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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

P62088

MOD Form 329D
(Revised 8/00)
PPQ = 100

Date opened (Date of first enclosure)
30.8.2006

2017/06

Registered file number D/DAS/10/2/8/13

Part No. R

1. Attention is drawn to the notes on the inside flap.
2. Enter notes of related files on page 2 of this jacket

DIVISION/ESTABLISHMENT/UNIT/BRANCH

[FULL ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER]

SUBJECT Information Management — Defence Information Management — The Freedom of Information Act — Requests for Information.

[BLOCK CAPITALS]

RECORD OF KEYWORDS:

29/8/06

2014

Referred to	Date	Min/ Encl	Referred to	Date	Min/ Encl	Referred to	Date	Min/ Encl	Referred to	Date	Min/ Encl
			CLOSED								

FOR DRO USE ONLY

1st Review date

2nd Review date

PA ACTION

(MOD Form 262F must be completed at the time of file closure)

RCU001249932 TNT

Produced by MOD
DSDA (PC) Ky. Tel: 0117 9376256

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Registered File Disposal Form

MOD Form 262F
(Revised 9/01)

FILE TITLE: (Main Heading - Secondary Heading - Tertiary Heading etc)
Information Management - Defence Information Management - Freedom of Information Act - Requests for Information

Reference: (Prefix and Number): D/DFOI/10/2/8/13

Part: R

PROTECTIVE MARKING (including caveats & descriptors): Restricted

Date of last enclosure: 29/08/06

Date closed: 29/08/06

PART 1. DISPOSAL SCHEDULE RECOMMENDATION
(To be completed when the file is closed)

	✔
Destroy after _____ years	
Forward to INFO(EXP)-R after _____ years	
No recommendation	

FOR DEFENCE INFO(EXP)-R USE ONLY

Date of 1st review	Date of 2nd review	Forward Destruction Date

Reviewer's

Reviewer's Signature: _____

PART 2. BRANCH REVIEW
(To be fully completed at time of file closure)
(Delete as appropriate)

a. Of no further administrative value and not worthy of permanent preservation. DESTROY IMMEDIATELY (Remember that TOP SECRET and Codeword material cannot be destroyed locally and must be forwarded to INFO(EXP)-R. ✔

b. (i) To be retained until the end of the year _____ for the following reason(s):

For permanent preservation

	✔		✔	
LEGAL		DEFENCE POLICY + OPERATIONS		
CONTRACTUAL		ORIGINAL COMMITTEE PAPERS		
FINANCE/AUDIT		MAJOR EQUIPMENT PROJECT		[_____]
DIRECTORATE POLICY		OTHER (Specify)		

PPQ = 100

(Continued overleaf)

(ii) Key enclosures which support the recommendation are:

(iii) At the end of the specified retention period the file is to be:

Destroyed	☐
Considered by DR for permanent preservation	☐

c. Of no further administrative value but worthy of consideration by INFO(EXP)-R for permanent preservation. ✔

PART 3. **BRANCH REVIEWING OFFICER (not below C2/equivalent)**

Signature: Section 40 [redacted]

Name: [redacted]
(Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: C1 Date: 20 Aug 2010

Branch Title and Full Address:

RAF Bus Sec
HQ Air Cmd
RAF High Wycombe
Bucks
HP14 4UE

Tel No:

PART 4 DESTRUCTION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the specified file has been destroyed.

Signature: _____

Name: _____
(Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by (TOP SECRET* and SECRET only)

Signature: _____

Name: _____
(Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: _____ Date: _____

*(FOR DR USE ONLY)

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D/DAS/10/2/8/13 PART R

ENCLOSURE	SUBJECT	NAME	AIT REF
1	UFO	Section 40	04-07-2006-162649-001
2			
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From: Section 40
Directorate of Air Staff - Freedom of Information
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
5th Floor, Zone H, Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 020 7218 2140
(Switchboard) 020 7218 9000
(Fax) Section 40
e-mail das-ufo-office@mod.uk

ENCLOSURE 1 NUMBER

Section 40

Bagillt
Flintshire
Section 40

Our Reference
04-07-2006-162649-001

Date
21 August 2006

Dear Section 40

I wrote to you on 5 July 2006 informing you that your request for copies of the contents of two files relating to parliamentary enquiries in 1976 and 1977 and the background notes and briefing papers supplied to John Spellar MP regarding written parliamentary questions in 1998, had been considered to fall within the scope of Section 36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the MOD was therefore required to consider whether there are overriding reasons why disclosure would not be in the public interest. I also informed you that two of these requests may fall within the scope of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication). On review of the documents it has become apparent that further exemptions may be applicable as provided below. These considerations have now concluded and I am writing to provide you with the outcome. Each request will be addressed separately.

Your first request was for a paper copy of the contents of file AF/BJ84/76 – Sir John Langford-Holt MP, Mr J Hennessy, UFO Enquiry. I can confirm that the MOD holds this file and all the relevant papers have been considered for release. These documents contain information which falls within the scope of a number of exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, namely; S.22 (Information intended for future publication), S.36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs), S.40 (Personal Information) and S.38(Health & Safety).

First, we took into account the age of the information and the fact that it has been selected for future transfer to The National Archives. If transfer was imminent it would have been appropriate to withhold this information at this time in accordance with S.22(1)(c) of the FOI Act and provide advice as to the timing of availability at The National Archives. Our enquiries have, however, revealed that there is currently no firm date for transfer and it has been concluded that it would not be in the public interest to withhold the information at this time on this basis.

The documents include internal discussion and advice provided by a variety of MOD departments which fall within the scope of S.36(2)(b)(i). Against disclosure of this information is the need to insure that officials are able to consult colleagues internally and provide Ministers with free and frank advice in support of draft answers provided to parliamentary enquiries. Release of such information could inhibit this process and

therefore prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. This would not be in the public interest. This has, however, been balanced against the age and content of the advice provided in the background papers and it has been concluded that the release of this information now would not prejudice this process. The public interest therefore falls with release.

The file also includes correspondence between Mr Hennessy and his MP which contains details of Mr Hennessey's home address and telephone number. This falls within the scope of absolute exemption S.40 (2)(a). It has not been determined whether Mr Hennessy still resides at this address and release of this information could lead to an invasion of his privacy. This information will not therefore be released. The name of another individual who accompanied Mr Hennessy on a visit to the Meteorological Office will also be withheld for the same reason.

Finally, the documents contain comment and internal advice regarding Mr Hennessy's contacts with various government departments and actions on a visit to the Meteorological Office. Consideration has been given to whether it is likely that a harm could be caused to Mr Hennessy's physical or mental health by the release of this information and if so whether S.38(1)(a) of the Act applies. It has been judged that there is no evidence that such a harm would be caused and the public interest therefore falls with release.

It is concluded that the public interest favours partial release of these documents with minor redaction and a copy is therefore enclosed with this letter. The information that has been removed consists of Mr Hennessy's home address and telephone number and the name of another member of the public which are withheld in accordance with S.40(2)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act. Mr Hennessy's name and signature have also been removed throughout the documents because while it is appreciated that you are aware that they relate to Mr Hennessy, his identity in relation to these documents is not in the public domain. Names of MOD officials who provided advice have also been removed as these are not relevant to the information you have requested.

In your second request you asked for a copy of file MR/122505 – John Ellis, UFOs. I can confirm that the MOD holds this file and all the contents have been considered for release. These documents consist of information which falls within the scope of a number of exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, namely; S.22 (Information intended for future publication), S.36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) and S.40 (Personal Information).

As with the previous request we first considered S.22 (1)(c) given the age of these documents and their future transfer to The National Archives. There is however, no firm date for transfer of these documents and as before we consider that the public interest under this section favours release.

The documents contain internal discussion and advice provided by MOD departments which fall within the scope of S.36(2)(b)(i). As detailed above, the release of this information could inhibit MOD officials ability to provide free and frank advice and this would not be in the public interest. We have taken into account the age of the documents and the content of the advice and concluded that the release of this information would not prejudice this process and the balance of public interest therefore favours release.

The file also contains a number of UFO sightings reported to the MOD by members of the public which include their names and home addresses. This information falls within the scope of S.40(2)(a). Release of this information could lead to an invasion of the privacy of these individuals and this information will not therefore be released.

It is concluded that the public interest favours partial release of these documents with minor redaction and a copy is enclosed with this letter. The information that has been removed consists of the personal details of members of the public who made UFO reports to the MOD which are withheld in accordance with S.40(2)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act and names of MOD officials who provided advice which have been removed as these are not relevant to the information you have requested.

Your final request was for copies of the background note and briefing papers supplied to John Spellar MP for use in his replies to written parliamentary questions from Helen Jackson MP in March 1998. I can confirm that the MOD holds information relevant to this request and these papers have been considered for release. These documents consist of information which falls within the scope of two exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, namely; S.36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) and S.40 (Personal Information).

The documents contain internal advice to Mr Spellar regarding the background to these questions which falls within the scope of S.36(2)(b)(i). As with your two other requests, the release of this information could inhibit officials ability to provide free and frank advice to Ministers and therefore prejudice the conduct of public affairs which would not be in the public interest. However, we have considered the contents of this advice and concluded that the release of this information would not prejudice this process on this occasion and the balance of public interest therefore favours release.

The documents also include a letter from a member of the public which contains their name and contact details. This information falls within the scope of absolute exemption S.40(2)(a) and will not therefore be released.

It is included that the public interest favours partial release of these documents with minor redaction and a copy is enclosed with this letter. The information that has been withheld consists of personal details of a member of the public which are withheld in accordance with S.40(2)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act, plus names of MOD officials and internal guidance notes on answering parliamentary correspondence which are not relevant to the information you have requested.

I hope this is helpful. If you are dissatisfied with our decision to refuse some of this information or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of this request, then you should contact the undersigned in the first instance. Should you remain dissatisfied, then you may apply for an internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB. (e-mail: Info-XD@mod.uk).

If you are still unhappy following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your

case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Section 40 [redacted]

Request 1

Redacted File

Copy.

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

MOD Form 41D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted]

MINISTER'S OFFICE REGISTERED FOLDER No:

AF/BS 84/76

RELATED DEPARTMENTAL REGISTERED FOLDER No(s).

117769 /2

SECOND REVIEW 2002

SUBJECT

Sir John Lawrence Hall MP

Mrs [redacted]

UFO Enquiries

This folder must be given priority. A draft reply (or other proposal for action) should be submitted to the Private Office within 10 working days; if this is not possible the Private Office must be consulted.

Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE
~~Hd S4(Q)~~	~~2 March~~				
~~Mr Pearce~~		See Mot A	23/3/76		
~~APS/US of S(RAF)~~	~~5 March~~	~~APS/US of S(RAF)~~			
Hd S4(Q)	11 March	~~APS/US of S(RAF)~~	~~8.4.76~~		
		APS/US of S(RAF)	13.4.76		
~~Hd S4(HCD)~~	~~15~~				
~~DS11 Sy~~	~~17~~				
S4(Hoc)	22 Mar				

LIBRARY & RECORDS 22 MAR 2001 DESTROY

2006

NOTES

1. When in action, this folder should in appropriate

Mary Donnelly

US of S(RAF) Folder No. AF/BJ/84/76

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

LM 1

HL S4 (C)

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

I have placed at E 1 on this folder a letter from Sir John Langford-Holt MP

2. I should be grateful if you would let me have, by 5 p.m. on 16 March, a draft of the letter which you would advise US of S(RAF) to send in reply, together with any other relevant information and papers.

3. If a final reply cannot be drafted within this time, I should be grateful if you would either return the folder to the Private Office with a progress report and draft interim reply, or, if the folder needs to be retained in the branch, advise the Private Office of the position by telephone (Ext 7516).

4. Your attention is drawn to Office Instructions paragraphs 0606-0608.

5. Any decision that the Department or Service proposes to take in this case must now be suspended until it has been reviewed by US of S(RAF). No action should be taken which might prejudice the final decision.

[redacted]

APS/US of S(RAF)

2 March

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

M2

APS/US of S(RAF)

You will see from Encl 3 that I am making enquiries about this case but it is obviously going to take time. US of S(RAF) may wish to send an interim reply to Sir John Langford-Holt on the lines of the attached draft.

5th March 1976

[redacted]
S4(Air)

3

DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3

We have now received the attached comments (Encl 5-8) on the letter from Mrs. [redacted] of which I circulated on 5th March. Now that we have the facts of the case would you please add your advice on the wait in the Meteorological Office and the passage about BMEWS procedures?

15 March 1976

[redacted]
S4(Air)

Reference AF/BJ 84/76

M4

APS/US of S (RAF)
Through Sec Met

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Copy to:
DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3

1. You asked for a full brief to set Encl 1 in perspective.

Introduction

2. As you know, MOD investigates all UFO sightings reported by members of the public and others. The arrangements are co-ordinated by S4(Air) and we consult specialist branches as appropriate. But only the defence implications are considered and we send no more than a general reply to the correspondent. When people ask to see the MOD files they are told that communications with other members of the public are regarded as confidential and moreover, even unclassified files could contain material which has some reference to classified subjects. For these reasons our UFO records must remain closed under the rules laid down by the Public Records Acts which at present forbid disclosure of files until 30 years have elapsed since the last action taken upon them.

3. Mr [redacted] is a persistent correspondent on UFOs and as you will see from the files attached he has been writing since April 1967 or earlier to the Board of Trade, Home Office, MOD and the Commissioner of Police. He has also had lengthy correspondence with the Prime Minister's Office, Sir John Langford-Holt, MP, Mr Julian Ridsdale MP, Sir Eric Bullus MP, the United Nations Organisation, other Governments such as Canada and Australia, and sundry other organisations. In 1967 HM Embassy in Washington advised that he was well known as a correspondent to the United States Air Force and to Dr Condon of the University of Colorado who was then conducting an investigation into UFOs at the request of the American Government. The Embassy reported that Mr [redacted] had described himself as having been engaged on confidential work for the Prime Minister although he had no official status. (Flag A). The Foreign Office advised No 10 to treat him with "some caution" (Flag B).

4. In February 1968 Mr [redacted] had a meeting with S4(Air) and possibly D155. There is no record of the discussion; all we have is the S4 brief (Flag C) and the letter drafted for the Prime Minister's Office (Flag D). In his correspondence with MOD he has criticised amongst other things the way we handle UFO investigations and our refusal to disclose details of the reports we receive. He is well aware of the 30 year rule and acknowledged this in December 1971 (Flag E) and again in his current letter.

5. Mr [redacted] has always written from a London address and we have no evidence that he has ever resided in the Shrewsbury constituency of Sir John Langford-Holt. However, Sir John has himself shown a continuing interest in UFOs (see the numerous letters and Parliamentary Questions tabbed on file AF/1505/Pt III); and as early as 1968, S4(Air) speculated on the similarity between the Questions and the contemporary enquiries received from Mr [redacted]

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Point A - Mr [redacted]'s visit to the Meteorological Office

6. This visit to Met O1a at Bracknell took place on 19 February. It seems Mr [redacted] has been there before and on this occasion was accompanied by Mr [redacted] of the North West University of Chicago (who is presumably an American National). You will wish to read:

(a) DD Met O(O)'s report at Encl 5

(b) The further comments of DD HQ Sy (MOD)3 and DD RAF Sy 1 at Encl 9-10.

7. Two main points emerge in these papers. Firstly, the content of the material shown to Mr [redacted] was not classified; it came from Merchant Navy meteorological log books which are already made available to the public in other ways, although it would have been better to have offered him the original documents rather than the official files. Secondly, Mr [redacted] was not supervised when he examined the files. This contravened the Ministry of Defence Manual4 Chapter 14, paras 1417 - 1419. This stipulates that every visitor is to be escorted while on official premises unless he belongs to the UK Armed Forces or another Government Department, or is representing a MOD contractor (and hold suitable security clearance), or is employed in an official capacity and is well known to the interviewing officer, or is a member of MOD not in possession of a Headquarters pass.

8. I have discussed this with DD Met O(O) and I understand that he took immediate action to rectify the situation as soon as it came to his notice. At this request I am now routing this file through Sec Met O who may wish to comment further.

These matters are entirely outside S4(Air)'s province of course and all I wish to add are one or two footnotes. The new legislation mentioned at Encl 9 is a reference to the work of the Ministerial Group on Disclosure of Official Information which (under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister I believe), is considering ways and means of discharging the commitment in the Government's Election Manifesto "to replace the Official Secrets Act by a measure to put the burden on the public authorities to justify withholding information". While suitable protection will be sought for material of a gneuine security significance it is doubtful whether our correspondence on UFOs will be included in that category especially as one of the suggestions now under consideration is that an Ombudsman should arbitrate on the type of information witheld. Incidentally, another idea, being discussed outside the Ministerial Group is that the 30 year closed period should be reduced to 15 years but this too has still to be examined in detail. Indeed I am told that it is most unlikely that any new legislation affecting the present rules for the public disclosure of information will be laid before Parliament in the near future. Meanwhile, as DD HQ Sy (MOD)3 says, the regulations require that official files should not be opened to the public until they have been sent to a recognised repository. There is of course no question of handing over any files to Mr [redacted] See OS9's advice at Encl 6.

9. I should also mention that S4(Air) do not consult Met O1 in the course of their enquiries into UFO sightings. We sometimes appeal to another branch of the Met Office when it is thought the public might have seen meteorological phenomena. And from time to time Met O1 send us extracts from the ships' meteorological logs (and the papers go on to our UFO files).

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

But we have not had occasion to bring the MOD UFO investigation procedure to Met O1's attention; nor indeed was this procedure widely publicised when the rules were endorsed by Lord Winterbottom in 1970.

Point B - Content of MOD files

10. Contrary to Mr [redacted]'s expectations the S4 files contain very little of value to a serious scientific investigator. I attach a typical folder (Flag F) and you will see that all we usually get back from the specialist branches are short notes saying either they cannot help or that the sighting can be identified as a commonplace object. That is not to say that the investigation is not taken seriously. The branches have their own methods - and S4(Air) has "no need to know" about them - but we are aware that D155 for example sometimes makes extensive enquiries. It is undesirable that even a hint of this should become public and we are currently consulting AHB on ways of expurgating the official records against the time when they will qualify for disclosure.

11. I do not suggest that we go into all that with Mr [redacted]. He will find out for himself when the 30 years are up and in the meantime we need do no more than remind him that we are concerned with the defence implications only.

Point C - Retention of 1962 records

12. Mr [redacted]'s third point is a quibble and since he says elsewhere that we should retain our records I can only assume that he is trying to discredit us. He points out that according to Mr Merlyn Rees' letter of August 1967 UFO records are generally destroyed after five years (Flag G). Yet in 1970 Lord Winterbottom said the eight year old 1962 reports were still available (Flag H). There is no inconsistency here. The decision to retain UFO files indefinately was taken late in 1967 after Mr Rees' letter because of a wave of public interest in UFOs. There was no need to go into that in Lord Winterbottom's letter and it has taken Mr [redacted] six years to comment on it.

Points D and E - Retention of material at BMEWS and Civil ATC units

13. DD Ops (GE) (RAF) discusses the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) material at Encl 7; DD(AP)2 NATS comments on the point about civil air traffic control units at Encl 8. There is further advice from DD HQ Sy (MOD)3 at encl 9 are from DD RAF Sy 1 at Encl 10.

14. The main points are:

a. there would be unacceptable costs and storage problems in the retention of BMEWS tapes and Air Defence radar film, and security objections to the accumulation and ultimate disclosure.

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

b. no films are made of civil air traffic service unit radars

c. while some film is made of radar pictures at the Joint (Military/Civil) Air Traffic Control Radar Units and, in future, more sophisticated records will be made at the London Air Traffic Control Centre, the question of cost alone would prohibit retention beyond a limited period

d. there is general agreement that the information already held by Mr [redacted] on BMEWS could have been obtained without infringing the security regulations. An American source is likely eg NORAD (the North American Air Defence Authorities).

Other Matters

15. As it happens, there is another letter outstanding from Mr [redacted]. He has written to us at official level about an incident involving an F111 aircraft on 26 October 1971 and I have discussed this on AF/PS.529/71 in the context of the previous correspondence. Since there is compiled criticism of a former Minister's letter it would be convenient to deal with this in the reply to Sir John Langford-Holt if US of S (RAF) agrees.

16. I attach a suggested letter for consideration.

23 Mar 76

[redacted]
S4(Air)

M.5

APS/US of S(RAF)

I must express regret for the embarrassment that has been caused by the failure of staff here to observe the security regulations and to exercise proper caution in dealing with members of the public. They have been told of their error and warned that this is a serious matter and is not to be repeated.

2. It would appear that the frequency of visits to this Office by members of universities, scientists and others may, by familiarity, have bred if not contempt at least some relaxation of guard. I have therefore written to all Directing Staff and Heads of Branches here (copy enclosed) to try to prevent any similar lapse from occurring. A Met Office Order on the disclosure of official information (which will be incorporated in due course in our Standing Instructions) is also in the course of issue to all staff at this Headquarters and at outstations.

3. While not seeking to excuse the degree of latitude that was allowed to these particular visitors I should perhaps explain, with reference to para 7 of minute 4, that although it is true that the information made available to Mr Hennessey was all recorded in MN log books a great deal of work would have been needed to dig this out of the Archives where the log books are stored only in date order whereas the information had already been extracted and summarized on the file.

[redacted]
for Sec Met O

25 Mar 76

Our file is with you already for action

US of S(RAF) Folder No. AF/65/84 / 76

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

4M

Hd S & Cy

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

I have placed at E ___ on this folder a letter from Sir Cuthbert Ramsford Holt MP.

2. I should be grateful if you would let me have, by 5 p.m. on 23 April, a draft of the letter which you would advise US of S(RAF) to send in reply, together with any other relevant information and papers.

3. If a final reply cannot be drafted within this time, I should be grateful if you would either return the folder to the Private Office with a progress report and draft interim reply, or, if the folder needs to be retained in the branch, advise the Private Office of the position by telephone (Ext 7516).

4. Your attention is drawn to Office Instructions paragraphs 0606-0608.

5. Any decision that the Department or Service proposes to take in this case must now be suspended until it has been reviewed by US of S(RAF). No action should be taken which might prejudice the final decision.

[redacted]

APS/US of S(RAF)

8 April

Reference AF/BJ 84/76

M7

APS/US of S(RAF)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

I attach a suggested reply to Encl 15-16.

13 April 1976

[redacted]
S4(Air)

PS(Air)
See Met O

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-~~XXX XXXX~~ 218 6666

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/BJ 84/76

15/14 April 1976

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Dear Sir John

Thank you for your letter of 5th April and for sending on the further letter from Mr [redacted] of [redacted]

The Ministry of Defence have not found it necessary to draw up a formal definition of Unidentified Flying Objects. As you know, any flying object which cannot be identified immediately is of interest to us, but once the defence implications of the sighting have been examined we do not pursue the investigation any further.

I note Mr [redacted]'s comments about his visit to the Meteorological Office. I enclose the final batch of UFO statistics which were prepared before the analysis was discontinued.

Yours sincerely
Brynmor John

(BRYNMOR JOHN)

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

UFO STATISTICS - 1ST JANUARY 1968 TO 31ST DECEMBER 1973

Year	Satellites & Debris	Balloons	Celestial Objects	Meteorological & Natural Phenomena	Aircraft	Miscellaneous	Unexplained (Insufficient) Information	TOTAL
1968	65	10	36	3	114	30	22	280
1969	37	9	27	19	101	17	18	228
1970	9	8	31	16	97	5	15	181
1971	28	11	33	62	160	27	58	379
1972	7	28	17	2	128	5	14	201
1973	23	24	17	2	132	22	11	231

NOTE: Miscellaneous reports include, hoaxes, the reflection of lights on cloud, flares, fireworks, kites, lights on tall structures, photographic aberrations and bird flocks.

AF/B3 84/76

Sy (Q) 2 March

Sy (Q) 11 March

Sy (Q) 30 March

Sy (Q) 23 Feb

BT 16 March

BT 25 March

DF 14 April

BT 23 April

DF 10 March

Sir John Langford-Holt, M.P.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SWIA 0AA

Seen by US of S (RAF)

5th April, 1976.

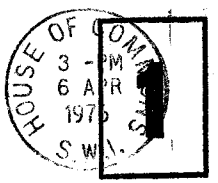
REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

I forwarded a copy of your letter of the 29th March to Mr. [redacted] and have received the enclosed reply.

I would be grateful if you could let me have answers to the questions he has posed.

Yours ever,
Sir John Langford-Holt

Brynmor John, Esq., M.P.
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence
for the Royal Air Force,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
SW1A 2HB.





Brynmor John, Esq., M.P.
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Air Force,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
London, SWIA 2HB.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone: [redacted]

[redacted] 15

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London SW1A OAA

1 April 1976

Dear Sir John

Thank you for the letter from Minister Brynmor John.
I think it essential to state, in fairness to the Meteorological Staff whom the Minister considers I have taken advantage of, that my colleague and I identified ourselves as being from a civilian organisation and that the photostats were given willingly and not through any misunderstanding nor deception.
The Minister should know that there was one individual at the Met Office who considered that the UFO reports he handled and passed to the Ministry of Defence may have had security implications. These reports were distinctly seperate from the non-classified ones we viewed and we were not permitted to view them, nor did we pursue the question of doing so.
The Minister's letter contains a number of points which require clarification, however, before referring to them, I would very much appreciate learning what his Department's definition is of an unidentified flying object (UFO). I have checked through my previous correspondence with the Ministry and can find no reference to such a definition.
To conclude, would the Minister please provide a copy of his Department's UFO statistics up to the date of discontinuation in 1974.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Hd of S4 (Air)

(14)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-~~230 7022~~ 218 6666

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/BJ 84/76

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

29 March 1976

Dear Sir John

I now have the report I called for about the letter you sent to me on 26th February from Mr [redacted] of [redacted]

The material Mr [redacted] saw on his visit to the Meteorological Office had been extracted from Merchant Navy log books. From time to time the more interesting of these observations are recorded in the "Marine Observer", a journal which is published by HMSO and is on sale to the general public. The log books themselves are also available to the public and form part of the National Meteorological Library permanent archive. Mr [redacted] should consult these sources if he is interested in the material. It is unfortunate he took advantage of the Meteorological Staff by obtaining the photostat copies he has shown you. The decision to destroy or retain the files has yet to be taken - he saw only a recommendation for disposal. The gift of any files is a very rare occurrence. It is most unlikely that any Ministry of Defence records would ever be handed over to an individual member of the public or to any organisation in a foreign country.

As Mr [redacted] has been told repeatedly, the Ministry of Defence files on Unidentified Flying Objects contain no more correspondence than is necessary to establish the possible defence implications and this may sometimes involve references to classified material. The files must remain closed to the public under the rules laid down by the Public Records Acts. Mr [redacted] told us on 19th December 1971 that he was fully aware of these rules and he has also referred to them in his latest letter. He should also be informed that, for obvious reasons, we shall review the files before their eventual publication in order to eliminate any information of a classified nature.

There is no inconsistency between Merlyn Rees' letter of 14th August 1967 and Lord Winterbottom's letter dated 26th March 1970. The decision to retain UFO records indefinitely was taken between

/these two

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

these two dates. It was not necessary to go into that when Lord Winterbottom wrote to you in 1970.

I can offer no assurances about the material at Fylingdales or within the Air Traffic Control Organisation. The retention of BMEWS tapes and air defence radar film is ruled out because of the cost and the problem of storing the accumulating material. There are also security objections. No films are made of civil air traffic control unit radars.

I would also like to deal with the attached letter dated 25th February which Mr [redacted] has addressed to my Department on the subject of the F111 activity on 26th October 1971. There are now no records available to provide the details Mr [redacted] requests. Nor can we help him with the statistical analysis of UFO reports. These analyses were discontinued in 1974 and it is no longer possible to provide the figures.

Yours sincerely

Brynmor John

(BRYNMOR JOHN)

FO/30

~~RESTRICTED~~
UNCLASSIFIED

(12)

LOOSE MINUTE

Sec Met O/C146

All Deputy Directors
All Assistant Directors
and Heads of Branches

cc: DG Met O
DS Met O
DR Met O
File AF/M582/76

ACCESS TO OFFICIAL RECORDS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. A recent incident in which two members of the public, one a foreign national, were given unsupervised access to a branch copying machine to make copies of entries on a registered file dealing with Unidentified Flying Objects sightings has led to Parliamentary correspondence that has caused serious embarrassment to the Minister for the RAF.

2. A number of points arise out of this incident on which guidance is now offered in order to prevent similar occurrences.

UFO Information

3. It may not be generally known that MOD investigates all UFO "sightings" reported by members of the public et al, although the investigation is confined to the defence implications and does not extend to the wider scientific aspects. These arrangements are co-ordinated by S4(Air). As a general rule S4(Air)'s reply to the correspondents merely explains in general terms that the Department is concerned with the defence implications only. If people ask to see the MOD files on UFOs they get the standard reply that although the correspondence may be unclassified any communication between the Department and another member of the public must be treated as confidential and UFO records must remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down in the Public Records Acts at the end of 30 years. This policy was endorsed by Ministers in 1970.

4. There is one possible exception to the general rule given above; an application would be considered seriously if it came from a major scientific organization of high standing with strong reasons for obtaining access to the official records. No application of this calibre has been received to date.

5. If a request is received in any part of the Met Office from a member of the public for information on UFO sightings or investigations S4(Air) is therefore to be advised in the first instance.

Disclosure of Official Information in General

6. The Official Secrets Acts provide for the security of all official information, whether classified or not and, as MOD Manual 4 para 1602 makes clear, discretion and care are necessary in relation to all official papers. As a general rule access to official files is not to be given to persons outside Government Service even where material contained in these files is published elsewhere or is available in another form to members of the public. A distinction is to be drawn in this respect between material in the Library Archives, which is available to members of the public, and material in Registry Archives, which is not.

UNCLASSIFIED
~~RESTRICTED~~

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Other Considerations

7. Further points arising from this particular incident are:

a. Visits by members of the public to HQ Branches of the Office are to be cleared with ADs or Heads of Branch (MOOM 6.9.1).

b. Such visitors are to be escorted while they remain on Met Office property (MOD Manual 4 para 2004).

c. ADs and Heads of Branches are to ensure that reproduction and photocopying equipment in their branches is adequately safeguarded both during working hours and in the silent hours to prevent its unauthorized use (MOD Manual 4 para 1453).

8. A Met Office Order will be issued in due course to give wider dissemination to some of these points but you are requested meanwhile to bring them to the attention of members of your staff, and to officers in charge of outstations under your control, who may have similar contacts with members of the public.

[redacted]
for Sec Met O

23 March 1976

10

LOOSE MINUTE

AF/BJ84/76

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

S4(Air) ←

Copy to:
DD HQ Sy(MOD)3

LETTER ABOUT
UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD HOLT MP TO US OF S(RAF)

We spoke about E9(DHQ Sy 13/2/1 of 19 Mar) to which I have nothing to add, DD HQ Sy 3 having come in Paras 4 and 5 to the same conclusion as I had before I got that far in his minute. As I understand you intend to reply on the lines he has set out, there is no point in my pursuing the security problems.

[redacted]

22 Mar 76

DD RAF Sy 1

[redacted]OSE MINUTE - D/HQ Sy 13/2/1

S4 (Air) (thro' DD RAF Sy 1)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD HOLT MP to US OF S (RAF)

1. This minute contains our co-ordinated comments from HQ Sy on the issues raised by this letter. I am sending it through DD RAF Sy 1 as he may well have an interest in certain aspects.

Mr [redacted]s visit to the Meteorological Office

2. With an organisation like the Meteorological Office, one of whose principal functions is to inform the public, it is always difficult to know where to draw the line in disclosing official information. In that the information collected on the files that Mr [redacted] inspected was, according to DD Met O(O), extracted from log books which are available for public consultation, it is difficult to argue on the grounds that Mr [redacted] should have been denied a sight of the files themselves, unless they contained assessments and views generated within the Met Office. Moreover, HMG is considering ways of increasing public access to official information, and the Met Office may have anticipated legislation to this effect. However, until there is new legislation, it is incumbent upon all officials to observe the present policy, which is not to allow public access to files until the review process is completed, and they have been sent to a recognized depository. Here the Met Office may have been incautious, and Mr [redacted]'s needs could have been met by referring him to the relevant parts of the log books. I appreciate that this is a fine bureaucratic distinction, and one that may not make much sense to practical men in the Met Office, but once exceptions are made, requests are received from other quarters, and the Service has a duty to be even-handed within the present policy.

3. We are rather more concerned with a certain laxity in the physical security revealed by paragraph 2 of D D Met O(O)'s loose minute. Under the rule in MOD Man 4 Chap 14 paragraph 1419, any visitor who does not fall into one of five clearly defined categories is required to be escorted while on official premises. This rule has gained in significane in the current phase of terrorist activity in the UK. So far as I know [redacted] had no status that entitled him to be left to his own devices unobserved while he was examining the Metrological Office records. The rules are compulsory, and no local discretion in their interpretation is permitted - a fact which should be drawn to the attention of the staff concerned.

BMEWS information

4. We do not see that Mr [redacted]s reference to the BMEWS rejection rate reflects any security breach. It's the sort of figure that could be picked up by any informed person, usually from a US source, as DD Ops (GE)(RAF) has pointed out. Whatever the security pros and cons of retaining BMEWS tapes (and any large scale accumulation of sensitive data is a security risk), retention is ruled out on grounds of costs and space, as the tapes could not be released for many years for the security reasons set out by DD Ops (GE)(RAF). I think that Sir John Langford-Holt should be informed that Mr [redacted]s suggestion is unacceptable for these reasons, particularly in a time of restriction on public spending and reductions on the Civil Service.

Information from Civil ATC units and 'other defence units'

5. Similarly, with the film produced by the air defence unit mentioned by DD Ops (GE)(RAF), it seems that security considerations, although compelling, are secondary to the cost of developing, storing and reviewing any film retained, which rule out any such retention. The same considerations apply to film and tape from Joint Air Traffic Control Radar Units. This is not really our field, and DD RAF Sy 1 will no doubt wish to comment.

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

[redacted]

19 Mar 76

DD HQ Sy (MOD) 3

[redacted]

DAH/2

(7)

LOOSE MINUTE

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

AF/CX 1528/72

S4(Air)

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT MP TO US OF S (RAF)

Reference:
AF/1505/III dated 5 Mar 76

1. Reference asked for comment on two points concerning the release of Service records for UFO research namely, BMEWS and Radar film information. Our comments are as follows:

a. BMEWS Information. Mr [redacted]s reference to the monthly BMEWS rejection rate of 800 non-ballistic radar targets a month could well be a figure gleaned from a NORAD release based on the 3-site system. We assume that he really means uncorrelated accelerating targets, in which case the figure is a reasonable average (In the case of Fylingdales, it is nearer 450 a month). Whilst data on such targets could be easily extracted from site historical tapes, the accumulation of this information over a period would lead to the disclosure of classified system performance details and this we cannot condone. On the matter of data retention, BMEWS historical tapes are cleared for re-use after a period of 28 days. This practice is due mainly to the cost and storage factors involved. However, should an event take place warranting corroboration from Fylingdales, we would expect initiation of such a task within this 28 day period to allow for on-site comparison with stored data.

b. Air Defence Radar films. Only one air defence radar unit currently has the equipment to produce radar film. The films are treated as Secret and are retained for 28 days, so that any unusual phenomena or special tracks may be examined. In the event that no investigation is required the films are then destroyed by fire. Storage considerations preclude routine retention for longer than this period. These films could provide a trained observer with comprehensive classified information on the radar's performance and its resistance to electronic countermeasures. For these reasons we strongly resist the release of the radar films to outside agencies.

[redacted]

[redacted]

DD Ops(GE)(RAF)

[redacted]

12 Mar 76

LOOSE MINUTE

(S)

AF/M 582/76

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

S4(Air) -

Cc DD of HQ Sy (MOD) 3
OS 9
DD Ops (GE)(RAF)
DDC (AP)2

YOUR LM AF/1505/III - AF/7464/72 of 5.3.1976 CONCERNING THE UFO LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT MP TO US OF S (RAF)

I refer to para 4 of the above-mentioned loose minute. Mr [redacted] accompanied by Mr [redacted] an astrophysicist from the North West University of Chicago, visited the Marine Division, Met O 1a on 19 February 1976 by prior arrangement. He had visited Met O 1a several times during previous years to view unclassified files in which observations of unusual aerial phenomena, extracted from Merchant Navy meteorological log books completed by voluntary observers, generally ships' officers, are assembled. From time to time the more interesting of these observations are recorded in the Marine Observer which is published by HMSO on behalf of the Office and is on sale to the general public. The log books themselves are available for consultation by members of the public and form part of the National Meteorological Library permanent archive.

2. In the course of his recent visit, Mr [redacted] was allowed to copy extracts of interest to him. During this period he was not supervised and it must be assumed that he copied the disposal recommendation slips included in the files.

3. We were not aware of the general guidance referred to in paras 2 and 3 of your loose minute.

[redacted]

DD Met O(O)

12 Mar 1976

Head of S4(Air)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1

TELEPHONE 01 ~~XXXXXXX~~ 218 6666

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/BJ 84/76

11 March 1976

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Dear Sir John

Thank you for your letter of 26th February and for forwarding the comments you have received from Mr [redacted] of [redacted] on the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects.

I have arranged for my Department to look into the points Mr [redacted] raises but will write again as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

(BRYNMOR JOHN)

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

~~RESTRICTED~~ UNCLASSIFIED

LOOSE MINUTE

8M/27/026

(8)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

S4(Air)

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT. MP, to US of S(RAF)

Reference: AF/1505/111)
AF/7464/72) dated 5 Mar 76

1. The Reference (para.6) asks me to comment on the suggestion that radar film taken at "civil air traffic control units" should be retained.

2. It is not NATS policy to take film of civil air traffic service unit radars and, in fact, no such films are made.

3. There are, however, civil control consoles established at the Joint Air Traffic Control Radar Units (JATCRUs) and film is made of the radar pictures used by these civil positions by virtue of the fact that it is MOD policy to take radar films at the JATCRUs. These films are developed only in case of an incident or accident and all un-processed film is retained for 30 days only. Any suggestion to develop all films so taken would be costly.

4. In the future, it is intended to record digitised radar information being fed into the London Air Traffic Control Centre (LATCC). This will be stored on multi-track digital tape and not on film, but will be capable of reprocessing through the LATCC computers to provide a record of the air situation as seen by any of the radars fed into LATCC. The quantity of digitised information so stored will be such that, to keep costs within reasonable limits, these records are intended to be kept for 15 days only.

[redacted]
DDC(AP)2 NATS
[redacted]

10th March 1976

UNCLASSIFIED ~~RESTRICTED~~

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(6)

LOOSE MINUTE

D/OS9/5/76

S4(Air) - [redacted]
Copies to:
DD Met O(O)
DD of HQ Sy(MOD)3
DD Ops (GE)(RAF)
DDC(AP)2

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT, MP, TO US OF S(RAF)

1. We spoke about your loose minute (AF/1505/III: AF/7464/72) of the 5th March. It is most unfortunate that Mr [redacted] appears to have been supplied with photostat copies of the disposal recommendation forms (RAF Form 5659A) relating to at least 2 of the files concerned.

2. I suggest it be explained to Mr [redacted] that a completed RAF Form 5659A merely records the recommendation of the desk officer about the disposal of a file at the time he passes it to the registry for closure; it does not constitute a decision either to retain the file permanently or to destroy it. This decision is taken later when the file is finally reviewed by the staff of the Departmental Record Officer to determine its disposal. And in view of the interest in UFO, records on the subject, other than those of a purely routine nature, are likely to be considered worthy of permanent preservation at this final review stage.

3. On the general question of the disposal of public records you will be aware that those not selected for permanent preservation (in the Public Record Office or other approved place of deposit) are normally destroyed. However, under Section 3(6) of the Public Records Act of 1958 the Lord Chancellor may approve the disposal of records in some other way and at the request of Departments the Lord Chancellor has, on occasion, agreed to gifts of records to approved bodies such as museums and universities. It is most unlikely, however, that he would agree to the handing over of public records to an individual or to an organisation in a foreign country.

8 Mar 76

[redacted]
OS9
[redacted]

3

LOOSE MINUTE

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

AF/1505/III
AF/7464/72

DD Met O(O)
DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3
OS 9
DD Ops (GE)(RAF)
DDC(AP)2

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT, MP TO US OF S(RAF)

1. I attach a letter and enclosures which US of S(RAF) has received from Sir John Langford-Holt, MP about the records we keep on Unidentified Flying Objects. The constituent, Mr [redacted], has been plaguing us for years and US of S(RAF) has asked me to prepare a full brief on this current correspondence. Two of the points - labelled B and C - are matters for S4(Air) and I need not trouble you with them. However, I would be grateful for your early advice on the following:-

POINT A - Mr [redacted]'s visit to Meteorological Office

2. It may not be generally known that MOD investigates all UFO "sightings" reported by members of the public et al, although the investigation is confined to the defence implications and does not extend to the wider scientific aspects. The arrangements are co-ordinated by S4(Air). The procedure is to refer the public's comments to specialist branches such as Ops(GE)2(RAF), DI 55 and, when appropriate Met O9, but the public are not informed of the results. As a general rule S4(Air)'s reply to the correspondent merely explains in general terms that we are concerned with the defence implications only.

3. If, like Mr [redacted] people ask to see the MOD files on UFOs, they get the standard reply that the correspondence may be unclassified but any communication between the Department and another member of the public must be treated as confidential. Furthermore, even "open" files might still have a bearing on classified material such as relevant radar film. For these reasons UFO records must remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down in the Public Records Acts ie at the end of 30 years. There is one possible exception here; an application would be considered seriously if it came from a major scientific organisation of high standing with strong reasons for obtaining access to the records. But no application of this calibre has been received to date.

4. This policy was endorsed by Ministers in 1970 and it has been explained to Mr [redacted]s MP on at least one occasion. He now appears to have got round the rules on his recent visit to the Meteorological Office. Would DD Met O(O) please let us have full details of this visit and comment on such points as how it came to be arranged, what really went on and how Mr [redacted] managed to get access to the files which he alleges he inspected? DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3 will also wish to comment. And on a separate point, would OS9 please arrange the official reply to Mr [redacted]'s suggestion that if the files are to be destroyed they should be handed over to him?

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

POINT D - BMEWS information

5. Mr [redacted] seems to have some acquaintance with Fylingdales as well. I should be grateful if DD Ops(GE)(RAF) would advise on the accuracy of the attached comments, and on the current practice for retaining the BMEWS magnetic tapes. There may also be security problems here and I would welcome DD of HQ Sy(MOD)3's views not only on the question of retaining the tapes for ultimate disclosure, but also on the wider implications. What worries me is how Mr [redacted] got his information in the first place. Does this point the need for reform in existing security arrangements? Should the American authorities be informed?

POINT E - Information from civil ATC units etc

6. Would DDC(AP)2 and DD Ops(GE)(RAF) please comment as necessary on this further suggestion that radar film taken at civil air traffic control units and "other Defence Units" should also be retained? Is this practical and (DD of HQ Sy(MOD)3) are there any security objections?

7. The Minister has asked for the full brief before 16 March. May I have your comments as soon as possible please?

5 March 1976

[redacted]
S4(Air)

Ack. by Form 26 on 26.2.76

11

[redacted]

25 February 1976

The Section Head
S4f(Air)
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Your ref: AF/CX38/67

Dear Sir

Referring to previous letters from your office dated 5 November 1971, 7 January 1972 and one from the Minister dated 7 February 1972 concerning the dumping of fuel by an F-111 based at RAF Upper Heyford about Noon on 26 October 1971, I would once again askif you could provide me with information as to the exact time, altitude, speed and position of the F-111 when it dumped its fuel.
Both your office and the Minister have confirmed that you have a record of this dumping and as both USAF and RAF regulations require that full details of such events be recorded, coupled with the fact that the operational capabilities of the type of F-111 based at RAF Upper Heyford is on record and therefore not classified, I see no reason why the Ministry cannot provide the requested information.
In replying to this letter, I would appreciate your forwarding me a copy of your UFO statistics for the period 1968 to 1975 inclusive.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Sir John Langford-Holt, M.P.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

AF/KS 84/76

What's all this about?

26th February, 1976

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Mr. [redacted]

I enclose a letter with enclosures from Mr. Hennessey and would be grateful if you could let me have answers to the various questions he has posed.

Yours

John Langford-Holt

Rt. Hon. William Rodgers, M.P.
Minister of State,
Ministry of Defence,
Whitehall,
S.W.1.

[redacted]

24 February 1976

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London SW1

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Dear Sir John

With reference to our previous communications regarding the retention of UFO records by the Ministry of Defence, and more specifically the 26 March 1970 letter from Lord Winterbottom in which he stated, "The Ministry of Defence hold UFO records from 1962 onwards. These records will not be destroyed..", I recently visited the Marine Division of the Meteorological Office in Bracknell, which is under the auspices of the Ministry, and was accompanied by a colleague, an astrophysicist from the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Illinois which is directed by Dr J Allen Hynek, former Chief Civilian UFO Consultant to the USAF for over 20 years.

During our visit, we viewed three files appertaining to reported UFO observations made by ships at sea. These three files, all of which are unclassified, contain a number of reports which would be of definite scientific value to the Center. However, as can be seen from the attached photostats, one of the files, located in the Meteorological Office's Main Building Registry, is due for destruction in 1978. Another file, at present in the Met.01 Annexe in Eastern Road, Bracknell, is recommended for destruction in 1991. In view of the nature of these files, and subsequent low-interest value to the Ministry, I herewith make formal application that they be given me, as a research associate of the Center for UFO Studies, in the year they are recommended for destruction, for onward transmission to the Center for computer study. A letter confirming my associateship with the Center can be given if required.

Regarding the 30-year ruling on UFO records held by the Ministry, I would also like to seek the Minister's assurance that these records will also contain full data appertaining to the Ministry's investigation of the reports including the findings and records of Science-3 and 5, MAIS, STCOC, HQ II GP, S4f(Air) and any other body involved in collation and evaluation of them.

In a letter dated 14 August 1967 addressed to Wing Commander Sir Eric Bullus MP, Mr Merlyn Rees stated that UFO records were being destroyed after a 5-year period and that if any report appeared to be of special interest, it would be retained. Since it was not until 1970 that a decision was made not to destroy UFO records, I would be interested to learn why those of 1962 were retained and not destroyed in 1967.

Regarding other potential sources of UFO data, am also interested in learning for what length of time magnetic tapes from BMEWS are stored. I have on good authority that the rejection rate on the system is 800 non-ballistic radar targets a month. Tapes from the NORAD Command have been checked by one scientist and found to have contained uncorrelated targets of scientific interest to UFO research. It is therefore reasonable to assume the BMEWS rejection figure of 800 a month may well contain such data and should, like written records, be retained. In addition, because of the selectivity of the BMEWS System, any radar films taken by the Ministry at local civil air traffic control units which show UFOs should be retained as well as those from other Defence units. Perhaps the Minister would give some assurances in this respect.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Date Opened

UNIT OR BRANCH (For R.A.F. use only)

Flt Lt Sutton

SUBJECT

Supply matters

numbers and subjects of
er and subsequent papers
see inside cover

Date	Min. or	Referred to	Date	Min. or	Referred by	Date	Min. or
18.11.68							

RAF Form 565
(Revised May [illegible])

RECOMMENDATION FOR DISPOSAL OF A REGISTERED FILE

Subject : Ship Log Extracts to Technical Intelligence

File Number : M 24553 / 63

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

The above file is forwarded for disposal as action on it is completed. I recommend that in accordance with MOOM, Appendix Q1/Q2, item ..... it should be

*(a) destroyed immediately. 78 Hist

†*(b) destroyed in the year 19.... i.e., 25 years after the date of the last action.

*(c) retained for review by MOD [Archives (Air)] in the year 19....., i.e., twenty-five years from the date it was opened : it may be downgraded to.....

.....in.....

Branch Met.O.1. Signed [redacted]

Date 17/12/63 Name in block letters [redacted]

Rank N.O.

*Delete those which do not apply.
†This period may be extended by an agreed number of years if the file contains papers that are subject to the "Statute of Limitations."

For Registry use only

1. Destroyed by.....

2. Signature of Witnessing Officer.....

Date.....

PLEASE COMPLETE LEGIBLY AFTER READING NOTES OVERLEAF

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

RAF Form No. 3659 (Revised 3/1965)

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DISPOSAL OF A REGISTERED FILE

Subject: Ship Log Extracts To Technical Intelligence	CLASSIFICATION
Date of last minute or enclosure (for RAF Form 3659) 21/11/73	FILE No. AF/M 1376/68
	PART No.

The above file is forwarded for disposal as shown on it is completed (see Note 3 overleaf). I recommend that it be:

*(a) destroyed in the year 1991

*(b) returned for review by MOD-OS9a (Hayes) in the year [illegible] twenty-five years from the date it was opened. It may be downgraded to [illegible]

*(c) forwarded to the AHB (RAF) for historical purposes and a minute to reference to OS9a (Hayes) for final review in the year [illegible] twenty-five years from the date it was opened. It may be downgraded to [illegible]

RAF Uxbridge

Signed [redacted]

Date 18/2/74

Rank Wing Commander

*Delete as appropriate

PLEASE REFER READING NOTES OVERLEAF

Redacted

File

Copy.

Request 2

See Section 40 [redacted] request-

24-04-2005-084752-001

Clearing House approval.

D/DAS/10/2/8/13 PEI-ENC 10

REDACTION ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

MOD Form 41D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted]

MINISTER'S OFFICE REGISTERED FOLDER No.

AF/JW 234/77

RELATED DEPARTMENTAL REGISTERED FOLDER No(s).

122505

DEFE 11/98

SUBJECT

JOHN ELLIS

—

U.F.O.s

This folder must be given priority. A draft reply (or other proposal for action) should be submitted to the Private Office within 10 working days; if this is not possible the Private Office must be consulted.

Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE
~~Hd of S4(Air)~~	~~10 June 77~~				
~~AS1/D/S~~	~~13/6/77~~				
~~S4(Air)~~	~~21-6-77~~				
~~AS1/US4/S(RAF)~~	~~29/6/77~~				
~~S4(Air)-Mr Peduzzi~~					
~~MS 1 Mr Judy~~					
AS1/US4/S(RAF)	4/7/77.				

SECOND REVIEW 2003

Andrew Jeff

File Ref: MR/122505

Part:

1. When in action, this fold[er] [redacted] tal Registered file.

US of S(RAF) Folder No. AF/JW/234/77

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

EM1

Head of Sh Gov't

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

I have placed at E 1 on this folder a letter from John Ellis MP.

2. I should be grateful if you would let me have, by 5 p.m. on 24th June 77, a draft of the letter which you would advise US of S(RAF) to send in reply, together with any other relevant information and papers.

3. If a final reply cannot be drafted within this time, I should be grateful if you would either return the folder to the Private Office with a progress report and draft interim reply, or, if the folder needs to be retained in the branch, advise the Private Office of the position by telephone (Ext 7516).

4. Your attention is drawn to Office Instructions paragraphs 0606-0608.

5. Any decision that the Department or Service proposes to take in this case must now be suspended until it has been reviewed by US of S(RAF). No action should be taken which might prejudice the final decision.

for [redacted]
APS/US of S(RAF)

10th June 77

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

ADI/DI55

Copy Met 09

You will see from the enclosed correspondence that a Member of Parliament has asked us to investigate a recent press report about alleged UFO sightings on the Humberside. I should be grateful if you, and Met 09 to whom I am copying this, would advise on the reply that should be sent to Mr Ellis.

I enclose the associated reports from RAF Binbrook.

13 June 1977

[redacted]
S4(Air)

M3

S4(AIR)

ALLEGED UFO SIGHTINGS

1. Ref your M2, Parliamentary Paper and reports which have been annotated A-E, herewith the following comments:

a. Reports show a marked lack of consistency if we attempt to corelate them into a group of events.

b. Except for reports A & E, the reports are incomplete and lacking in meaningful information such as object size and distance relative to known fixed landmarks.

c. Reports A & E could refer to the same object as the descriptions are vaguely similar and the direction of movement in each case is N-S. However the object could not have been travelling at aircraft speed, as alleged in E, as 7½ hrs separates the sightings - one in Hull, the other at Scunthorpe.

d. In report C the 3 objects, one of which was flashing, could have been a reference to an aircraft travelling at night possibly with landing lights on. The flashing light would be the standard GRIMES light carried above and below the fuselage.

e. The Press Report itself is inconsistent with the facts reported in A & E. - It was [redacted] in A, who described the object as being "oval shaped, 20 ft long and 3 ft high". According to [redacted] in E, the object made no noise at all.

f. We have spoken to MET 16 who consider that the timing of the release of Met Balloons at Gt Yarmouth and Edinburgh and the wind direction at the time rule out any likelihood of an explanation being found based on Met Balloons.

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2. In conclusion we can offer no positive explanation for the objects allegedly sighted except that the object, in report C, could have been an aircraft with landing lights illuminated. Nor, on the evidence available, can we suggest why a spate of reports should have been made in the Humberside area within a 48 hrs period.

In a negative sense it can be reasonably stated that the objects reported upon were not Met Balloons.

[redacted]

17th June 1977

ADI/DI55

JP

M4

File AF/JW234/77

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APS/US of S(RAF)-

1. You will see from Minute 3 and Encl 7 that we are unable to account for these UFO sightings on the Humberside. In accordance with our standard practice copies of the reports went to DI55 and Ops(GE)(RAF) on receipt to ensure that any defence implications would not be overlooked and, as you know, we do not normally institute any further investigation if enquiries reach us from the general public.

2. I suggest then a reply should be sent to Mr Ellis on the lines of the draft attached.

29 Jun 77

[redacted]
S4(Air)
[redacted]

S4(Air) - [redacted] 17 MS

Thank you for your M 4..... US of S(RAF) has written to John Ellis Esq MP at E 9..... I attach a copy for your retention. Will you please take the necessary executive action.

[redacted]
APS/US of S(RAF)

1st July 77

L[redacted]E MINUTE

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

7

M868/73/Met O 9

S4(A[redacted]), MOD

UFO REPORTS FROM HUMBERSIDE

Reference A: Loose Minute AF/JW234/77 dated 13 June 1977

1. The UFO reports forwarded with reference A have been examined and after investigation it is considered that there were no Meteorological Office balloons and associated equipment flying in the area concerned at the times of interest. Also, the descriptions given do not appear to refer to meteorological phenomena.

2. It may be of interest to note that the Meteorological Office is not the only organisation in this country which uses balloon-borne equipment. The army does so for ballistic purposes, universities sometimes employ similar techniques in experimental work and there may be others. Perhaps you can check these possibilities. On the days in question there was a chance that balloons released by foreign users over the continent or from ships in the North Sea could have reached Humberside but we have no knowledge of this.

[redacted]

16 June 1977

Met Office (Met O 9)

[redacted]

8/2/3/5/343

(6)

GAL117 25/2158 14504275

FM CAS

ROUTINE 252200Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO HQUK AIR

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LGZ
REPORT OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT
REF: AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F (AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 252200A MAY. SHORT DURATION
B. SILVER CONE/SHAPED OBJECT AT A DISTANCE BECOMING BOWLSHAPED, NO SOUND
C. BODKIN ROAD, BRANSHOLME, HULL. OBSERVER OUTDOORS, STATIONARY
D. NAKED EYE
E. FACING NORTH
F/G. NOT AVAILABLE
H. MOVING NORTH TO SOUTH AT FAST AIRCRAFT SPEED
J. MOVING CLOUDS
K. TOWN ENVIRONMENT
L. HUMBERSIDE POLICE OPS ROOM 0482-2611, PC [redacted]
M. [redacted] BRANSHOLME, HULL

PAGE 2 RSDPIN 045 UNCLAS
N. HUMBERSIDE POLICE SAY INFORMANT SEEMED GENUINE, GAVE AN OK ADDRESS
O. TWO MORE 13 YEAR OLD COMPANIONS POLICE HAVE NOTE OF NAMES AND ADDRESSES
P. 252359A MAY
Q. OBSERVER STATES THAT AN AIRCRAFT HAD PASSED OVERHEAD JUST PRIOR TO THE UFO SIGHTING
BT

DISTRIBUTION LGZ
CAS 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDO))
CAL 1 DI 55 B(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 d
CYE 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAM 1 Science 3(RAF)

[redacted]

U N C L A S S I F I E D

8/2/3/5/54

(5)

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAL017 2779817 1470657

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 2706552 MAY

FROM RAF BIRDBROOK
TO MODUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LGZ
REPORT OF UFO, REF AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F(AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 262240A MAY DURATION NOT GIVEN
B. CIRCULAR RED OBJECT-25FT DIAM
C.-G. NOT AVAILABLE
H. TRAVELLING WEST FAST
J/K. NOT AVAILABLE
L. HULL POLICE
M.-O. NOT AVAILABLE
P. 262245A MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LGZ
P
CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDO))
CAL 1 DI 55 b(SIC)
CAY 2 DI 13 d
CYD 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAM 1 Science 3(RAF)

(4)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAB910 27/9815 1470/883

FOR CAE

ROUTINE 270702Z MAY

FROM RAF DINBROOK
TO HQBUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LQZ
UFO REPORT, REF AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F(AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 262300A MAY, 3 MINS
B. 3 OBJECTS, ROUND. TWO WERE ABOUT AS BIG AND BRIGHT AS A STAR. THIRD WAS LARGER AND FLASHING
C. EXETER GROVE, HULL
D. NAKED EYE
E/F/G/H NOT GIVEN
J. CLEAR MOONLIT SKY
K. CHEMICAL WORKS NEAR
L. HULL POLICE
M. [redacted] HULL
N. NIL
O. [redacted] HULL
P. 262330A MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LQZ
P
CAE 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(RFDC))
CAL 1 DI 55 D(SIC)
CAY 2 DI 13 C
CYD 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAM 1 Science 3(RAF)

(3)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

U N C L A S S I F I E D

UAL100 26/2$2$ 14003776

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 2619$5Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO MOBUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIC LGZ
REPORT OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT
REF AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F (AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 251300A MAY, SHORT DURATION
B. QUITE SMALL SILVER TRIANGULAR SHAPE WITHIN WHITE HAZY CIRCLE
C. BRANSHOLM SHOPPING CENTRE, EAST HULL
D. NAKED EYE
E/F/G. NOT AVAILABLE
I. HOVERING OVER SHOPPING CENTRE
J/K NOT AVAILABLE
L. HUMBERSIDE POLICE OPS ROOM 0482-2611 SGT [redacted]
M. [redacted] HULL
N. POLICE CONFIRM ADDRESS AS GENUINE AND OBSERVER SEEMED SINCERE WHEN INTERVIEWED
O. WHEN OBSERVER HAD TURNED TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF HIS COMP-

PAGE 2 RBDPIN 037 UNCLAS
ARIONS, THE OBJECT HAD DISAPPEARED
P. 262$$$A MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LGZ
F
CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDC))
CAL 1 DI 55 B(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 3
CYL 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAA 1 Science 3(AMP)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(2)

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAB$12 26/0835 14600715

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 26$81$Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO MODUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LQZ
REPORT OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT REF AF/3459/75/PT2/5/4F (AIR)
DATED 11 SEP 75.
A 26$335A MAY, SEVEN SECONDS
B 2 OBJECTS 2$FT BY 3FT OVAL SHAPED GREYISH CLOUD MAKING NOISE
LIKE A WHIRLWIND, SOUND WAS ZOOMING TO A GREAT VOLUME
C SOCIAL CLUB YARD BURRINGHAM 835$94 OS MAP REF
D NAKED EYE
E NORTH WEST
F NOT AVAILABLE
G 3/4 MILE
H TRAVELLING NORTH SOUTH ACROSS TRENT
J LOW CLOUD
K INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE
L SGT [redacted] SCUNTHORPE POLICE

PAGE 2 RBDPIN $12 UNCLAS
M [redacted] BURRINGHAM (TEL [redacted])
N NIL
O NIL
P 26$8$3Z MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LQZ
F
CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDO))
CAL 1 DI 55 5(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 d
CYD 1 Ops(QE) 2 (RAF)
CAX 1 Science 3(RAF)

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

AF/JW 234/77

BF
24th June 77

Hd of S4 (Air) 10th June 77

Chased 28th June

S4 (Air) [redacted] 1st July

15th July

Also on
D/D58/25/3 A.
Unidentified Flying Objects
– Parliamentary
Correspondence

Released to [redacted] Section 40
26-04-2005-084752-001.

Hd of S4(Air)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-218 6666... (Direct Dialling)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/JW 234/77

1 July 1977

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Dear John,

Fred Mulley has asked me to reply to your letter of 31st May concerning the Press report of an unidentified object seen recently on the Humberside. I am sorry I have not written before but as so often happens with reports like this the invesitgation has been inconclusive.

I should explain that the Department has not the resources to conduct an independent scientific study into the nature of unidentified flying objects. We invariably pass reports of sighting to the specialist staffs responsible for the air defence of the country but it is not possible to pursue enquiries from the public t the point of positive identification. You will appreciate that some reports are necessarily vague and we feel it would not be justifiabl to ask the staffs to make elaborate enquiries if in their opinion these would not be necessary in the interests of defence.

The Department have reached that point with the sightings you referred to in your letter. The five reports received by RAF Binbr show a marked lack of consistency when one seeks to correlate them into a group of events. Three are incomplete and lack significant information such as the size of the object and its distance relativ to known landmarks. They refer variously to quite a small silver triangular shape, to a circular red object 25 feet in diameter, and three objects, round in shape, with two as big and as bright as a star and the third larger and flashing. The other two reports were from [redacted] and [redacted] who are named in the press cutting There are certain similarities here. Both refer to an object measuring 20 feet by 3 feet which was either oval or cigar-shaped; but the cutting mentions a noise like a whirlwind while the report held by Binbrook records [redacted] as saying there was no sound at I am afraid the Department can offer no positive explanation for t objects, nor why they gave rise to five separate reports. The descriptions given do not appear to refer to meteorological phenom The report of the three objects, one of which was flashing, could a description of an aircraft travelling at night, possibly with landing lights on. Flashing lights are standard aircraft equipmer and are carried above and below the fuselage. Another possibilit;

/that balloons

John Ellis Esq MP
House of Commons

that balloons were seen. The Meteorological Office were not flying balloons at the times and places reported but other organisations, such as universities, sometimes use similar equipment in experimental work and it may even be that balloons released by foreign users on the Continent, or from ships in the North Sea, reached the Humberside although we have no knowledge of this.

It is all rather speculative and I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Yours Sincerely

Jim Wellbeloved

(JAMES WELLBELOVED)

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PS/US of S (RAF)

I should be grateful if your Minister would reply to the attached MP's letter, which has been acknowledged by this office.

[redacted]

9/6/77

APS/SECRETARY OF STATE

816

AF/5W 2.34/77
Hd of Sy (RAF)
recd 9th June

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

JE/MR

31st May, 1977

The Rt. Hon. Fred Mulley, MP,
Secretary of State,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
LONDON, SW1A 2HB

Dear Fred,

Please find enclosed herewith a press cutting regarding various sightings of an un-identified flying object which was reported to R.A.F. Binbrook.

I should be obliged if you would investigate this matter and let me know any comments you would be prepared to make.

Please return the enclosed press cutting with your reply.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN ELLIS MP

Boys see 'flying cigar' hovering at school

By John Alley

THREE boys watched transfixed as less than a mile away a strange object hovered over a school.

It was one of five U.F.O. sightings reported to police on Humberside within 48 hours.

All were logged at R.A.F. Binbrook, near Grimsby, and reported to the Ministry of Defence.

The cigar-shaped object —about 20ft. long and 3ft. high—was seen by Dale Rowe, 13, Edmund Gerrard, 13, of Cleave Drive, and Tony McKee, 13, of Hartland Close, Brans-holme, near Hull.

It hovered like a "grey cloud" for several seconds.

"There was a noise like a whirlwind and it grew louder and louder before moving off," said Tony.

A similar object was spotted several hours later at Burringham, near Scunthorpe, by Mr. Roy Thompson, who also mentioned a noise like a whirlwind.

Request 3
Redacted File
Copy

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64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 15

****
PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON THURSDAY 26 MARCH 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	**PQ 2434i, 2440i, 2444i, 2446i**
PQ TYPE	:	Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	PQ 2440i only: DIO, PJHQ

[redacted]

MP'S DETAIL: MRS HELEN JACKSON (LABOUR)(SHEFFIELD HILLSBOROUGH)

QUESTION

13|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what complaints were received by the RAF concerning low flying aircraft relating to 24th March 1997. [34607]

15|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if RAF/NATO military were engaged on an exercise over northern England between 9.30 and 10.30pm on 24th March 1997. [36404]

16|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons the RAF imposed an air exclusion zone around Howden reservoir on the morning of 25th March 1997. [36408]

17|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what reported sightings of UFOs were received from the (a) public and (b) police from the South Yorkshire/Derbyshire area on 24th and 25th March 1997. [36402]

REMEMBER you are accountable for the accuracy and timeliness of the advice you provide. Departmental instructions on answering PQs are set out in DCI(GEN)150/97 and can be viewed on the CHOTS public area and on DAWN.

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DRAFTED BY [redacted] TEL: [redacted]

APPROVED BY : [redacted]

AUTHORISED BY [redacted]

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with with Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 48/97).

ANSWER:

A number of military aircraft were booked to carry out low flying training in northern England on the evening of 24 March 1997. The Ministry of Defence received 13 complaints about aircraft activity for that date from locations across the UK. No reported sightings of "UFOs" on 24 or 25 March 1997 were received by my Department. A Temporary Danger Area was established on 25 March, centred on Howden Reservoir, to allow a RAF Search and Rescue helicopter, in response to a request for assistance from South Yorkshire Police, to carry out a search of the area without disturbance by other military aircraft. Such Danger Areas are routinely established for Search and Rescue operations.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. Mrs Jackson has been the MP for Sheffield Hillsborough since 1992. Her constituency covers the area of the Peak District to the northwest of Sheffield as far as the Derbyshire border, including the eastern part of Howden Reservoir. She has not previously tabled PQs about low flying and these four questions, and the related PQ 2436i and PQ 2448i (the latter tabled by Ms Helen Jones MP), follow a letter the Department received recently from [redacted] a journalist on the Sheffield Star investigating an occurrence on the Peak District during the evening of 24 March 1997. Copies of the letter and subsequent article (which was written before a reply to his letter could be sent) are attached.

2. The occurrence, contemporaneously thought to have been a light aircraft crash, remains unexplained. No aircraft were reported missing on the evening in question and a comprehensive search of the area, in which a RAF Sea King Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter from Leconfield also participated, found no trace of aircraft wreckage. Sec(AS) received no reports of this occurrence from members of the public, or any enquiries from the media until the arrival of [redacted]'s letter, on 6 March this year. Given the passage of time, it is not practicable to carry out any meaningful investigation as radar tapes, which would be critical in attempting to identify aircraft in the area, would have been re-used. Moreover, witness recollection of events would be unreliable.

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3. In answering these four PQs, we have interpreted Mrs Jackson's phrase "engaged on an exercise" in its widest sense as embracing all military aircraft activity. Without an investigation we cannot say with confidence whether military aircraft were or were not in the area; the only surviving, centrally maintained indication of activity over northern England on the evening in question is the Night Low Flying Sector booking sheets. These show that military low flying was booked to take place in all four Night Low Flying Sectors in northern England on the evening of 24 March. There are, however, no bookings for the area containing the Peak District (Night Low Flying Sector 3A) at the time of the alleged occurrence (which is mentioned in [redacted]s letter) but it is possible that military aircraft were operating at medium level.

4. The low flying complaints database shows that at total of 13 complaints were received about activity on 24 March 1997, none of which were from by residents of the area concerned. The database of "UFO" sighting reports has nothing logged for anywhere in the UK during the period 22 March to 26 March 1997 inclusive.

5. Temporary Danger Areas (TDA) are routinely established when SAR activity is taking place. HQ Military Air Traffic Organisation has confirmed that a TDA was established between 0730 and 1215 on 25 March 1997, centered on Howden Reservoir, to enable the SAR helicopter from RAF Leconfield to carry out its search without disturbance from other military air traffic.

Copy to:

AS.DD2
DPO(RAF)
RAF Kinloss - PRO Scotland
HQ MATO - Ops(LF)1
Sec(AS)1a

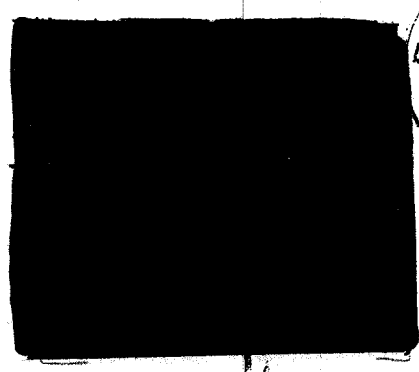
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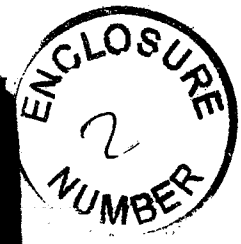
26 Mar 98

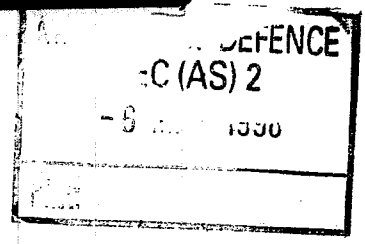
Files:

D/Sec(AS)/64/3

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2 March, 1998

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a news reporter working for Sheffield's evening paper **The Star** and have been investigating an incident which occurred on the western outskirts of the city on March 24, 1997, which was initially believed to have been a air disaster involving a light plane.

A brief TV documentary on the subject has since appeared on BBC1 in October last year, but the truth behind what caused the incident remains a mystery, hence this letter to you.

On the night in question between 10.10 and 10.15pm up to 40 separate groups of witnesses contacted police and emergency services to report seeing a low-flying object which they believed was a low-flying aircraft in distress near the South Yorkshire village of Bolsterstone.

At least two witnesses saw the object appear to disappear behind trees over Margery Hill, at the highest point of the Peak District moors west of Sheffield, which conicided with a report of an "explosion" heard by gamekeepers at the hamlet of Strines, nearby.

Subsequently, South Yorkshire Police initiated a full search and rescue operation - costing thousands of pounds in public money - involving seven Peak District Mountain rescue teams, the West Yorkhire Police helicopter and, I understand, RAF search and rescue helicopters from RAF Kinloss and RAF Leconfield.

After searching more than 40 square miles of moorland around the Howden reservoirs west of Bolsterstone, the police called off the search after 17 hours as no crash site was discovered and no civil aircraft had been reported missing.

Today, the police and civilian rescue teams remain open-minded about the cause of the incident, but a number of theories have been advanced from a drug-running operation involving a light aircraft to the misidentification of a

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

bolide meteor burning up in the earth's atmosphere.
Police logs of calls made to them by members of the public suggest there was a high-level of activity involving military jets in the Derbyshire/South Yorkshire area immediately preceding the "aircrash" on the moors. A number of inidividuals claim to have seen RAF Tornado jets flying northwards towards the Peak District from the north Derbyshire towns of Dronfield and Chesterfield between 9.45 and 10pm shortly before the "aircrash".
However, police say direct contact they made with the RAF at the time of the incident suggested there was no military activity in the area at the time.
I would be interested to hear any suggestions or theories you may have which could shed light on the mystery which remains unresolved one year later.
I enclose an SAE and look forward to hearing from you,

Yours Faithfully,

[redacted]

REDACTED ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

The Star, Tuesday, March 24, 1998

F.A.O.
Squadron leader
[redacted]
From [redacted]
Sheffield Star

EXCLUSIVE: Truth about a jet 'disaster' which sparked a massive moors hunt



A mountain rescue unit scours the moors. Was the 'crash' a Tornado jet, above, illegally breaking the sound barrier?

Crash that never was

A HUNT for a 'crashed aircraft' which cost tens of thousands of pounds could have been sparked by a military jet illegally breaking the sound barrier.

Emergency services from four counties were involved after an explosion was heard over Peak District moorland near Sheffield.

But it has been revealed the 'terrific bang' which sparked the alert could have been caused by a jet breaking the sound barrier.

At the time the Ministry of Defence denied one of its war planes was responsible for the explosion and flash which caused worried residents to dial 999 a year ago today.

But Edinburgh University says two sonic booms recorded over Sheffield that night "could only have been caused by a military plane reaching supersonic speed".

A Star investigation showed hundreds of people who took part in the operation have been kept in the dark ever since.

Hillsborough MP Helen Jackson will today ask Defence Secretary George Robertson to explain the mystery.

By David Clarke

NATO aircraft are forbidden to break the sound barrier over land at night to avoid hazards to civilian air traffic.

Dozens of people in Chesterfield, Sheffield and Barnsley rang police to report seeing and hearing low-flying jet aircraft minutes before the explosion echoed across Peak District moorland.

Emergency services became involved in the operation which lasted over 18 hours.

Two helicopters, including an RAF Sea King, joined hundreds of mountain rescue personnel, fire crews and police in a search of over 40 square miles of moors and reservoirs.

At one stage airliners landing at Manchester were alerted after a 10-mile air exclusion zone was imposed over Derbyshire's Howden reservoir.

South Yorkshire police claim no explanation was ever found for the mystery and say they remain open minded.

Chief Insp Christine Hurbeary, who was in charge of the search operation, said: "We got nothing back from the air traffic control and no reports of aircraft failing to return. But there is no doubt there was a number of phenomena including a very low flying aircraft."

RAF chiefs remained tight-lipped but Yorkshire Water workers who helped search reservoirs were told a military jet was responsible.

A senior official said: "I was told the RAF had admitted there was a plane doing a night-time exercise and it had gone through the sound barrier."

No flying rules for military aircraft

STRICT rules govern how low pilots are allowed to fly over populated areas – but military planes are excluded.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority said private pilots would face prosecution if they fly below 1,500 feet over a built up area.

Last year a pilot was fined and given a conditional discharge after pleading guilty to swooping to within 250 feet of the ground above Stannington in daylight.

Witnesses, including police Special Constable Marie-France Tattersfield, said the mystery aircraft which sparked last year's aircraft fears was flying "extremely low" – and in the dark!

Marie-France, who spotted the plane near Bolsterstone, said: "No light aircraft pilot would fly at that time of night because they rely on landmarks to navigate. It was a big aeroplane and all its windows were lit up which made it look even more odd."

According to aviation experts few pilots would risk their lives and licence by hedge hopping so low in darkness over a major city.

The puzzle led many who took part in the search to speculate the pilot could have taken the risk because he was being paid big bucks to take part in a covert drugs drop on the moors.

But aviation experts say the "covert operation" was more likely to have been a military one.

Ex-RAF officer John Bassington from Dronfield told The Star: "I distinctly heard both a single engined plane and minutes later two RAF jets - possibly Tornado fighters. I can assure you that if the RAF say nothing was going on that night they are being economical with the truth."

MOD Form 41D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

OFFICE REGISTERED FOLDER No.

MINISTER'S REGISTERED FOLDER No.

AF/BS 84/76

RELATED DEPARTMENTAL REGISTERED FOLDER No(s).

117769/2

Unredacted Copy.

SECOND REVIEW 2002

SUBJECT

Sir John Lang of Langholm Hall ... MP

Mr J. Hennessy Esq

DTO ... Complaints

This folder must be given priority. A draft reply (or other proposal for action) should be submitted to the Private Office within 10 working days; if this is not possible the Private Office must be consulted.

Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE
~~Hd S4(Cl) 2 Mar~~		See Ref O	23/3/76		
~~APS/US of S(AF) 5 May~~		~~APS/US of S(AF) 8 April~~			
~~Hd S4(Cl) 11 March~~		~~APS/US of S(RAF) 8 April 76~~			
~~S4(HCD)3~~		APS/US of S(RAF) 13 April 76			
~~S4 Chief~~					

22 MAR 2001

2006

NOTES

1. When in action, this folder should in appropriate

Mary Donnelly

US of S(RAF) Folder No. AF/BJ/84/76

4M 1

HL 54 (C)

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

I have placed at E 1 on this folder a letter from Sir John Langford-Holt MP

2. I should be grateful if you would let me have, by 5 p.m. on 16 March, a draft of the letter which you would advise US of S(RAF) to send in reply, together with any other relevant information and papers.

3. If a final reply cannot be drafted within this time, I should be grateful if you would either return the folder to the Private Office with a progress report and draft interim reply, or, if the folder needs to be retained in the branch, advise the Private Office of the position by telephone (Ext 7516).

4. Your attention is drawn to Office Instructions paragraphs 0606-0608.

5. Any decision that the Department or Service proposes to take in this case must now be suspended until it has been reviewed by US of S(RAF). No action should be taken which might prejudice the final decision.

APS/US of S(RAF)

2 March

M2

APS/US of S(RAF)

You will see from Encl 3 that I am making enquiries about this case but it is obviously going to take time. US of S(RAF) may wish to send an interim reply to Sir John Langford-Holt on the lines of the attached draft.

5th March 1976

J A PEDUZIE
S4(Air)

3

DD of HQ Sy (MOD) 3

We have now received the attached comments (Encl 5-8) on the letter from Mrs. Hennessey which I circulated on 5th March. Now that we have the facts of the case would you please add your advice on the wait at the Meteorological Office and the passage about BMEWS procedures?

15 March 1976

J A Peduzie
S4(Air)

Reference AF/BJ 84/76

M4

APS/US of S (RAF)
Through Sec Met

Copy to:
DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3

1. You asked for a full brief to set Encl 1 in perspective.

Introduction

2. As you know, MOD investigates all UFO sightings reported by members of the public and others. The arrangements are co-ordinated by S4(Air) and we consult specialist branches as appropriate. But only the defence implications are considered and we send no more than a general reply to the correspondent. When people ask to see the MOD files they are told that communications with other members of the public are regarded as confidential and moreover, even unclassified files could contain material which has some reference to classified subjects. For these reasons our UFO records must remain closed under the rules laid down by the Public Records Acts which at present forbid disclosure of files until 30 years have elapsed since the last action taken upon them.

3. Mr Hennessey is a persistent correspondent on UFOs and as you will see from the files attached he has been writing since April 1967 or earlier to the Board of Trade, Home Office, MOD and the Commissioner of Police. He has also had lengthy correspondence with the Prime Minister's Office, Sir John Langford-Holt, MP, Mr Julian Ridsdale MP, Sir Eric Bullus MP, the United Nations Organisation, other Governments such as Canada and Australia, and sundry other organisations. In 1967 HM Embassy in Washington advised that he was well known as a correspondent to the United States Air Force and to Dr Condon of the University of Colorado who was then conducting an investigation into UFOs at the request of the American Government. The Embassy reported that Mr Hennessey had described himself as having been engaged on confidential work for the Prime Minister although he had no official status. (Flag A). The Foreign Office advised No 10 to treat him with "some caution" (Flag B).

4. In February 1968 Mr Hennessey had a meeting with S4(Air) and possibly D155. There is no record of the discussion; all we have is the S4 brief (Flag C) and the letter drafted for the Prime Minister's Office (Flag D). In his correspondence with MOD he has criticised amongst other things the way we handle UFO investigations and our refusal to disclose details of the reports we receive. He is well aware of the 30 year rule and acknowledged this in December 1971. (Flag E) and again in his current letter.

5. Mr Hennessey has always written from a London address and we have no evidence that he has ever resided in the Shrewsbury constituency of Sir John Langford-Holt. However, Sir John has himself shown a continuing interest in UFOs (see the numerous letters and Parliamentary Questions tabbed on file AF/1505/Pt III); and as early as 1968, S4(Air) speculated on the similarity between the Questions and the contemporary enquiries received from Mr Hennessey.

Point A - Mr Hennessey's visit to the Meteorological Office

6. This visit to Met O1a at Bracknell took place on 19 February. It seems Mr Hennessey has been there before and on this occasion was accompanied by Mr Rodeghier of the North West University of Chicago (who is presumably an American National). You will wish to read:

(a) DD Met O(O)'s report at Encl 5

(b) The further comments of DD HQ Sy (MOD)3 and DD RAF Sy 1 at Encl 9-10.

7. Two main points emerge in these papers. Firstly, the content of the material shown to Mr Hennessey was not classified; it came from Merchant Navy meteorological log books which are already made available to the public in other ways, although it would have been better to have offered him the original documents rather than the official files. Secondly, Mr Hennessey was not supervised when he examined the files. This contravened the Ministry of Defence Manual4 Chapter 14, paras 1417 - 1419. This stipulates that every visitor is to be escorted while on official premises unless he belongs to the UK Armed Forces or another Government Department, or is representing a MOD contractor (and hold suitable security clearance), or is employed in an official capacity and is well known to the interviewing officer, or is a member of MOD not in possession of a Headquarters pass.

8. I have discussed this with DD Met O(O) and I understand that he took immediate action to rectify the situation as soon as it came to his notice. At this request I am now routing this file through Sec Met O who may wish to comment further.

These matters are entirely outside S4(Air)'s province of course and all I wish to add are one or two footnotes. The new legislation mentioned at Encl 9 is a reference to the work of the Ministerial Group on Disclosure of Official Information which (under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister I believe), is considering ways and means of discharging the commitment in the Government's Election Manifesto "to replace the Official Secrets Act by a measure to put the burden on the public authorities to justify withholding information". While suitable protection will be sought for material of a genuine security significance it is doubtful whether our correspondence on UFOs will be included in that category especially as one of the suggestions now under consideration is that an Ombudsman should arbitrate on the type of information witheld. Incidentally, another idea, being discussed outside the Ministerial Group is that the 30 year closed period should be reduced to 15 years but this too has still to be examined in detail. Indeed I am told that it is most unlikely that any new legislation affecting the present rules for the public disclosure of information will be laid before Parliament in the near future. Meanwhile, as DD HQ Sy (MOD)3 says, the regulations require that official files should not be opened to the public until they have been sent to a recognised repository. There is of course no question of handing over any files to Mr Hennessey. See OS9's advice at Encl 6.

9. I should also mention that S4(Air) do not consult Met O1 in the course of their enquiries into UFO sightings. We sometimes appeal to another branch of the Met Office when it is thought the public might have seen meteorological phenomena. And from time to time Met O1 send us extracts from the ships' meteorological logs (and the papers go on to our UFO files).

But we have not had occasion to bring the MOD UFO investigation procedure to Met 01's attention; nor indeed was this procedure widely publicised when the rules were endorsed by Lord Winterbottom in 1970.

Point B - Content of MOD files

10. Contrary to Mr Hennessey's expectations the S4 files contain very little of value to a serious scientific investigator. I attach a typical folder (Flag F) and you will see that all we usually get back from the specialist branches are short notes saying either they cannot help or that the sighting can be identified as a commonplace object. That is not to say that the investigation is not taken seriously. The branches have their own methods - and S4(Air) has "no need to know" about them - but we are aware that D155 for example sometimes makes extensive enquiries. It is undesirable that even a hint of this should become public and we are currently consulting AHB on ways of expurgating the official records against the time when they will qualify for disclosure.

11. I do not suggest that we go into all that with Mr Hennessey. He will find out for himself when the 30 years are up and in the meantime we need do no more than remind him that we are concerned with the defence implications only.

Point C - Retention of 1962 records

12. Mr Hennessey's third point is a quibble and since he says elsewhere that we should retain our records I can only assume that he is trying to discredit us. He points out that according to Mr Merlyn Rees' letter of August 1967 UFO records are generally destroyed after five years (Flag G). Yet in 1970 Lord Winterbottom said the eight year old 1962 reports were still available (Flag H). There is no inconsistency here. The decision to retain UFO files indefinately was taken late in 1967 after Mr Rees' letter because of a wave of public interest in UFOs. There was no need to go into that in Lord Winterbottom's letter and it has taken Mr Hennessey six years to comment on it.

Points D and E - Retention of material at BMEWS and Civil ATC units

13. DD Ops (GE) (RAF) discusses the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) material at Encl 7; DD(AP)2 NATS comments on the point about civil air traffic control units at Encl 8. There is further advice from DD HQ Sy (MOD)3 at encl 9 are from DD RAF Sy 1 at Encl 10.

14. The main points are:

a. there would be unacceptable costs and storage problems in the retention of BMEWS tapes and Air Defence radar film, and security objections to the accumulation and ultimate disclosure.

b. no films are made of civil air traffic service unit radars

c. while some film is made of radar pictures at the Joint (Military/Civil) Air Traffic Control Radar Units and, in future, more sophisticated records will be made at the London Air Traffic Control Centre, the question of cost alone would prohibit retention beyond a limited period

d. there is general agreement that the information already held by Mr Hennessey on BMEWS could have been obtained without infringing the security regulations. An American source is likely eg NORAD (the North American Air Defence Authorities).

Other Matters

15. As it happens, there is another letter outstanding from Mr Hennessey. He has written to us at official level about an incident involving an F111 aircraft on 26 October 1971 and I have discussed this on AF/PS.529/71 in the context of the previous correspondence. Since there is ~~compiled~~ implied criticism of a former Minister's letter it would be convenient to deal with this in the reply to Sir John Langford-Holt if US of S (RAF) agrees.

16. I attach a suggested letter for consideration.

23 Mar 76

J A PEDUZIE
S4(Air)

M.5

APS/US of S(RAF)

I must express regret for the embarrassment that has been caused by the failure of staff here to observe the security regulations and to exercise proper caution in dealing with members of the public. They have been told of their error and warned that this is a serious matter and is not to be repeated.

2. It would appear that the frequency of visits to this Office by members of universities, scientists and others may, by familiarity, have bred if not contempt at least some relaxation of guard. I have therefore written to all Directing Staff and Heads of Branches here (copy enclosed) to try to prevent any similar lapse from occurring. A Met Office Order on the disclosure of official information (which will be incorporated in due course in our Standing Instructions) is also in the course of issue to all staff at this Headquarters and at outstations.

3. While not seeking to excuse the degree of latitude that was allowed to these particular visitors I should perhaps explain, with reference to para 7 of minute 4, that although it is true that the information made available to Mr Hennessey was all recorded in MN log books a great deal of work would have been needed to dig this out of the Archives where the log books are stored only in date order whereas the information had already been extracted and summarized on the file.

E G SLATER
for Sec Met O

25 Mar 76

Our file is with you already for action

US of S(RAF) Folder No. AF/85/84 / 76

4M

Hd S & Cy

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

I have placed at E ___ on this folder a letter from Sir John Langford-Holt MP.

2. I should be grateful if you would let me have, by 5 p.m. on 23 April, a draft of the letter which you would advise US of S(RAF) to send in reply, together with any other relevant information and papers.

3. If a final reply cannot be drafted within this time, I should be grateful if you would either return the folder to the Private Office with a progress report and draft interim reply, or, if the folder needs to be retained in the branch, advise the Private Office of the position by telephone (Ext 7516).

4. Your attention is drawn to Office Instructions paragraphs 0606-0608.

5. Any decision that the Department or Service proposes to take in this case must now be suspended until it has been reviewed by US of S(RAF). No action should be taken which might prejudice the final decision.

Watt J.

APS/US of S(RAF)

8 April

Reference AF/BJ 84/76

M7

APS/US of S(RAF)

I attach a suggested reply to Encl 15-16.

13 April 1976

J A PEDUZIE
S4(Air)

CODE 18-77

Also Met O

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-~~230 7022~~ 218 6666

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/BJ 84/76

15/14 April 1976

Dear Sir John

Thank you for your letter of 5th April and for sending on the further letter from Mr Julian Hennessey of 43 Walnut Tree Road, Heston, Hounslow.

The Ministry of Defence have not found it necessary to draw up a formal definition of Unidentified Flying Objects. As you know, any flying object which cannot be identified immediately is of interest to us, but once the defence implications of the sighting have been examined we do not pursue the investigation any further.

I note Mr Hennessey's comments about his visit to the Meteorological Office. I enclose the final batch of UFO statistics which were prepared before the analysis was discontinued.

Yours sincerely
Brynmor John

(BRYNMOR JOHN)

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

UFO STATISTICS - 1ST JANUARY 1968 TO 31ST DECEMBER 1973

Year	Satellites & Debris	Balloons	Celestial Objects	Meteorological & Natural Phenomena	Aircraft	Miscellaneous	Unexplained (Insufficient) Information	TOTAL
1968	65	10	36	3	114	30	22	280
1969	37	9	27	19	101	17	18	228
1970	9	8	31	16	97	5	15	181
1971	28	11	33	62	160	27	58	379
1972	7	28	17	2	128	5	14	201
1973	23	24	17	2	132	22	11	231

NOTE: Miscellaneous reports include, hoaxes, the reflection of lights on cloud, flares, fireworks, kites, lights on tall structures, photographic aberrations and bird flocks.

NF/B3 84/26

S4(C) 2 March

S4(C) 11 March

S4(C) 30 March

S4(C) 23 Feb

NST 16 March

NST 25 March

DF 14 April

NST 23 April

DF 10 March

Sir John Langford-Holt, M.P.

S4 (4)

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SWIA 0AA

Seen by US of S (RAF)

5th April, 1976.

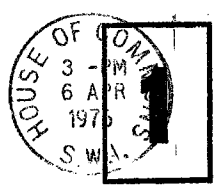
Dear John,

I forwarded a copy of your letter of the 29th March to Mr. Julian Hennessey and have received the enclosed reply.

I would be grateful if you could let me have answers to the questions he has posed.

Yours ever,
John Langford-Holt

Brynmor John, Esq., M.P.
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence
for the Royal Air Force,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
SWIA 2HB.





Brynmor John, Esq., M.P.
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Air Force,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
London, SW1A 2HB.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone: 01-570 6751

Vistula,
43 Walnut Tree Road,
Heston,
Hounslow, TW5 0LP
England.

15

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

1 April 1976

Dear Sir John

Thank you for the letter from Minister Brynmor John.
I think it essential to state, in fairness to the Meteorological Staff whom the Minister considers I have taken advantage of, that my colleague and I identified ourselves as being from a civilian organisation and that the photostats were given willingly and not through any misunderstanding nor deception.
The Minister should know that there was one individual at the Met Office who considered that the UFO reports he handled and passed to the Ministry of Defence may have had security implications. These reports were distinctly seperate from the non-classified ones we viewed and we were not permitted to view them, nor did we pursue the question of doing so.
The Minister's letter contains a number of points which require clarification, however, before referring to them, I would very much appreciate learning what his Department's definition is of an unidentified flying object (UFO). I have checked through my previous correspondence with the Ministry and can find no reference to such a definition.
To conclude, would the Minister please provide a copy of his Department's UFO statistics up to the date of discontinuation in 1974.

Yours sincerely

Julian Hennessey

Hd of S4 (Air)

(14)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-~~230 7022~~ 218 6666

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/BJ 84/76

29 March 1976

Dear Sir John

I now have the report I called for about the letter you sent to me on 26th February from Mr J J A Hennessey of Vistula, 43 Walnut Tree Road, Heston Hounslow.

The material Mr Hennessey saw on his visit to the Meteorological Office had been extracted from Merchant Navy log books. From time to time the more interesting of these observations are recorded in the "Marine Observer", a journal which is published by HMSO and is on sale to the general public. The log books themselves are also available to the public and form part of the National Meteorological Library permanent archive. Mr Hennessey should consult these sources if he is interested in the material. It is unfortunate he took advantage of the Meteorological Staff by obtaining the photostat copies he has shown you. The decision to destroy or retain the files has yet to be taken - he saw only a recommendation for disposal. The gift of any files is a very rare occurrence. It is most unlikely that any Ministry of Defence records would ever be handed over to an individual member of the public or to any organisation in a foreign country.

As Mr Hennessey has been told repeatedly, the Ministry of Defence files on Unidentified Flying Objects contain no more correspondence than is necessary to establish the possible defence implications and this may sometimes involve references to classified material. The files must remain closed to the public under the rules laid down by the Public Records Acts. Mr Hennessey told us on 19th December 1971 that he was fully aware of these rules and he has also referred to them in his latest letter. He should also be informed that, for obvious reasons, we shall review the files before their eventual publication in order to eliminate any information of a classified nature.

There is no inconsistency between Merlyn Rees' letter of 14th August 1967 and Lord Winterbottom's letter dated 26th March 1970. The decision to retain UFO records indefinitely was taken between

/these two

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

these two dates. It was not necessary to go into that when Lord Winterbottom wrote to you in 1970.

I can offer no assurances about the material at Fylingdales or within the Air Traffic Control Organisation. The retention of BMEWS tapes and air defence radar film is ruled out because of the cost and the problem of storing the accumulating material. There are also security objections. No films are made of civil air traffic control unit radars.

I would also like to deal with the attached letter dated 25th February which Mr Hennessey has addressed to my Department on the subject of the F111 activity on 26th October 1971. There are now no records available to provide the details Mr Hennessey requests. Nor can we help him with the statistical analysis of UFO reports. These analyses were discontinued in 1974 and it is no longer possible to provide the figures.

Yours sincerely

Brynmor John

(BRYNMOR JOHN)

FO/30

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(12)

LOOSE MINUTE

Sec Met O/C146

All Deputy Directors
All Assistant Directors
and Heads of Branches

cc: DG Met O
DS Met O
DR Met O
File AF/M582/76

ACCESS TO OFFICIAL RECORDS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. A recent incident in which two members of the public, one a foreign national, were given unsupervised access to a branch copying machine to make copies of entries on a registered file dealing with Unidentified Flying Objects sightings has led to Parliamentary correspondence that has caused serious embarrassment to the Minister for the RAF.

2. A number of points arise out of this incident on which guidance is now offered in order to prevent similar occurrences.

UFO Information

3. It may not be generally known that MOD investigates all UFO "sightings" reported by members of the public et al, although the investigation is confined to the defence implications and does not extend to the wider scientific aspects. These arrangements are co-ordinated by S4(Air). As a general rule S4(Air)'s reply to the correspondents merely explains in general terms that the Department is concerned with the defence implications only. If people ask to see the MOD files on UFOs they get the standard reply that although the correspondence may be unclassified any communication between the Department and another member of the public must be treated as confidential and UFO records must remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down in the Public Records Acts at the end of 30 years. This policy was endorsed by Ministers in 1970.

4. There is one possible exception to the general rule given above; an application would be considered seriously if it came from a major scientific organization of high standing with strong reasons for obtaining access to the official records. No application of this calibre has been received to date.

5. If a request is received in any part of the Met Office from a member of the public for information on UFO sightings or investigations S4(Air) is therefore to be advised in the first instance.

Disclosure of Official Information in General

6. The Official Secrets Acts provide for the security of all official information, whether classified or not and, as MOD Manual 4 para 1602 makes clear, discretion and care are necessary in relation to all official papers. As a general rule access to official files is not to be given to persons outside Government Service even where material contained in these files is published elsewhere or is available in another form to members of the public. A distinction is to be drawn in this respect between material in the Library Archives, which is available to members of the public, and material in Registry Archives, which is not.

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Other Considerations

7. Further points arising from this particular incident are:

a. Visits by members of the public to HQ Branches of the Office are to be cleared with ADs or Heads of Branch (MOOM 6.9.1).

b. Such visitors are to be escorted while they remain on Met Office property (MOD Manual 4 para 2004).

c. ADs and Heads of Branches are to ensure that reproduction and photocopying equipment in their branches is adequately safeguarded both during working hours and in the silent hours to prevent its unauthorized use (MOD Manual 4 para 1453).

8. A Met Office Order will be issued in due course to give wider dissemination to some of these points but you are requested meanwhile to bring them to the attention of members of your staff, and to officers in charge of outstations under your control, who may have similar contacts with members of the public.

E G Slater
for Sec Met O

23 March 1976

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10

LOOSE MINUTE

AF/BJ84/76

S4(Air) ←

Copy to:
DD HQ Sy(MOD)3

LETTER ABOUT
UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD HOLT MP TO US OF S(RAF)

We spoke about E9(DHQ Sy 13/2/1 of 19 Mar) to which I have nothing to add, DD HQ Sy 3 having come in Paras 4 and 5 to the same conclusion as I had before I got that far in his minute. As I understand you intend to reply on the lines he has set out, there is no point in my pursuing the security problems.

G BIGGAR
Gp Capt
DD RAF Sy 1

22 Mar 76

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9

OSE MINUTE - D/HQ Sy 13/2/1

S4 (Air) (thro' DD RAF Sy 1)

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD HOLT MP to US OF S (RAF)

1. This minute contains our co-ordinated comments from HQ Sy on the issues raised by this letter. I am sending it through DD RAF Sy 1 as he may well have an interest in certain aspects.

Mr Hennessey's visit to the Meteorological Office

2. With an organisation like the Meteorological Office, one of whose principal functions is to inform the public, it is always difficult to know where to draw the line in disclosing official information. In that the information collected on the files that Mr Hennessey inspected was, according to DD Met O(O), extracted from log books which are available for public consultations, it is difficult to argue on these grounds that Mr Hennessey should have been denied a sight of the files themselves, unless they contained assessments and views generated within the Met Office. Moreover, HMG is considering ways of increasing public access to official information, and the Met Office may have anticipated legislation to this effect. However, until there is new legislation, it is incumbent upon all officials to observe the present policy, which is not to allow public access to files until the review process is completed, and they have been sent to a recognized depository. Here the Met Office may have been incautious, and Mr Hennessey's needs could have been met by referring him to the relevant parts of the log books. I appreciate that this is a fine bureaucratic distinction, and one that may not make much sense to practical men in the Met Office, but once exceptions are made, requests are received from other quarters, and the Service has a duty to be even-handed within the present policy.

3. We are rather more concerned with a certain laxity in the physical security revealed by paragraph 2 of D D Met O(O)'s loose minute. Under the rule in MOD Man 4 Chap 14 paragraph 1419, any visitor who does not fall into one of five clearly defined categories is required to be escorted while on official premises. This rule has gained in significane in the current phase of terrorist activity in the UK. So far as I know Hennessey had no status that entitled him to be left to his own devices unobserved while he was examining the Metrological Office records. The rules are compulsory, and no local discretion in their interpretation is permitted - a fact which should be drawn to the attention of the staff concerned.

BMEWS information

4. We do not see that Mr Hennessey's reference to the BMEWS rejection rate reflects any security breach. It's the sort of figure that could be picked up by any informed person, usually from a US source, as DD Ops (GE)(RAF) has pointed out. Whatever the security pros and cons of retaining BMEWS tapes (and any large scale accumulation of sensitive data is a security risk), retention is ruled out on grounds of costs and space, as the tapes could not be released for many years for the security reasons set out by DD Ops (GE)(RAF). I think that Sir John Langford-Holt should be informed that Mr Hennessey's suggestion is unacceptable for these reasons, particularly in a time of restriction on public spending and reductions on the Civil Service.

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Information from Civil ATC units and 'other defence units'

5. Similarly, with the film produced by the air defence unit mentioned by DD Ops (GE)(RAF), it seems that security considerations, although compelling, are secondary to the cost of developing, storing and reviewing any film retained, which rule out any such retention. The same considerations apply to film and tape from Joint Air Traffic Control Radar Units. This is not really our field, and DD RAF Sy 1 will no doubt wish to comment.

19 Mar 76

R C HARFORD
DD HQ Sy (MOD) 3
MT 1/28 MB 7376

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DAH/2

(7)

LOOSE MINUTE

AF/CX 1528/72

S4(Air)

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT MP TO US OF S (RAF)

Reference:
AF/1505/III dated 5 Mar 76

1. Reference asked for comment on two points concerning the release of Service records for UFO research namely, BMEWS and Radar film information. Our comments are as follows:

a. BMEWS Information. Mr Hennessey's reference to the monthly BMEWS rejection rate of 800 non-ballistic radar targets a month could well be a figure gleaned from a NORAD release based on the 3-site system. We assume that he really means uncorrelated accelerating targets, in which case the figure is a reasonable average (In the case of Fylingdales, it is nearer 450 a month). Whilst data on such targets could be easily extracted from site historical tapes, the accumulation of this information over a period would lead to the disclosure of classified system performance details and this we cannot condone. On the matter of data retention, BMEWS historical tapes are cleared for re-use after a period of 28 days. This practice is due mainly to the cost and storage factors involved. However, should an event take place warranting corroboration from Fylingdales, we would expect initiation of such a task within this 28 day period to allow for on-site comparison with stored data.

b. Air Defence Radar films. Only one air defence radar unit currently has the equipment to produce radar film. The films are treated as Secret and are retained for 28 days, so that any unusual phenomena or special tracks may be examined. In the event that no investigation is required the films are then destroyed by fire. Storage considerations preclude routine retention for longer than this period. These films could provide a trained observer with comprehensive classified information on the radar's performance and its resistance to electronic countermeasures. For these reasons we strongly resist the release of the radar films to outside agencies.

12 Mar 76

N G COLVIN
Group Captain
DD Ops(GE)(RAF)
MB 4257 7892 MB

LOOSE MINUTE

(5)

AF/M 582/76

S4(Air) - Mr J A Peduzie ✓

Cc DD of HQ Sy (MOD) 3
OS 9
DD Ops (CE)(RAF)
DDC (AP)2

YOUR LM AF/1505/III - AF/7464/72 of 5.3.1976 CONCERNING THE UFO LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT MP TO US OF S (RAF)

I refer to para 4 of the above-mentioned loose minute. Mr Hennessey, accompanied by Mr M Rodeghier, an astrophysicist from the North West University of Chicago, visited the Marine Division, Met O 1a on 19 February 1976 by prior arrangement. He had visited Met O 1a several times during previous years to view unclassified files in which observations of unusual aerial phenomena, extracted from Merchant Navy meteorological log books completed by voluntary observers, generally ships' officers, are assembled. From time to time the more interesting of these observations are recorded in the Marine Observer which is published by HMSO on behalf of the Office and is on sale to the general public. The log books themselves are available for consultation by members of the public and form part of the National Meteorological Library permanent archive.

2. In the course of his recent visit, Mr Hennessey was allowed to copy extracts of interest to him. During this period he was not supervised and it must be assumed that he copied the disposal recommendation slips included in the files.

3. We were not aware of the general guidance referred to in paras 2 and 3 of your loose minute.

N E RIDER
DD Met O(O)

12 Mar 1976

Head of S4(Air)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1

TELEPHONE 01-~~XXXXXXX~~ 218 6666

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/BJ 84/76

11 March 1976

Dear Sir John,

Thank you for your letter of 26th February and for forwarding the comments you have received from Mr Julian Hennessey of "Vistula", 43 Walnut Tree Road, Heston, Hounslow on the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects.

I have arranged for my Department to look into the points Mr Hennessey raises but will write again as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Brynmor John

(BRYNMOR JOHN)

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

RESTRICTED
UNCLASSIFIED

LOOSE MINUTE

8M/27/026

(8)

S4(Air)

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT. MP, to US of S(RAF)

Reference: AF/1505/111)
AF/7464/72) dated 5 Mar 76

1. The Reference (para.6) asks me to comment on the suggestion that radar film taken at "civil air traffic control units" should be retained.

2. It is not NATS policy to take film of civil air traffic service unit radars and, in fact, no such films are made.

3. There are, however, civil control consoles established at the Joint Air Traffic Control Radar Units (JATCRUs) and film is made of the radar pictures used by these civil positions by virtue of the fact that it is MOD policy to take radar films at the JATCRUs. These films are developed only in case of an incident or accident and all un-processed film is retained for 30 days only. Any suggestion to develop all films so taken would be costly.

4. In the future, it is intended to record digitised radar information being fed into the London Air Traffic Control Centre (LATCC). This will be stored on multi-track digital tape and not on film, but will be capable of reprocessing through the LATCC computers to provide a record of the air situation as seen by any of the radars fed into LATCC. The quantity of digitised information so stored will be such that, to keep costs within reasonable limits, these records are intended to be kept for 15 days only.

D P J SMITH
Group Captain
DDC(AP)2 NATS
Room T1005 Ext 2429
Space House

10th March 1976

UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED

(6)

LOOSE MINUTE

D/OS9/5/76

S4(Air) - Mr J A Peduzie ✓
Copies to:
DD Met O(O)
DD of HQ Sy(MOD)3
DD Ops (GE)(RAF)
DDC(AP)2

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT, MP, TO US OF S(RAF)

1. We spoke about your loose minute (AF/1505/III: AF/7464/72) of the 5th March. It is most unfortunate that Mr Hennessey appears to have been supplied with photostat copies of the disposal recommendation forms (RAF Form 5659A) relating to at least 2 of the files concerned.

2. I suggest it be explained to Mr Hennessey that a completed RAF Form 5659A merely records the recommendation of the desk officer about the disposal of a file at the time he passes it to the registry for closure; it does not constitute a decision either to retain the file permanently or to destroy it. This decision is taken later when the file is finally reviewed by the staff of the Departmental Record Officer to determine its disposal. And in view of the interest in UFO, records on the subject, other than those of a purely routine nature, are likely to be considered worthy of permanent preservation at this final review stage.

3. On the general question of the disposal of public records you will be aware that those not selected for permanent preservation (in the Public Record Office or other approved place of deposit) are normally destroyed. However, under Section 3(6) of the Public Records Act of 1958 the Lord Chancellor may approve the disposal of records in some other way and at the request of Departments the Lord Chancellor has, on occasion, agreed to gifts of records to approved bodies such as museums and universities. It is most unlikely, however, that he would agree to the handing over of public records to an individual or to an organisation in a foreign country.

8 Mar 76

P WHITELOCK
OS9
ES 2010 Ext 3106 ES

(3)

LOOSE MINUTE

AF/1505/III
AF/7464/72

DD Met O(O)
DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3
OS 9
DD Ops (GE)(RAF)
DDC(AP)2

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS LETTER FROM SIR JOHN LANGFORD-HOLT, MP TO US OF S(RAF)

1. I attach a letter and enclosures which US of S(RAF) has received from Sir John Langford-Holt, MP about the records we keep on Unidentified Flying Objects. The constituent, Mr Hennessey, has been plaguing us for years and US of S(RAF) has asked me to prepare a full brief on this current correspondence. Two of the points - labelled B and C - are matters for S4(Air) and I need not trouble you with them. However, I would be grateful for your early advice on the following:-

POINT A - Mr Hennessey's visit to Meteorological Office

2. It may not be generally known that MOD investigates all UFO "sightings" reported by members of the public et al, although the investigation is confined to the defence implications and does not extend to the wider scientific aspects. The arrangements are co-ordinated by S4(Air). The procedure is to refer the public's comments to specialist branches such as Ops(GE)2(RAF), DI 55 and, when appropriate Met 09, but the public are not informed of the results. As a general rule S4(Air)'s reply to the correspondent merely explains in general terms that we are concerned with the defence implications only.

3. If, like Mr Hennessey, people ask to see the MOD files on UFOs, they get the standard reply that the correspondence may be unclassified but any communication between the Department and another member of the public must be treated as confidential. Furthermore, even "open" files might still have a bearing on classified material such as relevant radar film. For these reasons UFO records must remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down in the Public Records Acts ie at the end of 30 years. There is one possible exception here; an application would be considered seriously if it came from a major scientific organisation of high standing with strong reasons for obtaining access to the records. But no application of this calibre has been received to date.

4. This policy was endorsed by Ministers in 1970 and it has been explained to Mr Hennessey's MP on at least one occasion. He now appears to have got round the rules on his recent visit to the Meteorological Office. Would DD Met O(O) please let us have full details of this visit and comment on such points as how it came to be arranged, what really went on and how Mr Hennessey managed to get access to the files which he alleges he inspected? DD of HQ Sy (MOD)3 will also wish to comment. And on a separate point, would OS9 please provide the official reply to Mr Hennessey's suggestion that if the files are to be destroyed they should be handed over to him?

POINT D - BMEWS information

5. Mr Hennessey seems to have some acquaintance with Fylingdales as well. I should be grateful if DD Ops(GE)(RAF) would advise on the accuracy of the attached comments, and on the current practice for retaining the BMEWS magnetic tapes. There may also be security problems here and I would welcome DD of HQ Sy(MOD)3's views not only on the question of retaining the tapes for ultimate disclosure, but also on the wider implications. What worries me is how Mr Hennessey got his information in the first place. Does this point the need for reform in existing security arrangements? Should the American authorities be informed?

POINT E - Information from civil ATC units etc

6. Would DDC(AP)2 and DD Ops(GE)(RAF) please comment as necessary on this further suggestion that radar film taken at civil air traffic control units and "other Defence Units" should also be retained? Is this practical and (DD of HQ Sy(MOD)3) are there any security objections?

7. The Minister has asked for the full brief before 16 March. May I have your comments as soon as possible please?

5 March 1976

J A PEDUZIE
S4(Air)

ack. by form 26 on 26.2.76

11

'Vistula'
43 Walnut Tree Road
Heston
Hounslow TW5 OLP

25 February 1976

The Section Head
S4f(Air)
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1

Your ref: AF/CX38/67

Dear Sir

Referring to previous letters from your office dated 5 November 1971, 7 January 1972 and one from the Minister dated 7 February 1972 concerning the dumping of fuel by an F-111 based at RAF Upper Heyford about Noon on 26 October 1971, I would once again ask if you could provide me with information as to the exact time, altitude, speed and position of the F-111 when it dumped its fuel.
Both your office and the Minister have confirmed that you have a record of this dumping and as both USAF and RAF regulations require that full details of such events be recorded, coupled with the fact that the operational capabilities of the type of F-111 based at RAF Upper Heyford is on record and therefore not classified, I see no reason why the Ministry cannot provide the requested information.
In replying to this letter, I would appreciate your forwarding me a copy of your UFO statistics for the period 1968 to 1975 inclusive.

Yours faithfully

J J A Hennessey

Sir John Langford-Holt, M.P.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

AF/RS 24/76

Hd S+Q

What's all this about?

26th February, 1976

Mr. Julian Hennessey,
'Vistula'
43, Walnut Tree Road,
Heston, Hounslow

I enclose a letter with enclosures from Mr. Hennessey and would be grateful if you could let me have answers to the various questions he has posed.

Yours sincerely,

John Langford-Holt

Rt. Hon. William Rodgers, M.P.
Minister of State,
Ministry of Defence,
Whitehall,
S.W.1.

43 Walnut Tree Road
Heston
Hounslow TW5 OLP

24 February 1976

Sir John Langford-Holt MP
House of Commons
London SW1

Dear Sir John

With reference to our previous communications regarding the retention of UFO records by the Ministry of Defence, and more specifically the 26 March 1970 letter from Lord Winterbottom in which he stated, "The Ministry of Defence hold UFO records from 1962 onwards. These records will not be destroyed..", I recently visited the Marine Division of (A) the Meteorological Office in Bracknell, which is under the auspices of the Ministry, and was accompanied by a colleague, an astrophysicist from the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Illinois which is directed by Dr J Allen Hynek, former Chief Civilian UFO Consultant to the USAF for over 20 years.

During our visit, we viewed three files appertaining to reported UFO observations made by ships at sea. These three files, all of which are unclassified, contain a number of reports which would be of definite scientific value to the Center. However, as can be seen from the attached photostats, one of the files, located in the Meteorological Office's Main Building Registry, is due for destruction in 1978. Another file, at present in the Met.01 Annexe in Eastern Road, Bracknell, is recommended for destruction in 1991. In view of the nature of these files, and subsequent low-interest value to the Ministry, I herewith make formal application that they be given me, as a research associate of the Center for UFO Studies, in the year they are recommended for destruction, for onward transmission to the Center for computer study. A letter confirming my associateship with the Center can be given if required.

(B) Regarding the 30-year ruling on UFO records held by the Ministry, I would also like to seek the Minister's assurance that these records will also contain full data appertaining to the Ministry's investigation of the reports including the findings and records of Science-3 and 5, MAIS, STCOC, HQ II GP, S4f(Air) and any other body involved in collation and evaluation of them.

(C) In a letter dated 14 August 1967 addressed to Wing Commander Sir Eric Bullus MP, Mr Merlyn Rees stated that UFO records were being destroyed after a 5-year period and that if any report appeared to be of special interest, it would be retained. Since it was not until 1970 that a decision was made not to destroy UFO records, I would be interested to learn why those of 1962 were retained and not destroyed in 1967.

(D) Regarding other potential sources of UFO data, am also interested in learning for what length of time magnetic tapes from BMEWS are stored. I have on good authority that the rejection rate on the system is 800 non-ballistic radar targets a month. Tapes from the NORAD Command have been checked by one scientist and found to have contained uncorrelated targets of scientific interest to UFO research. It is therefore reasonable to assume the BMEWS rejection figure of 800 a month may well contain such data and should, like written records, be retained. In addition, because of the selectivity of the BMEWS System, any radar films taken by the Ministry at local civil air traffic control units which show UFOs should be retained as well as those from other Defence units. Perhaps the Minister would give some assurances in this respect.

Yours sincerely

Julian J A Hennessey

Date Opened

UNIT OR BRANCH (For R.A.F. use only)

Met Satellite

SUBJECT

Sub Satellites to

Numbers and subjects of ... and subsequent papers ... see inside cover

Date	Min. or	Referred to	Date	Min. or	Referred by	Date	Min. or
18.12.68							

RAF Form 565
(Revised May 19..)

RECOMMENDATION FOR DISPOSAL OF A REGISTERED FILE

Subject: Ship Log Extracts to Technical Intelligence

File Number: M 24553 / 63

The above file is forwarded for disposal as action on it is completed. I recommend that in accordance with MOOM, Appendix Q1/Q2, item ..... it should be

*(a) destroyed immediately. 78 1/8P

†*(b) destroyed in the year 19~~..~~.. i.e., 15 years after the date of the last action.

*(c) retained for review by MOD [Archives (Air)] in the year 19....., i.e., twenty-five years from the date it was opened: it may be downgraded to..... in.....

Branch Met.O.1. Signed [signature]

Date 17/11/65 Name in block letters PENCROFT

Rank N.O.

*Delete those which do not apply.
†This period may be extended by an agreed number of years if the file contains papers that are subject to the "Statute of Limitations."

For Registry use only

1. Destroyed by.....

2. Signature of Witnessing Officer.....

Date.....

PLEASE COMPLETE LEGIBLY AFTER READING NOTES OVERLEAF

RAF Form No. 3689 (Revised 5[illegible] 1969)

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DISPOSAL OF A REGISTERED FILE

Subject: Ship Log Extracts To Technical Intelligence	CLASSIFICATION
	FILE No. AF/M 1376/68
Date of last minute or index entry (not RAF Form 3689) 21/11/73	PART No.

The above file is forwarded for disposal-action on it is completed (see Note 3 overleaf). I recommend that it be

*(a) destroyed, the year 19[illegible]

*(b) destroyed, the year 1991

*(c) returned for review by MOD-C59a (Hayes) in the year 19[illegible] (i.e. twenty-five years from the date it was opened) it may be downgraded to [illegible]

*(d) transferred to the AHB (RAF) for historical purposes and returned for reference to C59a (Hayes) for final review in the year 19[illegible] (i.e. twenty-five years from the date it was opened) it may be downgraded to [illegible]

RAF Uxbridge only

Date 18/2/74 Signed [signature]

Name [illegible]

for [illegible] C.V. Branch

Rank [illegible] Wing Commander

* [illegible] AFTER READING NOTES OVERLEAF

MOD Form 41D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted]

MINISTER'S OFFICE REGISTERED FOLDER No.

AF/JW 234/77

RELATED DEPARTMENTAL REGISTERED FOLDER No(s).

122505

DEFE 7/1/98

SUBJECT

JOHN ELLIS

–

U.F.O.s

Unredacted Copies

This folder must be given priority. A draft reply (or other proposa
Private Office within 10 working days; if this is not possible the Priva

Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE	Referred to	DATE
~~Hd of S4(Air)~~	10 June 77				
~~AS1/DI55~~	13/6/77				
~~S4(Air)~~	21-6-77				
~~APS/US of S(RAF)~~	29/6/77				
~~S4(Air)-Mr Peduzzi~~					
~~Mrs Judy~~					
APS/US of S(RAF)	4/7/77.				

SECOND REVIEW 2003

506

Andrew Jeff

File Ref: MR/122505

Part:

1. When in action, this fold [redacted] tal Registered file.

US of S(RAF) Folder No. AF/JW/234/77

4M1

Head of Sy (Air)

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

I have placed at E 1 on this folder a letter from John Ellis MP.

2. I should be grateful if you would let me have, by 5 p.m. on 24th June 77, a draft of the letter which you would advise US of S(RAF) to send in reply, together with any other relevant information and papers.

3. If a final reply cannot be drafted within this time, I should be grateful if you would either return the folder to the Private Office with a progress report and draft interim reply, or, if the folder needs to be retained in the branch, advise the Private Office of the position by telephone (Ext 7516).

4. Your attention is drawn to Office Instructions paragraphs 0606-0608.

5. Any decision that the Department or Service proposes to take in this case must now be suspended until it has been reviewed by US of S(RAF). No action should be taken which might prejudice the final decision.

for E Kelly
APS/US of S(RAF)

10th June 77

ADI/DI55

Copy Met 09

You will see from the enclosed correspondence that a Member of Parliament has asked us to investigate a recent press report about alleged UFO sightings on the Humberside. I should be grateful if you, and Met 09 to whom I am copying this, would advise on the reply that should be sent to Mr Ellis.

I enclose the associated reports from RAF Binbrook.

13 June 1977

J A PEDUZIE
S4(Air)

M3

S4(AIR)

ALLEGED UFO SIGHTINGS

1. Ref your M2, Parliamentary Paper and reports which have been annotated A-E, herewith the following comments:

a. Reports show a marked lack of consistency if we attempt to corelate them into a group of events.

b. Except for reports A & E, the reports are incomplete and lacking in meaningful information such as object size and distance relative to known fixed landmarks.

c. Reports A & E could refer to the same object as the descriptions are vaguely similar and the directinn of movement in each case is N-S. However the object could not have been travelling at aircraft speed, as alleged in E, as 7½ hrs separates the sightings - one in Hull, the other at Scunthorpe.

d. In report C the 3 objects, one of which was flashing, could have been a reference to an aircraft travelling at night possibly with landing lights on. The flashing light would be the standard GRIMES light carried above and below the fuselage.

e. The Press Report itself is inconsistent with the facts reported in A & E. - It was Mr Thomson in A, who described the object as being "oval shaped, 20 ft long and 3 ft high". According to Dale Roe, in E, the object made no noise at all.

f. We have spoken to MET 16 who consider that the timing of the release of Met Balloons at Gt Yarmouth and Edinburgh and the wind direction at the time rule out any likelihood of an explanation being found based on Met Balloons.

2. In conclusion we can offer no positive explanation for the objects allegedly sighted except that the object, in report C, could have been an aircraft with landing lights illuminated. Nor, on the evidence available, can we suggest why a spate of reports should have been made in the Humberside area within a 48 hrs period.

In a negative sense it can be reasonably stated that the objects reported upon were not Met Balloons.

17th June 1977

for J D ASTERAKI
ADI/DI55

JP

M4 File AF/JW234/77

APS/US of S(RAF)

1. You will see from Minute 3 and Encl 7 that we are unable to account for these UFO sightings on the Humberside. In accordance with our standard practice copies of the reports went to DI55 and Ops(GE)(RAF) on receipt to ensure that any defence implications would not be overlooked and, as you know, we do not normally institute any further investigation if enquiries reach us from the general public.

2. I suggest then a reply should be sent to Mr Ellis on the lines of the draft attached.

29 Jun 77

J A PEDUZIE
S4(Air)
MB 8241 7065 MB

S4(Air) - M' Peduzie 12/7 MS

Thank you for your M 4..... US of S(RAF) has written to John Ellis Esq MP at E 9..... I attach a copy for your retention. Will you please take the necessary executive action.

F Kelly
for
APS/US of S(RAF)

1st July 77

(7)

LOOSE MINUTE

M868/73/Met O 9

S4(Air), MOD

UFO REPORTS FROM HUMBERSIDE

Reference A: Loose Minute AF/JW234/77 dated 13 June 1977

1. The UFO reports forwarded with reference A have been examined and after investigation it is considered that there were no Meteorological Office balloons and associated equipment flying in the area concerned at the times of interest. Also, the descriptions given do not appear to refer to meteorological phenomena.

2. It may be of interest to note that the Meteorological Office is not the only organisation in this country which uses balloon-borne equipment. The army does so for ballistic purposes, universities sometimes employ similar techniques in experimental work and there may be others. Perhaps you can check these possibilities. On the days in question there was a chance that balloons released by foreign users over the continent or from ships in the North Sea could have reached Humberside but we have no knowledge of this.

16 June 1977

J H ALBION
Room 104
Met Office (Met O 9)
Bracknell
Ext 2309

8/2/3/5/343

(6)

OAL117 25/2158 14504275

FM CAB

ROUTINE 252200Z MAY

FROM: RAF BIRDROCK
TO: MOD(UK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LQZ
REPORT OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT
REF: AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F (AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 252035A MAY, SHORT DURATION
B. SILVER CONESHAPED OBJECT AT A DISTANCE BECOMING DOMESHAPED, NO SOUND
C. BODMIN ROAD, BRANSHOLME, HULL. OBSERVER OUTDOORS, STATIONARY
D. NAKED EYE
E. FACING NORTH
F/G. NOT AVAILABLE
H. MOVING NORTH TO SOUTH AT FAST AIRCRAFT SPEED
J. MOVING CLOUDS
K. TOWN ENVIRONMENT
L. HUMBERSIDE POLICE OPS ROOM 0482-2611, PC HERRON
M. DALE ROE (AGE 13 YEARS) 54 CLEAVE DRIVE BRANSHOLME, HULL

PAGE 2 RBDPIM 045 UNCLAS
N. HUMBERSIDE POLICE SAY INFORMANT SEEMED GENUINE, GAVE AN OK ADDRESS
O. TWO MORE 13 YEAR OLD COMPANIONS POLICE HAVE NOTE OF NAMES AND ADDRESSES
P. 252050A MAY
Q. OBSERVER STATES THAT AN AIRCRAFT HAD PASSED OVERHEAD JUST PRIOR TO THE UFO SIGHTING
BT

DISTRIBUTION LQZ

CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDO))
CAL 1 DI 55 B(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 C
CYD 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAM 1 Science 3(RAF)

[redacted]

8/2/3/5/54

(5)

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAB217 27/2317 1470/657

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 2706552Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO MODUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LGZ
REPORT OF UFO, REF AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F(AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 262240A MAY DURATION NOT GIVEN
B. CIRCULAR RED OBJECT 25FT DIAM
C.-G. NOT AVAILABLE
H. TRAVELLING WEST FAST
J/K. NOT AVAILABLE
L. NULL POLICE
M.-O. NOT AVAILABLE
P. 262245A MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LGZ
F
CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDO))
CAL 1 DI 55 b(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 d
CYD 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAM 1 Science 3(RAF)

9/2/5/75

(4)

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAB918 27/0819 1470 663

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 270700Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO NORUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LQZ
UFO REPORT, REF AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F(AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 262300A MAY, 3 MINS
B. 3 OBJECTS, ROUND. TWO WERE ABOUT AS BIG AND BRIGHT AS A STAR. THIRD WAS LARGER AND FLASHING
C. EXETER GROVE, HULL
D. NAKED EYE
E/F/G/H NOT GIVEN
J. CLEAR MOONLIT SKY
K. CHEMICAL WORKS NEAR
L. HULL POLICE
M. GRANVILLE FOX 43 HARPON GROVE HULL
N. NIL
O. RICHARD MORGAN, 10 CONDER GROVE, HULL
P. 262300A MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LQZ
F
CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDC))
CAL 1 DI 55 b(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 d
CYD 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAM 1 Science 3(RAF)

(3)

(13)

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAB169 26/2$2$ 14$$3776

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 2619$5Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO MODUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIC LQZ
REPORT OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT
REF AF/3459/75/PT2/S/4F (AIR) 11 SEP 75
A. 2513$$A MAY, SHORT DURATION
B. QUITE SMALL SILVER TRIANGULAR SHAPE WITHIN WHITE HAZY CIRCLE
C. BRANSHOLM SHOPPING CENTRE, EAST HULL
D. NAKED EYE
E/F/G NOT AVAILABLE
H. HOVERING OVER SHOPPING CENTRE
J/K NOT AVAILABLE
L. HUMBERSIDE POLICE CPS ROOM 0482-2611 SGT WRIGHT
M. STEVEN COLEMAN (14 YRS) 475 NEWTONDALE, HULL
N. POLICE CONFIRM ADDRESS AS GENUINE AND OBSERVER SEEMED SINCERE WHEN INTERVIEWED
O. WHEN OBSERVER HAD TURNED TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF HIS COMP-

PAGE 2 RBDPIN 037 UNCLAS
ANIONS, THE OBJECT HAD DISAPPEARED
P. 2622$$A MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LQZ
F
CAS 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDC))
CAL 1 DI 55 B(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 d
CYL 1 Cps(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAA 1 Science 3(RAF)

(2)

U N C L A S S I F I E D

CAB$12 26/0835 1460/715

FOR CAB

ROUTINE 260810Z MAY

FROM RAF BINBROOK
TO MODUK AIR

U N C L A S S I F I E D
DIG LQZ
REPORT OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT REF AF/3459/75/PT2/5/4F (AIR)
DATED 11 SEP 75.
A 260335A MAY, SEVEN SECONDS
B 2 OBJECTS 20FT BY 3FT OVAL SHAPED GREYISH CLOUD MAKING NOISE
LIKE A WHIRLWIND, SOUND WAS ZOOMING TO A GREAT VOLUME
C SOCIAL CLUB YARD BURRINGHAM 835094 OS MAP REF
D NAKED EYE
E NORTH WEST
F NOT AVAILABLE
G 3/4 MILE
H TRAVELLING NORTH SOUTH ACROSS TRENT
J LOW CLOUD
K INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE
L SGT OVERTON SCUNTHORPE POLICE

PAGE 2 RBDPIN 012 UNCLAS
M MR ROY THOMSON, CARAVAN SITE BURRINGHAM (TEL BURR 0625)
N NIL
O NIL
P 260800Z MAY
BT

DISTRIBUTION LQZ
F
CAB 2 S 4 (Air) ACTION (CXK 1 DSC(AFDC))
CAL 1 DI 55 2(SIC)
CAV 2 DI 13 4
CYD 1 Ops(GE) 2 (RAF)
CAK 1 Science 3(RAF)

AFISW 234/77

BF
24th June 77

Hd of S4 (Air) 10th June 77
chased 28th June

S4 (Air) Mr Pedrazic 1st July

15th July

Hd of S4(Air)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-218 6666 (Direct Dialling)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/JW 234/77

1 July 1977

Dear John,

Fred Mulley has asked me to reply to your letter of 31st May concerning the Press report of an unidentified object seen recently on the Humberside. I am sorry I have not written before but as so often happens with reports like this the invesitgation has been inconclusive.

I should explain that the Department has not the resources to conduct an independent scientific study into the nature of unidentified flying objects. We invariably pass reports of sightings to the specialist staffs responsible for the air defence of the country but it is not possible to pursue enquiries from the public to the point of positive identification. You will appreciate that some reports are necessarily vague and we feel it would not be justifiable to ask the staffs to make elaborate enquiries if in their opinion these would not be necessary in the interests of defence.

The Department have reached that point with the sightings you referred to in your letter. The five reports received by RAF Binbrook show a marked lack of consistency when one seeks to correlate them into a group of events. Three are incomplete and lack significant information such as the size of the object and its distance relative to known landmarks. They refer variously to quite a small silver triangular shape, to a circular red object 25 feet in diameter, and to three objects, round in shape, with two as big and as bright as a star and the third larger and flashing. The other two reports were from Mr Roy Thomson and Dale Roe who are named in the press cutting. There are certain similarities here. Both refer to an object measuring 20 feet by 3 feet which was either oval or cigar-shaped; but the cutting mentions a noise like a whirlwind while the report held by Binbrook records Dale Roe as saying there was no sound at all. I am afraid the Department can offer no positive explanation for the objects, nor why they gave rise to five separate reports. The descriptions given do not appear to refer to meteorological phenomena. The report of the three objects, one of which was flashing, could be a description of an aircraft travelling at night, possibly with landing lights on. Flashing lights are standard aircraft equipment and are carried above and below the fuselage. Another possibility is

/that balloons

John Ellis Esq MP
House of Commons
London SW1A OAA

that balloons were seen. The Meteorological Office were not flying balloons at the times and places reported but other organisations, such as universities, sometimes use similar equipment in experimental work and it may even be that balloons released by foreign users on the Continent, or from ships in the North Sea, reached the Humberside although we have no knowledge of this.

It is all rather speculative and I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Yours Sincerely

Jim Wellbeloved

(JAMES WELLBELOVED)

SECRETARY OF STATE

PS/US of S (RAF)

I should be grateful if your Minister would reply to the attached MP's letter, which has been acknowledged by this office.

(A.W.H. BARRETT)
APS/SECRETARY OF STATE
218 6169/6312

9/6/77

8/6

AF15W 234/77
Hd of Sy (Air)
rec'd 9th June

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

JE/MR

31st May, 1977

The Rt. Hon. Fred Mulley, MP,
Secretary of State,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
LONDON, SW1A 2HB

Dear Fred,

Please find enclosed herewith a press cutting regarding various sightings of an un-identified flying object which was reported to R.A.F. Binbrook.

I should be obliged if you would investigate this matter and let me know any comments you would be prepared to make.

Please return the enclosed press cutting with your reply.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN ELLIS MP

Boys see 'flying cigar' hovering at school

By John Alley

THREE boys watched transfixed as less than a mile away a strange object hovered over a school.

It was one of five U.F.O. sightings reported to police on Humberside within 48 hours.

All were logged at R.A.F. Binbrook, near Grimsby, and reported to the Ministry of Defence.

The cigar-shaped object —about 20ft. long and 3ft. high—was seen by Dale Rowe, 13, Edmund Gerrard, 13, of Cleave Drive, and Tony McKee, 13, of Hartland Close, Bransholme, near Hull.

It hovered like a "grey cloud" for several seconds.

"There was a noise like a whirlwind and it grew louder and louder before moving off," said Tony.

A similar object was spotted several hours later at Burringham, near Scunthorpe, by Mr. Roy Thompson, who also mentioned a noise like a whirlwind.

Request 3

Unredacted

Info.

(e) Relevant Information.

Taken from D/Sec(AS)64/4 PtE

UFOs – PQs/PEs

64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 15

****
PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON THURSDAY 26 MARCH 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	**PQ 2434i, 2440i, 2444i, 2446i**
PQ TYPE	:	Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	PQ 2440i only: DIO, PJHQ

- **The answer and background note must be authorised by a civil servant at Senior Civil Service level or a military officer at one-star level or above who is responsible for ensuring that the information and advice provided is accurate and reflects Departmental Instructions on answering PQs (DCI GEN 150/97).**

- **Those contributing information for PQ answers and background notes are responsible for ensuring the information is accurate.**

- **The attached checklist should be used by those drafting PQ answers and background material, those contributing information and those responsible for authorising the answer and background note as an aid to ensuring that departmental policy is adhered to.**

- **If you or others concerned are uncertain about how PQs are answered seek advice from a senior civil servant in or closely associated with your area.**

MP'S DETAIL: MRS HELEN JACKSON (LABOUR)(SHEFFIELD HILLSBOROUGH)

QUESTION

13|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what complaints were received by the RAF concerning low flying aircraft relating to 24th March 1997. [34607]

15|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if RAF/NATO military were engaged on an exercise over northern England between 9.30 and 10.30pm on 24th March 1997. [36404]

16|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons the RAF imposed an air exclusion zone around Howden reservoir on the morning of 25th March 1997. [36408]

17|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what reported sightings of UFOs were received from the (a) public and (b) police from the South Yorkshire/Derbyshire area on 24th and 25th March 1997. [36402]

DRAFTED BY [redacted]

APPROVED BY [redacted] original signed
G7/Sec(AS)2

AUTHORISED BY : Martin Fuller original signed
SCS/Head of Sec(AS)

[redacted]

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with with Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 48/97).

ANSWER:

A number of military aircraft were booked to carry out low flying training in northern England on the evening of 24 March 1997. The Ministry of Defence received 13 complaints about aircraft activity for that date from locations across the UK. No reported sightings of "UFOs" on 24 or 25 March 1997 were received by my Department. A Temporary Danger Area was established on 25 March, centred on Howden Reservoir, to allow a RAF Search and Rescue helicopter, in response to a request for assistance from South Yorkshire Police, to carry out a search of the area without disturbance by other military aircraft. Such Danger Areas are routinely established for Search and Rescue operations.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. Mrs Jackson has been the MP for Sheffield Hillsborough since 1992. Her constituency covers the area of the Peak District to the northwest of Sheffield as far as the Derbyshire border, including the eastern part of Howden Reservoir. She has not previously tabled PQs about low flying and these four questions, and the related PQ 2436i and PQ 2448i (the latter tabled by Ms Helen Jones MP), follow a letter the Department received recently from David Clarke, a journalist on the Sheffield Star investigating an occurrence on the Peak District during the evening of 24 March 1997. Copies of the letter and subsequent article (which was written before a reply to his letter could be sent) are attached.

2. The occurrence, contemporaneously thought to have been a light aircraft crash, remains unexplained. No aircraft were reported missing on the evening in question and a comprehensive search of the area, in which a RAF Sea King Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter from Leconfield also participated, found no trace of aircraft wreckage. Sec(AS) received no reports of this occurrence from members of the public, or any enquiries from the media until the arrival of Mr Clarke's letter, on 6 March this year. Given the passage of time, it is not practicable to carry out any meaningful investigation as radar tapes, which would be critical in attempting to identify aircraft in the area, would have been re-used. Moreover, witness recollection of events would be unreliable.

3. In answering these four PQs, we have interpreted Mrs Jackson's phrase "engaged on an exercise" in its widest sense as embracing all military aircraft activity. Without an investigation we cannot say with confidence whether military aircraft were or were not in the area; the only surviving, centrally maintained indication of activity over northern England on the evening in question is the Night Low Flying Sector booking sheets. These show that military low flying was booked to take place in all four Night Low Flying Sectors in northern England on the evening of 24 March. There are, however, no bookings for the area containing the Peak District (Night Low Flying Sector 3A) at the time of the alleged occurrence (which is mentioned in Mr Clarke's letter) but it is possible that military aircraft were operating at medium level.

4. The low flying complaints database shows that at total of 13 complaints were received about activity on 24 March 1997, none of which were from by residents of the area concerned. The database of "UFO" sighting reports has nothing logged for anywhere in the UK during the period 22 March to 26 March 1997 inclusive.

5. Temporary Danger Areas (TDA) are routinely established when SAR activity is taking place. HQ Military Air Traffic Organisation has confirmed that a TDA was established between 0730 and 1215 on 25 March 1997, centered on Howden Reservoir, to enable the SAR helicopter from RAF Leconfield to carry out its search without disturbance from other military air traffic.

Copy to:

AS.DD2
DPO(RAF)
RAF Kinloss - PRO Scotland
HQ MATO - Ops(LF)1
Sec(AS)1a

Date:

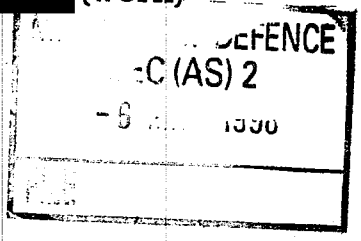
26 Mar 98

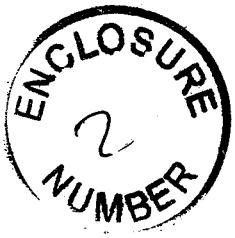
Files:

D/Sec(AS)/64/3

Section 40

Sheffield Section 40
Tel: Section 40
Section 40 **(work)**





2 March, 1998

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a news reporter working for Sheffield's evening paper **The Star** and have been investigating an incident which occurred on the western outskirts of the city on March 24, 1997, which was initially believed to have been a air disaster involving a light plane.

A brief TV documentary on the subject has since appeared on BBC1 in October last year, but the truth behind what caused the incident remains a mystery, hence this letter to you.

On the night in question between 10.10 and 10.15pm up to 40 separate groups of witnesses contacted police and emergency services to report seeing a low-flying object which they believed was a low-flying aircraft in distress near the South Yorkshire village of Bolsterstone.

At least two witnesses saw the object appear to disappear behind trees over Margery Hill, at the highest point of the Peak District moors west of Sheffield, which conicided with a report of an "explosion" heard by gamekeepers at the hamlet of Strines, nearby.

Subsequently, South Yorkshire Police initiated a full search and rescue operation - costing thousands of pounds in public money - involving seven Peak District Mountain rescue teams, the West Yorkhire Police helicopter and, I understand, RAF search and rescue helicopters from RAF Kinloss and RAF Leconfield.

After searching more than 40 square miles of moorland around the Howden reservoirs west of Bolsterstone, the police called off the search after 17 hours as no crash site was discovered and no civil aircraft had been reported missing.

Today, the police and civilian rescue teams remain open-minded about the cause of the incident, but a number of theories have been advanced from a drug-running operation involving a light aircraft to the misidentification of a

bolide meteor burning up in the earth's atmosphere.
Police logs of calls made to them by members of the public suggest there was a high-level of activity involving military jets in the Derbyshire/South Yorkshire area immediately preceding the "aircrash" on the moors. A number of inidividuals claim to have seen RAF Tornado jets flying northwards towards the Peak District from the north Derbyshire towns of Dronfield and Chesterfield between 9.45 and 10pm shortly before the "aircrash".
However, police say direct contact they made with the RAF at the time of the incident suggested there was no military activity in the area at the time.
I would be interested to hear any suggestions or theories you may have which could shed light on the mystery which remains unresolved one year later.
I enclose an SAE and look forward to hearing from you,

Yours Faithfully

Section 40

[redacted]

D. Clarke

F.A.O.
Squadron leader
Section 40

Section 40

from Section 40
Section 40

Sheffield Star

EXCLUSIVE: Truth about a jet 'disaster' which sparked a massive moors hunt



A mountain rescue unit scours the moors. Was the 'crash' a Tornado jet, above, illegally breaking the sound barrier?

Crash that never was

A HUNT for a 'crashed aircraft' which cost tens of thousands of pounds could have been sparked by a military jet illegally breaking the sound barrier.

Emergency services from four counties were involved after an explosion was heard over Peak District moorland near Sheffield.

But it has been revealed the 'terrific bang' which sparked the alert could have been caused by a jet breaking the sound barrier.

At the time the Ministry of Defence denied one of its war planes was responsible for the explosion and flash which caused worried residents to dial 999 a year ago today.

But Edinburgh University says two sonic booms recorded over Sheffield that night "could only have been caused by a military plane reaching supersonic speed".

A Star investigation showed hundreds of people who took part in the operation have been kept in the dark ever since.

Hillsborough MP Helen Jackson will today ask Defence Secretary George Robertson to explain the mystery.

BY DAVID CLARKE

NATO aircraft are forbidden to break the sound barrier over land at night to avoid hazards to civilian air traffic.

Dozens of people in Chesterfield, Sheffield and Barnsley rang police to report seeing and hearing low-flying jet aircraft minutes before the explosion echoed across Peak District moorland.

Emergency services became involved in the operation which lasted over 18 hours.

Two helicopters, including an RAF Sea King, joined hundreds of mountain rescue personnel, fire crews and police in a search of over 40 square miles of moors and reservoirs.

At one stage airliners landing at Manchester were alerted after a 10-mile air exclusion zone was imposed over Derbyshire's Howden reservoir.

South Yorkshire police claim no explanation was ever found for the mystery and say they remain open minded.

Chief Insp Christine Hurbeary, who was in charge of the search operation, said: "We got nothing back from the air traffic control and no reports of aircraft failing to return. But there is no doubt there was a number of phenomena including a very low flying aircraft."

RAF chiefs remained tight-lipped but Yorkshire Water workers who helped search reservoirs were told a military jet was responsible.

A senior official said: "I was told the RAF had admitted there was a plane doing a night-time exercise and it had gone through the sound barrier."

No flying rules for military aircraft

STRICT rules govern how low pilots are allowed to fly over populated areas – but military planes are excluded.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority said private pilots would face prosecution if they fly below 1,500 feet over a built up area.

Last year a pilot was fined and given a conditional discharge after pleading guilty to swooping to within 250 feet of the ground above Stannington in daylight.

Witnesses, including police Special Constable Marie-France Tattersfield, said the mystery aircraft which sparked last year's aircrash fears was flying 'extremely low' – and in the dark!

Marie-France, who spotted the plane near Holsterstone, said: "No light aircraft pilot would fly at that time of night because they rely on landmarks to navigate. It was a big aeroplane and all its windows were lit up which made it look even more odd."

According to aviation experts few pilots would risk their lives and licence by hedge hopping so low in darkness over a major city.

The puzzle led many who took part in the search to speculate the pilot could have taken the risk because he was being paid big bucks to take part in a covert drugs drop on the moors.

But aviation experts say the "covert operation" was more likely to have been a military one.

Ex-RAF officer John Brassington from Dronfield told The Star: "I distinctly heard both a single engined plane and minutes later two RAF jets – possibly Tornado fighters. I can assure you that if the RAF say nothing was going on that night they are being economical with the truth."

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 29 August 2006 16:12
To: Section 40
Subject: Internet-authorised: Freedom of Information Requests

Section 40

Thank you for responding so quickly. These will go out to the applicants today.

Regards

Section 40

-----Original Message-----
From: Section 40 GSI.GOV.UK]
Sent: 29 August 2006 15:32
To: Section 40
Subject: RE: Freedom of Information Requests

Hi Section 40

As promised I've taken a look at you responses. They all look fine to me. I note that you have been as factual as possible in your replies so apart from a small amount of exempt info they get the lot.

I'll assume that they are all going out in the next day or two. Well done.

Regards

Section 40

-----Original Message-----
From: Section 40 gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 25 August 2006 14:57
To: Section 40
Subject: Freedom of Information Requests
Importance: High

Section 40

At last I have the Ministers approval to send the responses to four of the FOI requests referred to yourselves. Please see attached my draft responses. I have not attached all the papers as these are not held electronically and there are rather a lot of them. If you are content I will get these off to the applicants.

The Cases are:

Section 40 - Case Ref: 5438

Case Ref: 5437

- Case Ref: 5334

Case Ref:5338

The final case Section 40 is still being worked on and I will contact you about this asap.

Regards

Section 40

Ministry of Defence

Directorate of Air Staff - Freedom of Information

5th Floor, Zone H Section 40

Main Building

Whitehall

LONDON

SW1A 2HB

Email: Section 40 @mod.uk

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Low Flying Training

Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what complaints were received by the RAF concerning low-flying aircraft relating to 24 March 1997; [36407]

(2) if RAF/NATO military aircraft were engaged on an exercise over Northern England between 9.30 and 10.30 pm on 24 March 1997; [36404]

(3) for what reasons the RAF imposed an air exclusion zone around Howden reservoir on the morning of 25 March 1997; [36408]

(4) what reported sightings of UFOs were received from the *(a)* public and *(b)* police from the South Yorkshire/ Derbyshire area on 24 and 25 March 1997. [36402]

Mr. Spellar: A number of military aircraft were booked to carry out low flying training in northern England on the evening of 24 March 1997. The Ministry of Defence received 13 complaints about aircraft activity for that date from locations across the UK. No reported sightings of "UFOs" on 24 or 25 March 1997 were received by my Department. A Temporary Danger Area was established on 25 March, centred on Howden Reservoir, to allow an RAF Search and Rescue helicopter,

in response to a request for assistance from South Yorkshire Police, to carry out a search of the area without disturbance by other military aircraft. Such Danger Areas are routinely established for Search and Rescue operations.

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 24 August 2006 17:34
To: Section 40
Cc:
Subject: RE: Ministerial Submission

Section 40

In the last of several discussions this afternoon with Section 40 asked me why the Minister had been asked to take a view on disclosure when the advice we were all giving him implied that there was effectively no choice (I refrained from saying that it was therefore perverse to disagree!). We then discussed whether it had been appropriate for the Minister to be consulted in the first place and, having seen your submissions, my inclination is to think not – or if he was approached it should just have been to ask him to note the intention to release the information.

Although the Background Notes are within the scope of s.36, the same could be said about virtually all information. It is obviously necessary to secure Ministerial endorsement when the exemption needs to be invoked, but this is not invariably the case when a decision has been reached that release is appropriate. In cases where the subject is particularly high profile and therefore likely to be reported by the media then a 'to note' submission/press lines are advisable, but otherwise – and particularly where there is a Working Assumption that advises disclosure – I think it is possible/better to limit clearance to those involved at working level. I therefore agreed with Section 40 that he would *not* broach the Minister again and that you would proceed on the basis that you had the necessary ticks in the box from your own higher management (and I know that you also intend to involve DCA).

I hope you are content with this and that it will allow you to meet your deadline. I am out of office on Friday, but if you want to discuss the principles further both Section and Section will be around.

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 24 August 2006 16:21
To Section 40
Subject: FW: Ministerial Submission
Importance: High

Section 40
Assistant Private Secretary / Under Secretary of State
Section 40

From Section 40
Sent: 10 August 2006 11:48
To: Section 40
Subject: Ministerial Submission
Importance: High

Section 40

Please see attached another Ministerial Submission regarding a Freedom of Information Request involving Section 36 (Prejudice to the Effective of Public Affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act. Please let me know if you wish to see the documents we propose to release. I have one more FOI request relating to Section 36 which I am currently working on and will send in due course.

Regards

Section 40
DAS-FOI

29/08/2006

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 10 August 2006 15:00
To: Section 40
Subject: Internet-authorised:Freedom of Information Request 04-07-2006-162649-001

Dear Section 40

On the 5 July I informed you that I was conducting a Public Interest Test for your Freedom of Information request regarding Parliamentary enquiries in 1976 and 1977, and a Parliamentary question in 1998 and I estimated that I would be able to provide you with a response by the 8 August 2006. Unfortunately it has not been possible to provide you with a substantive response by this date and your request will take a little longer than first estimated. I expect to be able to provide you with a final response by 25 August 2006. If there are any further delays I will, of course, inform you.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40
Ministry of Defence
Directorate of Air Staff - Freedom of Information
5th Floor, Zone H Section 40
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2HB

e-mail:das-ufo-office@mod.uk

10th August 2006

D/DAS/10/2/8/13

10 August 2006

PS/US of S

Copied to:

DAS-XO
DCT&UKOps – SOI Airspace Integrity
DI-BCR-CG3
Info-CMemR
DGMC-D News- Armed Forces 4
TOG-CTL

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

ISSUE

1. The MOD has received a Freedom of Information request for background briefing papers to official responses to two Parliamentary Enquiries and a Parliamentary Question concerning Unidentified Flying Objects. Details of the full request is attached at Annex A. This information falls within the scope of a qualified exemption of the Freedom of Information Act, namely: Section 36 – (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs).

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Minister approves the release of this information for the following reasons.

TIMING
3. Routine.

BACKGROUND

4. The applicant has requested three pieces of information. Two relate to responses to Parliamentary Enquiries in 1976 and 1977 and the third to a Parliamentary Question in March 1998. Details of the full request is attached at Annex A. The applicant has made a number of previous Freedom of Information requests regarding Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs).

5. This information falls within the scope of a qualified exemption of the Freedom of Information Act, namely; Section 36 (2)(b)(i) – (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) as it relates to information that would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank provision of advice. As this is a qualified exemption it is necessary for the MOD to consider whether there are overriding reasons why disclosure would not be in the public interest.

6. The Freedom of Information Act requires the Department to consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances of the case. Against disclosure of the information in all three cases is the need to insure that officials are able to provide Ministers with free and frank advice in support of draft answers provided to parliamentary enquiries and questions without this advice becoming public knowledge. Routine release of such information could inhibit this process and therefore prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. In accordance with S.36 (2)(b)(i) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this would not be in the public interest.

7. However, this must be balanced against the public need to be assured that the official answers provided by Ministers are accurate and not misleading. Often the background information will reveal the research involved in arriving at the answer and provide some clarity to the response. The age of the information and the content of the advice must also be taken into account when considering the harm that may be caused by release at this time. In this case, two of the pieces of information are more than 30 years old and the third is now 8 years old. The information relates to correspondence between MPs and the Department regarding the retention of MOD UFO related records and two particular UFO sightings which generated press articles. These papers reveal no information that could be considered to be harmful today and the public interest therefore falls in favour of release.

8. A number of other exemptions were considered to be relevant to these documents. The first two of the applicant's requests concern information that has been selected for The National Archives, so S.21(1)(c) – (Information intended for future publication) was considered. However, a date for transfer is not currently known so it has been concluded that it would not be appropriate to withhold the information on this basis. Some documents made comments concerning the actions of a member of the public and in accordance with S.38(1)(a) – (Health and Safety) consideration was given as to the harm that may be caused to the individual's physical or mental health by the release of this information. It has been judged that there is no evidence that such a harm would be caused and this information should not therefore be withheld. Some of the documents contain details of the names and addresses of members of the public who have corresponded with the MOD. Release of this personal information could lead to an invasion of their privacy so this information has been removed and will be withheld in accordance with absolute exemption S.40(2)(a) - (Personal Information). Names of MOD personnel who provided internal advice are considered not relevant to the information requested and these have been removed.

9. A draft letter to the applicant providing details of all the public interest considerations is attached at Annex B.

PRESENTATIONAL ISSUES

10. The subject of UFOs attracts a lot of public and media attention. This applicant makes regular Freedom of Information requests and appears on internet websites. He is a part time author and has media contacts. It is likely that any information released to him could be shared with a wider audience.

Section 40
DAS–FOI
5-H Section 40

Authorised by:
Section 40
DAS-Sec AD
5-H Section 40

Annex A

I want to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act on the subject of UFOs. Can you send me paper copies of the following:

a) Contents of the file relating to a Parliamentary enquiry by Sir John Langford-Holt MP on behalf of his constituent Julian Hennessy. I believe the file covers the period 1976-79 roughly and the reference is AF/BJ84/76.

b) Contents of the file relating to a Parliamentary enquiry by Mr John Ellis on UFOs in 1977, MoD reference MR/122505.

c) Copies of the background notes and briefing papers supplied to John Spellar MP for use in his replies to written questions by Helen Jackson MP in the House of Commons in March 1998. As you may or may not know, these questions do not specifically relate to UFOs but are about two unexplained "sonic booms" reported in the Peak District on 24 March 1997 at around the time that a search was conducted for a suspected light aircraft crash (no aircraft was subsequently reported missing).

Annex B

DRAFT

1. I wrote to you on 5 July 2006 informing you that your request for copies of the contents of two files relating to parliamentary enquiries in 1976 and 1977 and the background notes and briefing papers supplied to John Spellar MP regarding written parliamentary questions in 1998, had been considered to fall within the scope of Section 36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the MOD was therefore required to consider whether there are overriding reasons why disclosure would not be in the public interest. I also informed you that two of these requests may fall within the scope of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication). On review of the documents it has become apparent that further exemptions may be applicable as provided below. These considerations have now concluded and I am writing to provide you with the outcome. Each request will be addressed separately.

2. Your first request was for a paper copy of the contents of file AF/BJ84/76 – Sir John Langford-Holt MP, Mr J Hennessy, UFO Enquiry. I can confirm that the MOD holds this file and all the relevant papers have been considered for release. These documents contain information which falls within the scope of a number of exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, namely; S.22 (Information intended for future publication), S.36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs), S.40 (Personal Information) and S.38(Health & Safety).

3. First, we took into account the age of the information and the fact that it has been selected for future transfer to The National Archives. If transfer was imminent it would have been appropriate to withhold this information at this time in accordance with S.22(1)(c) of the FOI Act and provide advice as to the timing of availability at The National Archives. Our enquiries have, however, revealed that there is currently no firm date for transfer and it has been concluded that it would not be in the public interest to withhold the information at this time on this basis.

4. The documents include internal discussion and advice provided by a variety of MOD departments which fall within the scope of S.36(2)(b)(i). Against disclosure of this information is the need to insure that officials are able to consult colleagues internally and provide Ministers with free and frank advice in support of draft answers provided to parliamentary enquiries. Release of such information could inhibit this process and therefore prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. This would not be in the public interest. This has, however, been balanced against the age and content of the advice provided in the background papers and it has been concluded that the release of this information now would not prejudice this process. The public interest therefore falls with release.

5. The file also includes correspondence between Mr Hennessy and his MP which contains details of Mr Hennessey's home address and telephone number. This falls within the scope of absolute exemption S.40 (2)(a). It has not been determined whether Mr Hennessy still resides at this address and release of this information could lead to an invasion of his privacy. This information will not therefore be released. The name of another individual who accompanied Mr Hennessy on a visit to the Meteorological Office will also be withheld for the same reason.

6. Finally, the documents contain comment and internal advice regarding Mr Hennessy's contacts with various government departments and actions on a visit to the Meteorological Office. Consideration has been given to whether it is likely that a harm could be caused to Mr Hennessy's physical or mental health by the release of this information and if so whether S.38(1)(a) of the Act applies. It has been judged that there is no evidence that such a harm would be caused and the public interest therefore falls with release.

7. It is concluded that the public interest favours partial release of these documents with minor redaction and a copy is therefore enclosed with this letter. The information that has been removed consists of Mr Hennessy's home address and telephone number and the name of another member of the public which are withheld in accordance with S.40(2)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act. Mr Hennessy's name and signature have also been removed throughout the documents because while it is appreciated that you are aware that they relate to Mr Hennessy, his identity in relation to these documents is not in the public domain. Names of MOD officials who provided advice have also been removed as these are not relevant to the information you have requested.

8. In your second request you asked for a copy of file MR/122505 – John Ellis, UFOs. I can confirm that the MOD holds this file and all the contents have been considered for release. These documents consist of information which falls within the scope of a number of exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, namely; S.22 (Information intended for future publication), S.36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) and S.40 (Personal Information).

9. As with the previous request we first considered S.22 (1)(c) given the age of these documents and their future transfer to The National Archives. There is however, no firm date for transfer of these documents and as before we consider that the public interest under this section favours release.

10. The documents contain internal discussion and advice provided by MOD departments which fall within the scope of S.36(2)(b)(i). As detailed above, the release of this information could inhibit MOD officials ability to provide free and frank advice and this would not be in the public interest. We have taken into account the age of the documents and the content of the advice and concluded that the release of this information would not prejudice this process and the balance of public interest therefore favours release.

11. The file also contains a number of UFO sightings reported to the MOD by members of the public which include their names and home addresses. This information falls within the scope of S.40(2)(a). Release of this information could lead to an invasion of the privacy of these individuals and this information will not therefore be released.

12. It is concluded that the public interest favours partial release of these documents with minor redaction and a copy is enclosed with this letter. The information that has been removed consists of the personal details of members of the public who made UFO reports to the MOD which are withheld in accordance with S.40(2)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act and names of MOD officials who provided advice which have been removed as these are not relevant to the information you have requested.

13. Your final request was for copies of the background note and briefing papers supplied to John Spellar MP for use in his replies to written parliamentary questions from Helen Jackson MP in March 1998. I can confirm that the MOD holds information relevant to this request and these papers have been considered for release. These documents consist of information which falls within the scope of two exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, namely; S.36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) and S.40 (Personal Information).

14. The documents contain internal advice to Mr Spellar regarding the background to these questions which falls within the scope of S.36(2)(b)(i). As with your two other requests, the release of this information could inhibit officials ability to provide free and frank advice to Ministers and therefore prejudice the conduct of public affairs which would not be in the public interest. However, we have considered the contents of this advice and concluded that the release of this information would not prejudice this process on this occasion and the balance of public interest therefore favours release.

15. The documents also include a letter from a member of the public which contains their name and contact details. This information falls within the scope of absolute exemption S.40(2)(a) and will not therefore be released.

16. It is included that the public interest favours partial release of these documents with minor redaction and a copy is enclosed with this letter. The information that has been withheld consists of personal details of a member of the public which are withheld in accordance with S.40(2)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act, plus names of MOD officials and internal guidance notes on answering parliamentary correspondence which are not relevant to the information you have requested.

17. I hope this is helpful. If you are dissatisfied with our decision to refuse some of this information or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of this request, then you should contact the undersigned in the first instance. Should you remain dissatisfied, then you may apply for an internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB. (e-mail: Info-XD@mod.uk).

18. If you are still unhappy following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 20 July 2006 11:14
To: Section 40
Subject: RE: FOI Request

Section 40

I am content for my email to be released. Since then Hayes has closed and the OWOB element the subject of asbestos contamination!

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 20 July 2006 09:39
To: Section 40
Subject: FOI Request

Section 40

I am currently dealing with an FOI request for background information to a PQ in January 2001. The PQ asked "what is the highest classification that has been applied to any Ministry of Defence document concerning Unidentified Flying Objects". The answer given was "The highest classification is Secret".

The background papers contain the attached email from you giving information about MOD file holdings and classifications and I would be grateful if you could advise me whether you are happy for this to be released. Your name and contact details will be removed. I also attach a copy of the background note so you can see what was said there.

Regards

Section 40

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 05 July 2006 15:44
To: Section 40
Subject: Internet-authorised:Freedom of Information Request

Dear Section 40

I am writing concerning your email of 3 July regarding your Freedom of Information request for copies of two files relating to Parliamentary enquiries in 1976 and 1977, and background information to written parliamentary questions in March 1998. Your request has been registered and allocated with the reference number 04-07-2006-162649-001.

I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence holds the information you have requested. We believe this information falls within the scope of a qualified exemption: S.36 – Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs. In addition, the information you have requested at paragraphs a) and b) are amongst records prepared for transfer to The National Archives and it may be the case that these also fall within the scope of qualified exemption S.22- Information intended for future publication. We are currently making some enquiries regarding the timing of possible transfer and if it is found that the records are not likely to be transferred in the near future, S.22 will not apply.

With regard to your comments about exemption 36, it may be helpful if I clarify that the Freedom of Information Act requires that where a Qualified exemption applies to requested information the Department is required to consider whether the Public Interest ways in favour of disclosure or release. Each request is considered individually taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case and the fact that we are conducting a Public Interest Test for the information you have requested does not mean that the information will be withheld, as the result of the Public Interest Test may ultimately favour release.

The Freedom of Information Act requires us to respond to requests promptly and in any case no later than 20 working days after receiving your request. However, when a qualified exemption applies to the information and the public interest test has to be conducted, the Act allows the time for response to be longer than 20 working days. A full response must be provided within such time as is reasonable in all circumstances of the case and, in relation to your request, it is estimated that it will take a further 25 working days to make a final decision on where the balance of public interest lies. It is therefore planned to let you have a response by 8 August 2006. If it appears that it will take longer than this to reach a conclusion I will let you know.

If you are unhappy with the response or wish to complain at this stage about any aspect of the handling of this request, then you should contact myself in the first instance. Should you remain dissatisfied, then you may apply for an internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB **(e-mail Info-XD@mod.uk)**.

If you are still unhappy following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

Your sincerely,

Section 40

Ministry of Defence
Directorate of Air Staff - Freedom of Information
5th Floor, Zone H Section 40

05/07/2006

File location – [redacted] 04-07-2006-162649-001

a) [redacted]/8584/76

DEFE 1188 – Sir John Langford-Holt MO M J Hennessy – UFO Enquiry

with [redacted]

b) MR 122505

Provisional DEFE 71/164

John Ellis – UFOs

with [redacted]

c) D/Sec(AS)64/4 Pt E ✓

UFOs – Parliamentary Questions & Enquiries 1997-1998

D/Sec(AS) 64/4 Pt F

UFOs – Parliamentary Questions & Enquiries 1998-2001.



Sign Historical Group



The U.K. Government and UFOs

By Julian J.A. Hennessey

In July 1967, the author received a communication from The Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, OBE PC MP, then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom stating, "As reports of these objects (UFOs) continue to appear from many parts of the world, it is quite understandable that there should be a growing interest in seeing some responsible effort made to seek explanations of these phenomena." Yet, whilst reports of UFOs continue to be made in the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Defence fails to take cognizance of them from a scientific standpoint and belie the words of the former Prime Minister by claiming, according to Mr. Merlyn Rees, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Air Force, in August 1967, just one month later,

> "Of the many reports received here...the vast majority have proved to have very simple, even mundane explanations. The number of unexplained reports is very small; and there is nothing to indicate that we would not have discovered that similar explanations applied to these unexplained reports also, had we had sufficient and precise information to work with."

If such contradictions existed on other more sensitive issues of the day, a Minister or even a Government may well be forced to resign. As it is, such a contradiction, on what the Ministry considers is purely a defence matter, makes mockery of the British principle of 'collective responsibility'.

On what premise does the Ministry investigate UFO reports? According to a March 1970 letter from Lord Winterbottom, a successor to Mr. Rees, "This Ministry investigates reports of UFOs because of their possible implications for the air defence of the United Kingdom." Then, in May 1970, another letter from Lord Winterbottom, via Sir John Langford-Holt MC, MP, stated, "The Ministry of Defence has not carried out a general study on the scientific significance of UFO reports; as you know our interest is in possible defence aspects of reports." Therefore, without studying reports from a scientific standpoint, the Ministry is able to explain them away and, as we see, claims to have no 'unidentified' cases... a truly remarkable record which must place the Ministry in a super-investigative class of its own. Even when the U.S. Air Force's Project Blue Book closed down, it officially listed 701 'unidentifieds'.

As in the United States, the then British Air Ministry began investigating UFOs in 1947 when they first emerged into public limelight following the now famous sighting by private pilot Kenneth Arnold on 24th June of "nine peculiar-looking aircraft" without tails, which flew in a chain-like line and "swerved in and out the high mountain peaks" north of Mount Rainier, Washington. In the United Kingdom, the first reports to claim public attention were made by Service personnel involved in the NATOs "Exercise Mainbrace" which involved 8 NATO countries including 80,000 men, 1,000 planes and 200 ships under the direction of Britain's Admiral Sir Patrick Brind. On 19th September 1952, during "Exercise Mainbrace," 3 Flight Lieutenants and others from the Coastal Command Shackleton Squadron H.Q. at Topcliffe, Yorkshire, England, were watching a Meteor jet coming down at an altitude of 5,000ft to land at Dishforth RAF Station when they first observed a silvery circular-shaped object at an altitude of 10,000ft travelling 5 miles astern of the aircraft at a lower speed, but on the same course. The object maintained a slow forward speed for a few seconds and then started to descend in a swinging pendulum fashion from left to right. The

Meteor turned to start its landing run and the object started to follow it for a few seconds before it stopped its descent and hung in the air rotating on its own axis. It then accelerated at tremendous speed westwards, changed course, and disappeared southeast within 15-20 seconds. Each eye-witness attested that the subject was

about the size of a Vampire jet, and that they had never seen anything like it before. After 11 weeks of intensive investigation, the Air Ministry could offer no explanation as to the identity of the object and when a question was put to Mr. Ward, Secretary of State for Air, several years later, he replied "No object was identified." Many other reports were made by participants of the NATO Exercise, including one by 6 RAF pilots who unsuccessfully attempted to intercept a shiny spherical object that approached them from the direction of the fleet in the North Sea. On the return to base, one of the pilots looked behind and again observed the object coming after him. On turning to intercept the object, it sped once again into the distance and out of sight. The object was tentatively identified as a balloon, but the Air Ministry later admitted that it could not be positive. On the 20th September, personnel on the U.S. Aircraft Carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt observed another silvery spherical object which was photographed in colour by reporter Wallace Litwin who was taking shots of aircraft landing on the flight deck. The series of photos, which have never been made publicly available, were reported by the late Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, the USAF UFO Project Chief, to have "turned out to be excellent. He had gotten the superstructure of the carrier in each one and judging by the size of the object in each successive photo, one could see that it was moving rapidly." No definite identification of the object has been made by either the U.S. or U.K. authorities.

In the 1950s, one of the most prominent proponents of UFOs was the late Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, former head of the RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain, who stated in an article for the London ***Sunday Dispatch*** on July 16th 1954, "I am convinced that these objects do exist and that they are not manufactured by any nation on earth. I can therefore see no alternative to accepting the theory that they come from an extraterrestrial source." This statement, coupled with the following account from the ***London Reynolds News*** of June 16th 1954, caused great consternation in the Air Ministry,

> "In room 801 of what was once the Hotel Metropole, Britain's Air Ministry is investigating Flying Saucers...and that's official... At airfields all over Britain, fighter planes are kept ready to intercept, and if necessary engage, any unidentified flying object within combat range...(the room's) existence was admitted last night by an Air Ministry spokesman. He disclosed that it had been investigating Flying Saucer reports since 1947. 'We have something like 10,000 on our files,' he said."

Following these disclosures, which also showed that, as in the United States, there were two factions in the Ministry pro and con the existence of UFOs, which the author has had indications exist to this present day, the Air Ministry began to formulate its debunking policy akin to that of the United States. Despite this, however, another RAF report hit the headlines of the national press. On 4th October 1954, a Meteor jet, piloted by Flt Lt J.R. Salandin of the 604 Fighter Squadron, almost collided head-on with a huge metallic object "shaped like two saucers pressed together, one inverted on top of the other".. At the last second, the object flipped to one side at "tremendous speed". Shortly before, two other objects had been sighted speeding between two other Meteor jets that were in the vicinity. No explanation was advanced by the Air Ministry. Through Wing Commander Sir Eric E Bullus, MP, the author queried related reports and received the following reply in December 1967 from Mr. Merlyn Rees, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the RAF,

"It is a well established practice in government departments, as in most offices, to dispose of papers

of transitory interest rather than to retain them indefinitely. In view of the mundane explanations which are found to apply to reports of unidentified flying objects, these papers are only retained for five years and are then destroyed. It is not the practice of the Ministry of Defence to destroy important records and, if the investigation of the reports to which Mr. Hennessey refers had brought to light anything of significance of matters contained in reports and papers of this nature which are now 10-15 years old or in speculating about the explanations which were found to apply when the reports were investigated."

Thus, while no public explanation was ever made to account for these reports, the official records no longer exist for study by scientists. The Ministry alleges that "mundane" explanations account for past reports leaving none of "significance". However, even when the U.S. Air Force's sponsored University of Colorado Scientific Study of UFOs investigated a case which is a perfect illustration that the Ministry has destroyed papers of scientific "significance", and shows that there is "value" in disputing "10-15" year old reports" which should have been subjected to rigorous scientific investigation and not a "limited" defence one. The following details are extracted from a lengthy excellent account presented by the late Dr James E. McDonald to the Symposium on UFOs at the 134th Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science on 27th December 1969; The initial UFO reports centred around Bentwaters RAF Station, located about six miles east of Ipswich, near the coast, while much of the subsequent action centres around Lakenheath RAF Station, located some 20 miles northeast of Cambridge. Sculthorpe RAF Station also figures in the account. GCA radars at two of those three stations were involved in the ground radar sightings, as was an RTCC radar unit at Lakenheath. The entire episode extended from about 2130Z, August 13, to 0330Z, August 14, 1956. Owing to the complexity in detailing the sequence of events, the following is a summary of the scientifically provocative features found by Dr McDonald:

(1) At least three separate instances occurred in which one ground-radar unit, GCA Bentwaters, tracked some unidentified target for a number of tens of miles across its scope at speeds in excess of Mach 3. Since even today, 14 years later, no nation has disclosed military aircraft capable of flight at such speeds (we may exclude the X-15), and since that speed is much too low to fit any meteoric hypothesis, this first feature is quite puzzling.

(2) In one instance, about a dozen low-speed (order of 100 mph) targets moved in loose formation led by three closely-spaced targets, the assemblage yielding consistent returns over a path of about 50 miles, after which they merged into a single large target, remaining motionless for some 10-15 minutes, and then moved off-scope. Under the reported wind conditions, not even a highly contrived meteorological explanation invoking anomalous propagation and inversion-layer waves could account for this sequence observed at Bentwaters.

(3) One of the fast track radar sightings at Bentwaters, at 2255Z, coincided with visual observations of some very-high-speed luminous source seen by both a tower operator on the ground and by a pilot aloft who saw the light moving in a blur below his aircraft at 4000ft altitude. The radar-derived speed was given as 2000-4000mph. Again, meteors won't fit such speeds and

altitudes, and may exclude aircraft for several evident reasons, including absence of any thundering boom that would surely have been reported if any near hypothetical 1956-vintage hypersonic device were flying over Bentwaters at less than 4000ft that night.

(4) Several ground observers at Lakenheath saw luminous objects exhibiting non-ballistic motions, including dead stops and sharp course reversals.

(5) In one instance, two luminous white objects merged into a single object, as seen from the ground at Lakenheath. This wholly unmeteoric and unaeronautical phenomenon is actually a not-uncommon feature of UFO reports during the last two decades.

(6) Two separate ground radars at Lakenheath, having rather different radar parameters, were concurrently observing movements of one or more unknown targets over an extended period of time. Seemingly stationary hovering modes were repeatedly observed, and this despite use of MTI. Seemingly "instantaneous" accelerations from rest to speeds of order of Mach 1 were repeatedly observed. Such motions cannot readily be explained in terms of any known aircraft flying then or now, and also fail to fit known electronic or propagation anomalies.

(7) In **at least** one instance, the official report on USAF files makes clear that an unidentified luminous target was seen visually from the air by the pilot of an interceptor while getting simultaneous radar returns from the unknown with his nose cone radar concurrent with ground-radar detection of the same unknown. This is scientifically highly significant, for it entails **three** separate detection-channels all recording the unknown object.

(8) In **at least** one instance, there was simultaneous radar disappearance and visual disappearance of the UFO. This is akin to similar events in other known UFO cases, yet is not so easily explained in terms of conventional phenomena.

(9) Attempts of the interceptor to close on one target seen both on ground radar and on the interceptor's nose radar, led to a puzzling, rapid interchange of roles as the unknown object moved into tail-position behind the interceptor. While undergoing radar observation from the ground, with both aircraft on and unidentified object clearly displayed on the Lakenheath ground radars, the pilot of the interceptor tried unsuccessfully to break the tail chase over a time of some minutes. No ghost-return or multiple-scatter hypothesis can explain such an event.

Of this case, based on lesser details than was available to Dr McDonald, the Colorado Study concluded that the "probability that at least one genuine UFO was involved appears to be fairly high." As Dr McDonald rightly pointed out, "the Lakenheath case exemplifies a disturbingly large group of UFO reports in which the apparent degree of scientific inexplicability is so great that, instead of being ignored and laughed at, those cases should all along since 1947 have been drawing the attention of a large body of the world's best scientists" It would be interesting to know what "mundane" answers the Ministry of Defence found for the Lakenheath case! Almost two months later, on 9th October, Captain Jimmie J. Pollock, Flight Commander of the 55th Fighter Bomber Squadron, and Lt James W. Beisheim, 55th FBS Armament Officer, and their wives, made four ground-visual sightings at Little Easton, Essex of UFOs. First sighting was a bright yellow-orange object which faded to dim red and disappeared. He later saw what appeared to be the same object two more times. His second sighting was

over an hour in length. During this period a second similar object was seen to approach the first object, and then disappear. During the hour period the object climbed very slowly west. The final observation was only two or three minutes. The first object was round, elongating occasionally to two round objects one above the other and had rays shooting from it, five or six rays predominating with smaller rays between. Once or twice a broader or longer ray, yellow in colour, and varying in length three to six times the diameter of the object, appeared. When the object elongated or became two round objects, the one above was always smaller. The Air Intelligence Information Sheet of this case rated Captain Pollock as "very reliable", but, it apparently never reached the United States, for the top right hand corner contained a rubber-stamped 'DESTROY'. One can't help but wonder if the Lakenheath case hadn't already given too many headaches for another puzzling report to be submitted.

The first indication that the author had that the Ministry practiced a policy of destroying its UFO papers, came in June 1967, during a telephonic conversation with Mr. W. F. Allen, a High Executive Officer at the Ministry, who confirmed that all reports prior to 1959 (an embarrassing period when Service reports made news headlines) had been destroyed including the "unsolved" cases. He stated that there was no sense in keeping reports over 10 years old because no scientist could possibly explain them today. As already illustrated, Mr. Allen's surmise is incorrect. Confirmation of this statement was sought through Wing Commander Sir Eric Bullus, MP, and in August 1967, Mr. Mervyn Rees replied,

> "All Ministry of Defence papers, however, are retained only for a specific period once action is complete. The period relates to the importance of the papers and in the case of unidentified flying objects is five years. Thus, only reports which have been received since 1962 are currently retained. Nevertheless, should it appear that a report was of special significance, then the papers would, of course, be retained for more than five years. This has not yet been found to be necessary. In the circumstances, I cannot comment on the object said to have been observed over London Airport in 1959. We have no records of the other incidents in which Mr. Hennessey refers in paragraph 7 of his letter and I assume that these also took place before 1962. We have maintained a separate statistical record of incidents dating back to 1959 but I regret that I cannot comment on statistics relating to the period between 1947 and 1956."

Being convinced from personal investigation of reports that the Ministry was destroying records that were of great interest to the scientific community, the writer was fortunate to obtain the assistance of a prominent long-standing Member of Parliament, Sir John Langford-Holt MC, MP, who took this matter and others relating to the University of Colorado Study up with Lord Winterbottom at the Ministry of Defence.

It was about this time that the USAF-sponsored University of Colorado Scientific Study of UFOs came under attack from John G. Fuller in a ***LOOK*** magazine April 30 1968 article entitled "The Flying Saucer Fiasco". In the article, Mr. Fuller published extracts from a memorandum written by Dr. Robert Low, Project Co-ordinator of the Colorado Study, which revealed that the Study was established in such a way that it could only have a negative result. During a visit to the Ministry of Defence, the author discussed with members of S.4f (Air), the section handling UFO reports, whether, on his visit there, Dr. Low had requested details of cases, the reply was "No". The following confirmation letter was received in February 1968, from Mr. W. F. Allen of the Ministry.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building, Whitehall, LONDON S.W.1
Telephone: xxxxxxxxxxx
01-930 7022 EXT 7035

Please address any reply to
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
(**S4f (Air)**)
and quote: AF/CX 38/67/Pt III/S4f(Air)
Your reference:

18th February 1968

Dear Mr. Hennessey,

You telephoned this morning enquiring whether any information on unidentified flying objects had been made available by the Ministry of Defence to the University of Colorado.

2. I can confirm that although we are in touch with the Americans on this subject they have not asked to look at any of our cases. We would be willing to consider such a request but our impression is that the University has sufficient data from American sources.

Yours faithfully,

/s/ W. F. Allen

(W. F. ALLEN)

J. J. A. Hennessey, Esq.,
87 Lynton Road,
ACTON,
London W.3.

6.

In May 1968, the author wrote to the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson expressing his concern about the scientific validity and purpose of the Study and received the following reply from Mr. L. W. Akhurst of the Ministry of Defence,

"I have been asked to reply to your letter of 30th April addressed to the Prime Minister about the University of Colorado UFO Project. We are, of

course, aware of speculation about the purpose of this project. But, as I told you on the telephone the other day, we have received no information to support the view that this project is not a serious study. As far as I know the study will not be completed for a month or two."

The writer then submitted extracts from the U.S. Congressional Record in which Congressman Edward G. Roush raised doubts about the study and Mr. Akhurst replied,

"Thank you for your letter of 18th May. We found the extracts from the Congressional Record very interesting.

In essence the speeches made by Mr. Roush express doubts about and call for an investigation into the conduct of the University of Colorado project on UFOs. No firm conclusions are drawn.

Our attitude to unidentified flying object reports is based mainly on our own experiences but, like Mr. Roush, we have an open mind on the possibilities of new evidence and are interested in seeing the results of any projects sponsored by other countries. In considering what weight we give to the conclusions of any projects we would, of course, take into account, inter alia, the reliability of the study group. So far as the Colorado project is concerned, you have drawn attention to doubts about its objectivity. The contacts we have had so far do not support these doubts.

As regards further action by the United Kingdom, I am sure you will understand that we must not overlook a basic responsibility not to use public money to duplicate efforts elsewhere, particularly in a field where positive proof is so noticeably lacking. At present we see no need for further action by the United Kingdom."

Therefore, the fact that two scientists, Drs Levine and Saunders, had been fired from the Colorado project and the personal assistant to its head, Mrs. M. L. Armstrong had resigned, had no effect on the Ministry's opinion that the project was a scientifically valid one.

Following the publication of the Colorado Study Report of UFOs in full, a review of it by Dr J. Allen Hynek was published in the April 1969 issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist. In the words of Dr Hynek, the report was, "...a strange sort of scientific paper," which "does not fulfill the promise of its title." He continued,

"Physical scientists who know Edward U. Condon (Project Director) through his work in molecular physics and quantum mechanics will find the hand of the master strangely missing in The Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects. Not only is his talent for organizing and deftly attacking a problem unapparent, but, for example, he is not listed as having personally looked into any of the 95 cases to which various members of the rather fluid committee addressed themselves...While devoted in the large part to exposing hoaxes or revealing many UFOs as misindentifications of common occurrences, the book leaves the same strange, inexplicable residue of unknowns which has plagued the USAF investigation for 20 years. In fact, the percentage of "unknowns" in the Condon report appears to be even higher than the Air Force investigation (Project Blue Book) – which led to the Condon investigation in the first place."

Dr Hynek also mentioned provocative statements that were buried deep in the report which

"do not support its overall conclusion that UFO studies do not offer a fruitful field in which to look for major scientific discoveries...The cases...are glaringly there...an outright challenge to human curiosity, the

foundation stone of scientific

progress. It is difficult to understand why the National Academy of Sciences has fully endorsed Dr Condon's opinion that no further work on the UFO phenomenon should be done"

On the 17th December 1969, the U.S. Secretary for Defence announced the termination of Project Blue Book, citing the findings of the Colorado report and Air Force experience as the reasons for closure. Concerned that the Ministry of Defence would follow the policy of the U.S. Department of Defence and close its own investigation and destroy its records, the author discussed the matter with Sir John Langford-Holt MC MP, who already had taken up the matter of the Ministry destroying its records, and he sent the following letter to Lord Winterbottom,

"I note that the U.S. Air Force has closed its U.F.O. Project Blue Book. As it has been your Ministry's policy to follow closely the policy of the U.S. in this field, I presume that you will close all investigations into and assessments of U.F.O.s in this country. Under these circumstances I would like two assurances and one piece of information. Firstly, I would like to be assured that no records of U.F.O.s have, or will be, destroyed. Secondly, as the reports and evaluations have been considered by H.M.G. to be of no significance, will you make available to reputable scientific bodies who wish to study the matter any material you have. Lastly, I should like to know after what period of time these reports are to be made public, like other records."

The following reply was received from Lord Winterbottom in March 1970.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON. S.W.1

TELEPHONE: 01-930 7022

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

26th March 1970

Dear Sir John,

We have now completed the review of our policy on dealing with reports of unidentified flying objects which I mentioned in my letter to you of 9th February.

As I explained in that letter, the Ministry of Defence has not operated a special unit for dealing with these reports. These are dealt with in the course of our normal operations and the extra effort necessary is quite small. Much of the information drawn upon in looking into UFO reports, e.g. air traffic movements and satellite orbits, is collected for other purposes and these functions would continue even if the Department no longer took an interest in reports of UFOs.

This Ministry investigates reports of UFOs because of their possible implications for the air defence of the United Kingdom. No evidence has incidentally been found to suggest that UFOs represent a threat to our air defences. However, this Department has a duty to keep within its purview all matters which might be relevant to the defence of the United Kingdom and, in view of the small effort required to investigate reports of unidentified flying objects, we propose to make no change in our present arrangements.

The Ministry of Defence hold UFO records from 1962 onwards. These records will not be destroyed, but, I am afraid, we cannot make them available to outside bodies at this stage because of the effort that would be involved in editing reports to preserve the anonymity of the reporters or, alternatively, obtaining the reporters' permission to release the information. It would also be necessary to scrutinise all records before release to any organisation outside the public service to ensure that no classified information used in the course of investigating reports was inadvertently included.

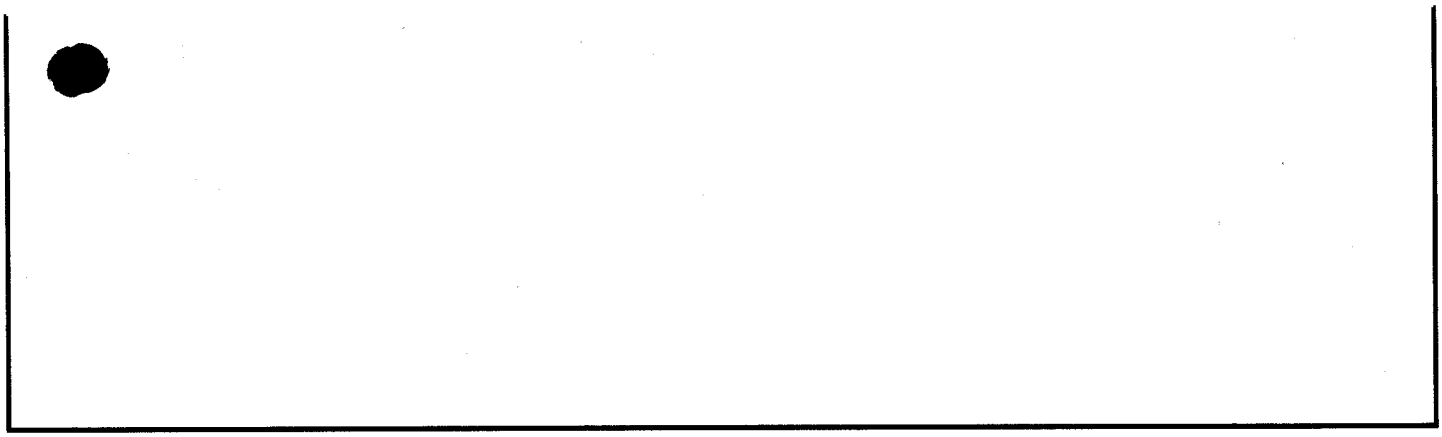
/In

Sir John Langford-Holt, MP
House of Commons
London SWl

In the normal course of events UFO records would remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the usual rules at the end of 30 years. If, however, a major scientific organisation of high standing had strong reasons for obtaining access to our records then its application would be considered on its merits.

Yours sincerely,
Winterbottom

(WINTERBOTTOM)



 View Letter as .Pdf Document

Thus, for the first time in its history of investigating UFOs since 1947, the Ministry is to retain its UFO files without destroying them after a 5-year period. Although not available to the public for 30 years, it has left the door open for the papers to be studied by a scientific organisation of high standing. It is only hoped that **every** report, including radar and Service ones, will be available without exception.

The question still remained, however, whether the Ministry still considered the Colorado report to be scientifically valid. From the review by Dr Hynek, any many other subsequent ones by other scientists in scientific publications, it is

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clear the report was not accepted by science as the final word in the UFO controversy. Letters to Sir John Langford-Holt MC MP, solicited the following reply from Lord Winterbottom in May 1970,

> "...The best available scientific opinion seems to be that contained in the Report of the Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects conducted by the University of Colorado, which was published in 1969. The general conclusion of that report, which was endorsed by the panel of the National Academy of Sciences, is that nothing has come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that has added to scientific knowledge and that further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby. The Colorado Study Group reached this conclusion after examining many cases including reports on the incidents referred to by Mr. Hennessey. I am sorry I cannot be more helpful."

One year later, in May 1971, Mr. L. W. Akhurst of the Ministry's S.4f (Air) wrote the author,

> "The Report by the University of Colorado on Unidentified Flying Objects was endorsed by the National Academy of Sciences and we accept that this august body would not have done so had it considered the study scientifically unreliable. As you know the Ministry of Defence has not carried out a general study of the scientific significance of UFO reports, our interest is in possible defense aspects, but our experience of UFO reports is consistent with the findings of the Colorado Study. Based on our own experience then we accept these findings."

The letter of Lord Winterbottom infers that the Ministry has studied the Colorado study, this being the case, why did he merely dismiss the Lakenheath case, which I had detailed to him earlier, by referring merely to the general conclusions of the Report's Summary. Had he, or a member of his Department, taken the time to look up the case in the Report, he would have read the Colorado investigator's conclusion which states, "...the probability that at least one genuine UFO case was involved appears to be fairly high.". The Ministry has also, but possibly unwisely, jumped on the bandwagon of those who believe that an endorsement by the National Academy of Sciences makes the Colorado Report scientifically valid and beyond reproach. On this point, there is absolutely no evidence that the Academy panel did any independent checking of its own; and none of that 11-man panel had any significant prior investigative experience in this area. One should also bear in mind that the National Academy of Sciences has been regarded as losing its credibility in its role as government adviser on scientific matters. Former U.S. Secretary of the Interior, at an annual December meeting of the American Association for the Advancement for Science, described the Academy as a "virtual puppet of the government," and urged citizen groups to challenge the Academy's reluctance to oppose establishment policy "on controversial public issues. Although Mr. Udall's remarks were not aimed at the UFO problem, it nevertheless challenges the ability of, what the Ministry termed an "august body" to make scientific assessments, independent of establishment policy and therefore the validity of its endorsement of the Colorado Report. The writer conveyed these points to Lord Winterbottom and stated, "There can be no doubt that the Condon Report and its Academy endorsement have exerted a highly negative influence on clarification of the long-standing UFO problem and I would be glad to learn if the Ministry of Defence still intends to accept the Report's findings." In February 1972, a reply was received from Mr. Antony

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Lambton, successor to Lord Winterbottom, via Mr. Julian Ridsdale MP,

> "In his letter, Mr. Hennessey also questions the credibility of the US National Academy of Sciences in its role of government adviser on scientific matters. I can confirm that, in our view, the National Academy of Sciences remains a highly reputable body which is not tied to the US Government, although it often carries out work for that government. We know of no reason to discredit the work done by the panel from the National Academy of Sciences in reviewing the report on UFOs by the University of Colorado."

This endorsement still stands today.

During 1967, the author and a colleague personally investigated a number of selected UFO reports out of the many hundreds that were extensively reported in the national press. These investigations, deliberately made after those by the Ministry, gave a valuable insight as to the 'thoroughness' with which the Ministry conducted theirs. It is interesting to note that the Ministry never operated on an immediate capability basis, but waited until press interest had died down before making a foray into the field. One report investigated was made by a Wing Commander W. A. Cox and his wife. W/Cmdr Cox is a reliable witness of solid character and high standing in his local community, who served 36 years in the Royal Air Force.

On the evening of 24th October 1967, the W/Cmdr and his wife were visiting a relative and had watched the news on television that had included an interview of two policemen concerning their 90 mph patrol car chase of an unidentified light in the sky over Devon. After the news, they both watched another programme for a short while and decided it was time to leave. At the door, Mrs. Cox jokingly remarked to her sister, "I am going to look for lights in the sky tonight on my

way home." At 2146 hours whilst W/Cmdr Cox was driving along the Cadnam to Fordingbridge Road in Hampshire, his wife noticed seven lights in a 'V' formation in the sky to the north of their position. Trying to draw them to her husband's attention, W/Cmdr Cox immediately retorted, "Oh rubbish!" and continued to drive for a further quarter of a mile before his wife's persistence made him pull the car into a lay-by. The following is part of a transcript from the author's personal interview with W/Cmdr and Mrs. Cox:

W/CMDR COX ...And then I looked across to the north and, sure enough, there were these lights, so I wound the car window down and had a look. Then I got out of the car, we both did, and leant on the roof and watched them. Now, I thought, and said at the time, that they were a squadron of helicopters, this is what they looked like to me with landing lights on. But, then I looked at them more closely, this could not have been so because landing lights don't show sideways so brightly, they are downward lights.

MRS. COX: Well, in any case there wasn't any noise, was there?

W/CMDR: There was no noise. There was not enough movement for them to be helicopters, so we just dismissed it.

W/CMDR: ...as soon as we finished looking at these objects, we got back here and it is 4 to 5 minutes away, no more. I looked at the time straight away because I decided to ring up the police, this is why I know the time within 10 minutes.

MYERS: Why did you call the police?

W/CMDR: Because the police had been pooh poohed about what they had and hadn't seen, I thought it is only fair to let an outsider ring up. I rang the police and told them this, I said in case you don't feel too happy about this thing, because the police had been pulled over the coals, here is an

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outsider who has also seen something, so you can make them laugh at that. This was my attitude and the only reason for telling them.

W/CMDR: Of course the police had been doing some ringing around Boscombe Down and Larkhill ranges to find out whether there was any lights going up or any aircraft, and they said there was none. When I said they might been choppers, they rang up Middle Wallop, but there were no choppers up.

HENNESSEY: Do you know what sort of response they got from Larkhill? (an artillery range on Salisbury Plain)

W/CMDR: Yes, earlier in the evening, much earlier.

HENNESSEY: What is your reaction to the possibility that these could have been flare illuminating projectiles of the type fired by 25 pounders?

W/CMDR: If you fire any projectiles of any sort, you first of all have upward movement if you see the light as it lights and then a slow descent. If it is on a parachute, it has a fast descent, this did neither, it could either be something going away from us very very fast indeed, so that the light disappeared, or it could be a very powerful light being switched off.

HENNESSEY: You said that three of the lights departed or seemed to fade first.

W/CMDR: Yes that's right. They appeared to be a very good formation of lights and made me think it was helicopters, because it was a very good formation. But they were a stationary formation, this is the thing that also made me think they were helicopters when, suddenly, three on the right broke away as three and the lights went out.

HENNESSEY: When you say broke away, did you actually see them move?

W/CMDR: They moved away.

HENNESSEY: You actually saw them move away?

W/CMDR: They moved away. They didn't move away all three together, they moved away in a higgeldy piggeldy manner as though they could have each been an individual something. Now if they had been flares, they would have fallen at the same rate, wouldn't they? But these went up and around, they did not fall in a pattern.

HENNESSEY: So looking straight at them, they would have moved to the right?

W/CMDR: Yes, to the right, upwards and away as though they were individually controlled. As soon as they did that, the remaining four lights formed a perfect formation of a plus sign and, this is the other thing that struck me, it was such a perfect formation, that it looked as though it was controlled. Whether it was radio controlled equipment or not, I do not know, but this is what it appeared to be. These four lights went out absolutely simultaneously as though you had a large object with one stuck on four points and it went away from you, it could happen like that. It was from one source it looked to me.

MYERS: And after that it was completely blank when those final lights had gone?

W/CMDR: As soon as the lights had gone, we noticed the lights of Salisbury, you know the lights in the sky, not the actual lights themselves.

W/CMDR: And so we know the precise positi hey were, and I reckon that Boscombe Down (Aircraft Experimental Re arch Establishment) and Larkhill are away to the west of where we saw t..ese, in fact I know they are.

At this point I will quote from the letter of Mr. L. M. Akhurst, of 29th January 1968, in which he gave to W/Cmdr Cox the Ministry's findings; in order that we can see W/Cmdr Cox's reaction further on tape;

KER/9/29-3

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building, Whitehall, LONDON S.W.1
Telephone: **WHI*tehall*xxxxxxxx 01-930-7022**

Our reference: AF/509/30/S4f(Air)
Your reference;

29 January 1968

Dear Wing Commander Cox,

I am writing to let you know the results of our investigation of your report about unidentified flying objects which you saw at 21.45 hours on 24th October.

On the basis of the information you provided, we made a thorough examination of all activities in the area which might have given rise to your observation. Larkhill Artillery Range and Boscombe Down Airfield are both close to the line of sight which you indicated to us and we found that both were in use at the time of your sighting. Of course, both locations are rather further from your point of observation than the estimated position of the lights which you gave. But you will recall that our investigators discussed with you the difficulties of accurate estimation of range particularly at night, and you accepted that the lights might have been further away than you first thought.

Larkhill Artillery Range was in use all that evening until about midnight. In addition to high explosive shells, illuminating flares were being fired. As I am sure you know, these hang in the air for some time before expiring in a random manner. These flares were also observed by members of the Porton Down establishment which lies between your point of observation and the range. It does seem probable, therefore, that your "UFO" could have been a group of illuminating flares.

Coincidentally, at the time of your observations an aircraft was approaching to land at Boscombe Down and it is possible that you may have seen lights on this aircraft. The variation in the appearance of the lights could then be explained by changes in attitude of the aircraft as it made its circuit and final approach. However, the sight of aircraft lights will be familiar to you; and although even experienced pilots have been known to mistake the source of lights which they ought to recognise, this seems a far less likely explanation for your sighting. You will be interested to learn that one of the officers who investigated your sighting did himself subsequently see by chance an almost exactly similar series of lights, but was able at the time to identify them as lights of an aircraft. In this case the explanation was immediately obvious but it does mean that we cannot entirely disregard the possibility that you also saw the lights of an aircraft.

In short we cannot make a positive identification but we think that you must have seen either illuminating flares above the Larkhill Artillery Range or the lights of an aircraft landing at Boscombe Down; of these we regard the

former as much the more likely.

I would like to thank you for your very clear and detailed report and to say how grateful we are for your co-operation with the officers of the Department enquiring into this matter.

Yours faithfully

/s/ L.W. Akhurst

(L.W. Akhurst)

HENNESSEY: So far as you are concerned, Larkhill and Boscombe Down are not visible. If they had any flares up at the time, they would not be in the direction that you had seen the objects?

W/CMDR: I very much doubt it, **but Boscombe Down is so laughable, that it was an aircraft landing is absolutely stupid**. The clouds were low although it was very clear up to whatever height the clouds were, because we could see the moon, but it was very low on the horizon over on the east. **But you certainly would not have seen an airplane, that is absolutely certain**.

HENNESSEY: The aircraft landed at 2144 hours (confirmed to me in writing by the Senior Air Traffic Controller at Boscombe) and your sighting started at 2146, so the aircraft was not in the air at the time.

W/CMDR: I would not have seen that anyway.

HENNESSEY: What is your reaction to the Ministry's letter?

W/CMDR: Well, I was going to write to them and say lay this on... this light business, the flare business and get an aircraft to land at Boscombe Down and come down here and I will accompany you to the spot, we will then have a look and see. Now that is a scientific check in my opinion. If they say that this is so, well it is very easy for them to lay it on, no difficulty at all. We could have had a neutral observer as well, they have got my report as you have and they could say this is what you said then.

MYERS: You can't change that!

W/CMDR: You can't change that, this is what you are looking at now, we think it is similar or otherwise. I mean I am quite happy if they say there

you are, but this is what they ought to do and, until they do, **I think this is the biggest load of tripe that I've heard in a long time.**

HENNESSEY: You are definite about the length of time of the observation?

W/CMDR: You can't be definite about the length of time.

HENNESSEY: But you think you were reasonably accurate?

W/CMDR: From the time that my wife first saw it to the time the lights went out, I would say it was approximately six minutes. I could let you say four minutes and let you get away with it.

HENNESSEY: If I said it was ninety seconds?

W/CMDR: But if you said it was ninety seconds, I would say you just weren't there and just didn't know what you were talking about.

HENNESSEY:M That it what the Ministry said to us, it was just ninety seconds. (This information was given us during an interview at the Ministry of Defence with some of the investigators who also indicated that they considered W/Cmdr Cox an unreliable witness. The wife's testimony seems to have been forgotten or ignored).

W/CMDR: Yes, well look at this, it was quarter of a mile before I

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stopped the car, I then lowered my window and looked out at them. I then stopped the car engine, opened the door, got out, walked behind it, leant on the roof, and looked across it. if that is ninety seconds!

All the points made by W/Cmdr Cox's were substantiated by the author and colleague who retraced the route taken by Cox and followed the actions described. All timing was consistent with W/Cmdr Cox's estimate that he observed the objects for 6 minutes. The investigators also visited the Hampshire Constabulary Police Station at Fordingbridge, Larkhill School of Artillery and Boscombe Down, all of whom gave later written confirmation proving that, whatever W/Cmdr Cox and wife did see, it was certainly not flares or the landing lights of a Hastings aircraft coming down to land at Boscombe Down.

In March 1968, I submitted through Wing Commander Sir Eric E. Bullus MP, our findings to the Ministry of Defence requesting their comments. In May 1968, the following reply was received from Mr. Merlyn Rees;

"We have not heard from Wing Commander Cox since we told him of our findings in January. This exchange of views was, of course, a personal one between Wing Commander Cox and the Department and, as Mr. Hennessey has been told by the Department on a number of occasions, we do not discuss with third parties the detailed information included in such exchanges without the consent of the member of the public concerned. However, I can tell you that in reaching our conclusions we took into account all the information provided to us both in writing and verbally by Wing Commander Cox about the time and duration of the incident, the distance and bearings and the description of the lights. We also took account of the experience in observation Wing Commander Cox

must have accumulated over the years. Mr. Hennessey's personal assessment of the information which he has obtained does not give us cause to amend our views."

Need more be said about the Ministry's 'thoroughness' and 'open-mindedness' in investigating UFO reports. It is clear that the Ministry was unable to positively identify the objects because its investigating methods were unsatisfactory. It made unwarranted assumptions and disregarded important relative information given by the eyewitnesses.

As a classic example of the Ministry's 'shotgun' type examination, for which the U.S. Air Force was a past master, the author investigated a 1967 case in which thirteen H.M. Coastguards observed a large UFO for a 20-minute period which was circled by a jet interceptor. The Ministry at first explained the object as car headlights on a cloud until they realized that the time of the sighting was near noon midday and not midnight. The UFO was subsequently listed as a "probable balloon" (capable of flying diagonally into a strong wind) but, even more surprising to the writer, **the Ministry could not identify the jet nor where it came from!** This case was also discussed during the author's visit to the Ministry when Mr. Cassells, then head of S.4f(Air), admitted that the Ministry had been "a little embarrassed" here. Due to a "mix-up", the radar film of the object and intercepting aircraft was destroyed before they could get to it. However, the film could not have shown anything untoward or it would have been retained. A talk with the radar operator revealed that he had observed nothing unusual on scope. It was now impossible to identify the interceptor or where it came from. Drawings of the UFO suggested it was a high-altitude balloon. The question of the Ministry's inability to positively identify the object was taken up. In an October 1967 letter, Mr. W. F. Allen of the Ministry stated, "As far as the Berry Head sighting is concerned, as we cannot positively state that the object was a

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balloon its identity must obviously remain unknown. We have no record of any RAF aircraft being in the vicinity at the time and nothing was observed by radar which gave any concern from the air defence point of view." In October 1969, Mr. L. W. Akhurst wrote, "We have received no further information about this report and the position is as stated in our letter of 4th October 1967. That is, the drawings seen in the Ministry of Defence suggest that the object may have been a high altitude balloon." Then, in May 1971, he wrote, "The category in which a report is placed depends on the particular circumstances; this could mean that a report referred to as 'probably a balloon' could be placed in the 'Balloon' category." Thus, statistically, the H.M. Coastguards' report became a "Balloon"

Another case, which is on interest from the point of view that no official body was interested in investigating, despite its puzzling nature, occurred on 11th September 1967, when an Air Ferry DC-6, piloted by Captain F. E. C. Underhill, a training Captain of British United Airways on loan to Air Ferry, observed a dark object in the west travelling across his flight path parallel with the Pyrenees, Spain. At the time, Captain Underhill was at an altitude of 16,000ft and estimated the object to be about 60 miles ahead at an altitude of 25,000ft. The following is part of a transcript of a tape-recorded interview by the author:

CAPT UNDERHILL: I want to go back to answering your questionnaire here. First of all, the distance (of the object at first sighting) would be 55 miles, as by Mr. Hope (First Officer), and the second one, likewise, would be 17.05 GMT, again as recorded by Mr. Hope. The estimate of speed, well I find this very difficult...ultrasonic, well up in the thousands, before that I wouldn't be able to say, other than the fact that I've watched very high-speed performance aircraft, but never saw anything as fast as this. It was

really going too fast, it really drew my attention to it. Above that, it was just a black speck.

You asked me to answer what happened when I reported it. Now on the question of reporting it, I am not sure of the procedure, to be absolutely honest, in this particular case and I've never had anything like this before. I called up Manston (Manston RAF base) and they said would I phone them as soon as I got down. I phoned up the Duty Officer there, he then said he was extremely interested and that he would like details of which he took down over the phone, so I never actually filled in a complete report. The whole thing was done over the phone to him, which was more or less exactly the same as I told you, with a description of which he took all down. He was the Duty Officer and in fact was extremely interested at the time because he said he experienced something similar to this a number of years ago when he was with Transport Command over the Mediterranean.

...I'll now deal with your second one (question), which there was this effort from the Air Ministry. Now I would like to say right away, unless, of course, they have got something I don't know about, but I would have said right from the start **it was not mistaken for an aircraft**

In an October 1967 letter, the Ministry stated, "We have been unable to positively identify the object seen by the crew of a DC-6 aircraft but on its face-value this report has no defence implications for the United Kingdom. It

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may possibly have been an aircraft seen in an unusual attitude."

CAPT UNDERHILL: This was not something which seen...you know, an aircraft seen in an unusual attitude. The only time it looked like an aircraft, at any stage, was when it was in this turn and the First Officer said, "It looks like a formation" and we all stared at it and said "well it could be you know"...because it was probably the shape, you know how a formation sort of wheels and sort of gets this shape out of it (indicating a triangle shape with his hands)... sort of black and in the distance. But, when it came nearer, **to me there was no doubt that it was nothing like an aircraft anyway**, but the fact that it was sort of up in this attitude (here he indicated that the point of the cone-shaped object was at a 2 o'clock position) with the pointed part sticking up here (almost vertical), I can't possibly see how it could have been, unless it was something we have no knowledge of whatsoever.

HENNESSEY: Was there any report made at all to Barcelona?

CAPT UNDERHILL: Yes I did. Actually, I called up Barcelona and asked them if they had any knowledge of any other activity in the area at the time. They said they would call back and said they had no knowledge, they were a bit vague. We were in touch with Barcelona, but I thought they might pass it on to the Americans who have got quite an extensive radar set-up, I believe, there in Spain. I thought that they might have done some liaison..this went through my mind. I did not expect the Spanish to deal with it, but the Americans who are operating there from a number of NATO airfields, I thought they probably would have been able to do something. As I say, to my mind there was no doubt about it whatsoever that, whatever it was, it was controlled, this you know was apparent to me. The fact that it came across at an angle, did a turn and came at us from about

here (raising hand to slightly above eye-level) and dropped down. Initially when we saw it, it was higher than us, I would not like to say how much higher, a few thousand feet at least, but then it came down and passed below us.

HENNESSEY: Did it slow down?

CAPT UNDERHILL: Yes it did, slowed right down actually.

HENNESSEY: You had the impression though that it had seen your aircraft?

CAPT UNDERHILL: Well, this is what really impressed me..but I mean, you know, I could be guessing, but to me it was under control. Whether he had seen us or not, I don't know, but the fact that he was coming very fast along here, then slowed right down as it came into the turn, then, of course, you can't check on speed when it was coming head-on towards you, but as it came past us, there was very little motion on it in actual fact. There did not appear to be any real speed at all. We were all so engrossed in looking at this thing that I never thought..I undid my strap and sort of leaning across, but I didn't think of the fact we ought to cut the auto pilot out and turn the airplane or do anything like this, but I should have done if I thought more..everything was happening and we were all sort of rivetted on this thing and I just didn't do anything about it.

HENNESSEY: Were there any markings on it?

CAPT UNDERHILL: We couldn't tell because it was in the base, anyway it was just beginning to get about dusk and it was on the port wing and we were on the starboard. It was lighter than it is now (dusk), but it was a sort of evening haze. You could tell it had this silver appearance and appeared to be metallic, even still define it, but you couldn't identify anything else and.. after that it had a completely rounded bottom. We all agreed on everything there and then, excepting we couldn't make out whether it was completely rounded.

In this case, had the DC-6 been approached by a conventional aircraft, no doubt a strong protest would have been made by some official U.K. body, but, because it was unconventional, nobody was interested, including the Board of Trade responsible for civil aviation matters. The author contacted Project Blue Book to see whether U.S. radars in Spain had picked up any UFOs, but the reply from a Major Hector Quintanilla was negative. Yet, it is interesting to note, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State for Defence for the RAF, stated in Parliament on 8th November 1967, "We have complete radar coverage to a very great height all over these islands and have access to that over Europe, and none of this leads us to believe in any sense that this is anything else than something which we know nothing about." Indeed! Either radar in Europe has blind spots, which is not a happy prospect, or the Ministry here and abroad are 'in the know'. In December 1967, the following letter was received from Mr. R. Broadbent, Deputy Director of Flight Safety (B) of the Board of Trade,

> "Thank you for your letter about the near collision between an unidentified flying object and a DC-6 aircraft of Air Ferry. We have sent it to the Director of Civil Air Traffic Operations who looks after these matters and he has asked me to say that, since the incident occurred over a foreign country, it may take a little time to get details."

The author's interest was aroused in what role, if any, the Board of Trade had in UFOs. In October 1967, the author received the following statement from Mr. J. H. Riddoch, Under-Secretary for the Aviation Safety & General Division of the Board of Trade,

> "Before the Board of Trade could define their nature and extent of their interest, more positive interest would be required than is available now about the characteristics, behaviour and intentions of any such objects that are proved to exist."

The author then placed a number of specific questions to the Board and received the following reply from Mr. J. R. Neill, Director of Flight Safety,

> "There are no special rules or authorizations applicable to any such objects. Rules of the Air which are made under the authority of the Air Navigation Order prohibit the low flying of aircraft. Any reports of aircraft flying in breach of these regulations are considered by the Board of Trade and when appropriate are referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for proceedings in the Courts. No reports concerning unidentified flying objects have been received by the Board of Trade. The answers to the questions you put are as follows:-
>
> Question:
> (1) Under what authorization does the Board receive UFO reports?
>
> Answer:
> (1) There is no special authorization or procedure for dealing with unidentified flying objects in civil aviation or in Board of Trade practice.

> Question:
> (2) How long has the Board been receiving such reports?
>
> Answer:
> (2) No such reports have been received by the Board of Trade.
>
> Question:
> (3) What happens to reports when they are received by the Board?
>
> Answer:
> (3) Not applicable
>
> Question:
> (4) Which other bodies, apart from the police, are required to forward UFO reports to the Board?
>
> Answer:
> (4) Not applicable

From the above, it was clear that the Board has no interest in UFOs. Therefore civil aviation pilots have no rulings as to whom they should report any such observations. In May 1968, whilst investigating combined visual-radar tracking of a UFO over Northern Island, the author received a letter from the Board of Trade Air Traffic Control at Belfast Airport which stated, in part, "...4.

You may be interested to know that Air Traffic Service Units have, since February 1968, instructions to report details of U.F.O.s to the Military Aeronautical Information Service at Uxbridge and these details will be recorded." Therefore, four months after the author's enquiries into Board of Trade involvement, or rather non-involvement, in the UFO problem. A rather remarkable coincidence! In May 1968, following numerous but unsuccessful telephone enquiries for details about the work of MAIS Uxbridge, the author wrote them and received the following reply from Mr. L.W. Akhurst of the Ministry of Defence in June 1968, a whole month later, "I am writing to let you know that MAIS Uxbridge has passed on to me your letter of 19th May about UFOs. Any reports received by MAIS Uxbridge are passed on to the Ministry of Defence. You are, of course, aware of our position on the release of or access to documents." A further letter from Mr. Akhurst was received in May, 1971,

> "With regard your enquiry about ATC radar reports, I cannot recall when we last received one. As I told you in my letter of 25th March 1971 we received none in 1970. It is true that reports received by ATC centres from, for example, members of the public are normally routed through MAIS to MOD. This line of communication was arranged by the ATC authorities and is, I assume, organisationally convenient for them. MAIS has no direct responsibility for investigating UFO reports but does provide MOD with information as required."

Through Sir John Langford-Holt MC MP, I put a number of questions to the Board of Trade and the following reply was received from The Minister for Trade in May 1971,

> "NATCS units have instructions that, in the event of a report concerning an unidentified flying object, they should obtain as much as possible of the information required to complete a prescribed report form. The details are to be passed by telephone to the parent Air Traffic Control Centre (ATCC), while the completed report form is forwarded to the Ministry of Defence. The ATCC is required to give the details without delay to the Military Aeronautical Information Service. These instructions were first issued in January 1968, and published in the Manual of Air Traffic Control. I enclose copies of the relevant pages from the manual, which include the report form. The NATCS does not keep statistics of these reports once they have been passed on this way, but I understand that Anthony Lambton has recently written you about reports received by his Department during 1970. I would suggest that he may be able to supply similar information for earlier years should you so wish, and am copying this letter to him."

The following is from the Manual of Air Traffic Control No. A.T.C.1 No. 2 part 1-19 Chapter 5;

17.

5.5 Reporting of Unidentified Flying Objects

5.5.1. In the event of a report concerning an unidentified flying object being received by an ATS unit the following action should be taken.

5.5.2. The ATSU receiving the report shall obtain as much as possible of the information required to complete the report form shown at Appendix "F" and pass all details by telephone to the watch supervisor at the parent ATCC (Scottish ATCC, Preston ATCC or London ATCC). The completed form shall be sent by the originating ATSU to the Ministry of Defence

(AFOR), Royal Air Force, Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1.

5.5.3. The Watch Supervisor at ATCC concerned shall pass all details without delay via the operational telephone network to the Military Aeronautical Information Service section at West Drayton. If it is necessary to use the GPO network the information should be passed to West Drayton 4077 extension 5343.

5.5.4. Such reports shall be entered in the ATC log.

In May 1971 the author, through Sir John Langford-Holt MC MP, again queried the Board to establish whether separate instructions were given the Board of Trade's radar operators about reporting UFOs and whether different reporting forms were used. The following reply, addressed to Sir John's Private Secretary, was received from Mr. R. J. Ager, Private Secretary to the Minister for Trade, in November 1971,

> "The only instructions to air traffic controllers concerning unidentified flying objects are those published in the Manual of Air Traffic Control about which the Minister informed Sir John in his letter of 21 May. No special form is used for this purpose but the report is required to be made on the lines of the Appendix F to the Manual which was copied to Sir John. While the Ministry of Defence take film records of radar displays at some units this is not for the purpose of gathering information about unidentified flying objects. There is no requirement for such recordings at our civil air traffic control units, at which incidentally there have been no UFO reports over the past two years."

On 8th September 1971, the author paid a visit to the LATCC (Military) and was permitted to view some UFO records, which were kept on well-stocked files, and was given photostat copies of reports that related to current investigations being undertaken by the author. During his visit, the author was informed that there had been quite a "deal of activity in the South East" which kept the "fighter chaps busy." Other information obtained included the fact that some reports, depending on their nature, were teletyped to the Ministry of Defence Operations Room with copies to the Royal Air Force Strike Command at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire and marked 'PRIORITY'. It is not known what action is taken on them immediately thereafter. In December 1971, the author made an application for permission, as an accredited investigator for Dr J. Allen Hynek of the Northwestern University, to review future such reports received at LATCC (Military) as received from ATCs without necessarily knowing how these were investigated nor the conclusions of the Military of Defence. In December 1971, Mr. A. N. Davis DSO, DFC, then the section head of S.4(air), replied,

> Thank you for your letter of 19th December about UFO reports. I know of your visit to the LATCC (military) on 8th September but I must confess that I am at a loss to know how on that visit you managed to see UFO reports received 26/27th October 1971. No doubt you will be aware that on the 25th November the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Air Force wrote to Mr. Julian Ridsdale M.P., who had taken up a question on your behalf, advising him that UFO records remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down

---

> in the Public Records Act. i.e. at the end of thirty years. I regret therefore that I cannot accede to your request periodically to view reports

of UFO sightings received by MAIS. In view of this ruling there will be no point in our meeting to discuss the matter further."


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Another avenue of information was again closed.

In October 1971, the author personally handed in a letter to the private residence of Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Defence, pointing out "inherent shortcomings" of the Ministry's policy in handling the UFO problem as follows:

Firstly, the Ministry does not appear to operate on an immediate capability basis. Often, witnesses in major cases were not interviewed until weeks after making their report. The value and validity of doing so is certainly in question. The Ministry has stated in the House (of Commons) that it is often difficult to assess what a witness observed several days later, let alone several weeks.

Secondly, judging from my correspondence with the Ministry, it appears unable to positively identify an extremely high number of the reports made. Yet the annual statistics never support this fact. UFOs listed as "probable balloons" suddenly become definite balloons statistically. Cases have even occurred where the Ministry was even unable to identify jet interceptors involved.

Thirdly, explanations given witnesses are often more puzzling to them than the nature of the UFO reported. In many cases, the witnesses, often trained competent observers, have regarded these Ministry explanations as an insult to their intelligence and certainly would never again report any other such observation to the Ministry. My discussions with airline pilots revealed that a majority of them would never make a report to the Ministry for fear of ridicule. A highly unsatisfactory situation caused by the present policy.

Fourthly, once an explanation has been given, the Ministry will not, even when the evidence has been presented to the contrary, review its findings if the evidence presented does not fit in with theirs. It has a strong tendency to ignore valid points in the statements of witnesses simply because it does not support what they think is the probable cause of the sighting.

Lastly, the Ministry only investigates the air defence implications of reports and admits that it has never carried out a study into their scientific implications. Scientists or serious UFO researchers have no access to these unclassified reports on file. Indeed, it is only over the recent years that such reports are permanently retained. Previously they were destroyed after a 5-year period.

From the above, it is clear that, in the first instance, a major public relations problem exists. My opinion is certainly not an isolated one, a prominent scientist, who visited the then Air Ministry for a discussion of UFOs, stated to me in a tape-recorded conversation, "I am probably speaking treason here, but there seems no point to follow things up and no basic rapport between the British Air Ministry and the public...they say the public be damned!" The same attitude has not changed six years later! If one accepts the above as the only "true" picture, which is how the

public now sees it, then the Ministry's investigation is one of gross incompetence that endangers National security. However, my observations lead me to believe that it is not the only investigation."

The author's letter was personally acknowledged by Lord Carrington in November 1971,

"Thank you for writing me on 24th and 26th October expressing your concern about material available to UFO researchers. Since this is a matter for the Air side of the Department I have passed your letter to Mr. Lambton, the Under Secretary of State for the Royal Air Force, for action. You should be hearing from his office shortly."

19.

At the end of November 1971, Mr. Antony Lambton replied via Mr. Julian Ridsdale MP as follows,

---

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1.

TELEPHONE 01-930 7022

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

AF/PS 529/71

26th November 1971

Dear Sir John,

Your letter of 6th November to Geoffrey Johnson-Smith has been passed to me for reply since this is a matter for my Department. You enclosed a letter from Mr J. Hennessey of 57 Pont Street, London, SW1 about an object filmed by an ATV camera crew at Enstone. Mr Hennessey also wrote to the Prime Minister and to Peter Carrington about the Ministry of Defence role in the field of research into unidentified flying objects and I am taking this

opportunity of replying, through you, to these other letters, in addition to the one sent to you.

To deal first with Mr Hennessey's enquiry about the object filmed at Enstone, a recording of the colour film was viewed many times and closely examined by two officers of the Ministry of Defence, who concluded that the sequence shown was consistent with an aircraft emitting a condensation trail or dumping fuel. F. 111 aircraft from RAF Upper Heyford were operating in the area at the time.

Turning now to Mr Hennessey's other letters, he has questioned the Department's policy in handling UFO problems in respect of the depth and nature of our examination of reported sightings, the nature of our explanations, the availability of our records for research purposes and the absence of Ministry of Defence investigations into the scientific implications of these phenomena. Mr Hennessey is aware that the Ministry of Defence investigates and keeps records of UF sightings because of their possible air defence implications. There has, as yet, been no evidence to suggest that UFOs represent an air defence threat to the United Kingdom. As regards our examination of UFO reports, once it is clear that there are no defence implications any further assessments are based exclusively on information readily correlating the UFO sighting report with a natural or manufactured object such as a star, planet, space junk,

/balloons

Julian Ridsdale, Esq, MP,
House of Commons,
London, SW1

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balloons or aircraft lights seen in unusual meteorological cirumstances. We cannot undertake to pursue research to a point where positive correlation with a known object is established. To carry out a review of our findings, as he suggests, whenever an observer does not agree with our explanation, would go beyond our purely air defence interest as we would not be justified in terms of the expenditure of time and effort that would be needed to seek and assess information which might or might not enable us to make a positive identification of the object reported.

Since the Ministry of Defence interest in UFOs is limited to the defence aspect, a study of the scientific significance of UFOs has not been carried out. Nor would there be any justification for expending public funds in duplicating studies already carried out elsewhere. I refer, for example, to the studies by the University of Colorado, the main findings of which were made public early in 1969 and were endorsed by a panel of the (US) National Academy of Sciences. As Mr Hennessey no doubt knows the panel concluded, inter alia, that:

a. about 90% of all UFO reports proved to be quite plausibly related to ordinary phenomena;

b. little, if anything, had come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that added to scientific knowledge;

c. further extensive study of UFO sightings was not justified in the expectation that science could be advanced thereby;

d. no evidence had come to light that UFO sightings might represent a defence hazard.

Our own experience is such that we would not disagree with any of these findings.

Records of UFO reports received since 1962 are retained in the Department. Although these reports may themselves be unclassified, correspondence between the Department and members of the public is treated as confidential and thus documents cannot be made available to any organisation outside the public service without either the reports being edited to preserve the anonymity of the reporter or our obtaining the observer's permission to release the information. The reports would also need examination to ensure that no classified information was inadvertently disclosed. The extensive time and effort needed for this task would, in my opinion, not be justified. UFO records therefore remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down in the Public Records Acts, i.e. at the end of 30 years.

Mr Hennessey has sought our comments on the question of international efforts being made to seek explanations of UFOs.

/This

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This could, no doubt, be of interest to some people. Our experience in the field of UFO investigation, however, would not justify the United Kingdom in taking the initiative in such a project. Any proposal which might be put forward in the future by an international organisation such as the United Nations would be considered on its merits in the light of evidence available at the time.

/s/

(ANTONY LAMBTON)

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Julian Hennssey's article ends here. Not long after it was written, a series of events led to his gradual withdrawal from UFO research. As outlined in the Hennessey Introduction, the competing needs of work and family life, along with the closing down of NICAP, led to a cessation of his UFO research. Julian left behind a rich collection of historically important UFO material which will be highlighted further in due course.

Back To Hennessey Intro | Back to SHG Resources

UFO UpDates

A mailing list for the study of UFO-related phenomena
'Its All Here In Black & White'

The U.K. Government UFOs & Julian J.A. Hennessey

From: **Jan Aldrich <project1947.nul>**
Date: Mon, 2 Jan 2006 23:48:04 -0500
Fwd Date: Mon, 02 Jan 2006 12:22:45 -0500
Subject: The U.K. Government UFOs & Julian J.A. Hennessey

Julian Hennessey, an important figure in both British ufology and the National Investigations on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), for many years investigated UFO cases in Great Britain and all over Europe. He formed an European UFO investigative unit, NICAP European Investigative Subcommittee #1 composed of scientists, a pilot, and UFO investigators and Euronet, a UFO reporting network involving European airlines. He also through direct contacts with officials and through various Members of Parliament attempted to obtain official UFO information long before the current Freedom of Information Act. His investigations revealed that significant official information in the hands of the British government had been destroyed through the years prior to his inquiries.

Efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to obtain official UFO information cross-fertilized each other. The Staff at NICAP kept Hennessey undated on their actions, and he reported on his efforts in the UK and around the world. (Hennessey finally got the USAF to concede that the 1948 Top Secret Project SIGN Estimate of the Situation had, in fact, existed.) At NICAP headquarters, they heard about the Project Grudge/Blue Book status reports 1951-1953. Don Berliner took action to secure the release of a copy the documents from the Pentagon. In one of the early freedom of information actions, the Moss Subcommittee in the US House of Representative became involved and Congessional interested help obtained the release of these reports which had reached the mandatory declassification dates.

See:

http://www.bluebookarchive.org/download.aspx

After the release, Berliner informed Hennessey of his success. Similarly, Hennessey attempted to get the UK government to release government documents on UFOs. Many times direct attempts were met with icy cold turn downs and denials, however the resourceful Hennessey many times found various ways around official spokesmen and went to various agencies involved.

Various documents, UFO reports, and letters in the files of CUFOS, the Condon Committee, Dr. David Jacobs, Richard Hall and others demonstrate Hennessey's extensive and exhaustive investigations and research on UFOs. Joe McGonagle recently interviewed Hennessey which shed new light on his activities and clarified certain things in the written record. Based on these record I have written a short introduction to Hennessey's article on The UK Government and UFOs. See:

http://project1947.com/shg/hennessey/index.html

Include in my introduction are articles from NICAP's UFO Investigator on Hennessey's activities.

Hennessey had hoped to publish his essey in a British magazine. He also gave a copy to Dr. Hynek to publish in the US. With his kind permission it is published here:

http://project1947.com/shg/hennessey/hennessey.htm

Some of the official views of Hennessey were detailed in "Out of the Shadows: UFOs, the Establishment and Official Cover Up" by British authors, Dr. David Clarke and Andy Roberts. I purposely did not use this material in my introduction so the reader could consult the author's independent views of Hennessey and the official reactions to his efforts.

After the original announcement of Hennessey's essay, Dave Clarke kindly provide his take on Hennessey and other references concerning Hennessey's activities:

"For the record, here is a brief news item on Julian, under the heading 'The Forgotten UFOlogist', which I wrote for Fortean Times 191 (2004), p26:

"'....one of these 'forgotten UFOlogists', Julian Hennessey, has become the subject of a fascinating mini-biography by UFO historian Joe McGonagle who runs the respected UFOlogyinuk list. Hennessey first became interested in UFOs as a child in his native Scotland when he sighted a pair of bright moving objects in the sky. As a teenager in the 1960s, he moved to London and, as his interest grew, he joined what was then the prestigious US-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). While others followed the hippy trail to Warminster, Hennessey decided to tackle the authorities head-on in a personal campaign for scientific study of UFO reports. He then embarked on a letter-writing programme which lasted 15 years to enlist the support of everyone from the British Prime MInister to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. During this period, Hennessey founded a UK branch of NICAP and became friends with some of the big names in the 'serious UFOlogy' of his day. His greatest achievement was to enlist a group of sympathetic MPs to pile pressure on the Ministry of Defence who, in 1967-68, were struggling to cope with an unprecedented wave of UFO sightings. Hennessey discovered to his horror that the MoD was at that time destroying its UFO files at five yearly intervals, which meant papers dealing with some of the classic incidents from the 1950s, such as the radar-visual from RAF Lakenheath (see FT 171:14) had been lost to any future scientific study. His campaign embarrassed the MoD and forced them to end the destruction of any further UFO papers. They were also obliged to set up, for the first time, a direct process whereby Civil Aviation pilots and police officers could report their sightings to the MoD. Were it not for the work of Julian Hennessey, much of what we now know about the UK Government's attitude to UFOs - and indeed the history of our subject - would have been lost for good.'

"Further information about Julian's role in tackling the MoD over the destruction of papers relating to the RAF Lakenheath incident and other cases from the '50s can be found in my online papers at Martin Shough's URL:

http://lakenheath.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/

under the heading 'The Fate of British MoD Records.'"

Ja[redacted]ldrich
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Operated by Errol Bruce-Knapp

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DCA Access to Information Central Clearing House
Referral Form – New Requests

1/ Please complete this form as thoroughly as possible. Referral forms must be used when referring cases to the Clearing House.

2/ If possible, please include with this form details of information falling within the scope of the request. However, referrals should be made at the earliest opportunity. If relevant information has not yet been collated, please refer the case and forward the information and your detailed analysis of the request subsequently.

3/ You should continue to process the request until a Clearing House case officer contacts you. However, please do not issue a final response before agreement with the Clearing House.

Contact Details of Departmental FOI Practitioner	
Name:	Section 40
Department:	**Ministry of Defence**
E – mail (check accuracy):	Section 40 @mod.uk
Telephone Number:	Section 40
Fax:	
Departmental Case Ref:	04-07-2006-162649-001
Is this person the first point of contact for this case? (Please check box)	**Yes** ☒ **No** ☐ *(If no, please indicate first point of contact in **Key Contacts** section)*

Timeframes	
Date request received:	4 July 2006
Date Clearing House advice required by:	1 August 2006
Deadline for response to applicant:	8 August 2006
Is there a prospect of using NCND?	**No**

Case Details:	
Name / organisation of applicant and exact wording of request:	Section 40 Paper copies of the following: a) Contents of the file relating to a Parliamentary enquiry by Sir John Langford-Holt MP on behalf of his constituent Julian Hennessy. I believe the file covers the period 1976-79 roughly and the reference is AF/BJ84/76. b) Contents of the file relating to a Parliamentary enquiry by Mr John Ellis on UFOs in 1977, MOD reference MR/122505. c) Copies of the background notes and briefing papers supplied to John Spellor MP for use in his replies to written questions by Helen Jackson MP in the House of Commons in March 1998. As you may or may not know, these questions do not specifically relate to UFOs but are about two unexplained "sonic booms" reported in the Peak District on 24 March 1997 at around the time that a search was conducted for a suspected light aircraft crash (no aircraft was subsequently reported missing).
Please give detailed background information on the subject matter and sensitivities (including media interest) surrounding the request:	The subject of UFOs attracts public and media attention. The applicant is a part time author who has written books, magazine and newspaper articles about UFOs and the unexplained. The Parliamentary question referred to in the applicants request at para c) was asked as a result of a letter from a member of the public, namely Dr David Clarke who is a known associate of the applicant.

What Clearing House triggers are engaged by this request? (Refer to Clearing House toolkit at http://www.foi.gov.uk/guidance/pdf/toolkit.pdf)	The information consists of background information provided to a Minister.
Does/will the National Security Liaison Group (NSLG) have an interest in this case? Is there a possibility of a s23 or s24 certificate being issued?	**No**

Exemptions:

Which exemptions may apply to the information held, and why?	S.36 (2)(b)(i) This information consists of background advice by officials to Ministers in order for them to provide an informed response to Parliamentary Questions. Release of this information could inhibit the free and frank provision of such advice. S.22 (1) The information requested at paragraphs a) and b) of the request have been prepared for transfer to The National Archives where they will be fully open for public inspection. Enquiries are being conducted to establish a timescale for transfer.

Internal Departmental action to date:

Summary of case action (including contact with applicant) taken by Department so far:	Relevant information has been located. The applicant has been informed that the MOD holds relevant information and a Public Interest Test is being conducted under S.36. The applicant has also been informed that depending on the timing of transfer of information to The National Archives, S.22 may also apply.
Next steps for Department (including internal clearance procedures) and timeframes:	A Public Interest Test is now being conducted. This will be followed by a submission to seek ministerial agreement and approval for a course of action as a result of the PIT. Once ministerial approval has been achieved, the documents will be referred back to the Clearing House for final approval. A response will then be sent to the applicant.

Involvement of Other Government Departments/NDPBs:

Is this a suspected Round Robin request? (Please check box)

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

If not a Round Robin, are any other Government Departments or NDPBs likely to be involved? (Please check box)

Yes ☐ **No** ☒ **Possibly** ☐

If **"Yes"** or **"possibly"**, please state why and provide contact details where possible:

	Department 1	Department 2	Department 3
Name of Department			
Reasons for (possible) involvement:			
Contact details			

Key Contact Details – Policy Official / first point of contact (if not already specified)		
		Please check if this is first point of contact
Name:	Section 40	
E – mail:	@mod.uk	☒
Telephone Number:		

Key Contact Details – Departmental Lawyer		
		Please check if this is first point of contact
Name:		
E – mail:		☐
Telephone Number:		

24-07-2006-16264-001
Expiry 1 Aug 2006

Section 40

From: Section 40
Sent: 03 July 2006 18:42
To: Section 40
Subject: FOIA Request

Dear Section 40

Dear

I want to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act on the subject of UFOs. Can you send me paper copies of the following:

a) Contents of the file relating to a Parliamentary enquiry by Sir John Langford-Holt MP on behalf of his constituent Julian Hennessy. I believe the file covers the period 1976-79 roughly and the reference is AF/BJ84/76. with Section 40 Dets 13/1188

b) Contents of the file relating to a Parliamentary enquiry by Mr John Ellis on UFOs in 1977, MoD reference MR/122505. with Section 40 - Provisional DETE 71/164

c) Copies of the background notes and briefing papers supplied to John Spellar MP for use in his replies to written questions by Helen Jackson MP in the House of Commons in March 1998. As you may or may not know, these questions do not specifically relate to UFOs but are about two unexplained "sonic booms" reported in the Peak District on 24 March 1997 at around the time that a search was conducted for a suspected light aircraft crash (no aircraft was subsequently reported missing).

I realse that it's possible you may wish to invoke Exemption 36 of the FOI, arguing that release is "prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

The MoD have already set precedents for the release of briefings to Ministers, both in the release of the Rendlesham papers on appeal in 1982-3 and, more recently, in the briefing papers supplied to Defence Minister Tom King in March 1992 in preparation for his response to the PQ by George Foulkes MP on the Aurora black project. These papers were released to Section 40 following an FOI request he made in 2005 (see The Guardian, June 24, 2006).

I don't believe this is the case however and, should you use Exemption 36, I will appeal to the Information Commissioner for a judgement.

Could you supply me with a reference number for my request and use my address below for correspondence etc.

Thanks for your assistance in this matter.

Regards

Section 40
Bagillt
Flintshire
North Wales
Section 40