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EXCLUSIVE

Ex-official who revealed UFO project accuses Pentagon of 'disinformation' campaign

Lue Elizondo's inspector general complaint asserts that officials have tried to discredit him since he went public.



A day after Lue Elizondo filed his complaint, the agency's inspector general announced a probe into Pentagon "actions" on UFOs. | Charles Dharapak, File/AP

By BRYAN BENDER
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The former Pentagon official who went public about reports of UFOs has filed a complaint with the agency's inspector general claiming a coordinated campaign to discredit him for speaking out — including accusing a top official of threatening to tell people he was “crazy,” according to documents reviewed by POLITICO.

Lue Elizondo, a career counterintelligence specialist who was assigned in 2008 to work for a Pentagon program that investigated reports of “unmanned aerial phenomena,” filed the 64-page complaint to the independent watchdog on May 3 and has met several times with investigators, according to his legal team.

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The claim that the government is trying to discredit him comes weeks before the director of national intelligence and the Pentagon are expected to deliver an unclassified report to Congress about UFOs and the government’s strategy for investigating such encounters. The report is expected to include a detailed accounting of the agencies, personnel and surveillance systems that gather and analyze the data.

“What he is saying is there are certain individuals in the Defense Department who in fact were attacking him and lying about him publicly, using the color of authority of their offices to disparage him and discredit him and were interfering in his ability to seek and obtain gainful employment out in the world,” said Daniel Sheehan, Elizondo’s attorney. “And also threatening his security clearance.”

Sheehan, a public interest lawyer and activist, [has a long history](#) of taking on the federal government on behalf of high-profile clients, including defending The New York Times in the Pentagon Papers case as well as one of the Watergate burglars.

He is also widely viewed as a provocateur who has an abiding interest in UFOs and [has spoken publicly](#) about alien visitations. He also served as counsel for the Disclosure Project, led by ufologist Steven Greer, that has sought to force more government transparency on UFOs.

When asked for comment, Elizondo referred questions to Sheehan.

Sheehan maintains the goal of Elizondo’s IG complaint is much bigger than clearing his name: He wants to compel the Pentagon to clear up all the ambiguity about what it knows about UFOs.

“Nobody seemed to be taking this thing seriously,” Sheehan said of Elizondo’s concerns when he left the Pentagon in 2017. “The different units and different groups that are responsible for responding to this particular phenomenon ... they’re not briefing each other on this.”

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“The old dodge,” Sheehan says, “is ‘oh well, the real problem was that one shop wasn’t communicating with the other shop.’ That’s the classic bureaucratic dodge. I’m trying to get the Defense Department to clarify for the public and media what exactly is the cartography inside the Defense Department for dealing with this particular phenomenon.”

A spokesperson for the Defense Department IG’s office declined to comment on the status of Elizondo’s complaint. “I cannot speculate or deliberate about complaints that our office may have received,” said Dwrena Allen. “I certainly cannot confirm or deny the existence of an investigation to the same.”

But a day after Elizondo filed his complaint, the IG [announced a probe](#) into Pentagon “actions” on UFOs, which is being undertaken by the assistant inspector general for evaluations on space, intelligence, engineering and oversight.

“We may revise the objective as the evaluation proceeds, and we will consider suggestions from management for additional or revised objectives,” stated the IG’s memo announcing that probe.

It remains unclear whether Elizondo’s claims will be found to merit an official investigation, but his legal team says he is scheduled to meet again with investigators from the IG next month.

Elizondo has become a minor celebrity since he retired from the Pentagon in October 2017 and went public about the Advanced Aerial Threat Identification Program, or AATIP, a secret Pentagon effort that was initiated in 2008 by then-Sen. Harry Reid. POLITICO and The New York Times [revealed the existence of the office](#) and Elizondo’s role in it in December 2017.

Elizondo complained at the time that his Pentagon bosses were failing to take seriously numerous intrusions into military airspace by high-performance

aircraft of unknown origin.

“It was during this time I grew increasingly frustrated by the lack of resources and interest by senior leadership,” he states in the IG complaint. “UAP reporting to our office was increasing, yet our resources were minimal, and leadership involvement was almost non-existent.

“After increased frustration, ” he added, “I became alarmed by the frequency and duration of UAP activity in and around controlled U.S. airspace. The instances seemed more provocative, and during one instance, they came within feet of a U.S. fighter aircraft.”

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After he retired from government service, Elizondo also shared with the media [a trio of Navy videos](#) he got declassified before he left government service.

He claims he has since endured a coordinated effort to malign his reputation, including Pentagon press statements asserting he had no official role in UFO research, even after his role was officially confirmed. He also alleges a personal vendetta from a Pentagon rival he claims has sought repeatedly to damage his career, including trying to have him investigated for releasing the video after he had been cleared of any wrongdoing.

Elizondo charges “malicious activities, coordinated disinformation, professional misconduct, whistleblower reprisal and explicit threats perpetrated by certain senior-level Pentagon officials,” according to the complaint, which includes dozens of supporting documents.

POLITICO is declining to publish the names of the Pentagon officials who are cited in the IG complaint because it is unclear whether they are being investigated.

But Elizondo told the IG he has evidence, in the form of emails, documents and the public record, “which suggests a coordinated effort to obfuscate the truth from the American people while impugning my reputation as a former intelligence officer at the Pentagon.”

“These negative actions against me have resulted in great personal and professional challenges to me and my family,” he adds in the complaint.

In recounting one episode in the days after he left government service, Elizondo claims a senior official warned him that he would “tell people you are crazy, and it might impact your security clearance.”

“I responded ... by telling him that he can take any action he thinks is prudently necessary, but that I was not mentally impaired, nor have I ever violated my security oath,” Elizondo wrote in the complaint, saying he did not meet with

the official again “after our discussion as I feared he would take retribution against me.”

The IG complaint also charges that the Pentagon’s press operation has engaged in a disinformation campaign to discredit him by suggesting he was lying about his UFO work.

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He cites several public statements asserting the department had no record of his involvement in UFOs [even after saying that he did](#) work for AATIP.

“Several internet bloggers were notified ... that I had no duties regarding AATIP and that AATIP did not involve the study of UAPs,” Elizondo told the IG. “As a result, the bloggers began to disseminate reporting, accusing me of being a fabricator.”

He said when he inquired why the Pentagon had changed its official story about AATIP, he claims one individual directly involved told him he “was not happy with the way this was being handled internally with the Department.” The official also said he “was aware I ran AATIP, but forces within the building were telling him not to admit it,” according to Elizondo.

The Pentagon public affairs office declined to comment for this story.

The Defense Department this month [publicly acknowledged](#) in a statement that the AATIP program was involved in UFO research, but it has not corrected the record on Elizondo’s involvement, he says.

“It goes beyond simple ambiguity,” Sheehan said. “There [are] actual discordant narratives that are going on. They’re professing a substantial amount of confusion.”

Elizondo maintains that the efforts to punish him for coming forward continue. The IG complaint outlines that his release of the three unclassified UFO videos was investigated by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and “there were no findings of me conducting any kind of Unauthorized Disclosure.”

But he says he was contacted this April by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency advising him to submit to a new interview to maintain his clearance even though it was renewed in January 2021. And he maintains he was told it was about concerns over whether he violated the rules when he made the UFO videos public.

“Despite a previous favorable AFOSI investigation, I am under accusation of releasing the videos in an unauthorized manner,” he wrote in the IG complaint.

Elizondo [has continued to publicly maintain](#) that he believes the government is covering up what it knows about UFO sightings. And Sheehan also claims


Elizondo's experience within the Pentagon's bureaucracy signifies a much deeper resistance to coming clean.

He said there is "this extraordinarily bizarre process going on in the heart of the national security state bureaucracy where general officers, secretaries of defense are not being briefed in on something that is transparently within their jurisdiction."

"That is a profound and fundamental problem that they view as being above their pay grade," Sheehan added. "They know something is going on, and they don't dare go there."

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CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(PUBLIC DOMAIN) - 19 May 2021 — Steven Greer states Daniel Sheehan told him Lue Elizondo informed Sheehan he was in a facility where an actual extraterrestrial vehicle was “stored.” Sheehan represents Elizondo as his lawyer.

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