

AOIMSG Establishment November 23, 2021

Executive Summary

Public and news media interest in unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) remains high. ODNI submitted a preliminary assessment report to Congress on June 25, 2021, as required by the SSCI report attached to the FY20 NDAA. That report noted the challenges associated with assessing UAP occurring on or near DOD training ranges and installations highlighted and also identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP. On the same day, DSD directed OUSD(I&S) to develop a plan to formalize the mission currently performed by the UAPTF. On Nov. 23, 2021, DSD signed a memo announcing the establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) as the successor to the UAPTF; the memo also established the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC) to provide oversight of the AOIMSG.

Top Line Messages / Talking Points

- We take reports of incursions into our airspace – by any aircraft, identified or unidentified – very seriously, and investigate each one.
- Safety (of our personnel) and security (of our operations) are of paramount concern.
- Our approach has been – and will continue to be – driven by science and data.
- The Deputy Secretary’s direction reflects her desire to ensure the Department is fully aware of objects in our airspace in order to protect safety of flight and national security.
- The AOIMSG construct focuses on proactively identifying objects in Special Use Airspace, rather than simply focusing on items that were observed but not identified. This will help to ensure that we are postured to collect adequate data during the event, instead of only gathering data forensically.
- This has been, and will continue to be, a collaborative effort, involving many organizations across DoD, as well as with interagency partners.
- We currently lack the data to indicate whether UAP are part of a foreign collection program or indicative of a major technology advancement by a potential adversary.
- There is not one single explanation for UAP.
- We need to improve our capacity and capability to further analyze UAP. We need more data, more sensors, more reporting, and more consistency and standardization in reporting.

Coordinated with: OUSD(I&S), Navy

Prepared by: (b)(6)

- The selection of USD(I&S) and the Director of Operations, Joint Staff on the AOIMEXEC reflect the Department's characterization of this issue as both an operational and intelligence problem, and provides strengthened guidance to ensure appropriate efforts are undertaken in each area.
- Implementing guidance with further details on the AOIMSG Director, organizational structure, authorities, and resourcing, is forthcoming.

Questions and Answers

Q. Why is the Deputy Secretary replacing the UAPTF?

A. The DNI report to Congress highlighted the challenges associated with assessing airborne objects, including UAP, occurring on or near DOD training ranges and installations. It also confirmed that the scope of the UAP activity expands significantly beyond Navy's purview. The report also identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP.

Q. What are the national security threats that the Pentagon is concerned about?

A. The Department of Defense takes seriously any incursion into our airspace by any aircraft, identified or unidentified, very seriously.

Q. Is the U.S. not currently aware of items in its airspace?

A. Not all objects in U.S. airspace are tracked and identified, especially if they are small and don't pose a threat. However, the increase in unmanned aerial systems and airspace debris has highlighted that there are a number of objects which do pose a concern. This effort lowers the threshold for items to be considered and evaluated to ensure that we are able to identify any items that may pose a threat to safety of flight or national security.

Q. Why is the data you have insufficient? What else do you need?

A. Encounters with UAP are often brief and fleeting, and frequently involve a single source, such as a verbal report or a single photograph. We need more data and a better reporting structure – standardized reporting, timely reporting, and further reducing the stigma about reporting on UAP so that we have more reports for pattern and trend analysis.

Q. Who is going to be the AOIMSG Director/what can you tell me about the AOIMSG budget/organization/size/members/personnel/operations/etc.?

A. As Deputy Secretary Hicks noted in her memo, implementing guidance is forthcoming.

Q. Can you explain the SUA term? Why are you using that now?

A. Special Use Airspace is designated in accordance with 14 CFR Part 73. It's a more accurate term for airspace that the AOIMSG will be focusing on. SUA is airspace that is restricted for national security and other uses, and includes military operations areas, firing ranges, etc. For the AOIMSG, we are not interested in looking at *all* airspace in the world; the AOIMSG will be focused on the areas where there are security risks to our training, operations, and infrastructure. [This is no different than what the UAPTF was focused on – military training ranges and operations airspace.]

Q. Why is the memo using the term “airborne object” (rather than UAP)?

A. The term “UAP” still refers to items that are unidentified. The ODNI report in June 2021 noted that most objects were unidentified due to incomplete data. Therefore, this effort seeks to proactively detect, identify and attribute objects to help minimize the overall number of items that are classified as UAP. Additionally, as we’ve said, we need more data, including more reporting. One way to do that is to destigmatize UAP reporting by standardizing and normalizing reporting of airborne objects in SUA – whether the object is a UAP or another object.

Q. Why is Navy no longer in charge of UAP examinations?

A. The Department recognizes the great work that Navy did on examining UAPs, both before the UAPTF existed and as the head of the UAPTF. The June 2021 report to Congress confirmed that the scope of UAP activity expands beyond Navy and identified the need for improvement in many areas to better understand UAP; this involves organizations across DoD and the USG interagency, and is better directed at the OSD level rather than by a military department.

Q: Is the AOIMSG being established under the USD(I&S) because there are intelligence concerns or concerns about foreign actors?

A: The USD(I&S) has broad responsibilities for intelligence and security, which includes security of U.S. facilities. The USD(I&S) also oversees defense intelligence production and analysis which are critical capabilities to ensure identification of objects. As there are significant operational equities, the Joint staff is also involved.

Q. What is the mission of the AOIMSG?

A. The AOIMSG will oversee the Department’s efforts to detect, identify and attribute objects of interest in Special Use Airspace and to assess and mitigate any associated threats to safety of flight or national security.

Q. Has the Department found any evidence of extraterrestrial technology?

A. The examinations into incursions by UAPs are still ongoing; we lack sufficient information in our dataset to attribute incidents to specific explanations. It is not the purpose of the AOIMSG to look for evidence of extraterrestrials. Other parts of the government do that; for example, NASA looks for evidence of life on other planets.

AOIMSG Establishment December 9, 2021

Executive Summary

Public and news media interest in unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) remains high. On Nov. 23, 2021, DSD signed a memo announcing the establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) as the successor to the UAPTF; the memo also established the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC) to provide oversight of the AOIMSG. The *draft* FY22 NDAA approved by the House on Dec. 7 contains a section directing DoD and ODNI to establish an office, organizational structure, and authorities to address UAP.

Top Line Messages / Talking Points

- [*Prior to NDAA becoming law:*] We're not going to comment on pending legislation. We're not going to get ahead of the legislative process.
- We take reports of incursions into our airspace – by any aircraft, identified or unidentified – very seriously, and investigate each one.
- Safety (of our personnel) and security (of our operations) are of paramount concern.
- The Deputy Secretary's direction reflects her desire to ensure the Department is fully aware of objects in our airspace in order to protect safety of flight and national security.
- The AOIMSG will focus on proactively identifying objects in Special Use Airspace, rather than simply focusing on items that were observed but not identified. This will help to ensure that we are postured to collect adequate data during the event, instead of only gathering data forensically.
- The AOIMSG will ensure we leverage of the strength of the Department and the IC to normalize UAP reporting, analysis and mitigation into standing processes.
- This has been, and will continue to be, a collaborative effort, involving many organizations across DoD, as well as interagency partners.
- Implementing guidance with further details on the AOIMSG Director, organizational structure, authorities, resourcing, and roles and responsibilities is forthcoming.
- The Department is committed to transparency with the Congress and the American people while balancing its obligation to protect classified information.

Questions and Answers

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Q. Why is the Deputy Secretary replacing the UAPTF?

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Coordinated with: OUSD(I&S), ODNI

Prepared by: (b)(6)

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Q. Will the AOIMSG be more transparent on UAP encounters than the UAPTF was?

A. The Department is committed to transparency with the Congress and the American people while balancing its obligation to protect classified information. In executing the AOIMSG mission, the Department will keep the Congress fully and currently informed in both unclassified and classified detail of its activities and findings to enable effective congressional oversight and accountability to the public. The Department is eager to work with Congress as it completes its Fiscal Year 2022 legislation to posture the AOIMSG for success.

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Additional Background Information (Not for Release)

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Coordinated with: OUSD(I&S), ODNI

Prepared by: (b)(6)

Additional Talking Points

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