

In late 2025, during early evening daylight hours, I – a senior U.S. intelligence officer – along with a colleague and two pilots, departed our Joint Operations Center (JOC) in a helicopter. Our mission was to investigate loud thuds heard in the mountains on the test range, which coincided with Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) sightings reported over the previous several nights. We aimed to search remote mountain areas for possible debris or objects that might explain the orb-like sightings.

After leaving the JOC, we flew a low-altitude “map of the earth” route through the mountain range for several hours. Multiple times, we spotted debris on the ground and descended for closer inspection. Each time, we determined it was remnants from rockets and other projectiles that had crashed during years of weapons testing on the range. As we continued searching near areas of reported orb activity, we discovered a large cave entrance with no visible end in sight. The terrain around the entrance offered no safe landing spot, so I instructed the pilot to orbit it several times for observation. We noted the location and then pressed on.

Running low on fuel, we headed to a prearranged rendezvous point to meet a ground team and let my colleague disembark. The two pilots and I then proceeded to a prepositioned tanker on the range for refueling. Our plan was to return to base afterward, but the JOC radioed with a request to search a nearby mountain for debris spotted by one of the ground teams. By this time, the sun had set, and the pilots switched to Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) and Night Vision Goggles (NVG), while I continued using the unaided naked eye.

After a brief search of the mountain yielded no findings, the pilots began navigating back to the JOC to end the mission. I then received a message from the JOC: radar had detected hits several miles up range from our position – the same area where UAP activity had been observed on prior nights. I relayed this to the pilots, and we altered course to intercept. What followed was a series of close UAP encounters lasting over an hour.

En route, ground teams reported spotting a UAP on FLIR, describing it as “super-hot,” low to the ground, and moving east then south at high speed. The object then split into two and changed direction. Upon arrival, we scanned the area using NVG, FLIR, and the naked eye. The ground team suddenly radioed that the object had risen from the ground, approached within ten feet of the helicopter, dropped below us, and then sped away. The pilots observed it through NVGs and saw it split into two as a smaller object emerged before it accelerated out of sight. We briefly pursued but broke off, unable to match its speed. At one point, the JOC informed us that several fighter jets had launched on a training mission in our operating area and requested their assistance in identifying the UAP.

Minutes later, the JOC directed us to nearby radar detections. We took up a hovering position at approximately 700 feet above ground level (AGL). In the distance, we saw countless orange orbs swarming in all directions against the backdrop of the mountain. The display lasted several minutes before fading. The JOC then redirected us to our previous position based on fresh radar hits. I provided coordinates to the pilots, and we moved to intercept, hovering again at 700 feet AGL. Through NVGx, the pilots and I (using the naked eye) observed two large orbs flare up side by side, close to the helicopter – stationary and just above the rotor disk to our right. They were oval-shaped, orange with a white or yellow center, and emitted light in all directions.

After a few seconds, a third orb flared up below the pair, followed by a fourth below that, forming a total of four or five in a “T” formation under the original two. Moments later, they dimmed in reverse order, remaining stationary until they vanished from view. The entire event lasted 10-15 seconds. I didn’t take photos, as I was focused on assessing what it was and whether it posed a threat.

After this encounter, the pilots briefly considered landing due to the objects’ proximity but opted to remain hovering at 700 feet AGL for further observation. We then spotted the fighter jets entering visual range at about 23,00 feet AGL, identifiable by their blinking navigation lights. As watched from afar, the same type of orbs appeared directly above the fighters. They flared up one at a time in a horizontal formation, matching the jets’ speed and flight path. After 10-15 seconds, they dimmed sequentially and disappeared. This repeated several times as the jets transited the airspace and eventually landed. I remarked to the pilots that it seemed the same orbs we had encountered were now “chasing” the fighters. We also observed orange orbs flaring up and down around us for several minutes, forming a distinct triangle before vanishing.

Low on fuel, the pilots decided to return to the JOC. After landing, I briefly spoke with them – mostly to express thanks. We were virtually speechless after these observations. I then entered the JOC for a quick debrief before driving home.