SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA UAP

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WHO AM I?

- Former Department of the Air Force civilian historian assigned to HQ Air Force Reserve, Robins AFB, and HQ Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles AFB (1995–1998).
- Received a classified briefing on a UAP incident in 1996.
- Interviewed by the Department of Defense's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, 17 May 2023.
- Guest lecturer, "UAP and Homeland Security" course, Farmingdale State College.

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA & UAP

- The population of San Francisco Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties) rose from an estimated 617,000 in 1896 to 7.7 million in 2026.
- The Bay Area has hosted dozens of civilian and military airfields since the beginning of powered aviation, including numerous facilities that are no longer operational.
- It is no surprise, then, that the Bay Area has had its share of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) sightings.
- This presentation is not a complete catalog of every recorded UAP sighting in the area.
- This presentation examines sightings in which enough information was readily available to suggest highly anomalous characteristics.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA UAP SIGHTINGS



OAKLAND/PIEDMONT MYSTERY AIRSHIP 1896



- At approximately 1730 on 20 November 1896, multiple witnesses in Oakland and Piedmont observed an unidentified aerial object.
- Charles H. Ellis, armorer for Companies A and F of the California National Guard, reported observing a dark object with a brilliant light and apparent wings or propellers.
- Ellis, initially skeptical of earlier airship reports, stated that his own observation convinced him something unusual was flying overhead.
- Selby Yost, a Piedmont streetcar motorman and member of the Oakland Guard, reported seeing the object along with passengers aboard his streetcar.
- Witnesses described a powerful forward-facing light and a second light illuminating the ground below.
- The object reportedly passed over St. Mary's College, descended gradually, and disappeared toward San Francisco.



SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA AIR RAID ALERT 1942

- At 1848 on 3 January 1942, the Fourth Interceptor Command ordered a blackout across the San Francisco Bay Area following reports of unidentified aircraft offshore.
- Army acoustic listening stations detected two distinct sound tracks approximately 80 miles west of the Golden Gate.
- Military authorities reported two groups of unidentified aircraft but could not determine the number of planes involved.
- The blackout extended from Santa Cruz northward to Santa Rosa and Napa, including San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond.
- No aircraft were confirmed over the mainland. The all-clear was issued at 1932, after 44 minutes.
- The identity and origin of the reported aircraft were not established in contemporary accounts.



CONCORD AERIAL ENCOUNTER 1947

- At approximately 1215 on 15 July 1947, Colonel Frank A. Flynn, a veteran U.S. Army aviator and Civil Aeronautics Administration examiner, was flying a Vultee BT-13 toward Sacramento at 4,000 feet.
- While over Concord, California, Flynn observed 12–15 unidentified objects that initially resembled a flock of large birds.
- The objects appeared approximately 15 feet across, without discernible necks or tails, and moved in a seesaw motion at three different altitudes, approximately 200 feet apart.
- Flynn described their upper surfaces as white, with gray and black undersides visible when they tilted.
- He turned his aircraft to pursue the objects, but they rapidly outdistanced him at speeds he estimated exceeded 200 mph.
- Flynn compared the objects to U.S. Navy radio-controlled target aircraft but observed no controlling aircraft nearby.



HAMILTON AFB (NOVATO) I, 1950

- On 21 June 1950, three U.S. Air Force personnel at Hamilton AFB in Marin County observed an unidentified aerial object described in contemporary reports as disk-shaped.
- Corporal Roger G. Pryor and Staff Sergeant Ellis R. Lorimer were control tower operators.
- Staff Sergeant Virgil Cappuro, assigned to airways communications, observed the object from another location.
- The object reportedly emitted a blue flame and made multiple passes over the area.
- Witness accounts indicated approximately five passes, although reports differed on the precise number.
- The Air Force subsequently classified the case as “Insufficient Data,” reportedly because the original investigative report was missing.



SAN FRANCISCO 1952

- On 26 July 1952, an unidentified aerial object was reported over San Francisco, California.
- The object was described as bright red, horizontally oblong, and approximately the size of a B-36 bomber.
- Its speed was estimated at 1,500 mph, traveling west-southwest without producing any sound.
- The sighting was reported to the Combat Operations Center and documented by the 66th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron at Mill Valley.
- A military teletype dated 27 July forwarded the report through Air Defense Command intelligence channels, including Headquarters USAF and the Air Intelligence Center at Wright-Patterson AFB.



HAMILTON AFB (NOVATO) II 1952

- At 1615 on 3 August 1952, three USAF officers on the ground observed two silver, spherical objects over Hamilton AFB, California.
- Captain L. R. Hadley and Second Lieutenant D. A. Swimley were experienced pilots; Captain W. T. Perske was the third witness.
- The objects were estimated at 60–100 feet in diameter, traveling at 400–450 mph without audible sound.
- Observed at approximately 12,000 and 18,000 feet, the higher object reportedly descended to the altitude of the lower object.
- The observation lasted approximately 75 minutes, with additional objects subsequently reported.
- Air Force intelligence officers considered weather balloons a possible explanation.



SAN JOSE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT 1981

- At 2240 on 9 February 1981, two pilots aboard a Cessna 150 (N16032) encountered an unidentified aerial object while practicing takeoffs and landings at San Jose Municipal Airport, California.
- Pilot Gary Rounds and passenger Charles Shackleford, also a licensed pilot, observed an intensely bright, pulsating red object estimated at 10 feet in diameter.
- The object approached the aircraft, passed overhead, and subsequently appeared behind it, prompting Rounds to maneuver to avoid a possible collision.
- Air traffic controllers Rich Gutterud and Randy Blount independently observed the object from the airport control tower.
- The controllers reported that the object made tight turns, briefly hovered, and departed at an extremely high rate of speed.
- The encounter lasted approximately two to three minutes. Controllers reported that the object was not detected on airport radar.



NAS MOFFETT FIELD (SANTA CLARA COUNTY) 1982

- At approximately 1530 on 18 July 1982, an unnamed U.S. Navy reservist aboard a P-3 Orion reported observing an unidentified cylindrical object shortly after departing NAS Moffett Field.
- The witness, an Aviation Electrician's Mate Third Class (AE3) and student pilot, was seated beside a window on the aircraft's left side.
- While climbing through approximately 6,500–8,500 feet, he observed a vertically oriented, highly reflective metallic cylinder slightly below the aircraft.
- The object was estimated at 20–40 feet tall and 7–13 feet in diameter, approximately 100–300 feet below the P-3.
- The cylinder appeared stationary or moved very slowly, at an estimated distance of ¼–1 mile from the aircraft.
- The observation lasted approximately 15 seconds before the object disappeared behind and below the aircraft's horizontal stabilizer.
- The witness did not alert other crew members and submitted his account to the National UFO Reporting Center in January 2004.



SARATOGA 1986

- On 16 and 21 October 1986, numerous witnesses reported mysterious aerial lights over Saratoga, California.
- Dozens of witnesses reported the first sighting, while approximately 15 people contacted Santa Clara County dispatchers during the second.
- On 16 October, Maureen Denton of Los Gatos observed a brilliant red light while attending a class at West Valley College. She reported a small burning or flickering object descending from it.
- On 21 October, Vicki Yauger of Saratoga observed a bright light moving toward and then away from her location. Through binoculars, she described a cluster of lights.
- Yauger's husband reported that the light changed to green before slowly disappearing.
- NAS Moffett Field reported no aircraft activity matching the second sighting. Vandenberg AFB reported no corresponding launch, while local air traffic controllers and Lick Observatory astronomers reported no unusual observations.



UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT 1389 ENCOUNTER, 2026

- On 29 April 2026, the crew of United Airlines Flight 1389, a Boeing 757-300 arriving from Denver, reported an unidentified object during final approach to San Francisco International Airport.
- Approximately seven miles from the airport, the pilots observed an object crossing their flight path from right to left.
- The crew reportedly referenced a traffic indication on the aircraft's Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS).
- After landing, the pilots estimated that the object appeared to be moving approximately twice as fast as a conventional aircraft.
- The encounter occurred at low altitude, with approximately 700 feet cited in subsequent accounts.
- The object's identity was not established in the publicly circulated account.



UAS (?) ENCOUNTER 1 —NAPA 2016

- At 1907 PDT on 31 May 2016, the crew of an Embraer E170 reported an unidentified aerial object near Napa County Airport.
- The aircraft was climbing northeastbound through approximately 13,500 feet.
- The crew described the object as red and approximately five feet in diameter.
- The object reportedly passed close to the aircraft, just off a wingtip.
- No evasive action was reported.
- Oakland ARTCC issued a traffic advisory to other aircraft in the area.
- The Napa County Sheriff's Office and Napa Airport Tower were notified.
- The reported altitude was unusually high for a conventional small UAS.
- The FAA classified the incident as a UAS report, but the object's identity was not independently established.



UAS (?) ENCOUNTER 2—SOUTH OF CONCORD 2018

- At 1217 PDT on 6 June 2018, the crew of a Boeing 757-200 reported an unidentified aerial object approximately 10 miles south of Concord, California.
- The aircraft was traveling northeastbound at 13,000 feet when the crew observed the object at its 2 o'clock position.
- The object was described as red and black, with an apparent rotor configuration.
- The crew did not take evasive action, and no law enforcement notification was documented.
- The reported altitude of 13,000 feet was exceptionally high for a consumer multirotor drone in 2018, far exceeding normal operating altitudes and the standard FAA 400-foot limit.
- Although specialized unmanned aircraft could operate at such altitudes, the object's identity and capabilities were not established.

UAS (?) ENCOUNTER 3 —NW OF SAN FRANCISCO 2019



- At 1453 PDT on 21 April 2019, the crew of a Boeing 777-200 reported an unidentified silver aerial object approximately seven miles northwest of San Francisco, California.
- The aircraft was traveling eastbound at 11,000 feet when the object was observed off its left side.
- The object was reportedly at approximately the same altitude as the Boeing 777.
- The number of rotors, if any, could not be determined. The FAA classified the report as a suspected UAS encounter.
- No evasive maneuver was reported. Law enforcement was not notified because the encounter occurred over water.
- At 11,000 feet, the object would have been operating far above the normal capabilities and authorized operating altitudes of consumer drones available in 2019.
- The FAA report did not establish the object's identity, leaving open whether it was a drone, another airborne object, or a misidentification.

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