



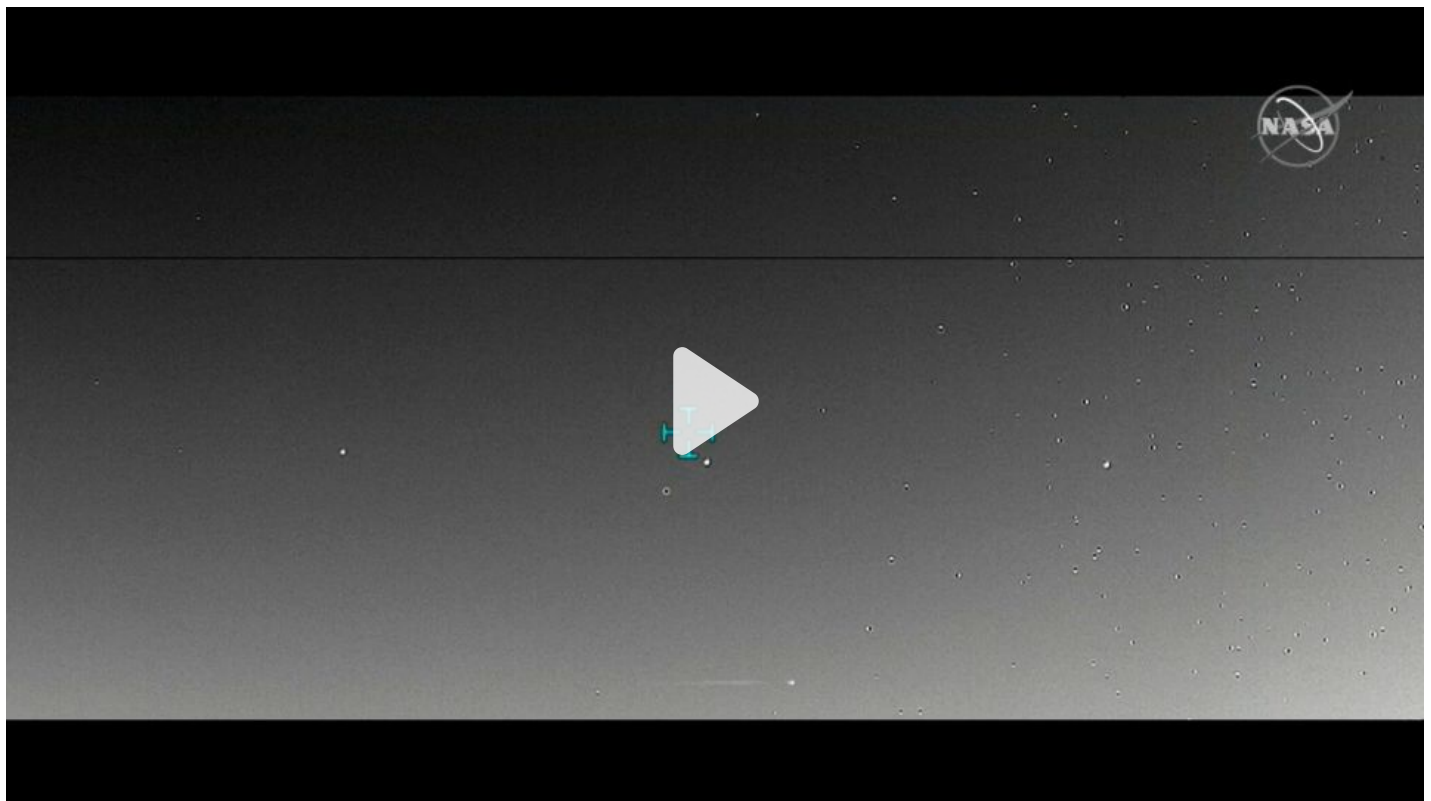
Opinion

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## Opinion: The actual hidden truth about UFOs

Opinion by [Peter Bergen](#) and Erik German

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NASA reveals findings on unidentified objects

00:45 - Source: [CNN](#)

Editor's Note: *Peter Bergen is CNN's national security analyst, a vice president at New America, a professor of practice at Arizona State University, and the host of the Audible podcast "In the Room with Peter Bergen," also on [Apple](#) and [Spotify](#). Erik German is the senior producer of "In the Room." The opinions expressed in this commentary are their own. View more [opinion](#) at CNN.*

It sounds like a pitch for a Hollywood movie. But last year, Americans saw it happen on the news. The former Pentagon official, David Grusch, had been an Air Force intelligence officer. He told a congressional committee that he'd learned of a decades-long Pentagon program focused on "crash retrieval and reverse engineering" of UFOs from other planets. Grusch also said that remains found at the spacecraft crash sites were "non-human biologics."

That's right. Crashed alien spacecraft and dead extraterrestrials, right there in the Congressional Record. If it wasn't the wildest thing ever broadcasted on C-SPAN, it must've been close. Someone should look into this, right?

It turns out that someone already had. In 2022, the Pentagon tapped a veteran scientist and intelligence officer named Sean Kirkpatrick to set up a new office tasked with investigating UFO sightings by the US military. Named the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office by the US Department of Defense, Kirkpatrick told us his team dug into UFO cases and interviewed US service members who said they had knowledge about encounters with UFOs.



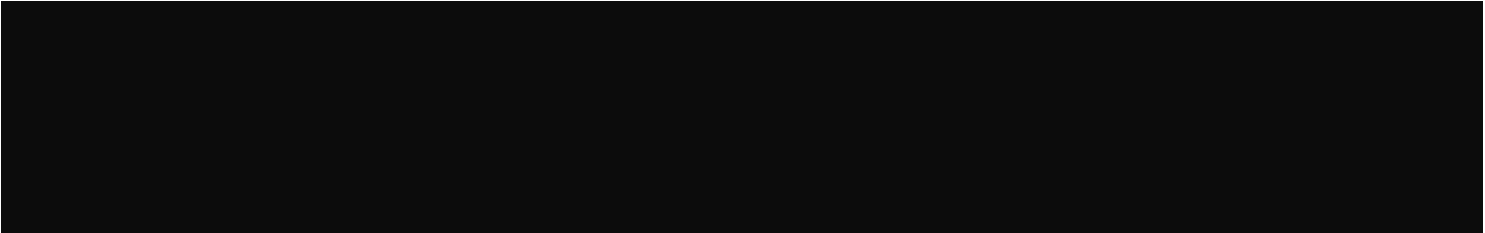
July 26, 2023.

Kirkpatrick recently retired from his job at the Pentagon and spoke with us for the Audible podcast “In the Room.” Kirkpatrick and his team investigated every US government UFO sighting going back to Roswell in the 1940s, putting the findings in a report that’s likely to be made public this month.

In the most extensive media interview he’s given, Kirkpatrick laid out a convincing case that the stories swirling for decades about the alleged government cover-up of alien-related UFOs may well have been fueled largely by true believers inside the US government or with close ties to it.

Since the term “flying saucer” was first coined, much of the conspiratorial thinking about UFOs has been spawned by people catching glimpses of highly secret US aircraft and wanting answers. And when the government doesn’t provide answers, the public imagination takes over.





US Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence Scott Bray explains a video of an unidentified aerial phenomena, as he testifies before a House Intelligence Committee subcommittee hearing at the US Capitol on May 17, 2022.

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But, in fact, Kirkpatrick says, his investigation found that most UFO sightings are of advanced technology that the US government needs to keep secret, of aircraft that rival nations are using to spy on the US or of benign civilian drones and balloons.

“There’s about two to five percent of all the (UFO reports that are)... what we would call truly anomalous,” says Kirkpatrick. And he thinks explanations for that small percentage will most likely be found right here on Earth.

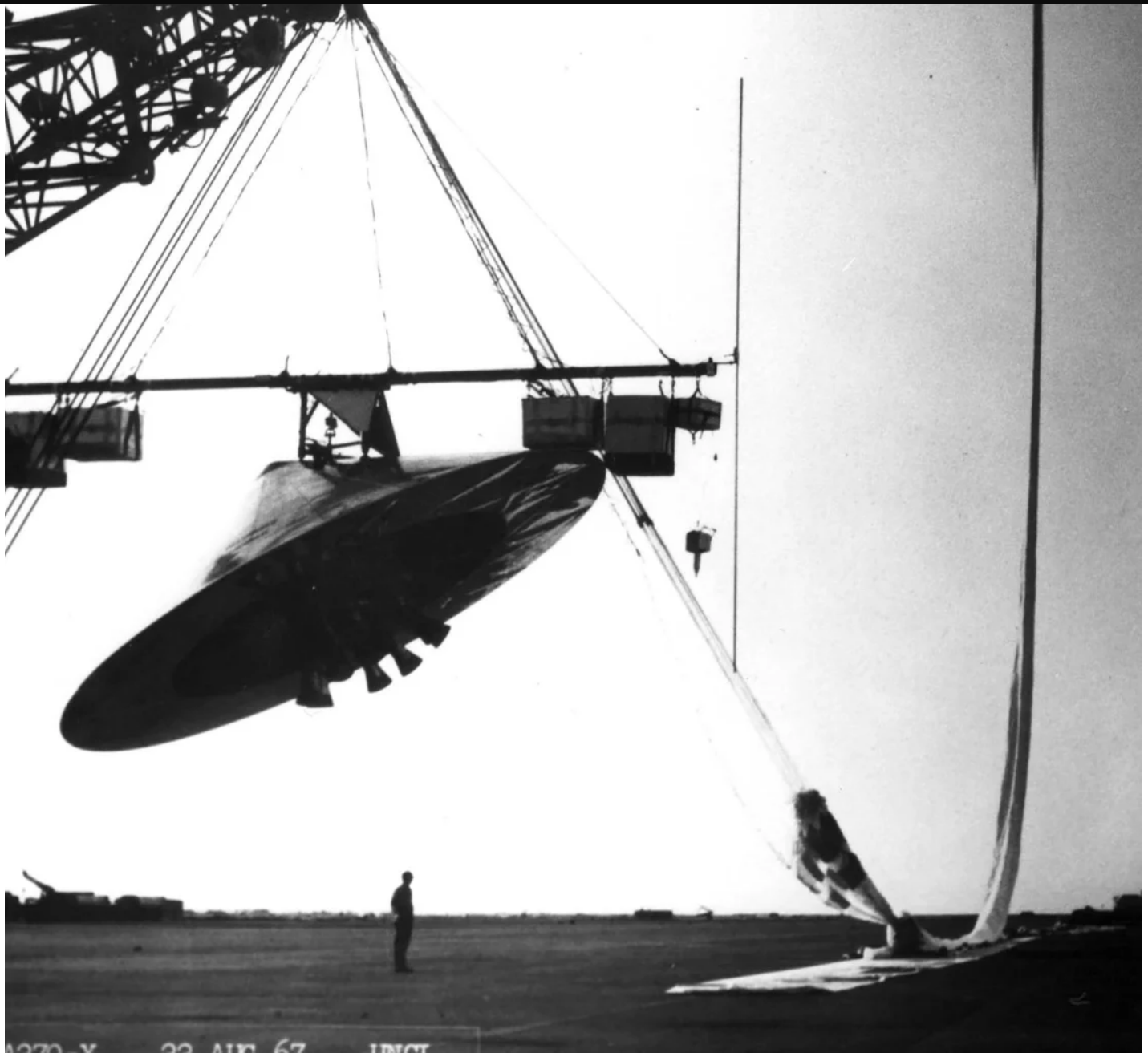
## The Roswell incident

This is how Kirkpatrick and his team explain the Roswell incident, which plays a prominent role in UFO lore. That’s because, in 1947, a US military news release stated that a flying saucer had crashed near Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico.

A day later, the Army retracted the story and said the crashed object was a weather balloon. Newspapers ran the initial saucer headline, followed up with the official debunking, and interest in the case largely died down. Until 1980, that is, when a pair of UFO researchers published a book alleging that alien bodies had been recovered from the Roswell wreckage and that the US government had covered up the evidence.

Kirkpatrick says his office dug deep into the Roswell incident and found that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were a lot of things happening near the Roswell Airfield. There was a spy program called Project Mogul, which launched long strings of oddly shaped metallic balloons. They were designed to monitor Soviet nuclear tests and were highly secret.



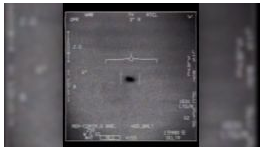


Reuters

The US Air Force released this photo on June 24 of an aeroshell of a NASA Voyager Mars space probe prior to launch at Walker AFB, New Mexico (formerly Roswell AAF) as part of its report on the so called "Roswell Incident" of 1947.

At the same time, the US military was conducting tests with other high-altitude balloons that carried human test dummies rigged with sensors and zipped into body-sized bags for protection against the elements. And there was at least one military plane crash nearby with 11 fatalities.

Kirkpatrick also lays out a convincing case that something similar is happening today. He says new technology taking flight now could help explain a lot of the modern era of UFO sightings from the early 2000s on. It's not just secret government technology, either. Lots of observers get flummoxed when they catch sight of cutting-edge drones and even odd-looking balloons.

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"What's more likely?" asked Kirkpatrick. "The fact that there is a state-of-the-art technology that's being commercialized down in Florida that you didn't know about, or we have extraterrestrials?" he said. "And it even makes me scratch my head more when you show them; here's the company in Florida that builds exactly what you've described. And their response is, well, no, no, no, it's gotta be extraterrestrials, and you're covering it up."

Nevertheless, UFOs remain a genuine national security concern mainly because they are flight hazards. As Kirkpatrick put it, "military pilots that are flying at greater than Mach 1; if they run into a balloon with a tether on it, it's going to rip a wing off."

Since 2020, the Pentagon has standardized, de-stigmatized and increased the volume of reporting on UFOs by the US military. Kirkpatrick says that's the reason the closely covered and widely-mocked Chinese spy balloon was spotted in the first place last year. The incident shows that the US government's policy of taking UFOs seriously is actually working.

## The true believers

So in the face of the actual evidence, why are people in and around government promoting the unsupported idea of alien invaders being covered up by the US government?

"True believers are not just outside of government; many of them are inside government," Kirkpatrick told us, including the late US Senator Harry Reid, the Nevada Democrat who was Senate Majority leader. Another key player was Reid's longtime friend Robert Bielew.

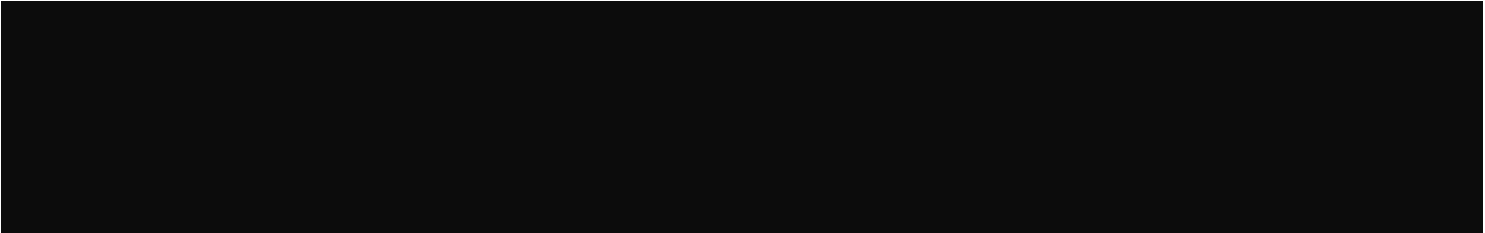


Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images/File

Then-Senate Majority Leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) holds a news conference to announce the inclusion of the "public option" in the Senate's version of the health care reform legislation October 26, 2009 in Washington, DC.

In 2007, Senator Reid got funding for a US Defense Intelligence Agency program that paid \$22 million to his buddy Bigelow's aerospace company — money the company spent on investigations into paranormal phenomena. Among other investigations, Bigelow's team looked into sightings of UFOs by US military personnel and proposed setting up laboratories to study the purported physical remains of alien spacecraft. (On "60 Minutes" in May 2017, Bigelow said he was "absolutely convinced" that aliens exist and that UFOs have visited Earth.)

Reid told a reporter in Nevada in 2021 that even though this was a secret program to look into UFOs, Bigelow didn't benefit from "some sweetheart deal ... it was put out to



embellished and received the occasional boost from service members who'd heard rumors about or caught glimpses of seemingly sci-fi technology or aircraft.

And Kirkpatrick says his investigators ultimately traced this game of top-secret telephone back to fewer than a dozen people.

"It all goes back to the same core set of people," Kirkpatrick said. This is both deeply weird and richly ironic. Because, for decades, UFO true believers have been telling us there's a US government conspiracy to hide evidence of aliens. But — if you believe Kirkpatrick — the more mundane truth is that these stories are being pumped up by a group of UFO true believers in and around government.

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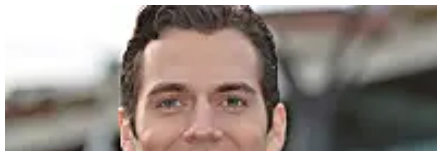
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Sadly, for all the UFO lovers out there, that may be the biggest takeaway from Kirkpatrick's report to Congress, which is expected to be published later this month. Plenty of outsiders have long speculated about whether the Pentagon's alien-focused programs were coming up empty and perhaps were suspiciously self-perpetuating.

But now, highly credible people inside the Pentagon — with really high-level security clearances — are finally saying, we looked at every single piece of secret evidence about supposedly alien UFOs. And as far as we can tell, it's humans all the way down.

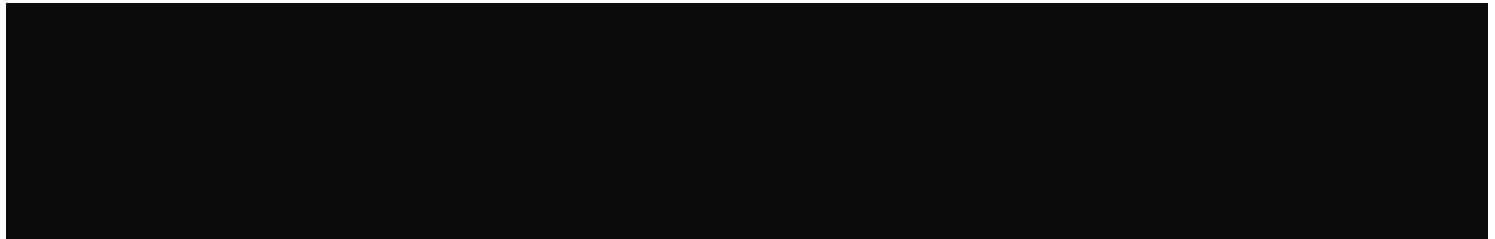
Although Kirkpatrick concedes that for those who truly believe that there are alien visitations here on Earth, little will convince them otherwise: "There is absolutely nothing that I'm going to do, say, or produce evidentiary that is going to make the true believers convert ... It is a religious belief that transcends critical thinking and rational thought."

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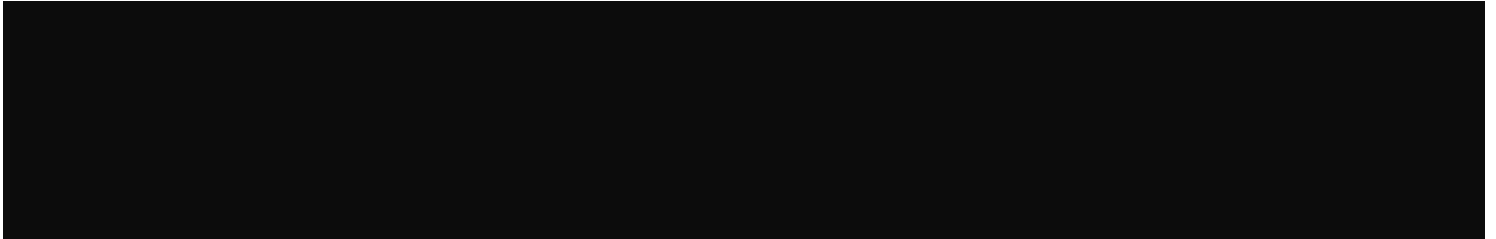
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