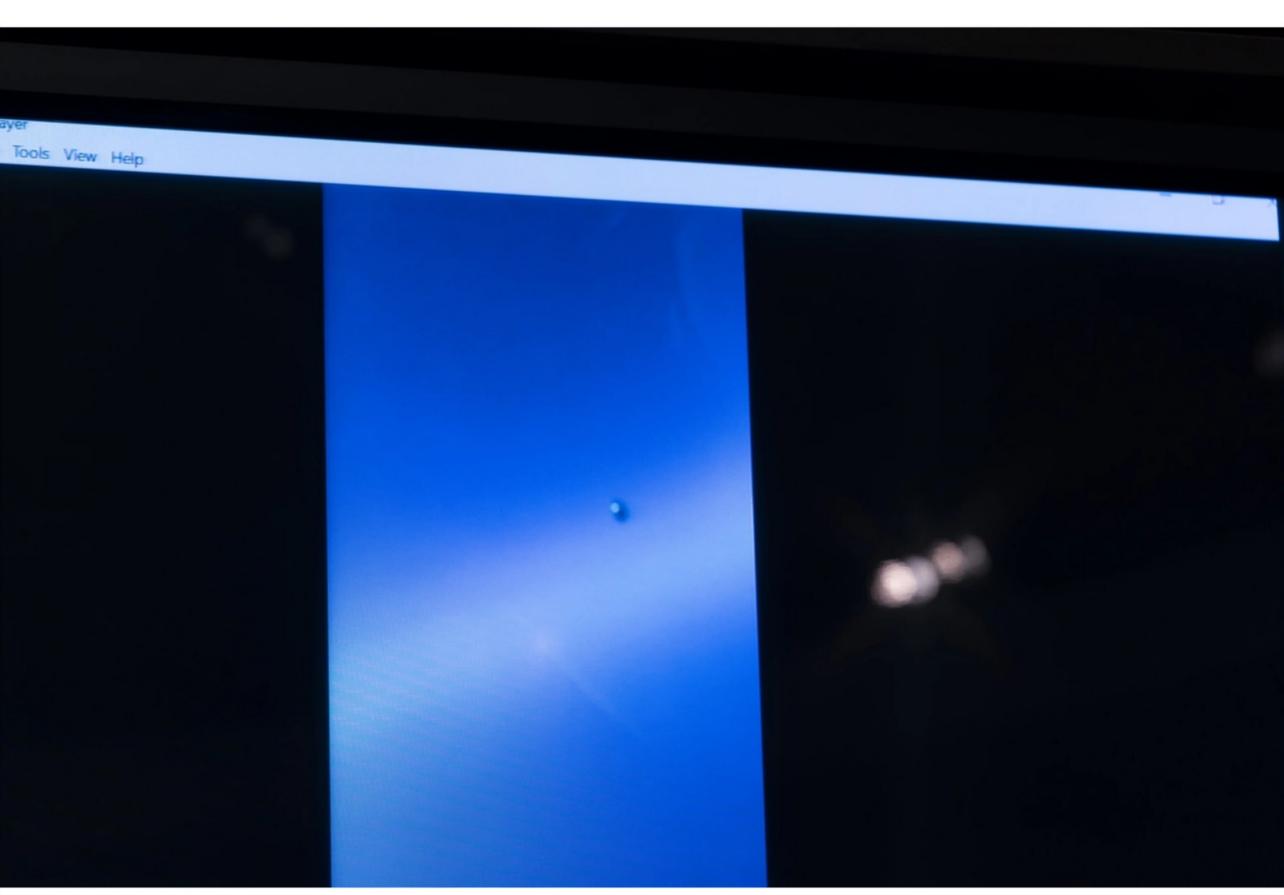


PRIMARY SOURCE

## We Have a Real UFO Problem. And It's Not Balloons. America's fixation on the recent objects floating over the country overlooks a much more serious problem with

MAGAZINE

advanced technology aircraft that we can't explain.



and engineer, chairs the American

Brandon/AP Photo

By RYAN GRAVES

Ryan Graves, a former Navy fighter pilot

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Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics' UAP Integration & Outreach Committee. He is the founder of the new non-profit Americans for Safe Aerospace (www.safeaerospace.org). The Navy has officially acknowledged 11 near misses with Unidentified Aerial Phenomena that required evasive action and triggered mandatory

safety reports between 2004 and 2021. | Alex

Virginia Beach. All traffic into the training area goes through a single GPS point at a set altitude — almost like a doorway into a massive room where military jets can operate without running into other aircraft. Just at the moment the two jets crossed the threshold, one of the pilots saw a dark gray cube inside of a clear sphere — motionless against the wind, fixed directly at the entry point. The jets, only 100 feet apart, zipped past the object on either side. The pilots had come so dangerously close to something they couldn't identify that they terminated the training mission immediately and returned to base. "I almost hit one of those damn things!" the flight leader, still shaken by the incident, told us shortly after in the pilots' ready room. We all knew exactly what he meant. "Those damn things" had been plaguing us for the previous eight months.

towards Warning Area W-72, an exclusive block of airspace ten miles east of

n a clear, sunny day in April 2014, two F/A-18s took off for an air

combat training mission off the coast of Virginia. The jets, part of my

Navy fighter squadron, climbed to an altitude of 12,000 and steered

I joined the U.S. Navy in 2009 and underwent years of rigorous training as a pilot. Specifically, we are trained to be expert observers in identifying aircraft with our sensors and our own eyes. It's our job to know what's in our operating area. That's why, in 2014, after upgrades were made to our radar system, our

squadron made a startling discovery: There were unknown objects in our

Biden addresses unidentified objects, China spy balloon

airspace.



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continuously throughout the day. I am a formally trained engineer, but the technology they demonstrated defied my understanding.

After that near-miss, we had no choice but to submit a safety report, hoping that something could be done before it was too late. But there was no official acknowledgement of what we experienced and no further mechanism to report the sightings — even as other aircrew flying along the East coast quietly began sharing similar experiences. Our only option was to cancel or move our training, as the UAP continued to maneuver in our vicinity unchecked. Nearly a decade later we still don't know what they were. When I retired from the Navy in 2019, I was the first active-duty pilot to come

forward publicly and testify to Congress. In the years since, there has been

some notable coverage of the encounters and Congress has taken some action

to force the military and intelligence agencies to do much more to get to the

But there has not been anything near the level of public and official attention that has been paid to the recent shoot downs of a Chinese spy balloon and the three other unknown objects that were likely research balloons.

bottom of these mysteries.

And that's a problem. Advanced objects demonstrating cutting-edge technology that we cannot explain are routinely flying over our military bases or entering restricted airspace.

"UAP events continue to occur in restricted or sensitive airspace, highlighting

Director of National Intelligence reported last month, citing 247 new reports

over the last 17 months. "Some UAP appeared to remain stationary in winds

aloft, move against the wind, maneuver abruptly, or move at considerable

speed, without discernible means of propulsion."

Intelligence Committee.

what is in our skies — period.

answers about UAP.

community and private industry.

sense.

possible concerns for safety of flight or adversary collection activity," the

The Navy has also officially acknowledged 11 near misses with UAP that required evasive action and triggered mandatory safety reports between 2004 and 2021. Advanced UAP also pose a growing safety hazard to commercial airliners. Last May, the Federal Aviation Administration issued an alert after a passenger aircraft flying over West Virginia experienced a rare failure of two major systems while passing underneath what appeared to be a UAP.

One thing we do know is these craft aren't part of some classified U.S. project.

"We were quite confident that was not the explanation," Scott Bray, the deputy

director of the Office of Naval Intelligence, testified before Congress last year.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio confirmed in a recent interview that whatever the

origin of these objects it is not the U.S. military. "We have things flying over

don't know what it is and it isn't ours," said Rubio, who is vice chair of the

President Joe Biden rightly points out the real national security and aviation

our military bases and places where we're conducting military exercises and we

safety risks, from "foreign intelligence collection" to "hazard to civilian air traffic," that arise from low-tech "balloon-like" entities. I applaud his new order to create an interagency UAP taskforce and a government-wide effort to address unidentified objects, and his proposal to make sure all aerial craft are registered and identifiable according to a global standard is good common-

16 were the UAP that exhibit advanced performance capabilities. Where is the transparency and urgency from the administration and Congress to investigate highly advanced objects in restricted airspace that our military cannot explain? How will this new taskforce be more effective than existing efforts if we are not being clear and direct about the scope and nature of advanced UAP?

The American public must demand accountability. We need to understand

In the coming days, I will launch Americans for Safe Aerospace (ASA), a new

support pilots and other aerospace professionals who are reporting UAP. Our

voices, public education, grassroots activism and lobbying on Capitol Hill to get

President Biden needs to address this issue as transparently as possible. The

White House should not conflate the low-tech objects that were recently shot

down with unexplained high-tech, advanced objects witnessed by pilots. Our

government needs to admit that it is possible another country has developed

game-changing technology. We need to urgently address this threat by bringing

together the best minds in our military, intelligence, science and tech sectors. If

advocacy organization for aerospace safety and national security. ASA will

significant safety and national security problem. We will provide credible

goal is to demand more disclosure from our public officials about this

However, what the president did not address during his press conference Feb.

more conspiracy theories and greater distrust that stymie our search for the truth. We need a coordinated, data-driven response that unites the public and private

sectors. The North American Aerospace Defense Command, the U.S. Space

Force and a host of other military and civilian agencies need to be marshaled in

support of a much more aggressive and vigilant effort, along with our scientific

advanced UAP are not foreign drones, then we absolutely need a robust

scientific inquiry into this mystery. Obfuscation and denial are a recipe for

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Right now, the pieces of the UAP puzzle are scattered across silos in the

data available to the best scientists outside of government.

military, government and the private sector. We need to integrate and analyze

these massive data sets with new methods like AI. We also need to make this

We have strong supporters of more data sharing. Sen. Rubio has suggested the Pentagon's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO), which was set up by Congress last year, share its data on unidentified objects with academic institutions and civilian scientific organizations. The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and the Galileo Project at Harvard, tech startups

like Enigma Labs, and traditional defense contractors could all play a role.

Unfortunately, all UAP reports and videos are classified, meaning active-duty

pilots cannot come forward publicly and FOIA requests are denied. These are

two major steps backwards for transparency, but they can be mitigated with

data-sharing. I am impressed by the recent whistleblower protections enacted last year to encourage more pilots and others to come forward, and I support the fresh push by Rubio and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) for full funding of AARO.

Given the stakes, Congress also needs to fund grants for more scientific inquiry of UAP. Above all, we need to listen to pilots. Military and civilian pilots provide critical, first-hand insights into advanced UAP. Right now, the stigma attached to reporting UAP is still too strong. Since I came forward about UAP in 2019,

only one other pilot from my squadron has gone public. Commercial pilots also

face significant risks to their careers for doing so.

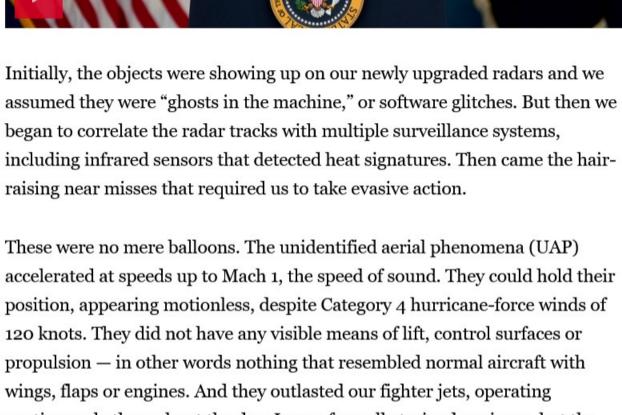
New rules are needed to require civilian pilots to report UAP, protect the pilots from retribution, and a process must be established for investigating their reports. Derision or denial over the unknown is unacceptable. This is a time for curiosity. If the phenomena I witnessed with my own eyes turns out to be foreign drones,

they pose an urgent threat to national security and airspace safety. If they are

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something else, it must be a scientific priority to find out.



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