
New NASA panel is studying UFOs, but will the US government ever tell us everything it knows?



Alien Fresh Jerkey Baker, CA, a depiction of a Alien and Extraterrestrial Life. (Photo by: Joe Sohm/Visions of America/Universal Images Group via Getty Images) Northeastern University physics professors [Jacqueline McCleary](#) and [Jonathan Blazek](#) doubt a NASA panel studying UFO sightings will reveal evidence of extraterrestrial life in its final report this summer.

But the cosmologists say they are happy that the study of UFOs is being taken seriously by the eminent scientists on NASA's independent panel, which held its first public meeting on May 31.

“People are seeing something, sensors are picking up something. Whether or not that something is extraterrestrial in origin is besides the point,” says McCleary, an assistant professor who uses galaxy clusters as a laboratory to explore the nature of dark matter. “The point is, it’s a phenomenon that people are observing,” she says. “We’re scientists and policymakers. We want to know what these things are.”

“Based on what I read about the panel, there was a decision to make everything as transparent as possible, to say, ‘Look, there’s evidence for things we don’t currently understand,’” says Blazek, an assistant professor whose primary focus is on understanding the universe using astronomical surveys that cover large areas of the sky.

“This does not mean aliens,” he says. “But it does mean that something interesting is going on. And NASA is going to take this seriously by assigning some really high-powered people to think about it.”

Taking the subject seriously

Even though members of the public have been spotting UFOs, or unidentified flying objects, at least since the 1940s, people who reported their sightings have been dismissed as hoaxers or cranks, McCleary says.

Taking the subject seriously could have serious repercussions, she says.

“If it doesn’t kill your career, none of your friends will talk to you anymore,” McCleary says.

“There’s probably been a realization in the last decades that the culture around this has gotten sort of toxic, on both sides,” Blazek says.

He says there’s a group of people who probably feel there’s a giant conspiracy to hide the truth.

“And there’s another group of people who think that anyone who entertains the possibility of extraterrestrial life is crazy,” Blazek says. “I think neither of these perspectives is particularly healthy.”

Dream team of scientists

The variety of fields represented by the 16 scientists and experts on NASA’s panel, and the regard in which the panelists are held, indicates that the study of UFOs is finally getting respectful treatment, McCleary and Blazek say.

[Chaired by astrophysicist David Spergel](#) and including former astronaut Scott Kelly, “this panel is really a dream team,” McCleary says.

Even so, NASA’s science chief Nicola Fox said in her [opening statement](#) May 31 that panelists had been subject to online abuse for delving into UFO research, which she says only furthers stigmatization of the phenomena.

The panel uses the acronym UAP for unidentified anomalous phenomena, a slight and recent change from Unidentified Aerial Phenomena. Media reports say the change was made to include unexplained observations in deep space and under the sea.

Spergel said the panelists are using unclassified data available to the public to create a “roadmap” for future analysis of UAPs.

Is the government telling us everything?

Not everybody believes individuals associated with U.S. government agencies will reveal what they know about UAPs.

“I 100% believe they are withholding stuff from us,” says Bob Spearing, the director of international investigations for MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network. “I’d like to see disclosure. I don’t know if it will ever come from the government. They’ve been calling us tinfoil conspiracists for over 80 years.”

Cracks in the government’s official stance on the subject came with the establishment of the Department of Defense’s All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office to identify UAPs that might pose a threat to national security.

AARO’s formation in 2022 came five years after a blockbuster [New York Times story](#) that revealed a secretive DOD program to investigate UFOs and showed the world a declassified video of Navy fighter pilots being outmaneuvered by an oval object that traveled at seemingly mind-boggling rates of speed.

Spearing says he was disappointed by AARO’s most recent Congressional hearing April 19, when the organization says it was reviewing 650 UFO incidents but there is no evidence any of them were extraterrestrial in nature.

“They have these hearings with Congress. Then nothing happens,” Spearing says.

New UFO sighting app

He says MUFON has a database of 131,000 cases of which he estimates 20% are unexplained.

Spearing expects to get many more cases following the debut of MUFON’s new UFO sighting app on Feb. 10, the day he appeared in an episode of “Ancient Aliens.”

His own fascination with UFOs came after seeing three anomalous objects, including a ball of dancing light in rainy skies close to a beach.

Spearing thinks it may have been naturally occurring ball lightning.

But he doesn’t have an explanation for the silvery sphere he says he once saw keeping pace outside a train window, or a giant metallic machine he drove past one snowy winter day that was climbing a sheer cliff wall in the Adirondacks.

“It should not have been there,” Spearing says.

He says he’s not quite sure what to think about a June 3 article in [Politico](#) in which former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Christopher Mellon calls for public disclosure about an alleged reverse engineering project involving UFOs. “This is either some sort of slow disclosure so it doesn’t shock the system. Or it’s some sort of giant misinformation campaign,” perhaps to mislead Russia and China, Spearing says.

Kicking off a new field of study

McCleary and Blazek anticipate that many anomalous sightings will turn out to have an “on-world” explanation, be it refractions or bending of light, new information about atmospheric disturbances or calibration problems involving radar, sound and video sensors.

“Actual explanations for some of these events would be really interesting. I would read that book in a heartbeat,” Blazek says

He says the DOD probably has a lot of information it can’t share, “not because they’re hiding aliens but for national defense purposes.”

McCleary and Blazek say they are interested in what the NASA panelists say in the UAP study expected to come out this summer.

In the May 31 meeting, the panelists said they need more data. The public was invited to start submitting comments June 2.

“I get the sense they are trying to kick off a new field of study, rather than shut it down,” McCleary says.

Cynthia McCormick Hibbert is a Northeastern Global News reporter. Email her at c.hibbert@northeastern.edu or contact her on Twitter [@HibbertCynthia](https://twitter.com/HibbertCynthia).

Taking the subject seriously? Is the government telling us everything?

NO!

Will the US government ever tell us everything it knows?

YES!