

# EXCLUSIVE Pentagon chief reveals high-res photo of a UFO 'mothership': 'A huge mini city floating in the sky'

By MATTHEW PHELAN SENIOR SCIENCE REPORTER FOR DAILYMAL.COM

PUBLISHED: 20:49 BST, 30 October 2024

An ex-Pentagon official, who gained fame for blowing the lid off [a \\$22-million, secretive government UFO program](#), has revealed an image of an alleged [UFO](#) 'mothership.'

Luis Elizondo, a career US Army counterintelligence specialist, previously ran the military's Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program.

Monday night in Philadelphia at a private UFO event, Elizondo dropped what he described as a craft 'looking like the mothership from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind,"' referring to the 1977 [Steven Spielberg](#) film.

'Guess what we caught in [Romania](#) in 2022? By the way, the US Embassy,' as Elizondo told attendees at the paid event, gesturing to the photo: 'That.'

He went on to describe it as a 'huge mini city floating in the sky.'

But the UFO, which resembles a gleaming disc-shaped craft, has already drawn withering critiques from skeptics, believers and even military UFO witnesses alike, who claim to have traced the photo to, not to the US Embassy, but a [Facebook](#) page.

One suggested to DailyMail.com that Elizondo has been lax in his vetting of such images in a bid to add sensational new material to his 'paid speaking engagements.'



© X (Twitter)  
Ex-Pentagon official Luis Elizondo (right), who gained fame for blowing the lid off a \$22-million, secretive government UFO program, has revealed an image of a UFO 'mothership'



© X (Twitter)

'Guess what we caught in Romania in 2022? By the way, the US Embassy,' as Elizondo told attendees at the paid event, gesturing to the photo (above): 'That'

Veteran US Air Force Staff Sergeant, Jeremy McGowan, who witnessed a dramatic UFO encounter himself in the Middle East decades ago, told DailyMail.com that Elizondo's dubious 'mothership' UFO fits a pattern with the man's past claims.

'This unfortunate situation with Lue follows my experiences with him nearly exactly,' McGowan said. 'I witnessed him exaggerate or outright fabricate information that simply wasn't true.'

Elizondo unveiled the 2022 Romanian UFO photo at [an October 28, 2024 event](#) held at The City Winery, a wine bar in Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania](#), for \$50-\$30 per ticket.

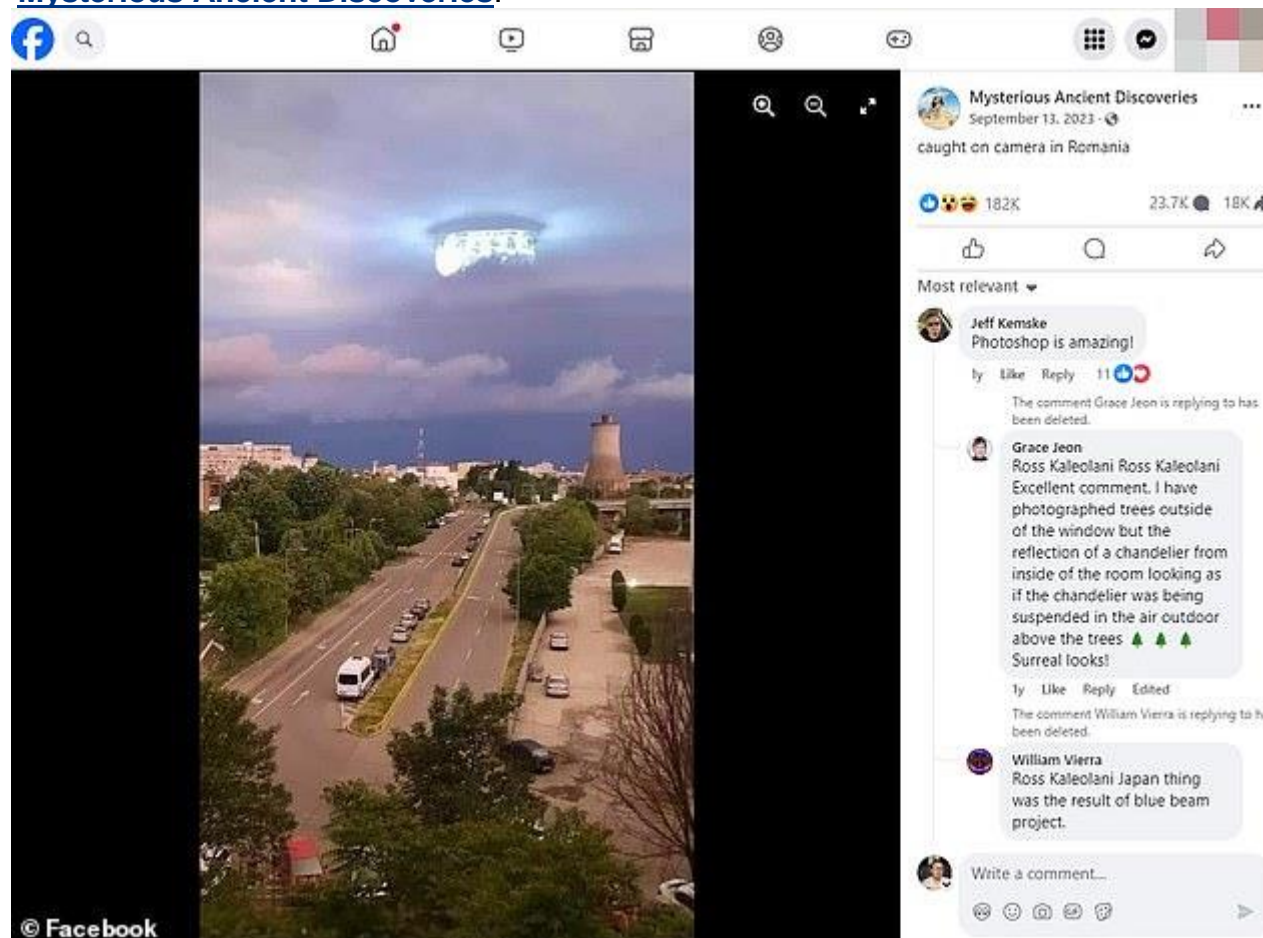
'There's a whole lot more here folks,' Elizondo told the audience in a leaked clip. 'I just want to give you kind of a small taste of what's going on "behind the scenes."'

'We're having pilots, military pilots and civilian pilots in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East, report what unimaginably seems impossible,' as Elizondo began to explain his 'real photo' of a UFO.

'They described it literally 'the mothership,'" Elizondo said.

But despite credible federal reports of ['mothership' UFOs over domestic US military sites](#) — investigated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), an FBI task force, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) and 16 local sheriff's offices — internet sleuths quickly managed to poke holes in Elizondo's 2022 Romanian UFO.

John Greenewald Jr, a longtime government transparency advocate who runs [The Black Vault](#), quickly tracked the photo back to a September 13, 2023 post in a Facebook group titled ['Mysterious Ancient Discoveries.'](#)



John Greenewald Jr, a longtime government transparency advocate who runs [The Black Vault](#), quickly tracked the photo back to a September 13, 2023 post in a Facebook group titled 'Mysterious Ancient Discoveries' (above)





**The higher resolution image of this apparent 'mothership,' which looks at first glance to be piercing clouds with its beatific shafts of light, appears more likely to have originated as the reflection of an indoor chandelier lamp reflected in window glass**

'I reverse imaged searched it,' Greenewald posted on X. 'It got more than 182,000 likes and more than 23,700 comments.'

The higher resolution image of this apparent 'mothership,' which looks at first glance to be piercing clouds with its beatific shafts of light, appears more likely to have originated as the reflection of an indoor chandelier lamp reflected in window glass.

The placement of Romania's coal-fired Arad Power Station indicates the image was not taken from the US Embassy, but a building near the Mureş River a few miles away.

America's Embassy in Romania is roughly 400 miles to the southeast of Arad, in the capital city of Bucharest.

While dedicated UFO skeptics were eager to pounce on Elizondo's inaccurate claims, UFO enthusiasts also expressed frustration over the episode.

'Lue is 100 percent using us as pawns to line his pockets,' one contributor to the [Reddit forum r/UFOs](#) lamented. 'His most recent book was no.1 seller in the nation.'

'It's muddying the waters and detracting from the important convo,' [another](#) opined.

By midday Wednesday, Elizondo was [publicly attributing the error](#) to 'a friend in Government' who provided him with the photo 'a couple of years ago.'

Retired USAF Staff Sergeant McGowan, however, told DailyMail.com that Elizondo's error was far from a one-off mistake.

'I've been on the receiving end where Lue has pulled out his cell phone and shown me what he described as highly classified video,' McGowan told DailyMail.com.



**The placement of Romania's coal-fired Arad Power Station (above) indicates the image was not taken from the US Embassy, but a building near the Mureș River a few miles away. America's Embassy in Romania is roughly 400 miles to the southeast of Arad, in Bucharest**

'For him to think I would believe he would simply carry classified info on an unsecure civilian cell phone is just insulting,' he added. 'And it wasn't just me, multiple podcast hosts were shown video Lue attributed to things they were not.'

For the past two years, McGowan has been notably public about this instance in which Elizondo showed him what he claimed was, in McGowan's words, '[a highly secret video smuggled out of Russia](#)' taken by a Soviet Union probe near Mars.

The video, as McGowan recollected to DailyMail.com, looked to be a decades-old public UFO video from the Soviet's Phobos 2 probe, released by retired Soviet Air Force Colonel Marina Popovich in 1991.

Elizondo had shown the video to McGowan, in hushed tones, in January 2021.

While Popovich, who wrote a book about her own UFO encounters as a test pilot, [long maintained the Phobos 2 video depicted a legitimate alien craft](#), the odd video had nevertheless been public for about three decades, in other words.

'There is a striking similarity between that public video and what Lue showed me on his phone,' McGowan recollected.

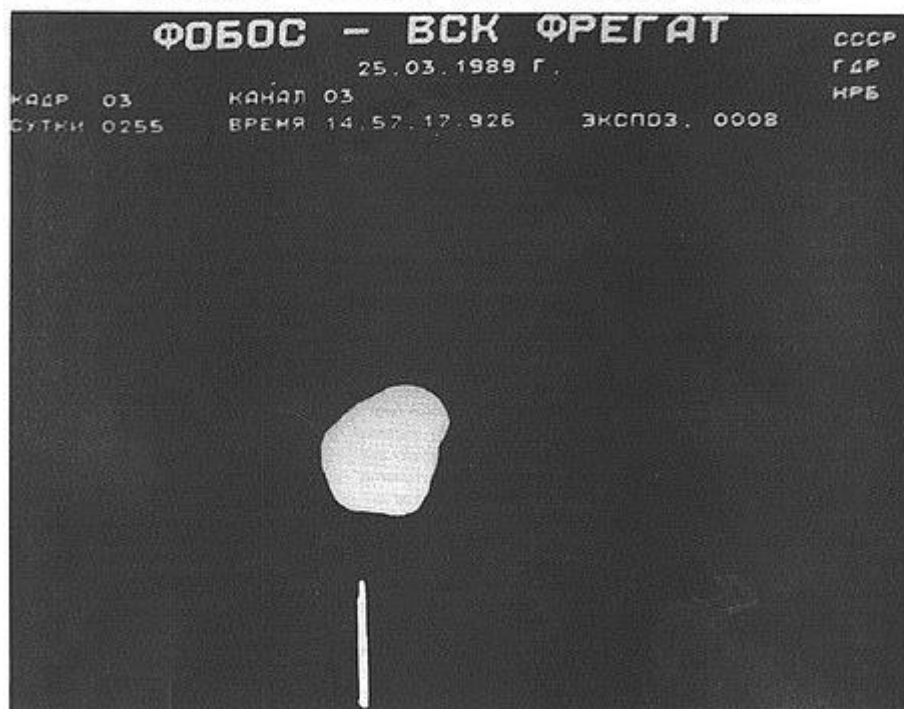


'Only saw it for a few seconds,' he said, 'so the granular details didn't get absorbed.'  
McGowan, whose duties in the Air Force included service in Desert Storm attached to Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and drug enforcement missions in Colombia, has been public for years on [his own UFO encounter](#).



In the mid-90s, while serving as a member of the JSOC J2 Security Team for 'Ellipse Foxtrot,' Jeremy McGowan (above) says he was a witness to unusual aerial lights appearing to survey a highly classified cargo container he had been tasked with guarding in the desert

## A Soviet 'Close Encounter' By Don Ecker



MARCH 25, 1989—Purportedly the above-top-secret infrared photo taken from the Soviet Phobos II probe, showing an object approaching the Martian moonlet. Estimates say the UFO was approximately 15½ miles long.

The above print of an infrared photograph of the Martian moonlet Phobos accompanied by an alleged UFO is being seen for the first time in a U.S. publication.

The photo was first made public on the Nov. 22, 1991 show "Larry King Live," when *UFO Research*

Director Don Ecker appeared on the show with author Keith Thompson.

The story of this photo began in July of 1988, when the Soviet Union launched two unmanned probes to rendezvous with the planet Mars and one of its two moons, Phobos. Not long after launch, the first space

craft Phobos I suffered a malfunction, which the Russians blamed on a combination of both human and computer failure.

The second craft, Phobos II, reached Mars in January, 1989. Unknown to most citizens in the United States, NASA was a part of

this mission; Phobos II had several American and European science packages on board, along with a very powerful Soviet laser. The laser was to be fired at the moonlet Phobos, and the resultant gases analyzed by onboard equipment. All this activity was to assist with future missions to Mars, and the grand finale was hoped to be a joint U.S./U.S.S.R mission to Mars.

All went well until March 25, 1989. Later, in the British publication *Nature*, the Soviets discussed their Phobos mission, but only devoted a couple of paragraphs to why it failed. According to the Russians, "something" turned the Soviet probe Phobos II into a "spinner," and the unmanned craft then disappeared.

According to Zechariah Sitchin in his book *Genesis Revisted*, the rumor going around was that the Soviet space craft had encountered a huge "UFO" while in Mars orbit. In his book, Sitchin included a photo that the Russians released, which showed a large ellipse shadow reflected off Mars. Sitchin claims that the few photos Phobos sent back prior to disappearing were never released by the Russians, and that they treated the entire matter as "above top secret."

Dr. Marina Popovich, the former Soviet test pilot who has made several trips to the U.S. to share her views on the UFO issue, claimed to *UFO* in May of 1991 that the incident was discussed by Soviet Gen. Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and President Bush at the Malta conference.

The photo was given to Dr. Popovich, she says, by Soviet Cosmonaut Leonov in June of 1989, and was reportedly taken by the infrared cameras on board the ill-fated Soviet craft. According to the Russians, the long ellipsoid-shaped object seen just outside of Phobos was 25 kilometers (approximately 15½ miles) in length.

Is it a real UFO? Was it of extraterrestrial origin? The jury is still out on those questions. But if the photo is not a fabrication, it can be safely assumed the object was not built on earth with those dimensions. The photo certainly qualifies as another piece of the puzzle, and if real, proof that any cover-up of the UFO presence cannot continue indefinitely.

8 VOL. 7, NO. 1 1992

© UFO magazine

For the past two years, McGowan has been notably public about an instance in which Elizondo showed him what he claimed was, in McGowan's words, 'a highly secret video smuggled out of Russia' taken by a Soviet probe near Mars. The video however had been public since 1991

In the mid-90s, while serving as a member of the JSOC J2 Security Team for 'Ellipse Foxtrot,' McGowan says he was a witness to unusual aerial lights appearing to survey a highly classified cargo container he had been tasked with guarding in the desert.

He spoke to the History Channel about this UFO sighting in the Mid East for the [2020 docu-series 'Unidentified.'](#) which had been hosted by Luis Elizondo.

As McGowan recollected about his appearance on the show in [a Medium blog post](#), he had agreed to this on-camera interview in the hopes of getting back in touch with other witnesses to the event, but felt 'used' by the experience.

'I was supposed to be introduced to investigators and researchers who could help me identify the person with me on that dune and saw what I saw!' he wrote in 2022.

'I left with no answers [...] I sent a few emails to production that were ignored, and I was never extended the courtesy promised to me.'





## Post



**Lue Elizondo**   
@LueElizondo



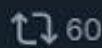
As you all know, I am always happy to be my own worst critic. A photo that was provided to me by a friend in Government a couple of years ago was presented by me two days ago at our engagement in Philadelphia. Looks like we can put this one bed, as our friends in Twitter figured/solved this one, major bravo to you! Excellent work to whoever solved this one and a big thank you! Crowdsourcing works. Now let's see if together we can figure out the rest.

As folks at the show will attest, this is precisely why I showed the first few slides at the beginning with an example of a fake UAP. We must continue to be vigilant and always go where the data leads. As you know, I will always own up to any mistakes I make. A good lesson here, just because someone in Government gives me something, due diligence and scrutiny is always a good idea. Onwards and upwards!

12:20 PM · Oct 30, 2024 · **24.6K** Views



100



60



585



23



Reply



**John Greenewald, Jr.** @blackvaultcom · 38m



What do you feel your "friend in Government"'s agenda was giving you this photo?

With all of your LEGITIMATE concerns about how the government conceals UAP information, do you think you could be used to further that obfuscation by being fed false info from "friends"?

© X (Twitter)



5



1



55



2K



By midday Wednesday, Elizondo was publicly attributing the error to 'a friend in Government' who provided him with the photo 'a couple of years ago' (above)



[Shows](#)
[Restaurant & Winery](#)
[Private Events](#)
[Membership](#)
[About us](#)
[Shop](#)

[< Back](#)

[Podcast](#)
[Main Stage](#)
[Halloween](#)

## Luis Elizondo

Universal Truth, The Evidence Is Clear: We Are Not Alone

**Date and Time:**  
Mon Oct 28 at 6:00 PM / 5:00 PM Doors

**Sale Has Ended**

Stage Premier	\$50.00
Premier	\$40.00
Gallery	\$35.00
Rear Gallery	\$35.00
Mezzanine	\$30.00

[Available](#)

Share this

### ABOUT

City Winery Philadelphia presents Luis Elizondo - Universal Truth, The Evidence Is Clear: We Are Not Alone - Live on Monday, October 28th at 6pm.

The former head of the Pentagon program responsible for the investigation of UFOs—now known as unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP)—reveals long-hidden secrets with profound implications for not only national security but our understanding of the universe.

Luis "Lue" Elizondo is a former senior intelligence official and special agent who was recruited into strange and highly sensitive US government program to investigate UAP. To accomplish his mission, Elizondo had to rely on decades of experience gained working some of America's most classified programs. Even then, he was not prepared for what he would learn, including the truth about the government's long shadowy involvement in UAP investigations, and the lengths officials would take to keep it a secret.

For years, Elizondo and his colleagues found themselves on the front lines of what may be the greatest mystery and cover-up in history. Unidentified craft that seem to defy our knowledge of physics—within air, water, and space—have been operating with complete impunity since at least World War II. The military, the CIA, and even past presidents have known the truth that humanity is, in fact, not the only intelligent life in the universe. The nonhuman intelligence controlling these UAP are actively conducting surveillance on our most sensitive military installations, and have interfered with ongoing military and nuclear operations. US service members and intelligence officers who have encountered UAP have sustained serious

© City Winery

**Elizondo unveiled the 2022 Romanian UFO photo at an October 28, 2004 event held at The City Winery, a wine bar in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania , for \$50-\$30 per ticket**

Federal government concern about 'mothership' UFOs harboring swarms of 'drones,' have spilled out into public view following [the release of internal reports via the US Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#) in recent years.

Weeks of reports of mystery 'drones' swept eastern Colorado and nearby areas of Nebraska, Wyoming and Kansas over the winter holidays of 2019 into the new year.

The sightings worried citizens and local law enforcement alike, but odd craft and thier 'motherships' troubled the US military especially for their proximity to some of America's sensitive, nuclear-equipped intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

'They all seem clustered in an area that has quite a few Minuteman sites,' a redacted official confessed in one email released via FOIA by F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

F.E. Warren security staff spoke to local sheriff's deputies who ' reported seeing a 'mothership' six feet in diameter flanked by 10 smaller drones (some fixed wing, some not).'

'When deputies follow the drones, they clock them at speeds of 60-70 mph,' the redacted base official stated.

**UPDATE | October 31, 2023:** via a publicist with his book publisher, HarperCollins, Elizondo delivered a response to this story via email at 10:15am Eastern.

The lengthy response, which had previously been posted to social media, can be read in full on [Elizondo's profile at X.com](#).

'Getting public engagement is precisely one of my motivations in sharing these types of photos,' Elizondo's message reads, in part.

'The fact that we now have individuals in social media with the expertise and willingness to conduct the much needed analysis is extremely encouraging to me and is welcome news in my opinion.'

'I am grateful for the public's help in resolving this case,' the former Pentagon official added. '[This] reinforces the notion that we must all remain vigilant and always question the data (including myself), even when that data may be coming from the Government.'