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What if UFOs Have Been a Cover for High-Tech— and Human—Defense Research Programs?

Teaser: A mix of government, private, adversarial, and unexplained objects are filling up an increasingly congested U.S. airspace. Uncovering what fills it should be of greater public interest.

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[Article Body:]

Could the decades-long pursuit of unraveling the UFO mystery potentially function as a cover for advanced government research and testing programs for innovative forms of propulsion and craft design? Moreover, might the recent rollout of official government hearings signal a gradual disclosure of some of those capabilities? This scenario is worth considering, as the process of investigating UFOs comes into sharper public focus.

In 2023, fascination with Unidentified Flying Objects ([UFOs](#)) and Unidentified Aerial Phenomena ([UAP](#)) has spiked. David Grusch, a former intelligence official who led the analysis of [UAPs within the U.S. military](#), told a Congressional hearing in July that the

United States had been collecting non-human craft “[for decades](#).” At the first Republican debate [on August 23rd](#), candidates were asked about the president’s responsibility to provide information to the public about UFOs. And on August 31st, the Pentagon [launched a new website](#) providing the public with declassified information about sightings.

Mainstream intrigue surrounding UFOs was born following the 1947 Roswell incident, the crash of what was initially described by the U.S. military as a “flying disc” in Roswell, New Mexico, but later attributed to a weather balloon. To quell public fear and speculation, official government studies to investigate UFO/UAP reports, including [Project Blue Book](#), [Project Sign](#), and [Project Grudge](#), were launched. While the government feared air warning systems could be overwhelmed by reports, it was also wary of Soviet attempts to boost false sightings and promote conspiracy theories that could [instigate panic and allegations of a coverup](#).

During the Cold War, UFO reports became common, often coinciding with [missile and rocket tests](#) ([a habit which continues today](#)). Several [Soviet](#) and [U.S. military personnel](#) also testified that UFOs were able to temporarily take control over missile and nuclear facilities. However, [in 1997](#), the CIA revealed that the military had lied to the public throughout the Cold War about many UFO sightings to obscure its black projects and keep Moscow in the dark about technological advancements. Blaming sightings on natural phenomena like ice crystals and temperature inversions fueled public distrust toward the government and its claims about UFOs/UAPs.

Many secret military aircraft were frequently mistaken for UFOs, such as [the U-2 reconnaissance plane](#), introduced in the 1950s, which featured a gray frame that often reflected the sun. The SR-71 “Blackbird” [meanwhile started service in 1966](#) and wasn’t declassified until the 1990s. Its distinctive shape, speed, and altitude capabilities were often mistaken for a UFO. The B-2 Spirit, introduced in the late 1980s, also had a unique aerodynamic design and its ability to control lift, thrust, and drag at low speeds often gave the appearance that [it was hovering](#).

Since the Cold War, [secretive experimental military aircraft](#) have continued to generate UFO reports. But unexplained phenomena have also fueled conspiracy theories. [In November 2004](#) off the coast of San Diego, Navy pilots filmed UFOs demonstrating rapid acceleration, physics-defying sudden changes in direction, and other feats in videos eventually released to the public in 2017. And despite formalizing a UFO/UAP reporting process [in 2019](#), Navy pilots and other military personnel who have witnessed them have

been hesitant to [come forward](#) due to fear of ridicule or professional repercussions.

The U.S. military's reluctance to disclose UFO/UAP information is often linked to the need to protect classified technology. Military agencies can choose to neither confirm nor deny such information exists. But when the government transparency website, the Black Vault, submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the Navy for more UFO/UAP videos, it was denied because it would harm national security and "[may provide adversaries valuable information](#) regarding Department of Defense/Navy operations, vulnerabilities, and/or capabilities."

Releasing these videos without additional information may also be an effective way for the U.S. military to hint at its own new technological capacities for various strategic, political, and scientific reasons. Suddenly revealing these technologies could result in rising geopolitical tensions and trigger a reaction, while merely hinting at it may also serve as a deterrence to adversaries. Gradually preparing the public for emerging technologies is equally as important, while encouraging speculation about UFO/UAPs could divert attention away from classified projects.

By clandestinely testing experimental new technologies on their own defenses without resorting to lethal forces, military agencies can also gain valuable insights into their capabilities and vulnerabilities in real-world scenarios.

A 2021 report by the DoD's intelligence agencies also noted [that many UFOs/UAPs were](#) "technologies deployed by China, Russia, another nation, or a non-governmental entity." The New York Times broke the story days before an updated version was [provided to Congress](#) in 2022. An ongoing investigation by The Warzone meanwhile suggests there are a large number of [hostile drones mistaken for UFOs/UAPs](#) that the government has until recently failed to confront.

Being unable to properly identify another country's experimental aircraft, by labeling it a UFO/UAP, would also demonstrate shortcomings in U.S. air defense systems. Similarly, releasing documentation of U.S. surveillance of other countries' stealth aircraft and other technology would give them a better idea of U.S. military capabilities and would alert these countries that they were being surveilled.

In addition to other countries, companies are also responsible for a significant number of UFO/UAP reports. The first drones were manufactured [more than a century](#) ago in the UK and U.S., and the capabilities of the private sector have grown considerably since then. Camouflage technology has made commercial drones [increasingly difficult to clearly identify](#), and hundreds of drones by China's largest drone maker DJI, were noted to have

entered restricted airspace in Washington D.C. [in 2022](#) alone. And, of course, commercial drones can be purchased and used by other governments.

Nonetheless, much of the technological developments concerning advanced aircraft stem from the U.S. military and other agencies. Since the 1970s, NASA has expanded on [ideas developed](#) by scientist and engineer Arthur Kantrowitz to use lasers to launch satellites without fuel or an engine, with successful tests carried out in the late 1990s. The U.S. [Air Force](#) and [NASA](#) have both continued developing this technology in the 21st Century, while NASA has also explored [plasma propulsion technology](#) that may have caused numerous UFO/UAP reports.

The U.S. Navy has pushed the boundaries of technology further with the development of [laser-induced plasma technology](#), patented [in 2018](#). This innovation can generate extremely high temperatures in the air, creating plasma that can be harnessed to form intricate shapes and lifelike optical illusions, even simulating aircraft performing seemingly impossible maneuvers. Additionally, the U.S. military has developed the ability to [produce sound out of lasers](#), which would add an additional layer of realism to UFO/UAP sightings.

Over the last few years, increasing attention has also been [brought to projects by Salvatore Cezar Pais](#), an aerospace engineer and scientist who has worked for the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD). Despite lacking empirical evidence and rigorous, peer-reviewed scientific scrutiny, his alleged breakthroughs in propulsion and energy generation would serve as some of the most groundbreaking technological breakthroughs in history.

Pais's [patents with the U.S. Navy](#) relate to the development of advanced propulsion systems that could potentially lead to rapid thrust technology and an abundance of clean energy generation. This includes a “craft using an inertial mass reduction device,” which was patented [in 2018](#), while a patent for a “[plasma compression fusion device](#)” was also filed but later appeared [to be abandoned](#). Nonetheless, documents retrieved by The Warzone through the Freedom of Information Act reveal that his [inventions are being considered](#) for the Air Force, NASA, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

Of course, like U.S. President Ronald Reagan's proposed “[Star Wars](#)” missile defense system in the 1980s, Pais's patents could be designed to bait adversaries into a costly arms race. That is not to say that these countries are not already developing their own fascinating projects. China has been [drastically](#) increasing [its development](#) of plasma

technology in recent years, and alongside the UK, Germany, and Japan, is [developing Active Flow Control \(AFC\)](#) technology to improve aerodynamic performance in aircraft. European entities have also recently [made breakthroughs in plasma propulsion technology](#), which may boost UFO/UAP reports across the continent.

Amid these developments, it remains crucial for the public to stay engaged and informed about UFOs/UAP – the more publicly observed the evidence is, the harder it becomes to manipulate. Considering the history of government audacity in crafting political and war propaganda, we should remain skeptical of the entities shaping narratives about extraplanetary intelligent life.

A shift toward destigmatizing and embracing a public approach to UFOs/UAP, both domestic and foreign, is essential. Alongside the Black Vault, initiatives like the [open-data Galileo Project](#), spearheaded by Avi Loeb from Harvard University's Astronomy Department, are actively seeking evidence of extraterrestrial life and pushing our understanding of outer space. By involving the public in the search for answers, we can bridge gaps in understanding and move closer to demystifying these phenomena.