

The 2022 Annual Report on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena, A Review

V.J. Ballester Olmos^{1,2} and Julio Plaza del Olmo³

On January 12, 2023, the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released the unclassified version of the “2022 Annual Report on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.” The requirement to submit a classified annual report to Congress by October 31, 2022⁴ as well as a later publishable version was established in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022.

The official U.S. DoD document is located here:

<https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Unclassified-2022-Annual-Report-UAP.pdf>

UNCLASSIFIED



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

2022 Annual Report on
Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

UNCLASSIFIED

This article presents the major highlights of the U.S. Government’s unclassified UAP report for 2022 and our own comments on the substance of it. This is an 11-page document; the main report has 7 pages plus three appendices. It is divided in five sections, to be described below.

Executive Summary. It starts by affirming that

Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) reporting is increasing, enabling a greater awareness of the airspace and increased opportunity to resolve UAP events.

¹ Corresponding author: ballesterolmos@yahoo.es

² <http://fotocat.blogspot.com/>

³ <http://gluonconleche.blogspot.com/>

⁴ V.J. Ballester Olmos, “A Commentary to the 2022 UAP Act,” https://www.academia.edu/69401447/A_Commentary_to_the_2022_UAP_Act

What would one expect after so much publicity and media coverage? Everywhere in the world the number of UFO reports increases after any Air Force press release about UFOs.⁵

Rhetoric is free but what actual relationship does it have to the rise in UAP reporting with a greater awareness of airspace? The atmosphere and airspace have been under close study for many years and the scientific knowledge achieved has nothing to do with flying saucers, UFOs, or UAP. This opening sentence is simply there to justify the existence of the project. After 75 years of UFO stories, we do not need more incidents to resolve the issue. That could be done by examining the older reports - as some of us have already done.

In addition to the 144 UAP reports covered during the 17 years of UAP reporting included in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) preliminary assessment,^{6,7} there have been 247 new reports and another 119 that were either since discovered or reported after the preliminary assessment's time period. This totals 510 UAP reports as of 30 August 2022.

Indeed, the prior report (issued June 25, 2021) was based on 144 reports, with only one solved! Unfortunately, no technical information that we researchers would like to probe is included in the unclassified report. This limited transparency is a shame, when other Government UAP study centers are providing full information online on investigated cases, for example France⁸, Argentina⁹, and Chile.¹⁰

AARO and ODNI assess that the observed increase in the UAP reporting rate is partially due to a better understanding of the possible threats that UAP may represent, either as safety of flight hazards or as potential adversary collection platforms, and partially due to reduced stigma surrounding UAP reporting. This increased reporting allows more opportunities to apply rigorous analysis and resolve events.

Nonsense! Reports do not arise because anyone has a greater awareness of a hypothetical safety threat but because of the big echo that various authorities (U.S. DoD, NASA, AIAA) and an increasing number of private UAP organizations have recently provided to the UFO/UAP subject, thus creating new reporting windows to collect information to be analyzed. The so-called reporting "stigma" is terminology from the UFO

⁵ V.J. Ballester Olmos, "UFO Declassification in Spain (Military UFO Files Available to the Public: A Balance)", in UFOs: Examining the Evidence, Mike Wooten (ed.), BUFORA, 1995, pp. 51-56.

https://www.academia.edu/30444424/UFO_Declassification_in_Spain._Military_UFO_Files_Available_to_the_Public_A_Balance.pdf

⁶ <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Preliminary-Assessment-UAP-20210625.pdf>

⁷ V.J. Ballester Olmos, "On the 2021 UAPTF Classified Report,"

https://www.academia.edu/75129891/On_the_2021_UAPTF_Classified_Report

⁸ <http://www.cnes-geipan.fr/index.php?id=202>

⁹ <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/fuerzaaerea/centro-de-identificacion-aeroespacial>

¹⁰ <https://sefaa.dgac.gob.cl/casos-resueltos/>

believers: UFO researchers have cataloged many hundreds of UFO reports by aviators, seamen, astronomers, and scientists. It is the promotion invested in the UAP issue from the U.S. Department of Defense that is encouraging people to report, coupled with the growth of flights of small aerial devices like drones, a large variety of types of balloons, and so forth.

It is noted (and we do value) that the creation of the U.S. Department of Defense's All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) will facilitate a greater coordination with other agencies, which, on the other hand, results in "greater attribution of UAP." Of course, the more you request, the more you will find. Mainly observational trash, in our view. If not yet, then in due course. The report trusts that this higher coordination

will ensure that UAP detection and identification efforts ... span across DoD and relevant interagency partners, as well as the Intelligence Community.

We think, however, that what will enhance identification and resolution of incidents is the application of added analytical resources to the incoming reports, while staying away from lobbying ufologists.

UAP events continue to occur in restricted or sensitive airspace...We continue to assess that this may result from a collection bias due to the number of active aircraft and sensors, combined with focused attention and guidance to report anomalies.

This seems to us a correct early conclusion, to be reinforced with the passage of time.

Scope and Assumptions. This section initially explains how this annual report arises from a requirement by Section 1683 of the FY 2022 NDAA: the ODNI "in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on unidentified aerial phenomena." Appendix A covers this in detail. In assuming these responsibilities, the newly created AARO

delivers quarterly reports on UAP to policymakers that contain greater detail regarding analysis and attribution of UAP events.

Unfortunately, it is this very detail that we researchers would need to check. For the time being, we will be content with basic numbers but, sooner or later, the full analysis work will have to be disclosed.

In a footnote, it notes that the FY 2022 NDAA

expands the definition of UAP to include air, sea, and transmedium objects, and this report maintains that nomenclature during the transition phase and stand up of AARO.

We are already on record explaining that the term and concept of transmedium object is a non-event, the fruit of misunderstanding and misinterpretation by hardcore ufologists.

The adoption of this term only reflects the success from lobbying groups that have led to the creation not only of AARO, but also AATIP and UAPTF in recent years.

The report then displays an impressive list of agencies that the ODNI-AARO coordinates. It is excellent because if—in the long run—the study concludes that no evidence of aliens has been found in the database, no one will be able to argue that this or that organization was not invited to the party.

Under Assumptions, the report correctly indicates that

multiple factors affect the observation or detection of UAP ... Regarding review or analysis of UAP events, ODNI and AARO operate under the assumption that UAP reports are derived from the observer's accurate recollection of the event and/or sensors that generally operate correctly and capture enough real data to allow initial assessments.

These inexperienced UAP analysts will soon realize that this assumption is untenable and that all that glitters is not gold. However, we feel that they are already beginning to awake to crude reality, when they add that

However, ODNI and AARO acknowledge that a select number of UAP incidents may be attributable to sensor irregularities or variances, such as operator or equipment error.

Yes, boys, people and machines err.

The section Governmental Changes to Manage UAP Issue first deals with the institution of AARO by order of the Deputy Secretary of Defense to continue the former UAPTF efforts since July 20, 2022 and

is authorized to develop processes and procedures to synchronize and standardize collection, reporting, and analysis... The broad scope of authority granted to AARO should enable them to leverage a multi-agency, whole-of-government approach to understanding, resolving, and attributing UAP in the future.

The report shows how far they have gone in the ODNI-AARO coordination with “multi-agency partners.” Such an all-encompassing workforce is both welcome and ideal to reach the final aim, which is the key word, “attribution.” At the end of the day, in a few years from now, only a negligible percentage of reports will be unattributed (that is, other than manmade, atmospheric, sensor-related, birds, etc.) Not due to their rareness or anomalousness, but due to poor data input. Those who hope that the U.S. Government will find alien activity in the UAP reports should be prepared for a big disappointment.

Continued Reporting and Robust Analysis are Providing Better Fidelity on UAP Events, but Many Cases Remain Unresolved. This long heading introduces these achieved figures on UAP reporting:

<i>Source</i>	<i>Cut-off date</i>	<i>Cases collected</i>
Preliminary Assessment (June 2021)	Mar. 5, 2021	144
2022 Annual Report (Jan. 2023)	Aug. 30, 2022	366 (cumulative: 510)
Reports occurred < Mar. 5, 2021		119
Reports occurred > Mar. 5, 2021		247 (cumulative: 366)

Absence of a tally by month or year prevents us from suggesting trends or influences, etc. As per our calculation, it is about 14 new reports acquired by month. Is this a lot or a little? Project Blue Book’s yearly statistics from 1947 to 1969 record 12,618 cases.¹¹ The number of cases reported to the USAF per month varied from 10 (minimum) to 125 (maximum).¹² Now one has data to compare.

The report self-characterizes their work against UAP reporting as a “robust analytic process.” Good for them. Unfortunately,

AARO’s final analytic findings will be available in their quarterly reports to policymakers.

Just our luck!... Does the public not have a right to know on this issue? However, some indications are given for the additional 366 reports since the prior assessment. 195 events exhibit *unremarkable characteristics*, simplified as follows:

- 163 balloons
- 26 Unmanned Aerial Systems (aka drones)
- 6 clutter (birds, airborne plastics)

Basically they use this initial characterization to focus on apparently stranger events, i.e., the remaining 171 events, *uncharacterized and unattributed UAP reports*. What clearly those figures show is that aviators and other military personnel are massively misrepresenting balloons and drones for UAP!

¹¹ https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/ufo/usaf_fact_sheet_95_03.pdf

¹² J. Richard Greenwell, “Project Blue Book,” in Ronald D. Story (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of UFOs*, Doubleday (Garden City, New York), 1980, p. 274.

The report points out that

Some of these uncharacterized UAP appear to have demonstrated unusual flight characteristics or performance capabilities, and require further analysis.

We are eager and willing to read those “apparent” unusual flight features. We advance our doubts that these are realistic unusual performances. All in good time.

Previous to this report, it was leaked that the three famous US Navy videos (the so-called “FLIR1”, “Go Fast”, “Gimbal” videos) had been analyzed by AARO¹³. Those videos are at the origin of this renewed focus on UAP, since they “appear” to show “unusual flight characteristics.” Their analysis would be in agreement with independent work showing that at least two of them were not that unusual, being caused by the illusion of parallax (“Go fast”)¹⁴, or being attributed to effects of the optical IR system (“Gimbal”).¹⁵ However, no mention is made of those videos in this report; they are probably hidden in the first 144 reports of the 2021 Preliminary Assessment.

Case explanation requires time, expertise, and a lot of insight. Not only personnel and budget, but insight, specialized talent, and—in our opinion—also a certain know-how in the history of the UFO phenomenon. Lack of any of those elements will contribute to elevate the percentage of unattributed events. It will take probably years to find out how flyers commit mistakes when confronting unexpected events, how recording equipment is not flawless, how trained individuals can be deceived, etc. When they have learned all this, they can view a comprehensive landscape for their data.

As expected, the report informs that the majority of the new UAP reports originate from U.S. Navy and USAF aviators while on operational duty. At the same time it remarks that

many reports lack enough detailed data to enable attribution of UAP with high certainty.

And this is basically the main issue regarding UAP: the lack of exact data leads to failed identification. Had there been enough information, odds are that there would not be any UAP to report.

The subheading Flight Safety Concerns and Health Implications addresses the possibility that UAP pose a safety of flight and collision hazard to air assets, which is one of the main excuses for this Office being started in the first place. This is why the continuing sentence is crystal clear:

To date, there have been no reported collisions between U.S. aircraft and UAP.

¹³<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/28/us/politics/ufo-military-reports.html>

¹⁴ J. Plaza del Olmo, “Go Fast: un vídeo del Pentágono,” <http://gluonconleche.blogspot.com/2020/10/go-fast-un-video-del-pentagono.html>

¹⁵ Mick West, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsEjV8DdSbs>

The alleged health concerns are another ufological legend. Regarding this, the report says:

there have also been no encounters with UAP confirmed to contribute directly to adverse health-related effects to the observer(s).

So AARO was created to study transmedium objects, air safety problems, and health effects that have not been acknowledged in their database!

Summary and Way Ahead. Hold on, let us see the recap of almost 18 months of work:

- ***UAP continue to represent a hazard to flight safety.***

What is the reliable basis for that statement? A mere conjecture, a possibility? Meteors also represent a risk, then. Should we create a center for meteoritics and aviation?

- ***UAP pose a possible adversary collection threat.***

Oh, yes, eavesdropping, intelligence, espionage, these are real potential risks, although—based on experience—we estimate that the impact in numbers will be very low.

- ***AARO has been established as the DoD focal point for UAP.***

This is obvious. The office is operational since July 2022.

- ***Coordinated efforts between DoD, the IC, and other government agencies to collect and report UAP events have resulted in increased data sets, spanning multiple security domains.***

The report says AARO is focused

on identifying solutions to manage and alleviate the resulting data problem... The establishment of AARO and application of AARO's new analytic process to this detailed reporting will increase resolution of UAP events (Our emphasis)

This is what we hope! The June 2021 preliminary assessment explained 1/144 cases (0.7%). The 2022 annual report “characterizes” 195/366 (53%). Well, this is progress.

However, is resolving cases their only goal? If the chief concern is about safety and security threats, shouldn't their ultimate goal be issuing recommendations to policymakers to avoid those threats? In this regard, they already have initial evaluations suggesting a remarkable number of drones and balloons loitering carelessly in military ranges.

The report closes with three appendices: Appendix A on the legislation requiring an annual report, Appendix B on AARO's mission and responsibilities, and Appendix C on key terms.

For us, in conclusion, the good point is that AARO has established a network of cooperation with different agencies and organizations. They seem to be working on case attribution, and the future will likely show more efficient figures in IFO characterization.

On the other hand, there is a lack of transparency in their public reports. The information disclosed so far is reduced to only very fundamental statistics. Quarterly reports that seem to contain the details on the attributions have not been made public either. External, independent experts cannot yet check, validate or discuss their findings.

Also, their ultimate goal, the final purpose for the existence of this office, is not completely clear. There is a feeling of reinventing the wheel, that will lead to the already known conclusions that UAP are not proof of alien life or advanced technology.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank Steve Roberts for editing.