

Japanese Defense Ministry unveils protocol for encountering UFOs



Defense Minister Taro Kono speaks during an interview in Tokyo on Sept. 3. Kono on Monday unveiled protocol for the Self-Defense Forces to follow for dealing with unidentified aerial objects that could pose a threat to Japan's security. | REUTERS

BY JESSE JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

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Protocol for UFOs? That's exactly what Defense Minister Taro Kono ordered the Self-Defense Forces to follow Monday as he issued standing orders for dealing with unidentified aerial objects that could pose a threat to Japan's security.

In a statement, Kono asked SDF members to record and photograph any such objects that they encounter or that enter Japanese airspace and to take steps for the "necessary analysis" of the sightings, including information provided separately by the public.

While the Defense Ministry says there have been no known cases of the SDF encountering UFOs, the latest move comes after the U.S. Defense Department established a special Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force last month in order “to improve its understanding of, and gain insight into, the nature and origins” of the objects and other phenomena. The Pentagon also released videos in April that were taken in 2004 and 2015, including one that showed an elliptical flying object that demonstrated unseen levels of speed and maneuverability.

Kono said after the videos’ release that he does not believe in UFOs.

Rather, one key aspect of forming the protocol was to have rules in place in the event that SDF members encounter unconventional aircraft, including ever-advancing drone technology, that could pose a national security threat.

In February 2018, the Japanese government made public its official position on UFOs, saying that “no confirmation has been made of their existence.”

The document, a Cabinet-issued response to questions from a lawmaker, added that there was no existing policy as to what the government would do in the event of a confirmed UFO sighting.

“The government has not considered in any specific manner what will be done should a UFO be spotted flying toward Japan,” it said.