

What Are UFOs

A Bayesian Assessment

RodMalpert.com

Most unusual aerial reports can be ordinary without every residual case being ordinary. Equally, an unexplained case is not evidence strong enough, by itself, to identify extraterrestrial technology.

The question is about an ensemble

This paper asks whether the heterogeneous public UAP record contains a genuine nonhuman component. It does not ask whether the average sighting is extraordinary or whether every witness is mistaken. Reports can contain aircraft, drones, astronomical objects, sensor artifacts, secret human systems, misidentification, and more than one cause within a single wave. The central comparison is between an entirely conventional ensemble and one containing at least some nonhuman contribution.

The assessment

The paper assigns roughly 68% to an entirely conventional explanation and 32% to a nonhuman component. Within the latter, extraterrestrial or ancient extraterrestrial probes receive 23 percentage points, an indigenous cryptoterrestrial family 3, interdimensional intelligence 2, simulator intervention 1, and consciousness-first or interface interpretations 3. These are subjective allocations, not measured frequencies, an official conclusion, or a claim that 32% of reports are nonhuman.

Where the number comes from

The starting allocation is 80% conventional and 20% nonhuman. It is a background-only prior based on astronomy, known physics, human fallibility, surveillance limits, and the history of extraordinary claims - not on the UAP cases later used as evidence. A cumulative evidential factor of about 1.9 produces the 32% result. With the same evidence, 10%, 20%, and 30% nonhuman priors yield about 17%, 32%, and 45%.

Why ancient probes matter

The strongest extraterrestrial version need not posit nearby biological visitors arriving on a recent flight. Durable artifacts or probes could outlast the civilizations that created them. Astronomy, technological longevity, detection limits, and the possibility of long-lived artifacts shape the prior; impressive stories alone do not. The analysis asks whether reports contain capabilities that ordinary explanations genuinely fail to account for, rather than capabilities inferred from uncertain geometry.

The argument and its limits

Separating cases instead of averaging stories

The case review distinguishes Nimitz's trained witnesses and multiple reported sensors from its missing public raw data. It separates the Phoenix Lights' well-explained flare display from the earlier, less documented moving formation, and keeps the 1976 Tehran interception apart from unsupported anniversary imagery. For the Northeast wave, it separates a civilian attention cascade from real military-base incursions. Human drones remain the leading explanation for the released base-incursion evidence; if calibrated sensors established genuinely extraordinary kinematics, Russia or China would no longer be a persuasive catch-all.

Witnesses, insiders, and official explanations

A credible witness can be mistaken; credentials do not independently verify an extraordinary claim. Insider narratives may share sources, institutions, or secondhand accounts. Conversely, official reassurance is not a technical explanation. Congressional behavior since 2023 strongly supports the existence of hidden records, compartmentation concerns, and a genuine oversight problem, but does not prove recovered nonhuman technology.

The PR-135 correction

The September 18 PURSUE release initially raised the working posterior from 32% to 34%. A revised October 13 preprint then measured all six PR-135 objects brightening and dimming independently at 7.1-7.9 times per second, within bird-wingbeat rates. Controls did not reproduce the flicker, and parallax can explain the reported 480 mph ground-projected speed if the objects were nearby birds. The authors find birds the best explanation and report similar signatures in four other released videos. Because the paper is not yet peer reviewed and platform altitude remains redacted, the result is strong rather than conclusive. It nevertheless removes most of the tranche's positive increment, returning the assessment to 68% conventional and 32% nonhuman.

Unusual physics is not a universal explanation

Higher dimensions, emergent spacetime, simulation, and consciousness-first theories receive a conceptual hearing. They do not automatically predict aerial objects, extraordinary movement, or visits to military sites. A coherent account of how something could be hidden does not establish that it exists. Quantum phenomena and the incompleteness of intuitive pictures of matter cannot be used as unrestricted evidence for unrelated anomalies.

What would change the assessment

The most valuable evidence would be calibrated, time-synchronized raw sensor data; independent analysis; recoverable physical material with a documented chain of custody; or a repeatable observation that discriminates among hypotheses. The PR-135 revision shows the model working as intended: official provenance counted positively, then a reproducible conventional analysis moved the probability back down. Conventional explanations lead at 68%, while a 32% nonhuman possibility still deserves more than dismissal.

Source update: Haqq-Misra, Kopparapu, Cloete, Eldadi, Shermer, and Loeb, "Six objects reported at 480 mph in a declassified military infrared video show brightness flicker at bird wingbeat rates," arXiv:2610.08692v3 (Oct. 13, 2026), submitted to Scientific Reports.

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