

Wow, What Is That?’ Navy Pilots Report Unexplained Flying Objects

By Helene Cooper, Ralph Blumenthal and Leslie Kean

May 26, 2019

WASHINGTON — The strange objects, one of them like a spinning top moving against the wind, appeared almost daily from the summer of 2014 to March 2015, high in the skies over the East Coast. Navy pilots reported to their superiors that the objects had no visible engine or infrared exhaust plumes, but that they could reach 30,000 feet and hypersonic speeds.

“These things would be out there all day,” said Lt. Ryan Graves, an F/A-18 Super Hornet pilot who has been with the Navy for 10 years, and who reported his sightings to the Pentagon and Congress. “Keeping an aircraft in the air requires a significant amount of energy. With the speeds we observed, 12 hours in the air is 11 hours longer than we’d expect.”

In late 2014, a Super Hornet pilot had a near collision with one of the objects, and an official mishap report was filed. Some of the incidents were videotaped, including one taken by a plane’s camera in early 2015 that shows an object zooming over the ocean waves as pilots question what they are watching.

“Wow, what is that, man?” one exclaims. “Look at it fly!”

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No one in the Defense Department is saying that the objects were extraterrestrial, and experts emphasize that earthly explanations can generally be found for such incidents.

Lieutenant Graves and four other Navy pilots, who said in interviews with The New York Times that they saw the objects in 2014 and 2015 in training maneuvers from Virginia to Florida off the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, make no assertions of their provenance. But the objects have gotten the attention of the Navy, which earlier this year sent out new classified guidance for how to report what the military calls unexplained aerial phenomena, or unidentified flying objects.

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