more satellites, more drones, media attention or a batch import of old files. Before treating a count as a trend in the sky, examine the pipeline that produced it.

Find the denominator where possible. Reports per flight hour mean more than a raw annual total. Cases per sensor platform can reveal collection bias. The share closed as balloons or satellite flares may change after investigators gain a new catalogue or model. A map of reports often maps military activity, population and reporting access as much as object distribution.

The same caution applies to the unresolved percentage. A public civilian database and a military operational database draw from different populations and use different closure rules. Their residues cannot be compared as if both sampled the same sky. Track definitions, intake dates, duplicate handling and evidence thresholds. A database is an instrument. Its design shapes the phenomenon it appears to measure. When a reporting rule changes, mark the break in the series. Comparing totals across it without adjustment confuses administrative change with physical change. A trend can be real in the files and artificial in the sky.

The limits

These lenses cannot identify every light from a description, and they should not be used to perform remote certainty. A plausible explanation is not a demonstrated one. Satellite flares, balloons and camera effects can account for many patterns without accounting for a particular case unless timing and geometry match. Witness fallibility does not make a witness dishonest. Government secrecy does not make every official statement false.

Public analysis also faces unequal access. Investigators may lack original files, classified sensor specifications, radar records or environmental data. An agency may hold more evidence than it can publish, while outsiders may notice assumptions the agency missed. No method turns absent data into certainty.

The aim is proportion. Strong testimony can justify investigation. Calibrated independent measurements can justify physical claims. Traceable material can justify laboratory testing. None should be promoted beyond the question it can answer. The method will sometimes leave an event open. That is a limit of the evidence, not a failure of nerve.

The one thing to keep

A UFO is the distance between an event and an identification. Everything interesting happens inside that distance: perception loses scale, sensors process signals, memories acquire order, institutions classify records, governments protect capabilities and culture supplies an answer before the measurements arrive.

Once you see that distance, the old believer-versus-sceptic contest becomes less useful. The serious division is between claims that preserve their evidential steps and claims that hide them. You can take a pilot seriously without accepting an alien craft. You can distrust an agency without pretending that a redaction names its secret. You can admit that a case remains open without treating the gap as empty or inhabited.

Future evidence could change the conclusion. A recoverable device, independent tests, repeatable signals or calibrated tracks could turn one report into a discovery. Until then, the correct response to an unknown is neither applause nor ridicule. It is to ask what was observed, what was measured, what was added, what was withheld and what could still decide the case.

Unknown is a demand for better information, not permission to choose your favourite answer.

Terms

UFO

Unidentified flying object. A reported airborne object or appearance not identified at the time. The term describes investigative status, although popular use often implies an alien craft. The label can change after investigation.

UAP

Unidentified anomalous phenomenon. The current American umbrella term covers reports in air, sea, space or across domains. Earlier usage often meant unidentified aerial phenomena. Its breadth makes comparisons across datasets difficult. A report can enter this category before any physical object is established.

Flying saucer

The press label that spread after Kenneth Arnold's 1947 sighting. It turned a comparison involving motion and form into a durable image of a disc-shaped vehicle.

IFO

Identified flying object. Investigators use the contrast informally for a report later matched to an aircraft, balloon, astronomical body, satellite, bird or other known source.

Anomaly

An observation that does not fit an expected pattern or remains unexplained. It names a discrepancy requiring examination, not a guarantee that known physics has failed. Many anomalies disappear when context improves.

Sighting

A report based chiefly on visual observation. A sighting may contain useful timing, direction and behaviour, but size and speed estimates depend heavily on range.

Encounter

A reported event involving closer observation, interaction or operational consequence. The word is descriptive and does not decide whether one physical object caused every reported feature. It may combine several observations whose connection still needs to be proved.

Close encounter

J. Allen Hynek's category for UFO reports at short apparent distance. Later subtypes distinguished simple proximity, physical effects and reported occupants or contact.

Prosaic

An ordinary or known explanation, such as an aircraft, balloon or optical effect. Prosaic does not mean uninteresting, and it still requires evidence matching the case.

Line of sight

The direction from an observer or sensor to a target. Changes in this angle can look like target motion even when observer movement supplies much of the change. It gives direction, not distance.

Angular size

The angle an object occupies in the observer's view. A small nearby object and a large distant object can have the same angular size.

Slant range

The straight-line distance from a sensor or aircraft to a target, rather than horizontal ground distance. It is essential for converting angles into physical size and speed.

Parallax

Apparent displacement caused by a change in viewing position. From a moving aircraft, parallax can make a slow nearby object seem to rush across distant terrain.

Autokinesis

A visual illusion in which a stationary light in darkness appears to move. With few reference points, small involuntary eye movements are attributed to the light.

Infrared

Electromagnetic radiation beyond visible red. Infrared sensors display detected radiance or temperature contrast through processing, so the image is not a literal coloured silhouette. Display colours are assigned.

FLIR

Forward-looking infrared, a class of imaging systems used on aircraft and other platforms. The abbreviation also became an informal name for the 2004 Nimitz video.

Glare

Spreading of light or infrared energy through optics and detectors. Glare can enlarge or reshape a bright source and can rotate with parts of an imaging system. Its apparent outline is therefore not a secure measurement of source shape.

Bokeh

The shape produced when a point of light is out of focus. Aperture geometry can turn a distant light into a disc, triangle or polygon in a photograph.

Radar cross-section

A measure of how strongly a target reflects radar energy towards a receiver. It depends on shape, material, orientation and wavelength, not physical size alone.

Clutter

Unwanted radar returns from terrain, sea, weather, birds or other sources. Filters suppress clutter, but filtering choices can also remove weak targets or leave misleading tracks.

Track fusion

Software or operator process that combines detections judged to represent one object. A wrong association can create apparent jumps, speeds or trajectories that no object followed. Investigators need the underlying detections before trusting the displayed path.

Telemetry

Time-stamped data describing a platform, sensor or target, including position, orientation and system state. Preserved telemetry can turn a striking clip into a testable reconstruction. Missing telemetry can leave speed indeterminate.

Metadata

Information about a file or observation, such as time, location, lens, exposure, platform and processing history. Screenshots and reposts often strip it away. Without metadata, reconstruction becomes guesswork.

Triangulation

Using observations from separated known positions to estimate target location. It supplies range, the missing variable behind many disputed claims about size and speed.

Spoofing

Deliberately creating false or misleading signals, tracks or navigation data. Electronic warfare makes some unusual military detections security problems without making them alien technology. Intentional deception remains a separate hypothesis.

Transmedium

Describing an object said to pass between air, water or space without expected effects. The claim requires evidence that one tracked object crossed the boundary continuously. Disappearance near a boundary is insufficient.

USO

Unidentified submerged object. The term covers unexplained reports beneath or entering water, but it inherits the same identification and evidence problems as UFO.

Project Blue Book

The United States Air Force's principal UFO investigation from 1952 to 1969. It collected 12,618 reports and classified 701 as unidentified before closing.

AAARO

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. The American office created in 2022 to receive, analyse and resolve UAP reports with aviation-safety, intelligence and national-security relevance.

Technosignature

Observable evidence of technology beyond Earth, such as a distinctive signal or engineered atmospheric effect. It belongs to astronomical search and is not synonymous with a UFO report. It requires repeatable, discriminating evidence. Astronomers look for features difficult to produce without technology.

Go Deeper

The global history

Greg Eghigian, *After the Flying Saucers Came: A Global History of the UFO Phenomenon* (Oxford University Press, 2024). This is the strongest broad history for understanding how an American phrase became an international category carried by newspapers, officials, civilian investigators, witnesses and entertainment. Eghigian treats reports as experiences and cultural events without pretending that historical method can identify every object. The global range corrects the usual story in which Roswell, Washington and Area 51 become the whole subject. Start here for the long view. The book is scholarly but readable, and its attention to institutions makes it especially useful beside current official reports.

Inside Project Blue Book

Edward J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Doubleday, 1956). Ruppelt led Project Blue Book during its most systematic early period and helped establish the term UFO in official usage. His account gives direct access to Air Force procedures, personalities, famous cases and Cold War pressures before Roswell became the dominant legend. Read it as an informed participant's record, not a neutral final history. Ruppelt knew only part of the classified environment, wrote before Blue Book ended and shaped his own role in the story. Its value lies in seeing how investigators faced a mixed queue of possible threats, weak reports, honest uncertainty and institutional impatience.

The modern myth

David Clarke, *How UFOs Conquered the World: The History of a Modern Myth* (Aurum Press, 2015). Clarke combines archival research, journalism and personal encounters with British ufology to explain how stories gain recognisable forms and survive failed predictions. His emphasis is cultural and sceptical, making the book a useful counterweight to case collections built around the unexplained residue. It is inviting, funny in places and strong on witness experience, media feedback and the costs of treating belief as a substitute for inquiry. Readers should keep one limit in view: explaining how a story spreads does not, by itself, identify every event that entered the story.

A scientific ufologist

J. Allen Hynek, *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry* (Henry Regnery, 1972). Hynek served as Project Blue Book's astronomical consultant, became dissatisfied with dismissive investigation and developed the close-encounter classification later made famous by film. The book shows a serious attempt to preserve hard cases without declaring them extraterrestrial. Its reporting standards, categories and proposed research programme influenced civilian ufology for decades. It is also a period document. The sample is selected, later sensor technology is absent and some expectations have aged. Read it to understand why thoughtful investigators rejected both ridicule and easy belief, then test its cases against the stricter data requirements used now.

Notes and Sources

The Whole Thing in One Page

The identification model. The sequence from event to observation, report, reconstruction and classification is the book's synthesis. NASA's 2023 independent study report and AARO's annual and case-resolution reports repeatedly stress that missing calibration, range, metadata and contextual data prevent identification. The model does not assume that every report begins with a discrete physical object. A light, radar return, image effect or group of observations can enter the same process.

What the present public record establishes. The statement that no public investigation has verified an extraterrestrial craft, body or reverse-engineering programme reflects the conclusions of NASA's independent study, AARO's 2024 historical review and AARO's fiscal year 2025 annual report. It is an assessment of evidence available publicly and to the stated investigations, not a proof that extraterrestrial life or visitation is impossible.

Why You Should Care

GoFast. AARO's *GoFast Case Resolution*, dated 6 February 2025, assessed the target at about 13,000 feet and concluded with high confidence that it did not display anomalous performance. Depending on assumptions about wind and aircraft heading, its summary presented an approximate wind-corrected range of 5 to 92 miles per hour. The methodology warns that these figures bound scenarios rather than supply a literal solved speed. NASA's 2023 report illustrated the same geometry with an estimate near 40 miles per hour. AARO used the public 34-second copy because the original file and accompanying metadata were no longer available; the aircraft's exact position and heading were unknown, and the office sought but could not obtain aircrew accounts. The target's identity remained unresolved. The opening therefore presents a conditional agency model, not a complete reconstruction.

Project Blue Book totals. The National Archives gives 12,618 reports and 701 unidentified cases for Project Blue Book. Those totals describe the Air Force's final classifications, not 701 demonstrations of advanced technology. The National Archives also records the programme's conclusions that no investigated report demonstrated a national-security threat, technology beyond contemporary scientific knowledge or an extraterrestrial vehicle.

The Core Ideas

GEIPAN categories. France's space agency, CNES, established GEIPAN in 1977. Its published system separates identified or probably identified cases from cases left open because information is inadequate and cases remaining unidentified after investigation. Live proportions change as files are added or reclassified. Figures used in this manuscript were checked on 4 September 2026 and rounded in the body because the categories and intake differ from AARO's.

Geometry and visual illusion. The treatment of angular size, range, parallax and autokinesis follows standard optics and aviation practice. The Federal Aviation Administration's *Airplane Flying Handbook*, especially its material on night operations, discusses degraded depth perception, autokinesis and false visual references. GoFast supplies a case-specific demonstration of how observer motion and missing range can inflate apparent target speed.

Infrared and radar interpretation. NASA's independent study report calls for calibrated multisensor observations and preserved metadata. AARO's published case resolutions illustrate the difference between recorded appearance and physical motion. Its Puerto Rico analysis concluded with high confidence that the 2013 video showed two objects travelling together at wind speed rather than one object splitting and entering the sea, and with moderate confidence that they were sky lanterns. Its atmospheric-wake analysis attributed apparent trails in three videos to sensor effects rather than anomalous propulsion. These are agency assessments whose calculations and stated assumptions can be examined; they do not establish

a universal explanation for infrared cases.

Witness memory. The account of memory as reconstructive, vulnerable to suggestion and affected by post-event information draws on the National Research Council's 2014 review of eyewitness identification. That report concerns criminal identification rather than UFOs, so the manuscript transfers only general findings about encoding, contamination, confidence and the value of early uncontaminated statements. It does not treat witness error as dishonesty.

Kenneth Arnold and the report template. The National Archives dates Arnold's sighting to 24 June 1947 and records his report of nine objects near Mount Rainier. Greg Eghigian's global history is the principal source for how the press label spread and how later reporting categories developed. Arnold used more than one comparison for form and motion. The manuscript therefore avoids the overcorrection that he described movement but no flat or saucer-like form.

Betty and Barney Hill. The chronology of the 1961 sighting, Betty Hill's later dreams, the 1964 hypnosis sessions and the 1966 publication of the story follows Eghigian, Clarke and contemporary case history. The discussion of hypnosis is limited to its inability to guarantee accurate retrieval and its susceptibility to suggestion and confabulation. The manuscript makes no clinical diagnosis of either witness and does not deny their distress.

Roswell and Project Mogul. The 1947 press release and rapid weather-balloon correction are documented in contemporary records. The Air Force's 1995 *Roswell Report* identified Project Mogul balloon equipment as the most consistent source of the ranch debris. The manuscript treats this as the best documented terrestrial account rather than a reconstruction accepted in every detail. The 1997 *Case Closed* report linked later body stories to anthropomorphic dummies, balloon mishaps and aircraft accidents from later years. Critics have correctly noted that the dummy drops did not occur in July 1947. The later report is therefore used only to show possible compression of memories across dates, not as a complete explanation of

every body account. The stronger evidential claim is that no contemporaneous record establishes alien bodies and that a classified balloon project explains both unusual debris and an incentive for an incomplete cover story.

U-2, OXCART and Area 51. CIA historian Gerald K. Haines wrote that U-2 and later OXCART flights accounted for more than half of UFO reports during the late 1950s and much of the 1960s. That proportion is a retrospective agency estimate and has been disputed by researchers. The manuscript therefore calls it a large share rather than adopting the fraction as an independent count. The physical mechanism, high secret aircraft reflecting sunlight at unfamiliar altitudes, and the use of the Nevada test site are independently documented.

Robertson Panel. AARO's historical report reproduces the panel's Cold War concern that mass UFO reporting could overload warning channels and be exploited by an adversary. The recommendation for public education, debunking and monitoring of civilian groups is used to explain institutional behaviour and later distrust. It is not presented as evidence that the panel had confirmed extraterrestrial craft.

Nimitz. David Favor's July 2023 written statement and congressional testimony are the principal sources for his account of the November 2004 encounter. FLIR1 was recorded by another crew on a later sortie, not during Favor's visual encounter. The manuscript labels reported radar behaviour and manoeuvres as testimony because the complete underlying radar data and event-wide sensor record have not been published for independent reconstruction. Official confirmation establishes the video's Navy provenance. "Publicly unresolved" does not mean that every claimed performance has been verified.

The three Navy videos. The United States Department of Defense authorised the public release of FLIR1, Gimbal and GoFast on 27 April 2020. It described one video as recorded in November 2004 and two in January 2015 and stated that the aerial phenomena remained characterised as unidentified. Authentication establishes that the clips were genuine Navy

recordings rather than fabricated videos. It does not establish the identity, origin or complete flight performance of the targets.

Gimbal. The apparent rotation in the Gimbal clip has generated competing optical analyses. A bright infrared image can include glare and need not preserve a solid outline, so the public clip cannot by itself establish the source's shape or physical rotation. No complete official resolution is claimed. The text keeps open how much apparent rotation belonged to the source, the optical train or both.

AARO fiscal year 2025. The latest annual report available at verification was added to AARO's public site on 20 July 2026. Its observation and intake period ran from 2 June 2024 to 30 May 2025, with information cut off on 30 May 2025. AARO reported holdings of 1,870 cases and 319 incoming reports. It resolved 114 of that intake and 256 older cases, for 370 resolutions during the period. A new modelling capability allowed 238 reports across its holdings to be attributed to satellite flaring. Nine incoming reports merited further specialist analysis, while 191 entered the active archive because available data were insufficient to determine whether performance was conventional. The report said all resolved cases were prosaic and none indicated breakthrough technology. These are AARO's stated assessments and the counts describe its own intake and closure rules, not the global sky.

The chronological spine

Foo fighters and ghost rockets. Eghigian provides the principal comparative history of wartime foo-fighter accounts and the 1946 Scandinavian ghost-rocket wave. The evidence does not support one cause for every report. Their role here is chronological: strange aerial reports were already being interpreted through current military technology before “flying saucer” existed.

Project chronology. National Archives and AARO records place the early Project Saucer effort in late 1947, Project Sign from January 1948 into 1949, Project Grudge in 1949 and Project Blue Book from March 1952 until

December 1969. Administrative dates vary slightly when establishment, renaming and formal termination are distinguished. The manuscript uses the standard public chronology and avoids claiming that each project held one fixed attitude throughout its existence.

Washington in 1952. Radar and visual reports over two weekends in July 1952 led to interceptor launches and national attention. Temperature inversions, radar propagation, stars and aircraft were among explanations offered for parts of the events. The manuscript does not state that one mechanism resolved every report. Its use is to show how an ambiguous event near the capital became an air-defence and communications problem.

Socorro. Lonnie Zamora's 24 April 1964 report became a leading Blue Book case because it described close observation, figures, a structured object, flame and ground traces. The Air Force did not reach an agreed conventional identification. The surviving record does not establish extraterrestrial origin. Hynek and Ruppelt are used to explain why close-range claims invite different tests from distant lights, while later retellings are kept secondary.

Condon study. The University of Colorado project, directed scientifically by Edward U. Condon, ran for about eighteen months and published *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* in 1968. Condon concluded that further extensive study was unlikely to advance science. Individual case chapters were more varied, and critics argued that the general conclusion outran parts of the case work. A National Academy of Sciences panel found the report's scope and method acceptable. The manuscript retains both the institutional consequence and the dispute.

Contactees and abduction. Adamski's 1952 claim of contact with a Venusian and the Hills' later abduction narrative are included because they altered the expected content of a UFO report. Eghigian and Clarke supply the cultural history. The text does not use the failure of one contactee claim to explain unrelated sightings.

Bob Lazar. Lazar's 1989 television appearance is included as a landmark in

the merger of Area 51 secrecy and recovered-craft mythology. The manuscript uses the documented public claim and its cultural role. It does not adjudicate disputed education or employment details, and no conclusion elsewhere depends on them.

The 2017 revival. The *New York Times* report of 16 December 2017 disclosed a Pentagon-funded aerospace study and brought the Navy videos into mass public attention. Descriptions of the programme, its name, purpose and products have remained contested. The manuscript limits the claim to the documented funding, reporting and public effect rather than treating the programme as proof of its contractors' interpretations.

NASA and AARO. NASA's independent team was asked to recommend methods for future civilian scientific study, not to issue final judgements on every historical case. Its 2023 report found no conclusive peer-reviewed evidence of extraterrestrial origin and stressed standardised data, calibration and metadata. AARO's remit is centred on defence, intelligence, safety and domain awareness. The institutions ask overlapping but different questions.

David Grusch. Grusch testified under oath in July 2023 that he had been informed of a crash-retrieval and reverse-engineering programme and denied access to it. His public account cited interviews with others rather than direct public presentation of a craft or laboratory result. The fact that he made allegations through protected channels and before Congress does not mean that an inspector general or Congress validated their extraterrestrial substance. AARO's historical review reported that it found no empirical support for the alleged programme.

What is out there now. The inventory in the final chronological subsection follows resolved categories named in the fiscal year 2025 AARO report, NASA's discussion of observational confounders and GEIPAN's public classifications. AARO's public imagery page supplies three distinct unresolved states retained in the text: a physical object with unremarkable behaviour but no attribution, a recording insufficient to determine its subject, and an infrared signature whose physical source versus sensor origin

cannot be decided. “There may be phenomena not yet recognised” preserves the logical openness of an unidentified category. It does not assign a probability to alien visitation, abiogenesis or technological civilisations, which belong to *Life in the Universe in a Hurry*.

What People Get Wrong

The seven corrections distinguish status from object, expertise from measurement, quantity of sensors from independence, provenance from interpretation, secrecy from the content of a secret, partial resolution from total closure and unresolved residue from positive evidence. They are syntheses of the sources already listed. No percentage of unexplained cases is treated as a probability of extraterrestrial origin.

Use It

The practical lenses translate the book's case method rather than offering a remote debunking checklist. NASA and AARO support preserving original files, metadata, platform state, timing, sensor characteristics and corroborating sources. The National Research Council supports early uncontaminated witness accounts and separation of witnesses. Any proposed conventional identification still needs a case-specific match in time, geometry and behaviour.

Terms

Terminology follows current AARO usage where it concerns UAP administration and standard optical, radar and aviation usage elsewhere. “Transmedium” and “technosignature” are included because popular discussion often treats them as proven object types. The definitions instead state the evidential work each claim requires. Hynek's close-encounter terminology is historical and does not function as a modern proof scale.

Bibliography

Official, archival and primary sources

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. *Fiscal Year 2025 Consolidated Annual Report on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena*. Added 20 July 2026. Information cut off 30 May 2025.

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. *GoFast Case Resolution*. 6 February 2025.

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. *Puerto Rico UAP Case Resolution*. 20 March 2025.

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. *Report on the Historical Record of U.S. Government Involvement with Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, Volume I*. 2024.

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. *Case: "Atmospheric Wakes"*. 8 May 2023.

All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office. Official UAP imagery and case descriptions. Consulted 4 September 2026.

Centre national d'études spatiales. GEIPAN mission, methods, case archive and current statistics. Consulted 4 September 2026.

Condon, Edward U., scientific director, and Daniel S. Gillmor, editor. *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*. Boulder: University of Colorado, 1968.

Federal Aviation Administration. *Airplane Flying Handbook*. FAA-H-8083-3C. Washington, DC: Federal Aviation Administration, 2021, with current addendum.

Haines, Gerald K. "CIA's Role in the Study of UFOs, 1947-90: A Die-Hard Issue." *Studies in Intelligence*, unclassified edition, 1997.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration. *Unidentified Anomalous*

Phenomena Independent Study Team Report. 2023.

Office of the Director of National Intelligence. *Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena*. 2021.

United States Air Force. *The Roswell Report: Fact Versus Fiction in the New Mexico Desert*. Washington, DC: Headquarters United States Air Force, 1995.

United States Air Force. *The Roswell Report: Case Closed*. Washington, DC: Headquarters United States Air Force, 1997.

United States Department of Defense. "Statement by the Department of Defense on the Release of Historical Navy Videos." 27 April 2020.

United States House Committee on Oversight and Accountability. *Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena: Implications on National Security, Public Safety, and Government Transparency*. Hearing and witness statements, 26 July 2023.

United States National Archives and Records Administration. "Public Interest in UFOs Persists 50 Years After Project Blue Book Termination." 2019.

Historical and interpretive works

Clarke, David. *How UFOs Conquered the World: The History of a Modern Myth*. London: Aurum Press, 2015.

Cooper, Helene, Ralph Blumenthal and Leslie Kean. "Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious U.F.O. Program." *The New York Times*, 16 December 2017.

Eghigian, Greg. *After the Flying Saucers Came: A Global History of the UFO Phenomenon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024.

Hynek, J. Allen. *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry*. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1972.

Ruppelt, Edward J. *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*. Garden City,

NY: Doubleday, 1956.

Perception and evidence

National Research Council. *Identifying the Culprit: Assessing Eyewitness Identification*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2014. doi: 10.17226/18891.