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Ranking Member Robert Garcia

Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs

Hearing on “Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena: Implications on National Security, Public Safety, and Government Transparency”

July 26, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses both for their service to our country, and for sharing their voices today. I welcome all the members who have joined our subcommittee today for waiving on to join this hearing for their interest in this issue, and I thank Chairman Grothman for his work today, and the tireless work of oversight committee staff to make today possible.

We are here to have a bipartisan, serious conversation about matters which get to the heart of our national security, and key to this subcommittee’s core purpose. Our witnesses will testify clearly today that UAPs have posed a serious safety threat, which we must understand.

More broadly, we’re dealing with real questions that get to the heart of questions of citizens’ faith in their government. Faith in our institutions is at an all-time low. Partisanship and alternative facts make it too easy to doubt any narrative or institution.

This hearing will offer the public unique perspectives, building on years of reporting by both federal agencies and the independent media. Some of the earliest reporting on this issue was a groundbreaking 2017 New York Times reports which revealed research on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, formerly known as UFOs, by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Graves and Commander Fravor’s experiences with UAPs have been documented for the public by the New York Times, Politico, CNN, and other outlets. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has published public reports documenting UAP, and on June 9, 2022, NASA announced that the agency is commissioning a study team to examine unidentified anomalous phenomena.

The sheer number of reports, whistleblowers, and stories of unidentified anomalous phenomena raise real questions and warrant investigation and oversight. Pilots have reported encounters for years. Because of the stigma around reporting these incidents, we still don’t have a complete picture of what’s going on, particularly, as our witnesses will testify, on the civilian side. That’s a real problem.

It’s very important that we show that Democrats and Republicans in Congress can come together to cut through misinformation, and to look at the facts in a serious and thoughtful way. If we are to advance oversight and public disclosure, we must also gain the broader trust of the public at large. We will succeed getting facts out to the public faster, if there is broad public support in our process.

I understand fully that the Department of Defense is hesitant to share information that could undermine our national security by revealing information on the capabilities of our aircraft, our sensors, or other sensitive

material. At the same time, many people believe that we are withholding secrets from them, and that is dangerous, too. I believe in openness and transparency, and I want to trust the American people to weigh the evidence and make up their own minds.

We have incidents where sensors, sometimes even multiple types of sensors, detect things we cannot explain. UAPs, whatever they may be, may pose a serious threat to military or civil aviation, which we need to understand.

Let's be clear: as it stands today this committee has been given no public evidence of extraterrestrial aircraft or life. But my career and training as an educator, teacher, and researcher, tell me that we also cannot rule out other life in our galaxy. Space is vast, and undiscovered.

Now, Mr. Sean Kirkpatrick, director of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office, the component of the Department of Defense office that investigates UAP data, testified before the Senate this year that that his unit has found no evidence of alien activity. NASA also has stated that they don't have evidence of extraterrestrial life, either.

But should also remind all viewers that witnesses and members, including me, also cannot legally discuss classified information in a public setting.

So questions will remain until the American people can see the data for themselves. The enormous interest in this hearing today underscores the importance of a fair and open look at the evidence, from witnesses who can share unique perspectives. I know I certainly have a lot of questions.

That means we should come at this hearing with an open mind, and we should not let our existing ideas restrict us—on either side. I hear over and over, from many agencies, that stigma around reporting and investigating UAP questions is actively preventing us from getting answers.

Whistleblowers have reported harassment, intimidation or stigma as well. That is totally unacceptable. If people can't report incidents which could have national security or safety implications, that has serious consequences.

And as Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, I know that my job would be completely impossible if whistleblowers or others feel intimidated. We can't be afraid of asking questions, and we can't be afraid of the truth.

I am proud to say that this hearing builds on bipartisan work by members of the House and Senate, dating back years, which has sought to increase awareness within the Department of Defense, and mandate more reporting to Congress, of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena. The Senate is taking up an amendment to their Defense Authorization Bill that will create a commission with broad declassification authority. I think that's an important step.

Members of both parties, and senior officials in multiple administrations have taken an interest in this issue, and I am proud to carry on their work to build confidence for the American people.

This hearing will not be the end of this discussion, but a new chapter and start. We should encourage more reporting, and more study of UAPs. The more we understand, the safer we are. Chairman Grothman, I hope we can continue to work together after the end of this hearing.

Today, we will hear testimony from witnesses with a long record of service to the American people, and with subject-matter expertise. Our witnesses today have a unique opportunity to share their perspective, insights, and

experiences with the American people. We should hold all their testimony up to scrutiny, evaluate the evidence as best as possible.

I encourage all of my colleagues to engage with these difficult questions with an open mind, and to tirelessly follow the facts, on behalf of our country.

Thank you. I now yield the remainder of my time to my friend from Florida, Representative Moskowitz, for an opening statement.

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