

# U.S. Government Says UFOs are “Real”

*An Analysis of the 60 Minutes Investigation*

BY MICK WEST



Journalist Bill Whitaker in the opening UAP segment of *60 Minutes*.

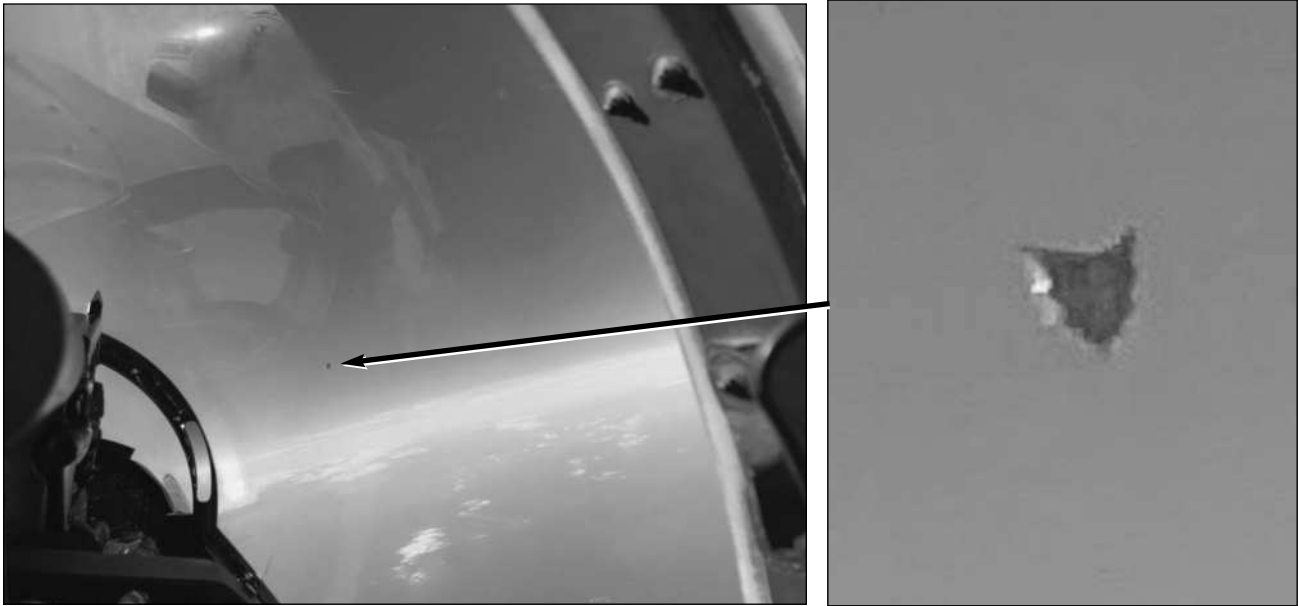


UAP enthusiast Luis Elizondo on *60 Minutes*.

THE *60 MINUTES* SEGMENT OF SUNDAY MAY 16, 2021 (available online at <https://bit.ly/3wa48Bo>), was no doubt for many people a startling revelation that the U.S. Government has admitted that UFOs are “real” and the military is investigating them. But for me it was a walk down memory lane, a recap of the curious events of the last four years. A disappointing recap at that, as I’d hoped for at least some new nuggets of information that I could use to help solve the rather complicated puzzle of just exactly what is going on.

The segment opens with an interview with a familiar character, Luis Elizondo, reputedly the former head of a \$22 million program instigated by Senator Harry Reid called AATIP: the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program. Ostensibly this was created to study possible future developments in aerospace. Elizondo claims the program was actually created to study UFOs (or, as they prefer to call them now, UAPs, or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.) Put out to tender in 2008, the budget was awarded to Reid’s friend, Robert Bigelow, a UFO and paranormal enthusiast.

Elizondo opens with the startling claim that “the Government has already stated for the record that [UFOs] are real.” Startling, that is, until you remember that “UFO” does not necessarily mean alien visitors, but rather something unidentified in the sky, something about which the observer lacks sufficient information to identify. Obviously, the government would admit such things are “real.” A mylar balloon (next page, top) floating into the range of a Navy jet’s camera is “real”, but the “U” in UFO and UAP does not mean extraterrestrial, or even necessarily an aerial technology beyond any known physics and aerodynamics.



Left: the view from the cockpit of what looks like a mylar balloon photographed from Navy jet. Right: The enlarged object.



The “Go Fast” video purports to show an incredibly fast craft skimming low over the ocean.

Elizondo then goes on to describe craft exhibiting startling technologies—the ability to accelerate at a physics-defying 600g, reaching speeds of 17,000 mph in the atmosphere, or even through water. These are things that the government very much has *not* admitted are real.

We then are shown a series of familiar videos as evidence of this amazing technology—all of which have been in the public domain for some time (over a decade in one case) and all of which have been analyzed (by several people, myself included) and found almost certainly not to represent

objects exhibiting incredible abilities, and instead more likely signify very ordinary human technology.

First, we see “Go Fast,” a video presented as showing an incredibly fast craft skimming low over the ocean. But if you do the very simple trigonometry invited by the numbers on screen, it turns out to be something *far* above the surface and moving at a speed that matches the wind at that altitude, making it almost certainly just a balloon. Yet the *60 Minutes* host, the highly respected journalist Bill Whitaker, repeats Elizondo’s baseless claim that it’s “fast moving.”



Above: a still from the green flashing triangle video. Below: a night vision device with a triangular aperture.

Next we see a more recent video, the green flashing triangle. Initially very impressive, it shows a triangular shaped object moving across the sky, filmed with a night vision device from a Navy ship. But then you notice the flashing light that, as I demonstrated in a video posted at Metabunk, perfectly matches the pattern of blinking lights on a commercial plane such as a Boeing 737. A little research reveals that some night vision devices have a triangular aperture (see my analysis at Metabunk here: <https://bit.ly/3ePgMzt>). When the device is slightly out of focus a plane flying overhead then looks exactly like this flying triangle. The case was effectively closed when other triangles in the scene were identified as stars. Yet we are told “the Pentagon admits it doesn’t know what in the world it is.” But if the Pentagon has actually studied this at all, then it’s pretty obvious they would agree with me.

In fact, the only thing the Pentagon has admitted is that the videos are “real,” in that they were taken by U.S. Navy personnel (and not, therefore, fake CGI-generated videos or whatever), and that they were included in studies by the UAP task force, meaning they were at least unidentified at one point.

We are then shown two other videos (following page). “FLIR1” is claimed to show physics-defying acceleration, but careful study has shown that the supposed sudden moves are actually the result of the camera moving or changing mode. “GIMBAL” shows an impressive looking flying saucer, but again the



reality seems mundane—an infrared glare of a distant plane and a rotating gimbal mechanism explain both the rotating saucer shape, and why it was named “gimbal” in the first place.

Later we hear about the 2004 *USS Nimitz* aircraft carrier incident, which gave us the FLIR1 video. Two pilots, David Fravor and Alex Dietrich, repeat a story they (mostly Fravor) have been telling for over a decade. Lauded as the greatest UFO encounter of all time, it has remarkably little in terms of actual evidence. The one blurry video has been consistently misinterpreted (including by Fravor) as showing rapid motion. There are accounts of unusual radar returns showing rapid motion, but unfortunately there’s no solid evidence for these, and the account has changed

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somewhat since it first appeared in a bizarre short science-fiction story written by the chief radar operator in 2008.

Dietrich and Fravor describe an encounter and short dogfight with a “Tic-Tac” shaped craft. This is perhaps the most compelling story, and one that’s difficult to explain. But their accounts don’t exactly line up, and I suspect that they saw the same thing, but both had different illusions of motion based on parallax. Fravor describes a five-minute encounter, yet Dietrich remembers only ten seconds. Unfortunately, the passage of time might mean we will never know what they saw.

We then meet Elizondo’s partner in this enterprise, Christopher Mellon, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Mellon seemingly shares Elizondo’s suspicion that we are being visited by some kind of non-human entity, and in 2017 worked with Elizondo to secure the release of the videos, which they then gave to the *New York Times* for a piece of well-timed publicity for their then employer, the To The Stars Academy, founded by rock star Tom DeLonge.

The *60 Minutes* segment is capped by Senator Marco Rubio, who has somehow become embroiled in the UAP saga, presenting himself as the voice of reason, just trying to get the military to look into “this.”

But the military is not ignoring things that fly into their airspace just because they can’t identify them. Procedures exist for reporting and investigating such things—and any unidentified incursion into sensitive military airspace would be aggressively intercepted. And the supposed rationale for AATIP (exploiting UFO technology) has already been covered by a variety of Foreign Material Exploitation Program—likely with vastly higher budgets.

What is going on? I really don’t know. The simplest explanation is that there are UFO fans in government, and they get to do these pet projects because the lumbering bureaucracy has better things to do than question every little \$22 million in the trillion dollar budget. More complicated alternatives involved some kind of military smokescreen, allowing UFO stories to run rampant to distract from real secret programs. But these are speculations. I suspect the people being quoted about the videos have not considered the more mundane explanations I have offered, or considered and rejected them because the “off world” or “extraordinary technology” explanations are more appealing.

Ultimately this story has gone on for far too long because the wall of military secrecy allows rampant speculation and claims based on supposed classified knowledge. The unwillingness of the military to clear this up is perhaps understandable, as they have more important things to do. Unfortunately it’s become a big story, with large segments of the public thinking that there’s something to these accounts and these videos, and it’s a short path from “unidentified” to “extraterrestrial” or “incredible foreign technology.” I do not have any great expectation this story will go away, but I wish that someone high up will eventually say enough is enough, and explain exactly what is going on, what these videos show, and what the military really thinks about UFOs. **S**



47  
FLIR1 screen shot.



3:16 / 13:47  
GIMBAL screen shot.