

Supplementary Budget Estimates: October 2023
Last updated: 22 September 2023

PDR No: SB23-000235
Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/
s47C

Key witness/es: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Professor Tanya Monro

Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Uniden

Handling Note:

- Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Chief of Air Force, to lead c
- Professor Tanya Monro, Chief Defence Scientist to lead c
- Technology Group activities related to Unidentified Anor

Key Messages

- Defence does not have specific policy governing the reporting or recording of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena by either members of the public or Defence members, rather it relies on existing safety and security and reporting mechanisms.
- Air Force ceased the handling of reports of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in 1996 after determining there was no scientific or other compelling reason to continue resourcing the recording and investigation of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.
- Defence safety of flight incidents, including those potentially posed by Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, are handled by the Defence Aviation Safety Authority, with civilian safety of flight incidents the purview of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

Talking Points

- Under Air Force Aviation Reporting protocols, no observations or sightings of unidentified aircraft have been lodged over the past ten years.
- Any unidentified aircraft observed by Air Force pilots or personnel entering military controlled airspace, or posing a safety risk to military aircraft, are subject to Defence Aviation Safety Reporting protocols.
- Aircrew can report unidentified aircraft to airspace control agencies and report unusual or unexpected activity through Aviation Safety or Defence security procedures.
- We are aware of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) within the United States Department of Defense and continue to monitor their reports. s47C
- We are aware of the latest reporting on 19 April 2023 that they are examining a number of cases, however, there is no credible evidence of extra-terrestrial activity, off-world technology, or objects that defy the known laws of physics.

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- Defence continues to assess there is no compelling reason to divert resources to the recording and investigation of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena. This aligns resources with the priorities, mission and objective of Defence.
- Defence Science and Technology Group does not conduct specific research and development on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena and is currently not funded to do so. Defence Science and Technology Group aligns with Air Force's position that there is no scientific reason to conduct research on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena and as such assess there are no further opportunities.
- Defence Science and Technology Group provides support to the ADF to identify and classify objects detected by sensing technology and currently has in place projects aligned with the requirements of the Defence Strategic Review in order to improve sensing and intelligence gathering in support of Defence of Australia and its interests.
- Defence Science and Technology Group works with Allied Scientists and to date has had no collaboration on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena; nor has there been any indication that collaboration would be of benefit. Specifically, Defence Science and Technology Group collaborates closely with the USAF Air Force Research Laboratory through the Air Senior National Representative forum who have not placed any priority on collaboration in UAP.

If raised: has the US shared intelligence regarding UAP?

- s47C The United States has *shared intelligence on UAP.* s47C
- s47C
- s47C Defence *will continue to* s47C *monitor and engage with the AHXU on* UAP, especially if they are deemed to be a security or safety threat. s47C

Background

- On 14 September 2023, the NASA UAP Independent Study Team published its final report containing a series of recommendations on how the agency could help to move their understanding of UAP forward.
- The report summarises that:
 - The nature of science is to explore the unknown, and data is the language scientists use to discover our universe's secrets. Despite numerous accounts and visuals, the absence of consistent, detailed and curated observations means they do not presently have the body of data needed to make definitive, scientific conclusions about UAP.

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- The study team found no evidence that reported UAP observations are extra-terrestrial.
 - Recommended that NASA play a prominent role in the whole-of-government effort to understand UAP by leveraging extensive expertise to contribute to a comprehensive evidence-based approach that is rooted in the scientific method.
 - The panel found that public engagement in the effort to better understand UAP will be vital and that NASA lending its name to UAP studies is already helping to reduce stigma associated with reporting. NASA recommended that beyond this, exploration into the viability of developing or acquiring a crowdsourcing system, such as open-source smartphone apps to gather imaging data and other smartphone sensor data from multiple citizen observers as part of a wider effort to more systemically gather public UAP reports.
 - NASA recommended the Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) for commercial pilot UAP reporting be better leveraged, providing a critical database for the whole-of-government effort to understand UAP.
 - Finally, the NASA report states that the threat to the United States airspace safety posed by UAP is self-evident.
- Inclusive of the release of the NASA report, NASA announced the appointment Mark McInerney as the Director of UAP research. This appointment is a contribution to the United States Federal Government's unified effort on UAP.
- On 31 August 2023, the United States Department of Defense launched a website for the AARO to provide the public with information concerning the AARO and its efforts to understand and resolve UAP. The website will provide information, including photos and videos on resolved UAP cases as they are declassified and approved for public release.
- In the US fall, the AARO will launch a secure reporting tool on the website to enable current and former US Government employees, service members, or contractors with direct knowledge of US Government programs or activities to contact the AARO directly to make a report. A mechanism for the general public to make reports will be announced in coming months.
- On 26 July 2023, the United States Committee for National Security, the Border and Foreign Affairs held a hearing on UAP Implications on National Security, Public Safety and Government Transparency.
- The Hearing summarises that:
- Former military intelligence officer turned-whistle-blower told the House that Congress are being kept in the dark about UAP. Alleging to misappropriation of

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funds to shield multi-decade UAP crash retrieval and reverse-engineering program operations from congressional oversight.

- The witness also alleged that he interviewed officials who had direct knowledge of aircraft with non-human origins and that so called 'biologics' were recovered from some craft.
- Members from both parties questions how Congress should go about investigating the remarkable allegations.
- All witnesses stated that current reporting systems were inadequate to investigate UAP encounters and a stigma still exists for pilots and officials who press for more transparency about their experiences.
- Lawmakers expressed their anger about their inability to retrieve information about UAPs from the military and intelligence agencies describing a system of over classification that shields reports of incidents from public view calling for disclosure, the time has come.
- Several lawmakers are looking forward to getting some answers in a more confidential setting and assume some legislation will come as a result.

On 19 April 2023, the United States Department of Defense, released a news article on the testimony of Senator M Kilpatrick, Director of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office, at their Senate Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

The article summarises the Senator's testimony:

- An Unidentified Aerial Phenomena is anything in space, in the air, on land, in the sea or under the sea that cannot be identified and might pose a threat to United States military installations or operations.
- The Department is working to better understand respond to Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.
- All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office scientists continue to improve their data collection and implementation of rigorous scientific and intelligence analysis to resolve cases in a systematic and prioritised manner.
- Only a very small percentage of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena reports display signatures that could be reasonably be described as 'anomalous'. The majority of reports demonstrate mundane characteristics of balloons, unmanned aerial systems, clutter, natural phenomena or other readily explainable resources.
- The All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office have found no credible evidence thus far of extra-terrestrial activity, off-world technology, or objects that defy the known laws of physics.

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- On 11 January 2023, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence delivered the Annual Report on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (now Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena) to Congress as required by their National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.
- The Report summaries that:
 - Unidentified Aerial Phenomena continue to represent a hazard to flight safety and pose a possible adversary collection threat.
 - Since their publication of their preliminary assessment in June 2021, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena reporting has increased, however could be attributed to a concentrated effort to destigmatise the topic.
 - The All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office has been established as the United States Department of Defense focal point for Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.
 - Coordinated efforts between the United States Department of Defense and other Government agencies to collect and report Unidentified Aerial Phenomena events have resulted in increased data sets, spanning multiple security domains.
- On 9 June 2022, NASA announced that the agency was commissioning a study team to examine UAP – that is observations of events in the sky that cannot be identified as aircraft or known natural phenomena – from a science perspective. The study will focus on identifying available data, how best to collect future data, and how NASA can use that data to move the scientific understanding of UAPs forward.
- On 25 June 2021, the United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (the Report) to provide an intelligence assessment of the threat posed by Unidentified Aerial Phenomena and the progress the United States Department of Defense Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force has made in understanding this threat.
- The Report does not draw conclusions on what Unidentified Aerial Phenomena are and most remain unexplained, mainly due to lack of data.
- The Report finds no evidence that Unidentified Aerial Phenomena are extra-terrestrial in origin.
- The Report did reach the following conclusions:
 - In a limited number of incidents, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena reportedly appeared to exhibit unusual flight characteristics. These observations could be the result of sensor errors, spoofing, or observer misperception and require additional rigorous analysis.

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- There are probably multiple types of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena requiring different explanations based on the range of appearances and behaviours described in the available reporting.
 - Unidentified Aerial Phenomena clearly pose a safety of flight issue and may pose a challenge to United States national security. Unidentified Aerial Phenomena would also represent a national security challenge if they are foreign adversary collection platforms or provide evidence a potential adversary has developed either a breakthrough or disruptive technology.
- On 23 November 2021, the United States Director of National Intelligence directed the establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronisation Group to coordinate reporting across United States Department of Defense and other United States agencies, with the goal to minimise flight safety and national security concerns.
- Defence has no plans to replicate a similar mechanism. The Defence Aviation Safety Authority and Civil Aviation Safety Authority already serve this function across flight safety issues and apparatus exist for concerns regarding National security.
- Historically the Air Force was responsible for handling Unidentified Aerial Phenomena reports, however that ceased in 1996. If civilians wish to report Unidentified Aerial Phenomena they should contact their local police authorities, or get in contact with a civil Unidentified Flying Object research organisation.
- Unidentified Aerial Phenomena may also be referred to as Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO) or Unusual Aerial Sightings (UAS). Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) is the contemporary term for such phenomena.

Supporting information

Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates: 30-31 May 2023

- In QoN 91, **Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena**, Senator Whist-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked a series of follow up questions following Estimates 15 February 2023, on the topic of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena.

Supplementary Budget Estimates: 9 November 2022

- In QoN 28, **Unidentified Aerial Phenomena**, Senator Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked whether the Royal Australian Air Force had held discussions with the United States on the topic of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.

Budget Estimates: 19 April 2022

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- In **QoN 38, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena**, Senator Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked for advice regarding the Royal Australian Air Force Aviation Safety Reporting and for reports of "unusual or unexpected events" in the past 20 years.

Additional Budget Estimates: 25 February 2022

- In **QoN 20, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena**, Senator Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked for advice on existing processes or protocols within the Royal Australian Air Force regarding unidentified aircraft.

Supplementary Budget Estimates: 27 October 2021

- In **QoN 29, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena**, Senator Peter Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked for advice on existing processes or protocols within the Royal Australian Air Force regarding unidentified aircraft.

Supplementary Budget Estimates: 27 October 2021

- In **QoN 90, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena**, Senator Peter Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked for advice regarding a report published June 2021 by the United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence titled 'Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena'.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- Air Force continues to receive a number of FOIs on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena from constituents.

Recent Ministerial Comments

- No recent comments.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 15 September 2023, The ABC published article titled [NASA releases UAP report, says more data and scientific techniques are needed to better understand UFOs](#). Journalist Jenny Cai wrote of the released NASA report which found no evidence that the reported sightings had 'extra-terrestrial origins'.

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Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/
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Division: Air Force	
PDR No: SB23-000235	
Prepared by: s47E(c) RAAF Ministerial Liaison Office Directorate Strategic Issues Management Mob: s22 Date: 19 September 2023	Cleared by Division Head: Air Commodore James Badgery Chief of Staff – Air Force Headquarters Air Force Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(c) Date: 22 September 2023
Consultation: Air Force Headquarters Air Vice-Marshal Wendy Blyth, Head of Air Force Capability Defence Science & Technology Group Mr Andrew Seedhouse, Chief Cyber, Intelligence & National Security	Date: 20 September 2023 Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(c) Date: 20 September 2023 Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(c)
Cleared by CFO / DPG / DSR: Date: N/A	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary (or equivalent Band 3/3*): Date: DD Month 2023 Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Chief of Air Force Air Force	

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Questions on notice referred to within the brief:

Budget Estimates (QoN 91)

Topic: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Senator Whish-Wilson

Question

At Estimates on 15 February 2023, Air Marshal Chipman stated that: "We have sought additional information from [the US] through the air attache in Washington."

1. Has a response been provided by the air attache? If so, what additional information was provided?

At the same Estimates: Senator WHISH-WILSON: The UK government have recently said that they are now going to also look at their ability to detect, for example, slower-moving objects that might be balloons or surveillance balloons or other objects—drones; who knows. Is that something the Australian government might consider, based on your responses?

Air Marshal Chipman: I haven't been directed to do that by the Australian government, but I have asked our Air Commander to understand what capabilities we have in order to detect these sorts of objects in our airspace.

2. What response did the Air Commander provide about capabilities?

A Defence FOI 459/21/22 states that collection and investigation of "these systems" (a reference to other nations systems) is the remit of the Intelligence Community and is classified.

3. What is the process/procedure for Air Defence to provide relevant reports to the Intelligence Community when an UAP (or some other observed phenomenon consistent with being another nations system) is sighted?
4. Did Australia attend the recent Five-eyes meeting held in May 2023? If so, did it attend the US briefing on UAP's?

Answer

1. Yes. The United States military released classified analysis to Defence.
2. The Air Commander provided a classified summary of relevant Air Force capabilities.
3. The Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities; control and reporting system; and procedures enable aircrew and air battle managers to gain awareness and communicate with higher headquarters and the Air Operations Centre (AOC). Intelligence Officers are resident at unit, headquarters and AOC levels in case deeper analysis is warranted.
4. Australia did not attend a United States briefing on UAPs.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates (QoN 28)

Topic: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Senator Whish-Wilson

Question

Senator WHISH-WILSON: At the US Congressional hearing on UAP back in May, the Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence, Scott Bray, confirmed that, since the release of this preliminary report in 2021, they now had 400 case reports they were considering. Most of them were from pilots like you. He was quoted at those hearings as saying that the US had brought many allies and international partners into their discussions on UAP. Given how close we are to the US, have there been any discussions with Australian intelligence services or the Air Force in relation to their approach—

Senator WHISH-WILSON: You're 'not aware'; does that mean that this just hasn't come across your desk, or can you say categorically there haven't been any?

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Answer

The Royal Australian Air Force has not held any discussions with the United States on the topic of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.

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Budget Estimates (QoN 38)

Topic: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Senator Whish-Wilson

Question

What the protocols for RAAF Aviation Safety Reporting that relate to unidentified aircraft identified by Air Force pilots or personnel entering military controlled airspace or considered to pose a safety risk to military aircraft? What records of observations or sightings of unidentified aircraft have been made over the past 20 years? What records of "unusual or unexpected events" (referring to previous QoN) have been made through the RAAF Aviation Safety Reporting procedures over the past 20 years?

Answer

The protocol for reporting of unusual, or unexpected airborne events is through Air Traffic Control or other military control reporting agencies. If the event manifests in a safety issue, then normal, safety reporting protocols are enacted.

There are no records of observations or sightings of unidentified aircraft made over the past 20 years. s47C

There are no records of "unusual or unexpected events" made through the RAAF Aviation Safety Reporting procedures over the past 20 years.

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Budget Estimates (QoN 20)

Topic: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Senator Whish-Wilson

Question

During the last Supplementary Budget Estimates (in response to a question on notice), the Department of Defence advised that there is no protocol for reporting or recording Unidentified Aerial Phenomena or Unidentified Flying Objects.

5. In a scenario that an airforce pilot, or airforce personnel on the ground (such as monitoring radar), detects or sights an aircraft over Australian airspace, or in their sphere of operation, but is unable to identify the nature of the craft, what is the process/protocol for pilot and/or personnel to report their observation?
6. If there is an existing protocol – how many such observations or sightings have been made in the past 10 years? If there is no protocol – by what means does the air force maintain the security of Australian Airspace in dealing with unidentified craft?
7. What encouragement is given to pilots to make reports of aircraft they cannot identify?

Answer

1. Any unidentified aircraft identified by Air Force pilots or personnel entering military controlled airspace or pose a safety risk to military aircraft are subject to RAAF Aviation Safety Reporting protocols.
2. Under RAAF Aviation Reporting protocols, there has been no records of observations or sightings of unidentified aircraft over past ten years.
3. There is no specific encouragement given to pilots to report aircraft they cannot identify, rather to report unusual or unexpected events through RAAF Aviation Safety Reporting procedures.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates (QoN 29)

Topic: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Senator Whish-Wilson

Question

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Does the characterisation of the DOD, in relation to their report, of both intent and advanced technology concern you? Basically, they're saying they can't explain what these things are, but they would like to better understand them.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Would it be possible for you to see if, across the other services, there has been any kind of reporting system in relation to this in Australia?

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Okay. Typically, would something like Jindalee be able to pick-up fast-moving objects, or is it more designed to look at ships and—

Answer

The Department of Defence does not have a protocol for reporting or recording of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena or Unidentified Flying Objects.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates (QoN 90)

Topic: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Senator Whish-Wilson

Question

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Does the characterisation of the DOD, in relation to their report, of both intent and advanced technology concern you? Basically, they're saying they can't explain what these things are, but they would like to better understand them.

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Senator WHISH-WILSON: Okay. Typically, would something like Jindalee be able to pick-up fast-moving objects, or is it more designed to look at ships and—

Answer

1. The Department of Defence has not formally reviewed the report.
2. The Department of Defence has not sought guidance on the publication.
3. The Unusual Aerial Sightings Policy was last reviewed in November 2003 and cancelled 25 March 2013.
4. A file was confirmed in 2008 to be at the National Archives of Australia. The interest of its location was raised again in 2011, however Defence was unable to verify its location nor held record of the file being destroyed. As such and to date, the Department of Defence cannot confirm its current existence.
5. The Department of Defence does not have a protocol for reporting or recording of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) or Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO). The Air Force ceased handling reports of UAP or UFO in 1996 after determining that there was no scientific or other compelling reason for the Air Force to continue to devote resources to the recording and investigation of UAP or UFO.

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