
The ODNI UAP Assessment (2021): a military-ufological puzzle

Military research

Assessment of military scientific research is an extremely risky business. The aim of such research is always to achieve superiority over a potential adversary and therefore they are very different from ordinary scientific activity.

1. The detailed methodology and exact parameters of the equipment used are always available to everyone who wants to repeat the experiment in ordinary science. However, attempts to find out them are perceived as vulgar espionage in the military environment

2. The "Big Science" works very effectively due to total reasoned criticism, that detects any inaccuracies. The circle of critics in military research is limited, so errors are more likely and are more difficult to detect.

3. Deliberate manipulations of data and conclusions are extremely rare in civilian science, and it always ends in major trouble for their authors. Misinformation of outsiders reading their reports is quite acceptable in the military circles.

Given the possible distortions and incompleteness of the information, any analysis of the military reports that have appeared in the public domain is conjectural and even sci-fi in nature.

On June 25, 2021 Office of the Director of National Intelligence of the USA (ODNI) published the document titled "Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena" [<https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/reports-publications/reports-publications-2021/item/2223-preliminary-assessment-unidentified-aerial-phenomena>]. This is a report about military research of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP), and all the features listed above can be present in it. But still, this is a notable event in the world ufology, so it is interesting to look at it carefully. To what extent does this document testify in favor of the presence of Another (non-human) Intelligence near the Earth, or, conversely, against it?

Sensor anomalies

UAP are defined in the document as "Airborne objects not immediately identifiable" (p.8). This is something unidentified in the broadest sense, without reference to specific hypotheses. It would be naive to put an equal sign between UAP and alien ships.

Military analysts received data about the UAP from eyewitnesses and recording equipment. Military pilots and personnel of an aircraft carrier group are unlikely to confuse an ordinary fighter with something else, but problems are very likely with objects they are not familiar with. "Surprisingly, commercial and military pilots appear to make relatively poor witnesses" -- the famous American ufologist Allen Hynek wrote [Hynek J. A. "The Hynek UFO Report" London, 1978. - p.271]. Pilots can make mistakes, but what about the devices?

Page 2: Assumptions

"Various forms of sensors that register UAP generally operate correctly and capture enough real data to allow initial assessments, but some UAP may be attributable to sensor anomalies."

It is interesting to note that the proper operation of sensors is presented not as a result of research, but as an initial postulate. All military equipment should be regularly checked, so the thesis about its serviceability sounds reasonable. However, the question arises what exactly the authors of the document call sensor anomalies.

Page 4: *"The sensors mounted on U.S. military platforms are typically designed to fulfill specific missions. As a result, those sensors are not generally suited for identifying UAP"*

I think the real problems may appear here. The systems can work perfectly for tracking standard targets (such as usual planes), but give strange results for non-standard ones. For example, attempts to measure the distance to a bright planet with an airplane radar, which is not suitable for such exercises, can lead the pilot into confusion.

Page 3: *"Most of the UAP reported probably do represent physical objects given that a majority of UAP were registered across multiple sensors, to include radar, infrared, electro-optical, weapon seekers, and visual observation."*

This conclusion also seems very logical, unless different sensors (and their software) have similar anomalies when processing non-standard data. The word "probably" used in the document should also be noted.

Unexplained

Reports of UAP observations between 2004 and 2021 (March) were considered. Majority of them were received over the past two years, when a new mechanism for collecting and processing primary information was activated.

Page 4: *"We were able to identify one reported UAP with high confidence. In that case, we identified the object as a large, deflating balloon. The others remain unexplained."*

144 reports originated from USG sources. Of these, 80 reports involved observation with multiple sensors."

One successful identification out of 144 is a depressingly low performance. However, it demonstrates to readers that the research were conducted, and there is clearly room for improvement. For example, researchers could collect more information.

Page 5: *"With the exception of the one instance where we determined with high confidence that the reported UAP was airborne clutter, specifically a deflating balloon, we currently lack sufficient information in our dataset to attribute incidents to specific explanations."*

And on page 6: *"...most of the UAP described in our dataset probably remain unidentified due to limited data or challenges to collection processing or analysis"*.

The word "unexplained", previously applied to the 143 remaining unidentified reports, could mean both "inexplicable" (unknown to science) and "unidentified" (unrecognized by an eyewitness or experts). The remark about the lack of information indicates in favor of the second option. The researchers would probably explain (identify) most of the UAP if they had more data of better quality.

Unable to confirm

Nevertheless, there are reports that are more interesting than others. *"And a Handful of UAP Appear to Demonstrate Advanced Technology. In 18 incidents, described in 21 reports, observers reported unusual UAP movement patterns or flight characteristics"* (page 5). Among such features are further noted: independence from the wind, sharp maneuvering, high speed, the absence of discernable means of propulsion, as well as the detection of the UAP on radio frequencies (radar?). Apparently, the other 122 (or 123?) reports are not so remarkable.

On the same 5th page, it is noted that UAP probably lack a single explanation. Among the explanatory categories: airborne clutter (birds, balloons, etc.), atmospheric phenomena, U.S. Government or industry developmental programs, foreign adversary systems, and a catchall "other" bin. Practically nothing is known about the identification procedure.

Of course, the US military department should have complete data on its developments and some information about foreign ones. But it is not known how thoroughly the researchers collected and analyzed such information. On page 6, it is briefly noted that there is currently no data on the connection of any UAP with the activities of a potential adversary. And on page 5 we see the similar "puzzle" for American developments:

"Some UAP observations could be attributable to developments and classified programs by U.S. entities. We were unable to confirm, however, that these systems accounted for any of the UAP reports we collected."

We can only guess for what reason the authors of the document were "unable" to confirm this. Perhaps they did not find the necessary information. Perhaps they found it, but the developments did not seem similar to the observed events. Perhaps they thought that these were not American developments. Perhaps they found out about the American developments perceived as UAP, but they are too secret for readers... Given this uncertainty, and the features of military research in general noted at the beginning, I believe that the activities of the military CAN be the cause of the observed UAP. "Military tricks" can include both the latest aircrafts and sophisticated means to deceive sensors.

No aliens detected

Notes about the difficulties of data collection are scattered on different pages (I wonder if the authors are familiar with the "Blue Book" project?). There are also statements that frighten taxpayers about the threat to air traffic and national security. It is clear that any real objects (for example, balloons) can pose a danger to aircraft. As for national security, let me remind you that the authors of the document do not have such data, and the threat is purely theoretical.

The entire document has 9 pages. However, this number includes the title page, an explanation of the main terms, as well as 2 pages consisting mainly of reference information (such as the reasons for writing and the connection with other documents). The content part of the "Preliminary Assessment", therefore, consists of only 5 pages. It begins with a comment about the limited amount of high-quality reporting (p. 3), and ends with a statement about the need for funding for further work (p. 7). In my opinion, this whole document looks more like an application for additional funding than a research report. If it is approved, we can expect new "puzzles" related to the UAP from the military in the future. Such a manner of action is justified on the assumption that the UAP are human secret developments. Or if the military hopes to study and use for their own benefit a new natural phenomenon. But if they suddenly discover something that really threatens the entire human civilization (for example, alien ships), then the most reasonable thing would be to transfer the research to "civilian" world science. That is, to inform scientists of the parameters of unclassified equipment capable of monitoring such objects. The study of the problem by the entire world community of scientists, publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals bring us closer to the truth much faster than spontaneous observations of pilots and military reports.

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[<http://ufology-news.com/intervyu/intervyu-s-sergeem-efimovym.html>]