JIATF-401

JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE

NIGHTTIME AIRBORNE CONTACT VALIDATION

SEE → CORROBORATE → CLASSIFY → CONFIRM

PURPOSE: Provide units a common procedure to determine whether a reported nighttime light is a UAS, manned aircraft, satellite/astronomical object, another source, or an unresolved contact.

A VISUAL REPORT IS A CUE FOR INVESTIGATION — NOT CONFIRMATION OF A DRONE.

CONTACT VALIDATION DECISION TREE

1 VISUAL REPORT RECEIVED

Observer reports an anomalous light or airborne object.

Capture observation details (see box left).

2 CORROBORATE OBSERVATION

- Fixed-reference test
- Second observer from different location
- Parallax / triangulation if possible
- Photo / video if available

NOT CORROBORATED → **UNCORROBORATED**
Low confidence
No further action beyond monitoring.

3 SENSOR CORRELATION

Check all available sensors in the reported area and time.

RADAR | EO/IR | RF | RID | ADS-B / ATC | ACOUSTIC

4 ELIMINATE ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Actively assess and document:

- Aircraft (manned)
- Satellite
- Star / planet
- Helicopter / balloon
- Authorized UAS
- Other sources

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION LIKELY → **NOT A UAS**
Record findings, continue monitoring as appropriate.

5 SEEK POSITIVE UAS INDICATORS

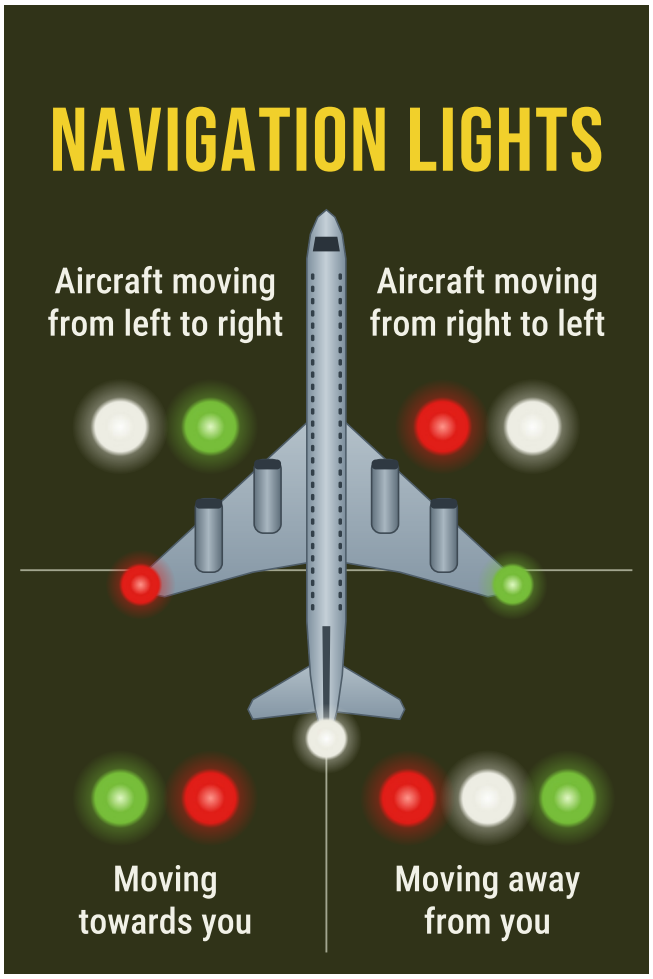
What evidence makes this a UAS?

- Maneuvering inconsistent with aircraft
- Low altitude operations
- UAS shape / airframe identified (EO/IR)
- RF emissions consistent with UAS
- Remote ID (if present)
- Audible electric or high RPM propeller sound

6 ASSIGN CONTACT CONFIDENCE

Based on totality of evidence.

UNCORROBORATED	CORROBORATED	PROBABLE UAS	CONFIRMED UAS
Visual observation only. UAS unconfirmed. ●○○○	Airborne object corroborated. UAS classification pending. ●●○○	Evidence strongly suggests UAS. Positive ID pending. ●●●○	Positive UAS identification with independent sensor correlation. ●●●●



Questions & Inquiries Contact

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Feature	Manned Aircraft	Star / Planet	Atmospheric / Visual Effect	Possible UAS
Lights	Often red, green, and white pattern	Constant or twinkling point of light	Reflected or distorted lights possible	May have lights; configuration and blink pattern varies
Sound	Jet, engine, or lower RPM rotor noise	None	None	High pitched rotor or propeller sound when close
Movement	Steady, predictable route	Fixed relative to terrain	Apparent movement caused by conditions	May hover, maneuver tightly or fly low and slow
Duration	Usually transits through area unless on landing pattern	Persists in same area across hours	Changes with weather or observer position	May loiter or repeatedly operate locally. Consider battery life
Best Check	Observe route, lights, and flight behavior	Use a fixed reference point over time	Check clouds, reflections, and camera optics	Document objective behavior and report

WHEN IN DOUBT — GATHER MORE DATA.

REPORT ACCURATELY. STAY CALM. PROTECT THE FORCE.

CONTACT VALIDATION IS MISSION READINESS.

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COMMANDER'S RULES FOR REPORTING DRONE SIGHTINGS



1. OBSERVE, DON'T ASSUME

Report what you see, not what you think it is. Avoid estimating altitude or distance.



2. GET A SECOND SET OF EYES

Confirm with a second observer from a different location whenever possible.



3. USE FIXED REFERENCES

Compare the object to fixed ground references. Is it moving relative to the ground?



4. LET THE SENSORS TELL US

We correlate ALL available sensors. No detection does not equal equipment failure.



5. CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES

Aircraft, satellites, stars/planets, helicopters, or other sources may explain what was seen.



6. REPORT CONFIDENCE, NOT FEAR

Use the contact confidence levels to inform leaders and drive appropriate response.

INITIAL REPORT – WHAT DID YOU SEE?

☐ SIZE: ☐GROUP 1 ☐GROUP 2 ☐GROUP 3 ☐GROUP 4 ☐GROUP 5

☐ ACTIVITY:

- BEARING: Cardinal Direction _____ Heading _____°
- ALTITUDE: _____ Changes in altitude? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- BEHAVIOR: ☐ Moving ☐ Stationary ☐ Hovering
- SPEED: ☐ Changing ☐ Constant
- DISTANCE: _____

☐ LOCATION: Observer location _____

☐ UNIT:

- WINGS: ☐ YES ☐ NO # Lights _____ Color _____
  ☐ Steady ☐ Flashing ☐ Pattern
- ENGINE: ☐ Front/Rear Mounted ☐ Multi-Rotor
- FUSELAGE: ☐ Fixed Wing ☐ Multi-Rotor
- TAIL: ☐ YES ☐ NO

☐ TIME _____ DURATION: _____

☐ EQUIPMENT:

- PAYLOAD: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ CANNOT CONFIRM

☐ OTHER NOTES:

☐ UAS INCIDENT REPORT COMPLETED?: ☐ YES ☐ NO

SENSOR CORRELATION GUIDE

SENSOR / SOURCE	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Radar	Physical track in reported area?
EO / IR	Resolve object or airframe?
RF Detection	UAS control link / video downlink?
Remote ID	Valid RID signal / operator info?
ADS-B / ATC	Aircraft track / flight plan?
Acoustic	Rotor signature / sound pattern?
Other C-UAS	Independent detection?

No detection is data. Incorporate it into the assessment. It is not proof of equipment failure.

CONTACT CONFIDENCE GUIDE

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
	UNCORROBORATED Visual report only. Very low confidence.
	CORROBORATED Airborne object verified by observer(s) and/or one sensor.
	PROBABLE UAS Multiple indicators strongly suggest UAS.
	CONFIRMED UAS Positive UAS identification supported by independent evidence.

DO NOT REPORT ESTIMATED ALTITUDE OR DISTANCE AS FACT.

Report observations – not conclusions.

WHEN IN DOUBT — GATHER MORE DATA.

REPORT ACCURATELY. STAY CALM. PROTECT THE FORCE.

CONTACT VALIDATION IS MISSION READINESS.