

## Pentagon ex-UFO chief says conspiracy theorists in government drive spending

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Sean Kirkpatrick, the first director of the all-domain anomaly resolution office, blames 'core group' of government workers

[Richard Luscombe](#)

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Conspiracy theorists working for and within the US government are perpetuating myths about [UFOs](#) that millions of taxpayer dollars are then spent looking into, a “self-licking ice cream cone”, according to the Pentagon’s former chief investigator of unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP).

Sean Kirkpatrick made the claim in a podcast this week after stepping down last month as the first director of the defense department’s [all-domain anomaly resolution office](#) (Aaro). It was set up in 2022 to collate military reports of UAP sightings and to be more transparent about what the government knows.



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Aaro’s first comprehensive historical record report, which has been submitted to Congress and is set for publication later this year, contains no evidence of the existence of alien life, or any government cover-up, Kirkpatrick says.

But many lawmakers, he insists, are only too happy to embrace unsubstantiated stories circulated by “a core group of people” about secret government UFO research programs. Those include [startling claims](#) from the former US intelligence official and whistleblower David Grusch last year about intact alien vehicles and non-human “biologics”, or biological matter, stored at a remote facility.

“They’re some of the same people that have been working behind the scenes with Congress to write legislation,” Kirkpatrick told the [In the Room With Peter Bergen](#) podcast.

“They’re the same people that worked with a US company and the US army to explore a piece of material that they claim was a UAP and really is a piece of missile casing from the 1950s. They’re the same people that have been influencing some of these whistleblowers who have come forward to say: ‘Hey, I don’t have any first-hand evidence, but all these people are telling me this.’”

Kirkpatrick declined to identify the people by name, but agreed with Bergen’s observation that “the actual conspiracy is being carried out by a group of true believers themselves to get the government involved in the business of investigating aliens”.

“That is a self-licking ice cream cone, exactly,” Kirkpatrick said. “The best thing that could have happened in this job is I found the aliens, and I could have rolled them out, but there’s none. There is no evidence of extraterrestrials. There is no evidence of aliens, and there’s no evidence of the government conspiracy.”

Kirkpatrick said in a resignation essay [published by Scientific American](#) last week that he feared lawmakers had succumbed to “conspiracy-driven decision-making” and sensationalism in their rush to “[uncover the cover-up](#)”.

“Worrisome is the willingness of some to make judgments and take actions on these stories without having seen or even requested supporting evidence, an omission that is all the more problematic when the claims are so extraordinary,” he wrote.

“Some members of Congress prefer to [opine about aliens to the press](#) rather than get an evidence-based briefing on the matter. Members have a responsibility to exhibit critical-thinking skills instead of seeking the spotlight.”

His frustration was apparent in his conversation with Bergen. He said his department’s mission to use a “rigorous scientific framework and a data-driven approach” to collate and evaluate UFO reports and sightings going back decades had been hampered by misrepresentations, half-truths and other snippets of misinformation from unreliable sources.

“You’ve got people that talk to people who come in to tell the story, or tell the media, and other people come in, but it turns out none of them have any first-hand evidence or knowledge,” Kirkpatrick said.

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“They’re all relaying stories that they’ve heard from other people. And if you track where all those people know each other, it all goes back to the same core group of people.”

What his team was able to deduce, Kirkpatrick said, was that at least 90% of recorded UFO sightings, including some videos of military encounters [declassified by the Pentagon](#) in recent years, have a perfectly logical explanation.

“When you dig into those kinds of observations, and we had hundreds, you go back and work with the pilot, you work with the sensor, and you reconstruct the entire engagement, nine times out of 10 or more that turns into an optical illusion that we call [parallax](#),” he said.

“Most of the times when we can’t give an explanation, it is because there is a lack of data, and by that I mean consistent, solid, recorded data that you can put into a computer and you can do analysis on.”

Even so, Kirkpatrick said, there are those unlikely to ever accept scientific explanations.

“There is absolutely nothing that I’m going to do, say or produce evidentially that is going to make the true believers convert,” he said.

“It is basically a religion, a religious belief that transcends critical thinking and rational thought.”