

THE GEIPAN'S FAQ

HOW DOES THE GEIPAN WORK?

The GEIPAN is part of the **Orbital System Directorate** of the CNES in Toulouse.

The GEIPAN works with a **network of 20 investigators** that are located throughout France. These investigators take part in the examination of cases and can also when necessary and asked by the GEIPAN, do field investigations to gather further information. They use the GEIPAN's guidelines that are defined in the investigator's guide.

The GEIPAN also relies on **external services** to conduct investigations:

- The services that work with the GEIPAN allow it to quickly access tangible information: Gendarmerie Nationale, Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace, Aviation civile, Météo France...;
- The scientific community: le CNRS (especially the IMCEE), the CEA...

The GEIPAN also rely on a **college of experts**, approximately 20 volunteers, who come from different scientific fields and can examine the most complex observation cases submitted to them. They provide scientific support for the examination of cases.

The GEIPAN is supervised by a **steering committee** chaired by a recognized person from the aerospace world but also counts representatives of the French civil and military authorities (Gendarmerie Nationale, Police nationale, Aviation civile, Météo, Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace, CNRS et Recherche scientifique) and the CNES. This committee's main task is to examine the GEIPAN's results and to make recommendations to the CNES about the GEIPAN.

HOW DOES THE GEIPAN COLLABORATE WITH PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS?

To ensure a network of trained investigators are able to work to the guidelines set by the GEIPAN, there are less than 20 volunteer investigators that are located throughout France. They can, if needed, do field investigations. Each investigator is required to conduct one to four investigations a year. The team is largely composed of people who are accustomed to working with the GEIPAN. They are chosen for their skills and availability but also have to take part in the GEIPAN training. The names of these investigators are confidential to avoid any possible disruption of their privacy or professional activities.

WHAT IS THE GEIPAN?

The GEIPAN is often considered as a research group dedicated to investigating the existence of extraterrestrial life or very advanced extra-terrestrial technologies but this is not the case. It is neither in its assignments and abilities nor in accordance with the CNES's work. One of the main aims of the GEIPAN is to let the scientific community and general public access all the gathered information.

HOW DOES THE GEIPAN PROCESS A TESTIMONY?

No testimony of an observation of an Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon will be treated directly by telephone or following a simple email to the GEIPAN.

To testify to the GEIPAN, only the GEIPAN questionnaire (fully completed with the technical information that will allow an analysis) and/or a police report are required.

If the testimony is very easy to explain without having to do an investigation a quick response is given to the witness. The processing of the testimony will then stop and not be published on the GEIPAN website.

In other cases an investigation will be opened. An investigation can follow several steps depending on the complexity or strangeness of the case and may require the intervention of an external investigator for the following:

- An intervention from the Gendarmerie following the police report on the location of the sighting or in the event of a risk to the safety of the witness
- A rapid remote investigation at the GEIPAN with the digital tools and if necessary the help of the external partners (Météo-France, Aviation civile, Armée de l'Air and Gendarmerie). They help the GEIPAN establish the astronomical, satellite routes, weather, aircraft and space debris maps.
- Sending an investigator to the location of the sighting so they can do an environmental audit and interview the witness
- To get the opinion of the GEIPAN experts to analyse certain hypothesis

Depending on the case, the complexity of the observation and the number of files being processed, an investigation can take several months.

At the end of the investigation all of the gathered information and expert opinions, the head of the GEIPAN can archive the case in one of **four categories**:

- **A:** a perfectly identified phenomenon - if the GEIPAN has evidence of the origin of the phenomenon.
- **B:** a probably identified phenomenon - if the GEIPAN is convinced of the origin of the phenomenon but could not gather absolute proof.
- **C:** a phenomenon that cannot be identified since the GEIPAN does not have enough elements to give a solid opinion.
- **D1:** an unidentified phenomenon but of average strangeness and consistency (only one witness or no photo for example).
- **D2:** an unidentified phenomenon of strong strangeness and consistency (several independent witnesses and photos for example).

The results of the investigation will then be anonymized (all personal data are erased) before being published on the GEIPAN website. The witness will receive a letter once the case is published and will therefore be able to see it on the website. The GEIPAN ethics admit that it may only be a provisional classification and that any new information likely to change this classification may lead to the review of the case and change the category it is archived as.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR THE GEIPAN?

The **National Defence** intervenes at different levels:

- An Air Force and a National Gendarmerie representative are members of the Steering Committee. They are informed about the work process and results of the GEIPAN and may make recommendations to the head of the GEIPAN.
- The GEIPAN can ask the Air Force for radar checks above the locations where a UAP was seen.

Neither the Gendarmerie Nationale, the Air Force nor any National Defence entity is involved in the decision to classify or publish an observation. This decision is made by the head of the GEIPAN.

DOES THE GEIPAN RECEIVE MANY HOAXES OR HALLUCINATION STORIES?

We find especially in multiple testimonies relating to proven facts (lanterns for example) that many stories are altered by emotion. Most often by surprise, sometimes by fear or terror even enthusiasm when it comes to passionate UFO witnesses. In these cases perception of distance, size, and speed may be inaccurate but this alteration does not contradict the existence of the phenomenon. The sincerity of the witnesses is very rarely questioned. The cases of hoaxes are very rare (less than 1%) but human testimony is never 100% reliable. Sometimes, the GEIPAN may conclude that the testimonies are not reliable. This may cause some witnesses to feel unbelievably by the GEIPAN or even that they are being accused of lying. This is not the case because the GEIPAN knows that the testimonies, although sincere, remain subjective and personal. Some cases may seem like hallucinations but there can be no certainty without the intervention of a professional psychologist which the GEIPAN refuses to be.

WHAT DOES THE GEIPAN THINK ABOUT THE COMETA REPORT ABOUT THE HYPOTHESIS OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE?

COMETA is an association of specialists in physics, life sciences and human sciences as well as engineers and senior army officers.

In July 1999, COMETA published a very detailed report about UFOs that was given to the President and Prime Minister. According to this report, the hypothesis of an extra-terrestrial origin of UFOs can no longer be ruled out.

The GEIPAN does not forbid any hypothesis, but it focuses solely on gathering facts and allowing the scientific community to use them for research purposes. No formal or scientific evidence of the existence or non-existence of any extra-terrestrial phenomenon has been provided to date. Therefore, the GEIPAN sometimes cannot find an explanation for the strangest cases submitted.

The GEIPAN's Steering Committee is very clear, cases that are archived as "D" could be linked to advanced distant civilizations but that hypothesis cannot be proved due to lack of current knowledge.

The universe is very vast and is made of billions of galaxies, themselves made of billions of stars. In this proliferation of matter, which spacecraft are scrutinizing with extreme precision, it would be surprising if there was no solar-type system that could support life. If we hope to have within a few years the proof of organic chemistry on an extraterrestrial planet, there would still be a long way to go before we have any proof of life let alone intelligent life. Even on earth, the existence of life and thought remains an enigma for scientists. The CNES has participated in some astrobiology programs (its COROT satellite discovered the first super-earth) but the GEIPAN does not take part in the same programs.

WHY ARE SOME FILES FROM SEVERAL YEARS AGO NOT PUBLISHED?

The GEIPAN gives priority to easy to solve and very strange cases. As the resources of the GEIPAN are limited, the processing of all cases is carried out over several months or even years.

HOW MANY PEOPLE VISIT THE GEIPAN'S WEBSITE?

Approximately 1,500 unique visits per day and 50,000 visits per month.

DOES THE GEIPAN PUBLISH ALL OF THE TESTIMONY INFORMATION?

The GEIPAN publish all the information that is useful for the understanding of the observation case files. Files that are deemed unnecessary such as e-mail exchanges concerning case processing, poor quality photos and other are therefore not published. In addition, the GEIPAN remove personal information to protect witnesses.

HOW MANY OBSERVATION TESTIMONIES DOES THE GEIPAN RECEIVE?

The testimonies received are defined as follows:

- There are approximately 10 to 20 testimonies received per month depending on the season (more in summer). This number is increasing.
- Approximately a hundred e-mails and letters are received per month.

After receiving these testimonies, the GEIPAN opens 10 to 15 investigations a month.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OVNI, UFO AND UAP?

The acronym OVNI (objet volant non identifié) is the French term for UFO (Unidentified Flying Object). The testimonies and the results of the investigations show that this term is most often misused. In most cases the observations describe a known or unknown phenomenon generally luminous but without proof of it being a material object having the same characteristics as an aircraft. Use of the general term UAP (Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon) is therefore more appropriate.

WHY AND HOW DOES THE GEIPAN ANONYMIZE THE INFORMATION LINKED TO TESTIMONIES?

To protect the privacy of the witnesses and as required by the CNIL, the GEIPAN publishes on its website an anonymized version of the observation case file. This anonymization is done manually by deleting any names, addresses and information that could help identify a witness, police investigator or specific location.

HOW TO SUSCRIBE TO THE GEIPAN'S RSS FEED?

An RSS feed is available at geipan.fr/rss.xml. To follow the latest news use your usual aggregator.

WHAT IT EQUIPMENT DOES THE GEIPAN HAVE?

The GEIPAN investigates observations using various specific computer tools that depend on their nature. The GEIPAN use the following tools:

- www.geoportail.gouv.fr for detailed mapping or aerial views and maps.google.fr for street view.
- www.google.fr/earth and modelling tools for 3D reconstructions in the surroundings.
- www.videolan.org/vlc et VirtualDubMod for video viewing and editing.
- Flightradar24 for aircraft routes.
- www.ipaco.fr for careful image and video analysis, in particular to estimate shooting angles, distance and size of objects, comparison of radiometric profiles to estimate distance of objects...
- www.gimp.org et Photoshop for graphic presentations, scene overlay, use of digital filters or formatting.
- www.space-track.org to retrieve satellite orbit parameters (ERA) and space debris.
- www.winstars.net or www.stellarium.org for astronomical reconstruction.
- www.aerospace.org for information about space debris.
- www.boam.fr for meteoroid fall observation.

Except Photoshop and IPACO, all of these tools are free.

WHAT MEANS DOES THE GEIPAN HAVE?

The GEIPAN team consists of three CNES (French space agency) officers they are the head, his assistant and an investigator but they also rely on external assistance for:

- The study and expertise of information processing (Case follow-up and study, statistics...).
- Information management, formatting, anonymization and archiving of the case studies.

GEIPAN's budgetary resources come from the public service subsidy received globally by the CNES to carry out its activities.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A METEORITE?

If you have a stone that looks like a meteorite and you would like it to be examined, you should contact your closest mineralogy museum that has the ability to conduct material analysis. The GEIPAN does not have that qualification and therefore cannot answer the question. Here is a list of mineralogy museums that you can contact:

- **Muséum national d'histoire naturelle de Paris**

Website: www.mnhn.fr

Telephone: 01 44 05 72 72

- **Muséum d'histoire naturelle Henri Lecoq, Clermont-Ferrand**

Telephone: 04 73 42 32 00

- **Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Toulouse**

Website: www.museum.toulouse.fr

Telephone: 05 67 73 84 84

- **Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Mans**

Telephone: 02 43 47 39 94

- **Musée Géologique de plein air, Limoges**

Telephone: 05 55 45 74 14

- **Musée de minéralogie, Ecole et Observatoire des Sciences, Strasbourg**

Telephone: 03 68 85 04

OTHER LINKS

Useful website links to identify or understand observable aerospace phenomena.

Astronomy websites and satellite tracking:

- **HEAVENS-ABOVE**: satellite tracking, International Space Station (ISS), space debris and information on comets/asteroids (<https://www.heavens-above.com/>);
- **STELVISION** : tools and tips for observing the stars in the sky (<https://www.stelvision.com/carte-ciel>);
- **WEBASTRO** (<https://www.webastro.net/>);
- **SAF** : French Astronomy society (<https://saf-astronomie.fr/>);
- **ASTROSURF** Observation of artificial satellites (http://www.astrosurf.com/d_bergeron/astronomie/Bibliotheque/Observation_satellites/satellites.htm);
- **WINSTARS 3** : a 3D planetarium (<https://winstars.net/>);
- **IN-THE-SKY** : night sky observation software (<https://in-the-sky.org/index.php>);
- **STELLARIUM** : free open source planetarium software (<http://stellarium.org/>);
- **IMCCE** (Institut de Mécanique Céleste de de Calculs d'Éphémérides, Observatoire de Paris) : prediction of the activity of future meteoric swarms from Earth or elsewhere (<http://www.imcce.fr/langues/en/ephemerides/phenomenes/meteor/>);
- **Ciel des Hommes** : news on astronomy (<https://www.cidehom.com/index.php>).

Aeronautical websites (aircraft track tracking):

- **PLANEFINDER** (<https://planefinder.net>);
- **FLIGHTRADAR24** (<https://www.flightradar24.com/38.54,5.19/5>).
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Meteoroid monitoring websites:

- **VIGIE-CIEL** : participatory science program to observe shooting stars, search for meteorites and impact craters (https://vigie-ciel.imo.net/members/imo/report_intro);
- **FRIPON** (Fireball Recovery and Inter Planetary Observation Network) : network of 100 sky surveillance cameras in France that allow the calculation of the trajectory of a bolide and to find meteorites on the ground (<https://www.fripon.org/>);
- **BOAM** (Base de données des Observateurs Amateurs de Météores) : French video observation database (<http://boam.fr/>);
- **REFORME** French meteor observation network (<http://www.reforme-meteor.net/>);
- **IMO** : International Meteor Organization : international organization of professionals and amateurs contributing to the knowledge of meteors (<http://www.imo.net/>) (https://fireballs.imo.net/members/imo_view/browse_events).

Various technical sites:

- **Méprises-du-ciel** : participatory website. Website of resources, references, links and examples of the most commonly observed misunderstandings in the sky and wrongly assimilated to Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena (<https://meprises-du-ciel.fr/>);
- **IPACO** : analysis of digital photo/video documents (<http://www.ipaco.fr/>);
- **LIGHTNING RESEARCH LABORATORY** (<https://www.labofoudre.com/>);
- **METEO CIEL** (<http://www.meteociel.fr/>);
- **INFOCLIMAT** open access weather database (<https://www.infoclimat.fr/>);
- **GEOPORTAIL** The National Territory Knowledge Portal implemented by IGN (<https://www.geoportail.gouv.fr/>);
- **CIRCEE** Centre for Information, Research and Consultation on Exceptional Experiences (<http://www.circee.org/>).

General space information websites:

- **CNES** (<http://www.cnes.fr/>);
- **Les lanceurs spatiaux dans le monde** (<https://lanceurs.destination-orbite.net/index.php>);
- **CIEL et ESPACE** (<https://www.cieletespace.fr/>);
- **SCIENCE et VIE** (<https://www.science-et-vie.com/ciel-et-espace>);
- **FUTURA SCIENCES** (<https://www.futura-sciences.com/sciences/>).