

H.654

Introduced by Representative Headrick of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Internal security and public safety; aeronautics and surface

transportation; airspace; Vermont Airspace Safety and Unidentified

Anomalous Phenomena Task Force

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the Vermont Airspace Safety and Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Task Force to evaluate reports of unidentified anomalous phenomena, assess airspace and public safety risks, coordinate with academic institutions and federal agencies, and develop recommendations to improve incident reporting, response, and analysis.

An act relating to Vermont Airspace Safety and Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Task Force

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) The federal government has formally acknowledged the existence of unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) and has established the All-Domain

1 Anomaly Resolution Office within the U.S. Department of Defense to
2 coordinate federal investigation and oversight of UAP-related reports.

3 (2) In 2023, the U.S. Congress enacted the Unidentified Anomalous
4 Phenomena Disclosure Act as an amendment to the National Defense
5 Authorization Act, establishing requirements for transparency, centralized
6 records management, and standardized federal investigation of UAP. The
7 amendment was a bipartisan effort led by Senators Charles E. Schumer,
8 Michael D. Rounds, Marco Rubio, and Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

9 (3) Independent research organizations have developed expertise in the
10 scientific investigation of UAP. The Scientific Coalition for UAP Studies, a
11 nonprofit interdisciplinary research organization composed of scientists,
12 engineers, law enforcement, and former military and intelligence professionals,
13 has conducted peer-reviewed analyses and collaborates with academic
14 institutions and government partners to advance scientific understanding of
15 UAP.

16 (4) Vermont has experienced recent public reports of unidentified aerial
17 objects that have required law enforcement response, including low-altitude
18 drone-like sightings and aircraft safety concerns. These incidents underscore
19 the need for a coordinated State-led mechanism to assess and respond to
20 airspace hazards.

1 Sec. 2. 5 V.S.A. chapter 9, subchapter 3 is added to read:

2 Subchapter 3. Vermont Airspace Safety and Unidentified Anomalous

3 Phenomena Task Force

4 § 241. VERMONT AIRSPACE SAFETY AND UNIDENTIFIED

5 ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA TASK FORCE

6 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

7 (1) “SCU” means the Scientific Coalition for UAP Studies.

8 (2) “Unidentified anomalous phenomena” means any object operating in
9 the atmosphere or underwater that cannot be readily attributed to a known or
10 conventional source, including unknown aircraft, drones, or other anomalous
11 objects exhibiting performance characteristics not consistent with currently
12 understood technologies, such as instantaneous acceleration absent observable
13 inertia or hypersonic velocity without a corresponding thermal signature or
14 sonic boom.

15 (b) Creation. There is created within the Department of Public Safety the
16 Vermont Airspace Safety and Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Task
17 Force. The Task Force shall coordinate its work jointly through the
18 Department of Public Safety and the Agency of Transportation and may
19 engage independent experts to support its charge.

20 (c) Purpose. The purpose of the Task Force is to:

1 (1) evaluate reports of unidentified anomalous phenomena, including
2 drones, balloons, and objects exhibiting anomalous behavior that cannot be
3 readily identified as weather phenomena, commercial products, or
4 conventional technologies legally operating in Vermont airspace;

5 (2) assess airspace and public safety risks;

6 (3) coordinate Vermont's response with federal, academic, and private
7 sector partners; and

8 (4) develop recommendations to improve incident reporting, emergency
9 response, transparency, and scientific analysis.

10 (d) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following 10
11 members:

12 (1) the Commissioner of Public Safety or designee, who shall serve as
13 Co-Chair;

14 (2) the Secretary of Transportation or designee, who shall serve as Co-
15 Chair;

16 (3) one member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the
17 Speaker of the House;

18 (4) one member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on
19 Committees;

20 (5) a representative of the Vermont National Guard, appointed by the
21 Adjutant General;

1 (6) a representative of the Vermont Bureau of Criminal Investigation,
2 appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Commissioner of Public
3 Safety;

4 (7) a representative of the Vermont airport system or general aviation
5 operations, appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary of
6 Transportation;

7 (8) one academic expert in aerospace or atmospheric science, appointed
8 by the Governor;

9 (9) one independent expert in radar or sensor systems, appointed by the
10 Governor; and

11 (10) a representative of the Vermont Intelligence Center, appointed by
12 the Commissioner of Public Safety.

13 (e) Technical assistance. The Task Force shall have the scientific and
14 technical assistance of SCU. SCU shall serve as the principal scientific analyst
15 for data and evidence related to unidentified anomalous phenomena. SCU may
16 receive incident reports and related information from State agencies, apply
17 scientific methodologies to analyze the data, and furnish the Task Force with
18 detailed analytical reports and findings. All analyses, conclusions, and
19 hypotheses developed by SCU under this subsection shall be submitted to the
20 Task Force for review and approval. The Task Force shall retain ultimate
21 authority over the use of any analytical results in policy development or public

1 communications. SCU's work shall be conducted pursuant to guidelines
2 established by the Task Force to ensure scientific integrity, objectivity, and
3 consistency with State investigative standards.

4 (f) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall:

5 (1) review and analyze reports of unidentified anomalous phenomena
6 activity in Vermont;

7 (2) collaborate with federal, academic, and private sector partners to
8 improve information sharing and data consistency;

9 (3) develop best practices for voluntary reporting, secure data storage,
10 and analysis;

11 (4) assess aviation and public safety risks posed by unidentified aerial
12 objects, including unregistered drones or other anomalous craft, and
13 recommend procedures for incident response, pilot reporting, and emergency
14 coordination;

15 (5) hold at least one public meeting annually to share information and
16 collect input; and

17 (6) submit an annual report with findings and recommendations
18 pursuant to subsection (i) of this section.

19 (g) Administrative support. The Department of Public Safety and the
20 Agency of Transportation shall provide administrative, technical, and legal
21 support to the Task Force as needed. This may include staff assistance,

1 meeting logistics, public communications, and coordination with other state or
2 federal entities. The Task Force may also request support from other
3 departments or agencies as necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

4 (h) Transparency and public access.

5 (1) The Task Force shall maintain a public web page hosted by the
6 Department of Public Safety containing notices of upcoming meetings,
7 meeting minutes, and any nonconfidential materials.

8 (2) A confidential, voluntary reporting process for unidentified
9 anomalous phenomena sightings by Vermont residents or officials may be
10 developed in consultation with SCU and the Department of Public Safety.

11 (3) Reports, data, and findings shall be made publicly available, subject
12 to State and federal privacy or security restrictions.

13 (4) All confidential reports shall be retained in a secure system
14 maintained by the Department of Public Safety or a designated technical
15 partner.

16 (i) Reports. Annually on or before December 15, the Task Force shall
17 submit a written report to the Governor, the House Committees on
18 Transportation and on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and the
19 Senate Committees on Transportation and on Government Operations. The
20 report shall include:

1 (1) a summary of activities and findings of the Task Force during the
2 previous year;

3 (2) any recommendations for legislative or administrative action to
4 enhance public and aviation safety potentially affected by documented
5 unidentified anomalous phenomena activity; and

6 (3) any recommendations for advancements in research collaboration
7 between government, academic institutions, and private sector to improve
8 detection, response, and analysis of unidentified anomalous phenomena.

9 (j) Compensation and reimbursement.

10 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
11 Assembly, a legislative member of the Task Force serving in the member's
12 capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
13 reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than 12
14 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
15 General Assembly.

16 (2) Other members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem
17 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
18 § 1010 for not more than 12 meetings. These payments shall be made from
19 monies appropriated to the Department of Public Safety.

20 (k) FAA jurisdiction. Nothing in this section shall be construed to
21 supersede or conflict with the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation

1 Administration over airspace and aviation safety. The Task Force shall not
2 promulgate or enforce air safety regulations but may make policy
3 recommendations relevant to state coordination and public information.

4 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

5 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.