

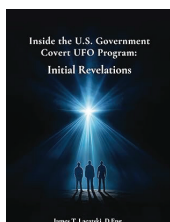


**BOOK AND  
MULTIMEDIA  
REVIEW**

## **Second Review: Inside the U.S. Government Covert UFO Program: Initial Revelations**

**Micah Hanks**

micah@thedebrief.org



Lacatski, J. T., Kelleher, C. A., & Knapp, G. (2023). Inside the US government covert UFO program: Initial revelations. [Publisher not listed].

**ISBN-13: 979-8989114610**

<https://doi.org/10.31275/20243541>

PLATINUM OPEN ACCESS



Creative Commons License 4.0.  
CC-BY-NC. Attribution required.

In recent years, the United States government's renewed interest and investigations into what it calls unidentified anomalous phenomena—aerial mysteries more commonly known as UFOs—have generated significant public interest.

The Pentagon's current official UAP investigative effort, the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO), is only the latest in a succession of similar initiatives the Department of Defense has launched over the last several years. Its predecessor, the Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force (UAPTF), was established on August 14, 2020, and was itself an outgrowth of a once-secret multi-agency effort within the DoD that examined unidentified aerial threats, informally referred to as the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP), a name first revealed to the public in reporting that appeared in *The New York Times* in 2017.

Although a program that received around \$22 million in taxpayer funding indeed existed as described in the 2017 *Times* article and had been referred to as AATIP, it was later revealed that this was merely its nickname and that there had, in fact, been two separate programs. The official name of the original program, which began in 2008 and ran for just two years within the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), was the Advanced Aerospace Weapons Systems Application Program (AAWSAP), and it was effectively the seminal new millennium DoD effort that gave rise to the modern renaissance in U.S. government interest in unidentified aerial mysteries. The other program was the same multi-agency effort (discussed above) that persisted for several years after AAWSAP ended, which borrowed the former program's unclassified nickname for a time.

Now, the AAWSAP program and its early foundational discoveries are the subject of a significant new volume, *Inside the U.S. Government Covert UFO Program: Initial Revelations* (Bowker, 2023), coauthored by the program's director, James T. Lacatski, D.Eng., along with its Deputy Director, Colm A. Kelleher, Ph.D., and Las Vegas-based journalist George Knapp.

*Inside the U.S. Government's Covert UFO Program* picks up where the authors left off in their previous collaboration, *Skinwalkers at the Pentagon: An Insiders' Account of the Secret Government UFO Program* (Independently Published, 2021), the unusual name of which was derived from another earlier work by Kelleher and Knapp, *Hunt for the Skinwalker: Science Confronts the Unexplained at a Remote Ranch in Utah* (Gallery Books, 2005). In their initial 2005 treatise, Kelleher and Knapp chronicled an independent scientific evaluation undertaken at Utah's infamous Skinwalker Ranch by the National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS), an independent scientific investigative organization funded by Nevada business magnate Robert Bigelow. The story continues in 2021's *Skinwalkers at the Pentagon*, where the authors were joined by AAWSAP Director James Lacatski to detail the story of the once-secret DIA program overseen by another of Bi-



gelow's enterprises, Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Space Studies, the staff for which consisted largely of past NIDS employees.

Now, in this latest installment of the ongoing series, *Inside the U.S. Government's Covert UFO Program* goes beyond the rise and fall of AAWSAP and the general overview of its research efforts outlined in the previous volume, providing a breakdown of AAWSAP's scientific investigations with, as the authors explain, a "focus on the physics and engineering aspects of UFOs."

This is indeed a good, simplified summation of the work, which begins with a preface featuring a comprehensive overview of recent developments involving UAP and the U.S. government's interest in them by coauthor George Knapp. In both the preface and the book's introduction, the authors bring readers up to date on the UAP situation, alluding to the factual errors conveyed in the initial 2017 *Times* reporting that helped give rise to the aforementioned AAWSAP/AATIP confusion (though perhaps to the degree that nears redundancy) and offer an outline of recent events that would certainly aid any reader unfamiliar with the nuances of current UAP-related happenings.

The book's early chapters then provide a succinct overview of the AAWSAP program before comparing it to the DoD's current efforts under the recently formed AARO, citing program functions outlined in recent Congressional language under Sec—1683 which convey what AARO's investigations are expected to entail. While the authors argue that "AAWSAP was effectively restarted by the U.S. Government in 2022," worth noting here are more recent statements by AARO's former director, Sean Kirkpatrick, that were issued since the publication of *Inside the U.S. Government's Covert UFO Program* and which contrast rather sharply with the author's assertions.

With timely comparisons between the new and old U.S. government UAP initiatives aside, the next several chapters focus on various components of the AAWSAP program, which are identified as *Project Database*, a combined database of historic UAP sightings; *Project Physics*, which focused on twelve technical areas and produced more than three dozen papers that examined potential advanced capabilities exhibited by UAP; *Project Engagement* which involved attempts at direct observation of UAP; *Project Northern Tier*, which focused on UAP incidents that occurred decades ago at several U.S. strategic sites; *Project Colares*, which analyzed UAP incidents that occurred in Brazil in the 1970s; *Project Ranch*, which continued investigations at Utah's Skinwalker Ranch; and *Project Consciousness* which explored "the connection between UAP/UFO and paranormal phenomena and the human mind and body."

Within the chapters devoted to subjects like possible propulsion systems, power generation, and other capabilities displayed by UAP, the authors provide intriguing analysis that draws from descriptions harvested from historical UFO narratives, many of which date back several decades. Admittedly, a few readers may find this to be a redundant rehashing of information lifted from already well-trodden paths left in UFO literature. However, it is the opinion of this reviewer that such historical comparisons are significant primarily for a few reasons: 1) here, the authors successfully illustrate that past observations of strange phenomena may represent displays of advanced aerospace technologies that are better understood today than they were at the time they were first described, 2) they offer a potentially meaningful technical analysis for cases that, in past publications, were mainly presented anecdotally, and 3) they provide a candid perspective on the interconnection and dynamics between AAWSAP's investigations, and the historical information amassed in its CAPELLA database, a massive project overseen by computer scientist Jacques Vallée that resulted in what is, arguably, the largest and most comprehensive global historical resource that documents UAP sightings, and which presently remains classified.

In addition to propulsion and other advanced capabilities, several of the more anomalous components of historical UAP displays are explored by the authors, which include the sudden appearances/disappearances of UAP, changes in size or shape, and even the apparent merging of several objects into one (see the book's seventh chapter for an overview of incidents of this variety). Such cases, the authors contend, "suggest spatial/temporal translation concepts that not only explain the observed vehicle flight characteristics, but go on to provide a basis for very advanced lift, propulsion, and structural materials." Additional phenomena examined include apparent alterations in time experienced by some UAP observers, as well as potential effects that "temporally-modified fields" produced by unconventional technologies may have on the surrounding environment (i.e., accelerated growth displayed by vegetation nearest to the UAP).

Along with its assessments of UAP capabilities conveyed in past observations and their technological implications, *Inside the U.S. Government's Covert UFO Program* offers a few surprises too. Arguably, one of the most controversial statements is offered by Lacatski, who discusses being present at a meeting that occurred at the U.S. Capitol building in 2011, at which time he "stated that the United States was in possession of a craft of unknown origin and had successfully gained access to its interior." Possessing "a streamlined configuration suitable for aerodynamic flight but no intakes, exhaust, wings, or con-

trol surfaces,” a possible function of the curious vehicle was speculated, according to Lacatski, as having been “a life-support craft useful only for atmospheric reentry,” a purpose that might seemingly account for the apparent lack of any discernible propulsion system within the device.

Discussion of this alleged anomalous vehicle recovery is presented mainly as an introduction to a discussion about Defense Intelligence Reference Documents (DIRDs) produced for the AAWSAP program by Earthtech International, a Texas-based research facility managed by physicist Harold E. Puthoff. Thus, little context is provided within the text that conveys a basis for the supposition that such a craft exists in the U.S. government’s holdings. However, the most obvious comparison that comes to mind involves descriptions of similar alleged vehicles provided by Bob Lazar, who claims to have observed such craft in the U.S. government’s possession in the 1980s. Departing somewhat from the “life-support craft” hypothesis, the DIRDs subsequently addressed within the same chapter then look at negative mass and vacuum (spacetime metric) engineering as possible mechanisms that may help provide an understanding of potential underlying mechanisms for such technologies.

The book’s later chapters also provide useful historical information on the AAWSAP program’s investigations into the now-famous Nimitz incident off the Baja California coast in 2004, as well as its arrangement with the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) that allowed AAWSAP investigators special access to information collected by one of the country’s largest and oldest existing UAP investigative organizations. This cooperative agreement managed to generate controversy both at the time and still today to some degree, primarily because the majority of the organization’s members—and even most of its board of directors—were unaware that the financial support MUFON received from Robert Bigelow had been taxpayer money associated with a DIA program (those interested in this cooperative arrangement are referred to the book’s twelfth and thirteenth chapters, where a brief history and an overview of sample MUFON cases that AAWSAP evaluated during this period are provided).

In the book’s final chapters, discussions involving AAWSAP’s Data Warehouse, as well as AAWSAP’s investi-

gations into UAP incidents along the U.S. Northern Tier in the 1960s and 1970s, physical injury cases from the late 1970s in northern Brazil, and an additional summary of the investigations at Skinwalker Ranch between 2008-2010 are outlined. Mirroring elements of the story conveyed in *Skinwalkers at the Pentagon*, the authors also discuss what the AAWSAP program was *not* able to achieve due to time constraints, lack of additional funding, and, ultimately, the program’s termination in 2010. As the authors explain near the volume’s conclusion, a few components of the AAWSAP research effort—chiefly its *Project Ranch* and *Project Consciousness*—receive far less attention than the components that detail physical characteristics and potential technological implications related to the function of UAP. This, they explain, is both due to the primacy of Projects *Physics*, *Engagement*, and *Database* in the early stages of the AAWSAP effort but also because of space limitations within the current volume. A forthcoming work by the authors is foreshadowed, in which these later stages of the AAWSAP investigations will be more fully detailed.

In conclusion, *Inside the U.S. Government’s Covert UFO Program* will leave many readers wanting more specifics about the core investigations undertaken during the two short years the AAWSAP program was in operation. Also, some may find the frequent references to historical literature a deviation from the modern studies of anomalous phenomena that the controversial program explored. However, while some frustration on these points is warranted, one must also note that all of the information contained within the book was cleared for public release by the Defense Office of Prepublication and Security Review (Case 22-SB-0151), as *Skinwalkers at the Pentagon* had been, and also that a large portion of the data produced by AAWSAP remains classified. Thus, for the time being, *Inside the U.S. Government’s Covert UFO Program* offers what is, to date, the clearest and most comprehensive overview of the research efforts undertaken by the AAWSAP program and thus provides a very valuable outline both for historians of the subject who work in the absence of direct access to AAWSAP materials, as well as for the general reader who is interested in learning about the extent and focus of recent past U.S. government investigations into unidentified anomalous phenomena.