

## Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Unidentified Flying Objects

### Handling Note:

- Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, to lead on topic.
- Chief Defence Scientist, Professor Tanya Monro, to lead on Defence Science and Technology Group activities related to Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena.

### Key Messages

- Defence does not have a specific policy governing the reporting or recording of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) by either members of the public or Defence members. It relies on existing reporting mechanisms.
- Air Force ceased handling reports of the then termed Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) in 1996, after determining there was no scientific or other compelling reason to continue.
- Existing Defence procedures and mechanisms already enable the reporting of all aerial Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena.

### Talking Points

- Defence continues to assess that there is no compelling reason to divert resources to the specific recording and investigation of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena. This assessment aligns resources with the priorities, mission and objectives of Defence.
- There are well established procedures utilised by military and civilian air traffic controllers and aircrew for the management and reporting of airspace infringements—that is the unauthorised entry of an aircraft into airspace that is either prohibited, or where clearance is required—and unknown aircraft. There are also equally well established military and civilian mechanisms for the reporting of incidents that pose a risk to aviation safety.
- Air Force intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, control and reporting system and procedures also enable our 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.
- Defence is aware of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) within the United States Department of Defense and monitor their reports.
- Defence takes all threats to aviation safety or national security very seriously and has continuous reviews of our reporting systems to ensure they remain suitable.

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- The AARO has found no credible evidence of extra-terrestrial activity, off-world technology, or objects that defy the known laws of physics.

*If asked: has the United States shared intelligence regarding UAP?*

- Defence will continue to monitor AARO reporting on UAP, especially if UAP are deemed to be a security or safety threat.

**Background**

- On 8 March 2024, the United States (US) Department of Defense delivered to Congress the initial volume of the AARO's Historical Record Report that reviewed the records of the US Government pertaining to UAP. To date, the AARO has found no verifiable evidence that claims that the US government or private companies have access to or have been reverse-engineering extra-terrestrial technology.
- The report also found no evidence that any US government investigations, academic-sponsored research or official review panel has confirmed that any sighting of UAP represented extra-terrestrial technology. All investigative efforts at all levels of classification concluded that most sightings were ordinary objects or phenomena and the result of misidentification. The AARO also assessed that the alleged names of alleged hidden reverse-engineering programs do not exist and are misidentified authentic national security programs unrelated to extra-terrestrial technology exploitation or resolve to a de-established program.

*A summary of the report's key points are:*

- A NASA UAP Independent study team found no evidence that reported UAP observations are extra-terrestrial.
- NASA recommended their Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS)—which collects, analyses, and responds to voluntarily submitted aviation safety incident reports in order to lessen the likelihood of aviation accidents—be harnessed to collect commercial pilot UAP reporting to provide a database that would be valuable for the whole-of-government effort to understand UAP

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## Supporting information

## Questions on Notice

**Supplementary Budget Estimates: 25 October 2023**

- In QoN 169, **Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena**, Senator Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked a series of questions regarding the Defence Aviation Safety Authority protocols for recording and reporting of “unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP)/unidentified flying objects (UFO)”.
- In QoN 168, **Australia’s Attendance at the US All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office’s Five Eyes Forum on UAP**, Senator Whish-Wilson (Green, Tasmania) asked a series of questions regarding Defence’s attendance at the inaugural Five Eyes Forum on UAP in May 2023.

**Budget Estimates: 30-31 May 2023**

- In QoN 91, **Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena**, Senator Whish-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**

- 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’.

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## Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- Air Force continues to receive a number of FOIs on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena from constituents. Since February 2024, Air Force has received eight FOI requests which scopes mostly related to preparing Senate Estimates Briefs, email correspondence and “FVEYS” topics related to UAP.

## Recent Ministerial Comments

- No recent comments.

## Relevant Media Reporting

- On 11 February 2024, the Canberra Times published an article titled [After denials, Defence admits to UFO briefing](#). Journalist Jamieson Murphy reported that Defence misled Senators stating that the Department of Defence did not do its homework before responding to the Senator Peter Whish-Wilsons’ question on notice in the May Senate estimates.
- On 26 January 2024, CNN published an online article titled [Opinion: The actual hidden truth about UFOs](#) by journalist Peter Bergen. The article writes of a former Pentagon official, David Grusch, and his public allegation that the United States government have been keeping crashed alien spaceships under wraps for decades.
- On 22 October 2023, The Canberra Times published an article titled [‘The truth is out there’: Australia accused of treating UFO threat as a ‘piss-take’](#) by journalist Jamieson Murphy. The author quotes Grant Levac and Ross Coulthard, and asserts that Australia is out of step with Five Eyes nations by not taking Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) seriously. The article further refers to Mr Levac’s e-petition to Government calling for a UAP sighting policy, and alleges that Australian Defence Personnel are reticent to report UAP due fear of ridicule.
- On 17 September 2023, numerous media agencies published an article titled [Fresh calls for Australian Government to conduct UFO review as sightings continue](#). The article discusses a petition presented to the Australian Government asking the House of Representatives “to conduct a formal review of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) and consider the establishment of an investigatory body to assess the potential national security threats and safety of flight risks that UAP pose”.
- 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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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2024

Last updated: 19 September 2024

Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Unidentified Flying Object

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Professor Tanya Monro

<b>Division:</b> Air Force	
<b>PDR No:</b> SB24-000023	
<b>Prepared by:</b> s47E(d) Chief of Staff Headquarters Air Command  Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 September 2024	<b>Cleared by Division Head:</b> Air Vice-Marshal Glen Braz Air Commander Australia Headquarters Air Command Australia  Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 September 2024
<b>Consultation:</b> Defence Science & Technology Group Mr Andrew Seedhouse, Chief of Space, Intelligence, National Security and Cyber Division Date: 9 September 2024 Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d)	
<b>Cleared by Deputy Secretary (or equivalent Band 3/3*):</b> Date: 05 November 2024 Air Marshal Stephen Chappell Chief of Air Force	

Questions on notice referred to within the brief:**Supplementary Budget Estimates****Senator Peter Whish-Wilson**

Question Number: 169

Date Question was tabled: 2 November 2023

**Question**

On 26 June 2021, an Australian Defence spokesperson was quote in an ABC News article as stating:

*Defence does not have a protocol that covers recording or reporting of unidentified aerial phenomena/unidentified flying object sightings*

On 16 September 2023, the Daily Telegraph reported the following:

*Australia's Defence position was in response to written parliamentary questions last month as to whether it would follow the US Director of National Intelligence in January to establish an All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office to co-ordinate sightings.*

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*“Defence has no plans to replicate a similar mechanism,” a handling note from RAAF Chief Air Marshal Robert Chipman confirmed.*

*“The Defence Aviation Safety Authority and Civil Aviation Safety Authority already serve this function across flight safety issues and apparatuses exist for concerns regarding National security.”*

- What protocol exists within the Defence Aviation Safety Authority for the recording or reporting of unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP), otherwise similarly identified as unidentified aerial phenomena, or unidentified flying objects?
- If there was no protocol in 2021, when was a protocol introduced if the Defence Aviation Safety Authority now serve this function?
- What is the definition of/criteria for “flight safety issues” for the Defence Aviation Safety Authority?
- If not accounted as flight safety issues, how are ‘spoofing’ (i.e. false GPS, radar signals) incidents monitored and recorded (or expected to be monitored and recorded if there have no reported incidents)?

**Answer:**

The Defence Aviation Safety Authority (DASA) does not have a specific protocol concerning the reporting of UAP.

A ‘flight safety issue’ might comprise an incident, malfunction, defect, technical defect or exceedance of limitations that endangers or could endanger the safe operation of aircraft.

‘Spoofing’ incidents are not recorded unless determined to be an aviation safety occurrence.

## Supplementary Budget Estimates

### Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

Question Number: 168

Date Question was tabled: 2 November 2023

### Question

Did the Australian Department of Defence receive an invitation from the US All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) to attend the inaugural Five Eyes Forum on UAP in May 2023 led by AARO Director, Dr Sean Kirkpatrick?

- If yes, for what reasons did the Australian Department of Defence decide that Australia – as a Five Eyes member – not attend AARO’s Five Eyes Forum on UAP? Who has final decision on attendance?
- How many Five Eyes forums/meetings has Australia not attended in the last 5 years?

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**Answer:**

Yes. A Defence representative at the Australian Embassy in Washington attended.

Five Eyes forums and meetings occur across a large number of agencies, on a broad range of topics and at all levels. There is no centralised record of Five Eyes forums and meetings in which Australia participates.

**Budget Estimates****Senator Peter Whish-Wilson**

Question Number: 91

Date Question was tabled: 30-31 May 2023

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

1. Has a response been provided by the air attaché? 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

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(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.

## Supplementary Budget Estimates

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson**

Question Number: 28

Date Question was tabled: 9 November 2022

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?

### Answer

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

## Budget Estimates

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson**

Question Number: 38

Date Question was tabled: 19 April 2022

### 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?

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## 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.

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

## Additional Budget Estimates

### Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

Question Number: 20

Date Question was tabled: 25 February 2022

## 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 November 2024

Last updated: 19 September 2024

Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Unidentified Flying Object

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Professor Tanya Monro

## Supplementary Budget Estimates

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson**

Question Number: 29

Date Question was tabled: 27 October 2021

### 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.

## Supplementary Budget Estimates

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson**

Question Number: 90

Date Question was tabled: 27 October 2021

### 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

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

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2024

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Key witnesses: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Professor Tanya Monro

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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s47E(d)

**From:** s47E(d)  
**Sent:** Monday, 9 December 2024 12:14 PM  
**To:** s47E(d); RAAF MLO  
**Subject:** 241209 1313 - s47E(d) s47E(d) ] SB24-000023 :  
Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Unidentified Flying Object PDMS Notification  
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	<p>NB. RAAF MLO will consult and populate all dollar and workforce figures closer to the date of the Additional Estimates Hearing.</p> <p>Your brief, cleared by the relevant 2* is required back to RAAF MLO in PDMS on or before NLT Thursday 16 January 2025.</p> <p>** NOTE: Please disregard the current Milestones Dates for this SEB in PDMS as they will be updated soon.</p> <p>Please reach out to RAAF MLO should you have any questions.</p> <p>Many thanks</p> <p>s47E(d) (RAAF MLO)</p>
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**Sent:** Tuesday, 14 January 2025 8:40 AM  
**To:** RAAF MLO  
**Cc:** s47E(d); Barns,  
Susie AIRCDRE (NZL)  
**Subject:** 250114 0940 - s47E(d)]-[RAAF MLO] SB24-000023 : Unidentified  
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## OFFICIAL

Ma'am and Team,

PFA cleared SEB - Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Unidentified Flying Object.

Respectfully

s47E(d)

Chief of Staff  
Senior ADF Officer Glenbrook and DEOH

Headquarters Air Command (HQAC)

Tel: s47E(d)  
Mob: s22



*I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. I recognise their connection to traditional lands and waters and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.*

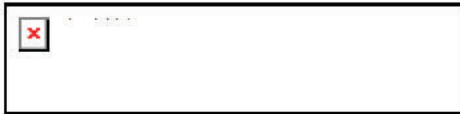
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Status:

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Subject:

**Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena/Unidentified Flying Object**

Good afternoon s47E(d)

**Instruction:**

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