



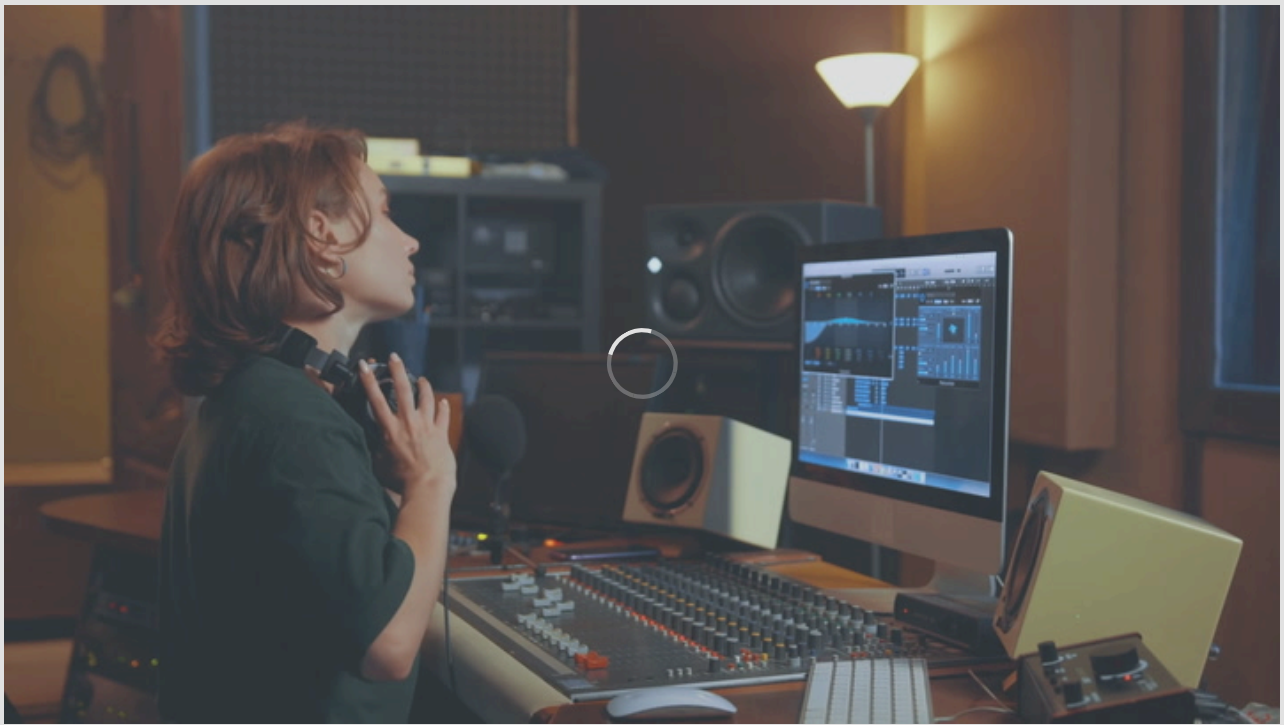
NAVY WITNESSES DESCRIBE 2004 ENCOUNTER WITH UAP ABOARD THE USS RONALD REAGAN

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Several U.S. Navy personnel who served aboard the USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76) say they encountered a mysterious, orb-shaped flying object in 2004 while on duty off the eastern coast of the United States. Nearly two decades later, the incident still defies explanation.

Witnesses who were on the nuclear-powered Nimitz-class supercarrier the night of the incident describe seeing a 20 to 40-foot wide luminous round object, which suddenly appeared and began to hover over the ship's flight deck.

MY LATEST VIDEOS



Adding to the strangeness of the event, sailors who witnessed this say their Naval commanders seemed disinterested that a large, glowing orb was reported flying over the ship, and continued normal operations without ordering any defensive actions to be taken.

Now, *The Debrief* has spoken with nearly a dozen witnesses to the 2004 incident, allowing documentation of this remarkable observation of unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) by multiple U.S. Navy servicemen to finally be brought to light.

BACKGROUND: THE USS RONALD REAGAN

On July 12, 2003, the USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76) was commissioned and became the ninth Nimitz-class nuclear-powered supercarrier. At 1,092 feet long, the vessel currently supports:

- A total crew of 5,680 (often called “76’ers” based on the CVN-76 designation)
- An airwing crew of 2,480
- 80+ aircraft
- Two Westinghouse A4W nuclear reactors
- Up to 260,000 HP and a max speed of 30 knots

In 2003, the USS *Ronald Reagan* called the East Coast home while conducting sea trials. This area of Atlantic Ocean operations ranged from Florida to Virginia utilizing the naval Virginia Capes Range Complex (FACSFAC VACAPES), the Cherry Point naval operations areas, and the Jacksonville (FACSFAC JAX) operations areas.



The aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan transits the Pacific Ocean in 2010 (U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Dylan McCord, mass-communication specialist).

Between January and May of 2004, the carrier was undergoing secondary flight deck certifications off the East Coast as part of Post Shakedown Availability (PSA), a certification process for newly acquired naval vessels that allow for the correction of deficiencies that were found in the initial Shakedown Cruise. On May 27, 2004, *Reagan* left Norfolk to begin the long circumnavigation around South America to its permanent homeport in San Diego, California.

AIR WING DETACHMENT

During the USS *Ronald Reagan*'s Post-Shakedown Availability, various flight deck certifications were ongoing and squadrons were using the ship to train. The VX-23 “Salty Dogs” Test and Evaluation Squadron performed flight tests from the ship in July 2003, while the VFA-15 “Valions” also performed flight deck evaluations in May 2004, though it appears no permanent Air Wing had been attached to the ship during this time. In May of 04 Carrier Air Wing 11, normally attached to USS *Nimitz* embarked 25% of its aircraft aboard the USS *Ronald Reagan* for transit around South America. Of note, VFA-41, “The Black Aces”—famous for Cdr. David Fravor’s 2004 “Tic Tac” encounter—was also aboard the ship (although it is unclear whether Fravor was part of this detachment at that time).



VX-23 "Salty Dogs" Test and Evaluation Squadron operating aboard USS Ronald Reagan in the Atlantic Ocean. July 25, 2003. U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Chad McNeeley.

THE USS RONALD REAGAN UAP ENCOUNTER

During *The Debrief's* ongoing investigation, we have identified and interviewed five witnesses who were aboard the *USS Reagan* during the timeframe of the incident, and who were all able to provide firsthand accounts of having witnessed the UAP. As part of this process, verification of military service was completed using DD-214 military separations documents, the official 2004 *USS Ronald Reagan* cruise book, and corroborating witness statements.

Although multiple interviews and record checks were conducted, none of the witnesses we spoke with were able to remember the specific date of the encounter.

UAP WITNESS 1

Karol Olesiak was a 3rd class petty officer and Quartermaster on the *Ronald Reagan* at the time of the incident. His job involved navigation of the ship, working from the main bridge at the navigation table. He was also responsible for the *USS Reagan's* official ship logbook during the encounter.

On the day of the UAP event, Karol was Quartermaster of the Watch (QMOW) during the 8:00 PM-12:00 AM time frame. This duty required him to report to the main bridge navigation table and involved coordination of the maneuvering of the vessel.



Photo – QM3 Karol Olesiak aboard USS Ronald Reagan circa 2003 – credit U.S. Navy Photo

Olesiak told *The Debrief* that when he arrived to relieve the previous watch that evening, the outgoing Quartermaster of the Watch indicated something was already going on at that time, though the individual offered no additional information. However, it soon became apparent to Olesiak that something was happening outside above the flight deck.

“I’m pretty sure ‘it’ was there,” Olesiak said. “And they were like, ‘I don’t know what that is. I don’t care.’ You know what I mean? Like they had an attitude like ‘I’m going to my rack. I don’t care. ... don’t even bother me about this shit’ ... So this ‘thing’ is there, the entirety of my watch and because the officers are ignoring it, I’m forced to ignore it.”

Olesiak emphasized that everyone was working 16-hour shifts and unless an issue was life-threatening most problems were prioritized. He stated that his prior training in boot camp indoctrinated him to not question orders. The officer of the watch continued normal bridge operations, he said. Olesiak said he saw a large round and orange-colored glowing object with a fiery surface hovering about 100 feet above the flight deck. He said he viewed this object directly through the windows on the bridge at eye level. Olesiak says the surface of the object reminded him of biblical descriptions of the “burning bush”.

“In the Eastern Orthodox church, they explain the burning Bush as unburnt energy,” Olesiak mused. “When you see it, you are entranced by the novelty of it. You’ve never seen it before. Right? You’ve never seen negative energy... but it’s there. You don’t know what it is, the experience of seeing something you haven’t seen before.”

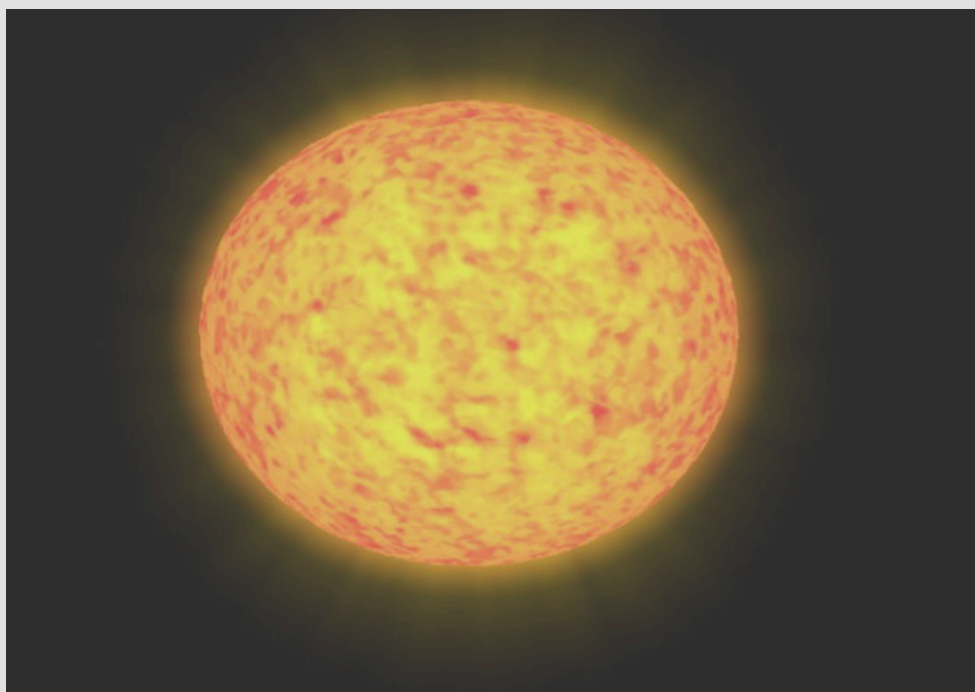


Photo CGI re-creation of orange “mini sun” UAP based on witness descriptions (Credit: Dave C Beaty)

Olesiak pointed out that the Officer Of the Watch (OOW) and the Conning Officer on the bridge were not alarmed by the object. They continued working as if nothing unusual was going on. When asked to clarify why he did not report his sighting, Olesiak stated that his training required him to defer to senior officers. Since they had observed it and were not reacting, likewise it was his responsibility to stay on task. "It's a problem when somebody says that it's a problem. It's a problem when somebody tells you that it's a problem.", He stated. Karol said he was surprised aircraft operations continued.

"And it's watching the planes, it's watching the planes get launched," he said. "For me, even though I'd never seen it before, I thought that this was natural and that, you know, that this was an organic thing that we would, maybe another form of life, maybe, but something we would figure out in the future"



CGI re-creation of UAP as seen from the bridge of USS Ronald Reagan based on witness descriptions (Credit: Dave C Beaty).

Karol only viewed the object from his position on the bridge. He does not remember seeing the object arrive, or move in any way other than match the speed of the ship which he said was ahead at 22 knots based on flight ops. He believes that the object was in the same location during the entirety of his four-hour watch.

Olesiak first [wrote about the sighting on his website](https://www.veteransforpeace.org/2021/10/26/exclusive-uss-ronald-reagan-uap-encounter/) in October 2021 (UAP investigator Keith Basterfield brought this article to the attention of Dave Beaty for this report). You can also hear more from Karol Olesiak in this video interview with Dave Beaty (below):
(<https://www.veteransforpeace.org/2021/10/26/exclusive-uss-ronald-reagan-uap-encounter/>)



UAP WITNESS 2

Derek Smith entered the navy in February 2002 as a Seaman (SN) in the deck department responsible for ship maintenance and operations. Smith was also trained as a lookout. Lookouts are trained in visual recognition of aircraft, ships, and marine mammals. At the time of the sighting, Smith says he was outside on an upper-level catwalk that surrounded the island superstructure of the ship. This starboard forward lookout position is approximately 50-75 feet above the deck.

Smith reported that he was with a female trainee at the time of the sighting (referred to here as "Witness 3"). Soon after arriving on watch, Their attention was drawn to a large, orange-colored, glowing object hovering above the flight deck several hundred feet in front of them, just above the centerline of the ship forward of the island.



SN Derek Smith aboard USS Ronald Reagan circa 2004 (Credit: Derek Smith).

"I'm sitting here looking at this thing, and I couldn't tell what it was," Smith told *The Debrief*. "There was a shape to it. It was oval-shaped... it didn't look solid, but it had a shape to it."

Derek said he reported the sighting to the carrier's tactical operations center (TOP) as required using the sound-powered microphone and headset the lookouts used. He also stated that he looked at the object through the "big eyes" deck-mounted binoculars. He said it looked like a "glowing, gaseous" self-luminous object.

It also appeared to have a "moving" swirling surface, but he was unable to identify it as a plane or helicopter. Smith recalls observing the object for several minutes.

"On starboard forward you had, I'd say, about 70% of the flight deck in front of you. And I remember we were looking down at the flight deck and you had airmen on there and me and her were just looking at each other. And then we looked down at the flight deck and all the people while flight deck was [sic] looking up at the (object)"



Sailors stand starboard forward lookout watch on a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, circa 2009 (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 3rd Class Walter M. Wayman).

UAP WITNESS 3

Accompanying BMSN Derek Smith on the lookout during the event was a female trainee or “UI” (undergoing instruction) shipmate referred to here as “Witness 3” who wishes to remain anonymous. *The Debrief* spoke with Witness 3 in April 2022 about the sighting, at which time she was able to confirm several details provided by Smith and Olesiak.

Witness 3 states that she had not communicated with any of the other witnesses in the last 19 years and had never read Olesiak’s article about the sighting. According to Witness 3, she did not arrive on the ship until November or December of 2003, in the Newport News naval shipyard. During the encounter, Witness 3 says she was undergoing training with Smith, who she refers to as “Smith D”. At one point, they both became aware of a large, “round, glowing object hovering over the flight deck” a few hundred feet above them and pacing the ship, which was then underway.

Witness 3 said Smith directed her to call the operations center to report the air contact, and that upon calling in the report, she was met with some skepticism on the radio, and was asked if she “was smoking crack.”



CGI re-creation of UAP over USS Ronald Reagan based on witness descriptions (Credit: Dave C Beaty)

Differing from Olesiak’s and Smith’s accounts, Witness 3 said she recalled that the first observation happened before sunset around dusk and that it was cloudy at the time. She further recalls seeing the object depart into the clouds. Witness 3 says she recalls that tactical operations also reported having an air search radar contact during the event.

“After I had called it in.....They were like... let us know what happens. And then it stayed with us. I don't remember how long it stayed with the ship, but it stayed with the ship for a while. ...It just followed us. And they were like, ‘well what's your positioning with the sun?’. I was like, ‘that's not the sun.’”

Witness 3 also said the people working on the flight deck were observing the object, some of them with increasing concern.

“There was a group of them,” Witness 3 recalls, “[that] we had seen them down there and they had looked up and pointed up and they all took off...They just ran off the flight deck. Like, they dropped their stuff and took off and that's when we looked up and were like, what's that!?...there was a huge ball above their heads, you know?... they all took off.”

Witness 3 described the object as a large “round object with a glowing orange color and fuzzy-looking edges”, solid but not defined edges. The inner color was swirling much like a “science video of the sun close up”, she said. She described a sudden series of half-circle-like maneuvers just before it “shot off into the clouds” at extreme speed.

Witness 3 said they had not been engaged in flight operations during the sighting. That those exercises had been completed earlier and the air department was busy securing the equipment when the sighting first happened. She says her watch ended after dark and remembers being on the bridge rotation on the lee helm duty station with Derek Smith and hearing other watchstanders commenting about the UFO. She also remembers instructions that no log entries should be made about the event.

UAP WITNESS 4

Patrick Gokey enlisted in the Navy in August 2003 and after basic training and “A school” he was stationed on the USS Ronald Regan in November 2003. He boarded the ship in Newport News naval shipyard as a Seaman. Gokey reports that he believes the sightings took place during the sea trials where the carrier would put out to sea for 1-2 week periods doing qualifications between December 2003 and May 2004. He recalls being told, “We are in the Bermuda Triangle”.



SN Patrick Gokey circa 2005 (Credit: U.S. Navy Photo)

On the night of the UAP encounter, he says he was assigned lookout watch from 8:00 PM to 12:00 AM, and the first time he observed the object was from the starboard forward lookout station on the catwalk of the island. He says up to 10 lookout positions would be manned during that period and they would rotate the positions each hour.

“I just saw this orange, bright orange ball, and it was wavy, but somehow still solid like a plasma almost,” Gokey told *The Debrief*. “And it just appeared over the flight deck. Maybe 200 feet off the flight deck. It sat there for about 30 seconds.”



CGI re-creation of UAP over USS Ronald Reagan based on witness descriptions (Credit: Dave C Beaty)

Gokey told *The Debrief* that he recalls flight operations were taking place and that dozens of air personnel were on the flight deck below him. He said after some time, he watched the object as it moved away rapidly.

“It didn’t seem to move at all, we were moving during flight ops, and it seemed to stay with us. But without any movement that you could discern. After that, it just did three half circles, just 1, 2, 3, and it was gone. I mean just in the blink of an eye, it was gone. And so that was pretty weird and, you know.”

“I reported it,” Gokey said, noting that “other people had reported it.”



CGI re-creation of UAP seen from the fantail based on Patrick Gokey’s descriptions (Credit: Dave C Beaty).

During one of his rotations, Gokey says he was stationed on the fantail lookout position. This area is a catwalk on the very back end of the carrier, below the flight deck, and provides an unobstructed view behind the ship. It was during this watch that he once again spotted an object.

“I was on the fantail by myself and the same thing,” Gokey said. “It came back by us on the fantail and it hovered, you know, maybe a hundred or 200 feet in the air in the same, you know, maybe the same distance behind it did three half circles and it took off.”

Gokey stated he believes the object was closer this time and appeared to have the same characteristics and description as the first object. Based on his description of the object pacing the ship and performing three similar half circle movements just before the object “shot away” rapidly he believes it was under intelligent control.

“Yeah. It was somehow controlled,” Gokey said. “It just couldn’t have been random.”



Enlisted sailors stand watch on the bridge of the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, circa 2010 (Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Seaman Nicholas A. Groesch).

UAP WITNESS 5

At the time of the sighting, the individual identified here as “Witness 5” (who also wished to remain anonymous) was the Boatswain’s Mate of the Watch (BMOW). His duties included overseeing all lookouts and keeping a boatswain’s mate logbook at his station inside the bridge, and he reported to the Officer of the Watch (OOW).

Witness 5 said he was in contact with all lookouts including Derek Smith, Witness 3, and Patrick Gokey, as well as other lookouts on duty. In his statement to *The Debrief*, Witness 5 says when he came onto his watch that evening, he was contacted by his chief, who told him to go outside and see why the lookouts were “horsing around on the intercom system talking about UFOs.” Witness 5 said he immediately went outside prepared to “chew out” the lookouts.



Sailor looks through the big eyes during watch from aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Veronica Mammina).

As he approached the starboard forward lookout post, he said he immediately observed a large round object about 200 feet above the flight deck in front of him. He reported that the object was “glowing orange”, and seemed to be somewhat “fuzzy” and like a “blob”. It did not shine any light onto the flight deck of the ship and the color was similar to the orange work lights used on the ship at night. He noticed airmen working below on the flight deck looking up at this object, but said no air operations were going on at the time. He said he did not see the UAP arrive, depart or make any movements during the several minutes he observed it.

“It was like a translucent blob, really translucent,” he said. “You could kind of see through it and it was...like a lava lamp. It had that type of movement...It seemed almost like viscous, but in the air, and it moved.”

Witness 5 told *The Debrief* that while it may seem unusual to most civilians that the officers did not seem to be alarmed by the sight of this object, he said everyone was operating on a lack of sleep and significant amounts of physically strenuous work. At the time, Witness 5 said he wondered about the lack of action by the officers but concluded it “was above my pay grade”.

More concerning, however, had been that when Witness 5 got back to his watch station on the bridge and began to write the sighting into his log, he was told by his chief to “rip it out.” (*Editorial Note: The Debrief* has communicated with Witness 5’s Naval Public Affairs Office requesting permission for the active duty service member to speak on the record, but has not received any response to date.)

SEARCHING FOR THE DATE

Narrowing down the exact date of the incident, which occurred nearly two decades ago presents its own challenges. Karl Olesiak originally believed the event may have occurred during the hurricane Isabel avoidance underway in September 2003. With a large hurricane threatening the eastern seaboard, the USS *Ronald Reagan* and 40 other ships left Naval Station Norfolk to ride out the storm.

However, two other primary witnesses that were interviewed by *The Debrief* stated that they did not board the ship until November of 2003. Based on these witnesses’ statements, it appears the event happened between Dec 03 and May 04 when *Reagan* left Norfolk for San Diego.

WHAT DID THE USS RONALD REAGAN UAP LOOK LIKE?

The various primary witness descriptions of the object were largely consistent. Assuming the witnesses accurately described the object they witnessed, it appeared to have the following visible features:

- Roughly the size of a jet fighter (10-40 feet wide)
- Hovering 100-200 above flight deck forward of the island
- Yellow, orange, reddish, fire-colored
- Round or a sideways oval, “A blob”
- Gaseous surface appearance with movement on the surface
- Burning-like surface appearance – like “science videos of the sun”
- Edges are not flat and symmetrical. Rough edges. fuzzy edges
- Possible translucent opacity
- Self-luminous – not reflected light
- No illumination on the flight deck from the object
- No sound or odor from the object reported
- Two witnesses observed both hovering and half-circle movements when the object departed
- Two witnesses observed the object depart at a rapid speed

POSSIBLE PROSAIC CAUSES

Very few prosaic explanations fit all the observations reported by the witnesses. Yet some scientific research into luminous aerial phenomena such as ball lightning and earthquake lights has resulted in data suggesting that under certain rare conditions, natural processes can result in similar visual displays of luminous aerial shapes.

In the case of earthquake lights (EQL) phenomena, several studies have presented the hypothesis that highly stressed rock layers within geologic fault lines can produce luminous emissions preceding earthquakes.

In their 2014 co-authored research paper, “[Prevalence of Earthquake Lights Associated with Rift Environments](http://searchgate.net/publication/274244963)” Robert Theriault, of the Quebec Ministère de l’Énergie et des Ressources Naturelles, France St-Laurent, an independent geophysics researcher, Friedemann Freund of NASA, and John Derr, a retired United States Geological Survey scientist, argue that reports of luminous displays have been observed near fault lines during seismic events.

These luminous displays, the authors say, are a result of electrical discharges that are produced by high-stress conditions within Earth’s crust, and are often “described as flames accompanied by smoke issuing from ground fissure... of meteor-like bolides passing over the sky at the time of the earthquake, or of luminous fog or clouds.” Having studied 65 written EQL reports dating back to the 1600’s up through 2009, the authors theorize that the high energy discharges ionize the air, which in turn creates these plasma luminosities.

In the case of the Saint-Fidèle (Charlevoix) earthquake in Quebec Canada on August 19th, 1979, several witnesses reported seeing luminous balls of light:

“...three newspaper delivery boys saw luminous globes traveling very rapidly over the Saguenay River in a SE direction. At one time, a luminous red globe was seen near and encircling the Sainte Anne’s cross (which is located on a cliff above the north side of the Saguenay River), before continuing its way towards the SE while emitting reddish flashes of light. Another flashing globe was also noticed over a very tall tree.”

Notable differences between EQL reports and the USS *Ronald Reagan* UAP include the appearance of flashing lights, or luminous columns rising out of the ground layer. Furthermore, all of the 65 reports the aforementioned scientists examined occurred over dry land. Also breaking from typical EQL type luminous phenomena had been that the USS *Ronald Reagan* witnesses also reported the UAP hovering, and what they perceived as a controlled maneuver before performing a rapid egress (*The Debrief* reached out to the coauthors of the EQL paper cited above to inquire further about whether such reports occur at sea, but had received no response as of the time of publication).

SECRET TECH?

Military hardware has historically been the source of UFO reports, such as the B2 Stealth Bomber and F117 Stealth Fighter test flights before they were commonly known to the public. One navy technology that may create aerial luminous balls of plasma is referenced in a 2018 Patent Application titled “System and Method for Laser-Induced Plasma for Infrared Homing Missile Countermeasure” by Alexandru Hening.



See Also



THIS TECH COULD PROVIDE HUMANS FULL COLOR NIGHT VISION
([HTTPS://THEDEBRIEF.ORG/THIS-TECH-COULD-PROVIDE-HUMANS-FULL-COLOR-NIGHT-VISION/](https://thedebrief.org/this-tech-could-provide-humans-full-color-night-vision/))

The invention uses ultra-rapid laser pulses to create a filament or channel of plasma called “laser-induced plasma filaments” (LIPF) behind an aircraft to fool incoming heat-seeking missiles as an alternative to traditional countermeasure flares. These laser-produced plasma decoys can be 2D or 3D and focused at a desired distance and position. Hening has apparently worked at [Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific](http://www.spawar.navy.mil/pacific) (now called Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific) on this secret “plasma shield” project since 2012.
(<http://www.spawar.navy.mil/pacific>)

The [Patent Application](https://appft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&p=1&u=/netahtml/PTO/srchnum.html&r=1&f=G&L=50&d=PG01&s1=20200041236.PGNR) for the project states:

([https://appft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-](https://appft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&p=1&u=/netahtml/PTO/srchnum.html&r=1&f=G&L=50&d=PG01&s1=20200041236.PGNR)

Parser?

[Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&p=1&u=/netahtml/PTO/srchnum.html&r=1&f=G&L=50&d=PG01&s1=20200041236.PGNR](https://appft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&p=1&u=/netahtml/PTO/srchnum.html&r=1&f=G&L=50&d=PG01&s1=20200041236.PGNR))

“By rastering plasma, it is possible to generate 2D or 3D volumetric images in space. This is analogous to the rastering of an electron beam in a cathode ray tube-based television. In one potential embodiment, a laser system would be mounted on the back of an air vehicle such that the beam can be rastered using optics and mirrors to generate a large ‘ghost’ image in space. This ‘ghost’ image would appear to detract the homing missile away from the tangible air vehicle. In a second embodiment, there can be multiple laser systems mounted on the back of the air vehicle with each laser system generating a ghost image such that there would appear to be multiple air vehicles present.”

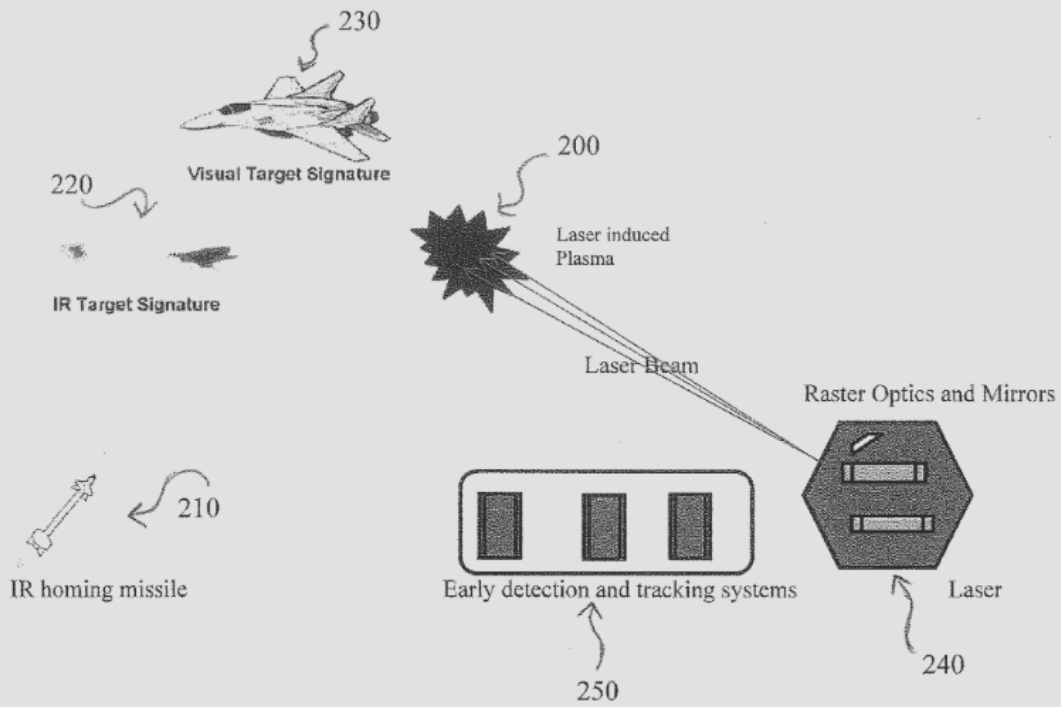


Fig. 2

Image from 2018 US Patent Application US20200041236A1 (Filed by US Department of Navy).

The development of laser-induced plasma decoys by the Navy has already been confirmed in years past. This includes technologies used for creating decoys that could protect naval ships, as well as airplanes. However, it is unclear if the Navy had an operational laser-plasma system deployed in 2004.

In 2018 Aerial Burton, a Japanese technology company demonstrated its own "Aerial 3D" laser-induced plasma system for projecting 3D objects in mid-air (see video below). Several of the *Reagan* witnesses stated they did not see any unusual equipment on the flight deck that could be the source of the object they saw. Derek Smith stated that what he observed did not appear to be a projection, nor was it the "bat signal" (*The Debrief* reached out to Navy Patent inventor Alexandru Hening for comment, but has not received a response as of the date of this report).



POSSIBLE COVER-UP?

One of the most puzzling aspects of this encounter was the reported lack of response from the USS Reagan's chain of command. Karol Olesiak recalled the captain was not on the bridge and was neither called nor informed, to his knowledge, while he was present. He stated that no general quarters or defensive measures were taken on the bridge. Several witnesses reported jokes about the "Bermuda Triangle" being mentioned. Olesiak said everyone's lack of response reminded him of the folktale called "The Emperor's New Clothes" in which the emperor travels the city in "invisible" clothes and the townsfolk ignores the man out of fear of staring and admitting he is actually naked.

Luis Elizondo is a former [U.S. Army Counterintelligence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Army_Counterintelligence) Special Agent and former employee of the DoD [Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Office_of_the_Under_Secretary_of_Defense_for_Intelligence). He is also the former director of the [Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advanced_Aerospace_Threat_Identification_Program), the government program he says once studied military UAP sightings. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advanced_Aerospace_Threat_Identification_Program)

Elizondo told *The Debrief* that he is aware of similar cases where there was an effort to ignore the events taking place.

"So as, as incredible as it may seem, this is not the first time reports of people being eyewitnesses to a UAP have behaved in a similar fashion," Elizondo said. "There are instances that we came across in AATIP where certain observers almost appeared to be in an essence mesmerized or I guess in a more in a less dramatic way, almost like hypnotized by the event to the point where after the event, it wasn't until after the event, did people kind of scratch their heads and say, oh my God, did we just see what we saw?"

Another troubling observation from the witnesses is they say they saw and overheard officers instruct the crew to not log this event into the official ship's deck log. In addition, Patrick Gokey was on his bridge rotation and he states he observed one officer ordering his subordinates to remove pages from his logbook.

"I remember one of the officers on the deck ordering someone to take the pages out of the deck logbook," Gokey remembers, "which for me was the most surprising thing because I was always told in the Navy that whatever you write in that logbook is a legal record and you can't, you know, just destroy it, ripping out anything like that. So that was actually the most surprising thing to me."

Witness 5, who was standing Boatswain's Mate of the Watch, recalled that when he had entered the sighting into his "Greenbook" or the official log of the Boatswain's Watch, a senior officer ordered him to "Rip that shit out." He said this was not the official ship deck logs that the quartermasters keep, but rather, a less formal one kept by members of the Watch.



Petty Officer 3rd Class Travis McKnight, aviation boatswain's mate (handling), from the primary flight control tower aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, circa 6/2011 (Credit: U.S. Navy Photo).

Witness 3 said the lookouts were told not to write it down and Karol Olesiak who was maintaining the official ship's log says he did not write down the sighting either.

"I asked, should I be logging this? You know, and I think I might have asked the conning officer and I don't remember exactly what he said, but the impression that I got was that this should not be in the official log." Karol Olesiak QM3

Elizondo said he's familiar with UAP cases he examined where the very stigma of officially reporting a case in the logbooks was avoided to keep the record clean of what was considered a "fringe topic, or incredible topic."

"There's actually a term that they used which ... was basically 'log it and scratch it,'" Elizondo explains. "So basically they were required to log these incidents, but then basically they would scratch it off as if it didn't happen. So, they were following their orders to log it, but then they scratched it out. So in essence you know... they're doing what they're told to do, but at the same time, it's not getting reported."

SIMILARITIES TO OTHER INCIDENTS

Since 2017, new details have come to light related to several incidents involving U.S. Navy personnel who say they observed UAP while on duty. These events include a notable 2004 incident involving the Navy's Carrier Strike Group 11, commonly known as the "[Nimitz Incident](https://www.military.com/2019/05/26/us-politics/ufo-sightings-navy)", as well as a series of [radar-visual encounters reported by Navy personnel aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt](https://www.military.com/2019/05/26/us-politics/ufo-sightings-navy) that occurred between 2014 and 2015. Since 2020, [The Debrief](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/26/us/politics/ufo-sightings-navy) has also reported on several similar incidents involving U.S. Navy personnel, and also confirmed the Pentagon's involvement with ongoing investigations of such incidents. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/26/us/politics/ufo-sightings-navy>)

The glowing UAPs reported by the crew of the USS *Ronald Reagan* have a similar appearance to other reported military UAP encounters going back several decades. In March 1967, Lt. Robert Salas was a Deputy Missile Combat Crew Commander at the Oscar Flight Missile Launch Facility at Malmstrom AFB, Montana. This was an ICBM Minuteman missile silo complex, and according to Salas, base security guards radioed him and reported a "glowing red ball" over the base front gate. Soon after that call, he reported that [8-10 Oscar Flight ICBM missiles went offline](https://theblot.com/2019/05/26/us-politics/ufo-sightings-navy). ([https://theblot.com/2019/05/26/us/politics/ufo-sightings-navy](https://theblot.com/2019/05/26/us-politics/ufo-sightings-navy))

Another guard at the nearby Echo Flight Launch Facility later wrote to him to report spotting an object fly past that was "red or orange-red in color" that "glowed" and looked "much like a ball of fire" and had "no distinct shape and appeared to be round." An additional 8-10 nukes then went offline at Echo Flight Launch Facility. These documented missile shutdowns purportedly involving UAP sightings remain unexplained and were recounted in-depth in Salas's book *Faded Giant*, coauthored with James Klotz. (<https://www.amazon.com/Faded-Giant-Robert-Salas/dp/1406634484>)

Orange-colored fireball-like objects have been reported making incursions at other military nuclear installations as well. On October 28, 1975, at Loring AFB, Maine, Sgt. Steven Eichner, crew chief on a B-52 bomber, was working along with Sgt. R. Jones, and other crew when Jones spotted a "red and orange object" over the nuclear weapons storage area. It looked like a "stretched-out football", Eichner said. (<https://www.military.com/2019/05/26/us-politics/ufo-sightings-navy>)

The crew gave chase and soon spotted an object 300 feet away from them that was hovering 5 feet above the ground. It made no sound and was a "reddish-orange color" about the size of 4 car lengths. Eichner described the object "as if all the colors were blending together as if you were looking at a desert scene... There were these waves in front of the object and all the colors were blending together. The object was solid and we could not hear any noise coming from it" (the events in question, along with related government documents, were detailed by researchers Barry Greenwood and Larry Fawcett in their book *Clear Intent: The Government Coverup of the Ufo Experience*). (<https://www.amazon.com/Clear-Intent-Government-Coverup-Experience/dp/0131366491>)

Elizondo told *The Debrief* that he's familiar with these types of UAP, adding that "What seemed to be these orbs or luminous balls of almost, like, plasma-like balls and some have even speculated that these are similar to something we're familiar with, (and) could be compared to unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs, or drones, basically, probes, if you will that are related to UAP and potentially, even launched and deployed from an actual UAP craft."

Lynda Thompson, a MUFON Field Investigator who looked at the organization's private database of UFO sightings for "fireball" shaped reports, told *The Debrief* that from "1/1/95 to 4/24/22 there were a total of 91,190 reports with 4,773 orbs and 839 Saturn-like. For instance, several of those could fit the description, and several are also described as an orb."

Another national UAP reporting database is the National UFO Reporting Center (NUFORC). According to the [NUFORC website](https://www.nuforc.org/), "The Center's primary function over the past four decades has been to receive, record, and to the greatest degree possible, corroborate and document reports from individuals who have been witness to unusual, possibly UFO-related events." Of the 138,017 reports online, 9,605 are "Fireball" shaped, totaling around 6.96 % of all cases. (<https://www.nuforc.org/>)

CONCLUSIONS

The USS *Ronald Reagan* encounter of 2004 is both profound, and also perplexing, given the witness statements. UAP cases are often criticized based on the lack of physical evidence, and this case is no exception. What sets this encounter apart, however, is the sheer number—and *quality*—of the witnesses. Among their qualifications, most had received training as lookouts to spot known aircraft.

Of the ten Navy vets, five are primary witnesses who personally saw the object and recalled the event independently. Several of these individuals had never talked about this incident in the 18 years since it occurred. While the majority of them do not recall the exact date and time, they do say they remember what they saw. Details vary slightly, but there were no widespread differences in statements or obvious indications of deceit. According to each of them, many more of their shipmates witnessed the event from the flight deck or the various other bridges and departments. Estimates range from 50 to 300 other people present during the hours-long event, they say.

The lack of response from the officers of the watch and orders to not log the event is also puzzling, but possibly explainable as an unwillingness to recognize a bizarre phenomenon in an era where people who reported UFO sightings were still being stigmatized. It could also affect career advancement, according to pilots and officers we've spoken with.

Today one thing is certain: incidents like this are mandatorily being reported using recently established Navy guidelines and sent to the new Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) at the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (OUSD(I&S)). According to a memo by Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, this office is tasked with coordinating with other federal agencies to "detect, identify and attribute" UAPs and "to assess, and as appropriate, mitigate any associated threats to the safety of flight and national security." (<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Releases-the-establishment-of-the-airborne-object-identification-and-management-synchronization-group>)

One thing is certain: if a USS *Ronald Reagan* event happened today, it's unlikely the public would ever hear details the likes of which are presented here, as they would now be kept secret. Recent [Navy briefing cards](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/foia-reading-room/) from the DoD public affairs office for the Navy's Chief of Information and the Office of Information (CHINFO), obtained through a FOIA request by researcher Marc Cootin, describe assistance on responding to UAP-related media requests, and state that "information obtained, in whatever form and from whatever source, involving UAPs, is classified." (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/foia-reading-room/>)

In other words, no unauthorized UAP information will be forthcoming from military service members in the future, as all military UAP reports are now to be deemed classified. In light of this, the significance of the testimony we recount here, experienced by multiple servicemen and women aboard the USS *Ronald Regan* in 2004, is of key importance in providing the public a broader understanding of what countless numbers of our armed forces personnel say they have experienced while on duty.

Additional reporting, research, and contributions to this article were provided by Sean Munger and Craig Labadie.

*Dave Beaty is a TV producer, documentary filmmaker, military historian, and journalist who specializes in 3D graphics. A longtime UAP researcher and consultant, he produced the short film, [The Nimitz Encounters](http://thenimitzenounters.com), which recounted UAP experienced by several Navy personnel aboard the USS *Nimitz* in 2004. If you have any information related to the 2004 USS *Ronald Regan* UAP encounter, you can contact the author at dbeatybeaty@yahoo.com.
(mailto:dbeatybeaty@yahoo.com)*

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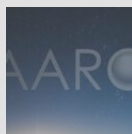
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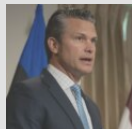
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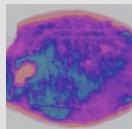
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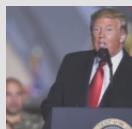
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CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(PUBLIC DOMAIN) - 9 May 2022 — Five witnesses on board the USS Ronald Reagan say they see a large, fiery orange UAP hovering 100 feet above the flight deck. QM3 Karol Olesiak states it reminded him of a "burning bush," and states the Office of the Watch and Conning Officer were not alarmed by the object. SN Derek Smith states the surface of the UAP was "swirling."

Another witness, an anonymous Boatswain's Mate of the Watch was in contact with all witnesses and saw the object himself, stating it was "translucent" like a "lava lamp," "almost like viscous, but in the air, and it moved." The BMOW corroborated Olesiak's statement that the superior officers weren't concerned by it and concluded they knew information "above my pay grade." When the BMOW wrote the sighting into his log, he was told by his chief to "rip it out."

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