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For the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Subcommittees on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation;
and
National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs

Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena: Exposing the Truth

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I. Introduction

Chairwoman Mace, Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Connolly, Ranking Member Garcia, and distinguished Members of the subcommittees, I am grateful to all of you as well as your intrepid staff for the opportunity to testify regarding this fascinating, challenging, and important topic. My name is Mike Gold, and I am currently Chief Growth Officer at Redwire Space. I have also served as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Associate Administrator for Space Policy and Partnerships, Acting Associate Administrator for the Office of International and Interagency Relations, and Senior Advisor to the Administrator for International and Legal Affairs. However, for the purpose of this testimony, I want to be clear that I am speaking exclusively on my own behalf, and not for Redwire, NASA, or any other organization.

I want to begin by complimenting everyone involved in this hearing for having the courage to publicly and robustly address the Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) issue. Unfortunately, for decades this topic has been suffering from a stigma that has prevented much needed study and public discourse. Despite this stigma, the Committee has chosen to proceed with hearings, demonstrating a devotion to truth and scientific openness regardless of the ridicule and even spite that the discussion of UAP can engender. Again, thank you for your courage and commitment to following the facts no matter where they may lead.

I would be remiss if I also didn't thank the sponsors of the NASA UAP Independent Study Team (IST). Specifically, I'm grateful to your former Congressional colleague, NASA Administrator Bill Nelson, for his courage and direction to tackle this challenging topic. Additionally, I would like to express my appreciation to the former NASA Associate Administrator for the Science Mission Directorate, Dr. Thomas Zurbuchen, who formed the IST, and to Dr. Daniel Evans, who did an amazing job under difficult conditions as the IST's intrepid Designated Federal Officer. Moreover, I want to thank all of the IST members, particularly those who encountered ridicule and even threats due to their participation. It's disconcerting when members of the academic community are vilified for even having the temerity to attempt to study UAP, and the fact that this occurred is an example of the extent and pernicious nature of the stigmatization of UAP which must be stopped. Finally, I want to express my deep appreciation to the CEO of Redwire, Peter Cannito, our Redwire Board Member Reggie Brothers

(who joined me on the NASA UAP IST), our VP of Government Relations, Suzanne Gillen, and all of my colleagues at the company who have been supportive of my work related to UAP.

The topic of UAP is often discussed in the context of national security and defense. This is certainly justifiable due the nature of the phenomena. However, it's important to ensure that America's and the world's civil and commercial sectors are not left out of this important dialogue. Agencies such as NASA have much to offer when it comes to understanding UAP, and this was a major finding of our IST report. However, before NASA, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), or the commercial space sector can effectively assist in resolving the UAP issue, we must first, as a nation, overcome the pernicious stigma that continues to impede scientific dialogue and open discussions.

II. Combatting the Stigma

NASA is an agency that operates on data. Data is the lifeblood of NASA and science in general. Without data, nothing can be achieved. This is why the stigmatization of the UAP phenomena is so harmful. The stigma prevents scientific inquiry, the best tool that we have to understand anomalies, from being fully applied. For example, the NASA IST was fortunate to hear the testimony of Lt. Commander Alex Dietrich, a decorated fighter pilot (Bronze Star and Air Combat Medal) who encountered UAP while conducting training exercises with the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group off the coast of California. Commandeer Dietrich was mocked by her colleagues, and the issue was ignored by her superiors, and the incident went years without any investigation. If not for the work of the Advanced Aerospace Weapon Systems Applications Program (AAWSAP), Commander Dietrich's experience may have been lost to history. This is a prime example of how the stigmatization of UAP prevents the gathering of invaluable data that represents our best and only chance to understand the phenomena. For NASA, or any scientific organization to properly engage on the UAP topic, this stigma must be eliminated.

Just the fact that this hearing is taking place is helping to combat the stigmatization of UAP. Again, kudos to the Committee for tackling this topic, and the more hearings like this one that take place on Capitol Hill, the more free a wide variety of experts from government, academia, and the private sector will be to openly research and contribute to the understanding of UAP.

III. How NASA Can Help

A. Combat the Stigmatization of UAP

There are few if any agencies that enjoy the popularity of NASA. You can't walk down the street in Washington without seeing the NASA logo on t-shirts and hats. NASA enjoys a global brand that is synonymous with hope, optimism, and credibility. Therefore, I believe that NASA is ideally suited to help combat the stigmatization of UAP. The NASA UAP IST was an important and valuable first step. However, there is much more that can be done. Specifically, NASA could sponsor symposia on UAP, or even just convene and/or participate in panels

discussing the topic at existing domestic and international conferences. Participation by NASA officials in such discussions would carry great weight and send a message to the academic community that the UAP topic is no longer taboo. Such conference and panel participation could be done with little cost to the agency, but the impact on the quality of research done on UAP would be dramatic.

B. Review Archival Data

NASA has a vast archive of data, much of which could be relevant to unraveling the mystery of UAP. Again, with relatively little cost and effort, NASA could create an Artificial Intelligence or Machine Learning algorithm that would review all agency archives to search for anomalous phenomena in the air, space, and sea. The results of such a search could then be shared with the All-domain Anomalous Resolution Office (AARO), other relevant defense and intelligence agencies, and the public at large. Additionally, NASA is digitizing increasing amounts of its archival imagery, creating a singular opportunity to conduct UAP research utilizing data spanning over a half century.

C. Reach Out to International Partners

Again, NASA is potentially America's most popular brand and has global reach. It's not just Americans that are wearing the NASA logo, you will see the Agency's meatball emblem in almost any city in the world. Moreover, NASA cooperates with hundreds of countries. The Artemis Accords, developed and driven by NASA and the Department of State, now have 47 signatories with numerous additional countries likely to join in the months and years ahead. NASA's Office of International and Interagency Relations, with relatively little effort, should take the time to regularly reach out to the Agency's global partners, requesting any information that they may have in regard to UAP. Subsequently, such information could then be shared with AARO, other government agencies, and the public.

D. Solicit, Archive, Review, and Release Civil and Commercial UAP Data

Again, data is key to understanding the UAP phenomena. Beyond stigmatization, a challenge that I saw during my work as a member of the NASA UAP IST is a dearth of process and knowledge by civilian pilots of how to report UAP. If a civilian pilot sees a UAP, even if they are able to overcome the potential for ridicule and negative consequences to their career and decide to share their experience, I do not believe that most, if any, pilots would know who to report such encounters to. From what I was able to gather, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) instructions on the matter are difficult to find, provide obsolete advice (e.g., referencing organizations that no longer exist), and are not generally known or understood by the civilian pilot community.

To address this issue, NASA could work with the FAA to create a clear, consistent, and uniform reporting process for civilian pilots. Such reports would be transmitted to NASA and the Agency would collate this data and provide the information to AARO, other relevant government entities and, most importantly, to the public at large. Subsequently, NASA would archive these reports for potential future use. The same could be done for data collected by

commercial / private sector space companies, commercial / private sector companies conducting ocean surface or underwater activities, and all civilians who collect credible and useful data.

I believe NASA would be effective in collecting and disseminating data on UAP due to its successful track record of collating information on aviation safety issues. Specifically, the NASA UAP IST recommended that the Agency's Aviation Safety Reporting System should be leveraged to collect UAP information as described in this excerpt from the IST's final report which stated:

> "*NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS), which NASA administers for the FAA. - This system is a confidential, voluntary, non-punitive reporting system that receives safety reports from pilots, air traffic controllers, dispatchers, cabin crew, ground operators, maintenance technicians, and UAS operators that provides a unique data source for emerging UAS safety issues. ASRS receives reports describing close-calls, hazards, violations, and safety-related incidents. With 47 years of confidential safety reporting, ASRS has received more than 1,940,000 reports, averaging approximately 100,000 per year. Reports are received from all aspects of aviation operations. Although the system resides at NASA Ames and involves NASA employees, the ASRS program is solely funded by FAA and it is not part of NASA's Aeronautics activity. Although not initially designed for UAP collection, leveraging this system for commercial pilot UAP reporting would provide a critical database that would be valuable for the whole-of-government effort to understand UAP, and here NASA should provide technical assistance.*"[1]

It's also worth noting that other space agencies collect data on UAP, and it was interesting for the NASA UAP IST to receive a briefing on CNES's (the French Space Agency's) modest yet nontrivial efforts.

In much the same way that AARO is responsible for collecting UAP data for the national security community, NASA could serve a similar role for civilian and commercial operators. Of course, a dramatic difference would be that the data collected by NASA would be open to all and the agency would continue its historic dedication to transparency and sharing scientific discoveries with the nation and the world.

NASA faces some very difficult budgetary challenges, and I would urge the Members of this Committee and Congress as a whole to support increased funding to allow NASA to successfully execute the Artemis program and all of its other vital scientific and exploratory activities. We must not fall behind rival nations, particularly China, in space exploration, diplomacy, and development. However, even under current budgetary constraints, I believe that NASA could support the activities described above with just a handful of officials and minimal expenses.

[1] NASA Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Independent Study Team Report, Sept. 14, 2023, https://smd-cms.nasa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/uap-independent-study-team-final-report.pdf

E. Develop and Deploy Dedicated Instruments to Detect and Gather Data on UAP

When NASA studies celestial objects and phenomena, planets, black holes, and galaxies, it does so with equipment that has been developed specifically for such tasks. If NASA had to study space with data collected from fighter cockpit cameras, radar from military installations, and cell phones, very little good science would be done. Therefore, it's worth considering building instruments tailored to study the UAP phenomena. Doing so would be more costly than other recommendations described in my testimony and, again, NASA is facing very difficult budgetary constraints, but I at least wanted to put the concept forward in the unlikely event that funding does become available.

IV. Conclusion: The Value of Anomalies to Science and Public Engagement

The topic of UAPs has captivated the public imagination for decades. Instead of vilifying or ridiculing those who dare to study the phenomena, NASA and the scientific community as a whole should seize this singular opportunity to engage the public in a high-profile demonstration of the scientific method. Information should be gathered, results should be studied, hypotheses made, and conclusions tested.

Moreover, science is driven by anomalies. Anomalies are the foundation upon which scientific breakthroughs are built. The Theory of General Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, virtually all of our scientific progress has been based on discovering and studying anomalies. This is why the study of UAPs should be embraced since, whatever is occurring, the chance to garner new knowledge should never be shunned.

We must be thorough in collecting information, fearless in making conclusions, and open to following the data no matter how mundane or extraordinary the results may be. I began this testimony by praising the joint subcommittee Members for their courage, and I will end by echoing that sentiment. As the saying goes, the truth is out there, we just need to be bold enough and brave enough to face it.