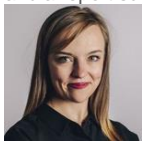


Defense Spending Bill Contains ‘Most Significant’ UFO Legislation Since 1960s



The image from video provided by the Department of Defense labelled Gimbal, from 2015, an unexplained object is seen at center as it is tracked as it soars high along the clouds, traveling against the wind. “There’s a whole fleet of them,” one naval aviator tells another, though only one indistinct object is shown. “It’s rotating.” The U.S. government has been taking a hard look at unidentified flying objects, under orders from Congress, and a report summarizing what officials know is expected to come out in June 2021. (DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE VIA AP)



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The legislation calls for details on reported health issues connected to UAP sightings, ‘transmedium objects,’ those that hover near military nuclear sites—and more.

Tucked into the latest, more-than-2,000-page version of the [National Defense Authorization Act](#) for fiscal 2022 is a provision that would mandate the formal establishment of a federal office, organizational structure, and authorities to confront unidentified aerial phenomena, the Defense Department’s modern term for UFOs.

Members of the United States’ UAP community are celebrating the detailed inclusion, arguing that it goes farther than almost any legislation ever proposed—with a real chance of passing.

“I think it’s probably the most significant legislation to target this topic since probably 1969, since Blue Book,” Tim McMillan, a retired police lieutenant and [writer](#) who co-founded the science and technology news website *The Debrief*, told *Nextgov* on Thursday. “In fact, there were a lot of specific things that were named and outlined in the legislation, some of which are still included now, that have not been discussed before.”

DOD has a long and very [complicated history](#) addressing objects in the sky that appear to perform in ways that transcend the capabilities of today’s technology. Still, there are heaps of credible reports spanning decades from current and former military personnel who claim to have seen—and at times been put at risk by—what they’ve perceived as UAP.

“We need a meaningful collection strategy and innovative and iterative analysis to support it,” former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Christopher Mellon told *Nextgov* via email this week.

Launched in the 1950's, Project Blue Book was a codename for the Air Force's UFO studies, until it was [disbanded](#) in 1969. In the 2000s, Congress approved millions in funding to back the Pentagon's Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program, or [AATIP](#). That effort encompassing UFO sighting-aligned research was unclassified but unpublicized, and existed for less than a decade.

More recently, after mounting public pressure, the Pentagon released and validated the authenticity of three videos depicting Navy officials encountering a baffling, UAP-type object. At that time last year, DOD also [announced](#) its formation of a [UAP Task Force](#) to investigate the seemingly unexplainable happenings. The group [submitted an analysis](#) to Congress this summer that confirmed there were 144 reliable reports of such phenomena originating from government sources—80 of which involved observations with multiple sensors—between 2004 and 2021. Then, this month, the Pentagon [unveiled](#) the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group, or AOIMSG, as the successor UAP Task Force. DOD's [memo](#) on AOIMSG's standing is relatively brief. The NDAA provision outlining the sort of office Congress views as appropriate to make sense of UAP, on the other hand, is quite thorough.

"It's a lot more detailed, and so we have a better idea of what would be the responsibility and role—whereas, besides just having a horrible acronym, this other office is really largely left up to the discretion of the Department of Defense, and the undersecretary for intelligence as to how much or how little they're going to investigate," McMillan explained. "It kind of goes back to that weird place that nobody wants to talk about, which is how effectively can the government work on a complex problem?"

The provision that would mandate the office was put forward by multiple lawmakers, including Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., who recently [expressed concerns](#) about briefings she received from UAP Task Force investigators, which motivated her proposal.

Her NDAA text outlines a wide range of the potential office's responsibilities—and it's inclusions shed new light on some of what the government knows but hasn't widely shared regarding some of these encounters.

For instance, according to the legislation "'unidentified aerial phenomena' means—(A) airborne objects that are not immediately identifiable; (B) transmedium objects or devices; and (C) submerged objects or devices that are not immediately identifiable and that display behavior or performance characteristics suggesting that the objects or devices may be related to the objects" previously referred to in the text.

"The significance is the inclusion of both. Some objects have been observed moving into and out of the ocean (a liquid) and into the atmosphere (a gas) seemingly unencumbered by traditional Newtonian physics and aerodynamic pressures," Mellon wrote. "Some of these same objects may also be able to operate in the vacuum of space, clearly impossible for conventional air-breathing means of propulsion."

McMillan added that this inclusion of such inexplicable objects "kind of goes into the mystery of the whole topic."

"It is surprising to see it in there, but yet at the same time, especially for me, it was very gratifying because when we first launched *The Debrief* a year ago, I reported on several intelligence memos that had been released and distributed throughout the Intelligence Community on this by the Task Force," he said.

The legislation includes a long list of information that would need to be compiled in reports for Congress, which the office would be mandated to complete by next October, and annually after through 2026. Among other elements, such reports would need to describe UAP-aligned incidents that occur each year—and comprehensive details about those "associated with military nuclear assets, including strategic nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered ships and submarines."

Text of the bill also calls for the report to contain "an assessment of any health-related effects for individuals that have encountered unidentified aerial phenomena."

“That was really intriguing because that's definitely something that I have heard had kept coming up inside from the people who have been working on it for the government formerly, or even some of the past programs, like AATIP,” McMillan said. “That was something that was definitely a part of it, but it was not something we'd heard discussed recently at all. And I thought that was pretty significant because obviously, you know, a lot of this stuff, I think—arguments against this—is largely anecdotal. But if you've got people that are injured, that's a serious deal. Something caused that, so what's going on?”

In the bill are also requirements for more expansive data analyses, semi-annual briefings to certain Congressional committees and new field investigations directly where the incidents and sightings are reported.

“DOD has conducted field investigations since Roswell in 1947,” Mellon explained.

Initially, those were undertaken by the Air Force under secret codenames. Subsequently, the Air Force Special Investigations Office spent many years on investigation and “cover-up/counterintelligence efforts” related to UAP, according to the former defense executive, and the Defense Intelligence Agency also had programs involved in field investigations.

“There are quite a few others also, both foreign and domestic, and conducted by both DOD and IC offices, including efforts undertaken by contractors,” Mellon said. “But this new effort is from Congress, explicitly in the public interest, with a requirement to report all current, future and past events to Congress for the first time in history.”

More of the legislative process must pan out before the text inclusions could become federal mandates. The NDAA conference report, or language both chambers' Armed Services Committee leaders agreed upon, was passed by the House on Tuesday.

Next, the Senate must vote on the report.

“Obviously a lot of people would be upset [if the NDAA passed without this provision]. There's a considerable number of people who are conspiracy-prone in the UFO community, who follow the topic. So, they're already inclined to believe in widespread conspiracies and government cover-ups—and that's only going to fuel that,” McMillan noted. “And it would be really disheartening, especially at a time when there is this kind of lack of trust and faith in government.”