the national archives

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MOD Form 329D
(Revised 5/97)
PPQ = 100

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

ed
MAY 1998

Registered file number
D/SEC(AS)/64/1

Part No. D

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

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT "UFOs"

POLICY

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

...d on :-
D/DAS(SEC)/64/1 PtE
49

FOR DRO USE ONLY

1st Review date

2nd Review date

PA ACTION

(MOD Form 262F must be completed)

Produced by Ministry of Defence CS (Pr) 2 Tel 0117 9376256

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a) Letter from PS/USofS - Enclosure
b) Complete briefing pack - Enclosure 35
c) Draft response to PS/USofS - Enclosure
d) Response to PS/USofS - Enclosure 37

49

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

Seen by DAS 4a (Sec).
Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/US of S/LM 7/1/2/1

12th October 2000

DAS 4a(Sec)

Copy to:
Hd of DR

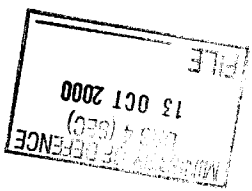
'UFOs' - ENQUIRY BY Section 40

Reference: D/DAS(SEC)/64/1 dated 6 October 2000

The Under Secretary of State was grateful for your minute at reference. The Minister does not wish to pursue this matter further and will not be taking this forward with Section 40 ... Section 40 I am returning the two files that you forwarded to this office.

Section 40

APS/US of S
MB6215 MB
CHOTS: USofS/Mailbox



Private Office

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

LOOSE MINUTE

D/US of S/LM 7/1/2/1

12th October 2000

Departmental Record Officer - Section 40

Copy to:
D Info(Exp)
~~DAS 4a(Sec)~~

UFOs - ENQUIRY BY Section 40

Reference: D Info(Exp)R/3/7/8 dated 9 October 2000

The Under Secretary of State was grateful for your minute at reference the contents of which he has noted. The Minister does not wish to pursue this matter further at this stage.

Section 40

APS/US of S
MB6215 Section 40
CHOTS: USofS/Mailbox

Private Office

37

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

18 November 1999

PS/USofS

Copy to:

APS/SofS
APS/Minister(DP)
APS/Minister(AF)
PS/2nd PUS
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'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Reference: D/USofS/PK/7/1/2/1 dated 15 November 1999

Issue

1. Should Section 40 of *The Sunday Times* be granted a face-to-face briefing on the Department's interest in 'UFOs'?

Recommendation

2. USofS declines. A briefing by officials might be offered instead.

Timing

3. Routine.

Background

4. Earlier this week the *News of the World, Daily Mail* and *Sun* ran speculative articles on the early release of MOD 'UFO' files. There is no substance to the articles. Files are routinely released to the Public Record Office under the 30-year rule and MOD 'UFO' files from 1969 will be made available in January.

5. Public interest in 'UFOs' and science fiction related issues (alien abduction, animal mutilation, crop circles etc) has grown rapidly in recent years fuelled by films,

TV programmes, books and media articles purporting to relate actual experiences or reconstruct alleged 'UFO' sightings. This in turn has prompted a small but vociferous number of 'ufologists' to demand MOD investigates all sighting reports whether or any defence-related interest has been reported. All attempts to explain MOD's limited interest are met with scepticism and, where these explanations do not accord with the inquirer's own views or interpretations, allegations of a cover-up or that information is held on secret files are made. No amount of reasoned explanation will convince them. The absence of substantiated information does not deter some journalists from filing fictitious articles illustrated with eye-catching pictures.

Briefing Options

6. USofS's name has already been quoted in highly speculative newspaper articles. If Minister was now to grant even a single journalist an interview about 'UFOs' it would be a scoop (no previous Minister has done so). It is highly likely to be interpreted by the lightweight press and sci-fi magazines as a subject in which he has a special interest and they will continue to lobby for interviews and 'quote' him. There is nothing Minister can say to any journalist about MOD's interest in 'UFOs' that has not already been said. Minister is strongly advised to decline all requests and distance himself from this subject.

7. USofS may wish instead to offer Section 40 an off-the-record briefing by officials. Sec(AS)2 could explain the policy aspects of the Department's limited interest in the subject and provide some sanitised examples of the sort of material held on Departmental files. A Departmental Records expert might sit in to answer any questions about early release of MOD files; and a member of D News's staff would need to be present. However, not even a briefing on these lines is without risk. Other journalists are likely to insist on similar facilities. Requests are received on a regular basis but because of the Department's limited interest in the subject all are refused and a written statement provided instead in an effort to avoid misleading and speculative reporting.

Conclusion

8. A face-to-face briefing in any circumstances poses a significant risk. There will be no control over what cascades from it so far as the tabloids and specialist press are concerned. Nevertheless, should Minister consider Section 40 warrants special treatment, a briefing by officials is recommended.

Presentational Aspects

9. The routine release of MOD 'UFO' files in January will be of further interest the media. Any briefing of a journalist will add to this interest. It is therefore likely that Minister's name will continue to be reported in connection with this subject unless the Department does all it can to prevent it. As a first step, the Department in their dealings with the media should stop repeating his name; use of the press line at para 4 [sic] of the reference should be discontinued immediately. The lines provided in the News Brief (D/Sec(AS)64/1 of 15 Nov), should continue to be used. In the event Minister approves a briefing by officials, additional lines to take as necessary will be provided nearer the time.

[signed]
Section 40
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 Section 40 MB

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)64/1

15 November 1999

APS/USofS

Copy to:

- APS/SofS
- APS/Minister(DP)
- APS/Minister(AF)
- PS/2nd PUS
- DAO
- D News
- D Fin Pol
- DCC(RAF)
- D News (RAF)
- PCB(Air)
- DCC(RAF)SIO
- Hd of CS(RM)1

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Issue

1. *News of the World* (14 Nov) and *Daily Mail* (15 Nov) articles about 'UFOs'.

Recommendation

2. To note.

Timing

3. As soon as possible in the event of any further media interest.

Background

4. It is standard practice to release to the Public Record office at the 30-year point MOD 'UFO' files. The files are withheld until that time to protect the personal details (names and addresses) of members of the public reporting what they have seen and themselves failed to identify. The files do not contain highly classified material (two examples are provided herewith). The issue of early release of files was address in September last year (CS(RM)/4/6/37 – copy attached for USofS) in response to Lord Hill Norton's request; legal advice was that the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it did so.

5. Under the 30-year rule, a total of 13 'UFO' files from 1969 have been passed to the Public Record Office and will be released on 1 January 2000. The files contain sighting reports, public correspondence and associated papers. As I explained (D/Sec(AS)/64/1 of 8 September copy also attached), it is simply not possible to say whether other 'UFO'-related papers might be filed elsewhere in MOD archives.

6. There is little factual information in the two newspaper articles. It is likely they are misrepresenting the arrangements for the Department's release of files, perhaps hoping to force MOD into expanding their limited interest in publicly reported unidentified sightings. I attach lines to take in the event of any further media interest.

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 [redacted] MB Section 40

NEWS BRIEF

DTG: 15 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: 'NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: 'UFOs'

SOURCE: Branch: Sec(AS)2: [redacted] Tel: MB87065

PRESS OFFICER: [redacted] D News RAF)

BACKGROUND

'News of the World' (14 Nov) and Daily Mail (15 Nov) have printed speculative articles that MOD is about to release all 'UFO' files.

KEY MESSAGE

MOD routinely releases files containing information from the public about alleged 'UFO' sightings under the 30-year rule. We are unable to release more recent files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality (ie the personal details of those providing information). There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs'.

KEY POINTS

* As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention but since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

* We have looked carefully to see whether early release of 'UFO' files is possible. However, the files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. MOD has a duty to protect the third party confidentiality. Staff would need to be diverted from essential tasks to manually scrutinise and remove all personal details on the files and the knock-on effect would be a major disruption to MOD's overall programme for release of files to the PRO. It cannot be justified.

* Mr Pope was an EO in Sec(AS)2; he left the Branch in Jul 94. The views expressed by Mr Pope in books and the media are entirely his own.

* It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. **MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity,** and responding to any associated public correspondence.

SUBSIDIARY POINTS

* Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft).

* Alleged sightings sent to us are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years that warranted any further investigation and no evidence was found of any threat.

* Where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

* Sec(AS)2 is the Air Staff Secretariat. It deals with a wide range of RAF-related issues. It also acts as the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police are forwarded to Sec(AS)2. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year

* Where a military or civilian pilot considers his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he is unable to identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

AS MINISTERS PLEDGE TO RELEASE TOP SECRET UFO RESEARCH . . .

Britain's X-Files (and yes, the truth is on this page)

DOCUMENTS and photographs detailing UFO investigations in Britain over 50 years are at last being made available for public scrutiny under New Labour's policy of greater openness in Government, according to reports at the weekend. Here, NICK POPE, the Ministry of Defence official formerly responsible for investigating extra-terrestrial visitations, previews the eagerly awaited contents.

by NICK POPE

OFFICIAL interest in UFOs has always had more to do with the Russians than any impending visit from Martians.

But in keeping an eye out for the Soviet aircraft that routinely probed our air defences during the Cold War, it soon became clear that there were other more exotic craft operating in British airspace.

There has been a steady stream of UFO reports sent to the Ministry of Defence over the past 50 years — between 200 to 300 each year. They fill more than 200 files, files to which I have had access. If, and when, they are made available publicly, I can promise some exciting revelations.

For three years it was my job in Secretariat (Air Staff) 2A at the MoD to investigate such reports, to determine any potential threat to the UK. I found explanations for 90 pc of sightings, which turned out *to be misidentifications of ordinary objects or phenomena*; aircraft lights, satellites, meteors and airships.

However, there has always been a hard core of sightings that couldn't be explained in conventional terms, where trained observers such as police officers and pilots have seen unidentified craft doing speeds and manoeuvres way beyond our capabilities.

Britain's most sensational UFO case occurred in 1980 in Rendlesham Forest, near the USAF/RAF airbase at Woodbridge in Suffolk. UFO activity was witnessed over a series of nights, then on December 26 at 2am two patrolmen on a tour of the camp perimeter saw bright lights among the trees and went to investigate.

Initially, they thought an aircraft had overshot the runway, although there was no accompanying noise. But what they saw was like no aircraft they had ever encountered before; a large metallic, triangular object which they chased before losing it among the trees.

JUST two nights later, there was a similar sighting. This time the deputy base commander, USAF Lt-Col Charles Halt, led a team out to investigate. He submitted a report to the MoD, describing the UFO as 'metallic in appearance and triangular in shape'.

There is also an eerie 18-minute tape, which reveals conversations between Halt and his men as they moved to within 150 yards of the moving red and yellow lights.

The report says that suddenly the lights appeared to 'explode' in fragments of white light. Immediately, Lt-Col Halt observed three objects in the sky, like stars, but giving off red, green and blue lights, darting off in all directions in sharp, angular movements.

The objects were visible for two to three hours, occasionally flashing down beams of light or energy. Radiation readings were subsequently taken from the landing site in the forest and were found to peak in the three indentations where the craft had touched down in a clearing.

There are a number of intriguing aerial encounters in Britain's so-called X-files, too. One of the earliest took place in August 1956, when a UFO was tracked on radar systems at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Two RAF jets were scrambled to intercept the mystery craft, and an energetic game of cat and mouse ensued as the pilots attempted to lock-on to the target. But the UFO was too quick and agile, and managed to elude the pilots, who eventually ran low on fuel and were forced to return to base.

Almost 40 years later, a number of RAF Tornado jets were overtaken by a UFO over the North Sea in November 1990. No adequate explanation was ever forthcoming.

Last year, also over the North Sea, a 900ft UFO was pursued by two fighter jets before it took off at 17,000mph.

More disturbing are the reports to the MoD that detail near-misses between UFOs and civil aircraft. There were two such cases in 1991, both over Kent.

In 1995, the pilots of a Boeing 737 encountered what they described as a brightly lit UFO while on their approach to Manchester Airport, and believed that it had passed only yards from their aircraft. This incident was investigated by the Civil Aviation Authority but remains a mystery.

One of the most fascinating cases that I investigated related to an incident that occurred in the early hours of March 31, 1993.

There had been a wave of UFO sightings that night, culminating in the direct overflight of two military bases, RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury in Shropshire.

The UFO was described by one of the military witnesses as being a vast, triangular craft, only marginally smaller than a jumbo jet. It flew slowly over the base at a height of 200ft, firing a narrow beam of light at the ground, before flying off at high speed.

These then, are the sorts of incidents to be found in the MoD's UFO files.

But the files also contain reports of alien abductions, the appearance of crop circles and animal mutilations, all of which have been linked with UFOs.

THE MoD was drawn into the crop-circle debate in 1985 — five years after they first started appearing — when a farmer in Middle Wallop, Hampshire, found a quintuplet of crop circles and blamed the local Army air corps base.

A Lt-Col Edgecombe investigated and submitted photographs and reports to the MoD, a routine procedure, but one which gave credence to the UFO link and allegations that then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had asked for a report on the phenomenon.

I have reviewed all the theories about crop circles and, while many are hoaxes, there are those which have yet to be explained; for example, why do crop samples taken from these 'genuine' circles show distinct cellular changes.

Some details of UFO sighting in Britain have, of course, already been made public under the 30-year rule which applies to sensitive documents, but by releasing files from more recent years the Government clearly hopes to end speculation that it has been covering up the truth about the phenomenon.

Unfortunately, releasing the files is a tactic that some people think could backfire.

A similar initiative in the U.S. simply fuelled interest in the subject, and led to accusations that other more highly classified papers were still being withheld.

The U.S. government's denial was not helped by the claims of a former U.S. army colonel, Philip Corso, who said that the so-called Roswell incident from 1947 — in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at an air force base in New Mexico — really did involve the crash of a UFO.

Colonel Corso claimed that he'd seen the bodies, and that his job at the Pentagon involved finding ways to use the technological secrets gleaned from the debris of the craft. He died of a heart attack shortly after going public with these claims, so took the secrets to his grave.

Conspiracy theorists love this sort of thing, and are unlikely to be satisfied by any release of papers that doesn't support their own theories.

But there really isn't any cover-up in the UK, although a letter sent from the MoD to the U.S. government in 1965 admits that MoD policy 'is to play down the subject of UFOs'.

My three years of official research into the UFO phenomenon changed my life for ever. I'd come into the job as a sceptic, but came to believe that some UFOs might well be extra-terrestrial.

If these files are to be made public, I think people are in for a big surprise, and I believe that, like me, they will come to see that this is a serious subject which raises important national security issues.

As far as these files are concerned . . . the truth is in there!

■ *NICK POPE's latest book is Operation Thunder Child (Simon & Schuster, £9.99).*

W... are the most urgent problems facing Britain today?

Poor schools that aren't teaching children properly?

The crisis in our health service which means people are waiting longer and longer for treatment?

The desperate paralysis on our roads and public transport? Rising crime that makes none of us feel safe on our streets? The flood of bogus asylum seekers? The daily selling-out to Brussels on issues like British beef?

These are what I think are the urgent problems facing Britain today. You probably agree with me. If next week's Queen's Speech was setting out the programme of the next Conservative government, I'll tell you what would be in it. Education would be right at the heart of the speech.

There would be a law to guarantee to parents the power to do something about bad schools by sacking school managements. And there would be a law to turn every primary and secondary school in the country into a Free School where teachers could get on with improving standards.

Then we'd give patients in the NHS a unique guarantee. Patients with the most serious conditions would get a maximum waiting time based not on party political targets but medical need.

We would introduce a tough law to make sure unemployed people who can work take the jobs that are offered to them—or lose their unemployment benefit.

A revolution in crime-fighting would make sure criminals serve the sentence handed down in court, teaching prisoners what it's like to work, dealing out life sentences to drug dealers who sell to children, and helping police get out and on to the street.

We would help pensioners and savers by halving the startling rate of tax on savings and protect the homes and assets of people who save for their long-term care.

We would help working women who take career breaks to look after their children with Family Scholarships that will help them if they want to get back to work.

We would propose a Budget that would put an end to Labour's stealth taxes with this open and honest Tax Guarantee: we'll cut the overall burden of tax over the lifetime of a parliament. And we'd show everyone that Britain is no pushover in Europe.

'We'll stop Britain being a pushover'

WILLIAM HAGUE Opposition Leader

away enough of this country's powers and rights to Brussels. The next Conservative government will make sure Britain is in Europe but not run by Europe.

So what is our Prime Minister doing about the issues? Nothing. If you don't believe me, just wait to see what the government announces in the Queen's Speech. It is likely to propose:

A NEW law about how political parties are run, a new law on the organisation of local government, a new law on motorway tolls and car park taxes, a new law creating a Right to Roam.

None of these laws will do anything to tackle the main problems that actually matter to the majority of people.

This week you will see a Labour government that is pursuing its own obscure political priorities instead of rising to the challenge of the real problems.

The next Conservative government would not duck the challenge. Our Queen's Speeches would turn the commonsense of the people into commonsense policies for the country.

TODAY, on Remembrance Day, it's more important than ever to remember our debt to those who gave their lives to protect our country and the ideals we stand for.

It's important, too, that we continue repaying the debt to the whole generation who sacrificed so much.

Many pensioners feel they don't get a fair share of the nation's prosperity. We've improved things since we came to power but there's a lot more to do. Gordon Brown's announcements on free TV licences for the over-75s, the £100 winter allowance to be paid every year and raising the minimum income guarantee, went a little further in honouring our debt.

We are half way through this Parliament. We've done a lot. But there is much more to. Like getting the Health Service right. But that's why we're putting in the extra £21 billion investment over the next three years, recruiting the extra doctors and nurses, building new hospitals and introducing new services.

You didn't expect miracles from New Labour. You knew how much was wrong.

But what you wanted was a government to start moving us in the right direction. Nothing is more important for a government than running the economy well. And nothing has a great impact if the government fails. Whether Labour could be trusted on the economy was why many of you thought long and hard before voting for us.

I understand that. It's not always been the fault of past Labour governments. But memories of devaluation, of the IMF crisis and the winter of discontent still haunted those who lived through them.

I believe we have gone a very long way to burying those memories and the doubts they fuelled. And Gordon Brown, a brilliant, radical and reforming chancellor deserves credit for that. We inherited an economy devastated by the two deepest recessions since the war. Where Tory boom was all too quickly followed by Tory bust. A Government spending £28 billion a year more than it had.

Now inflation's low and on target. Government borrowing is under control. Employment is up by 700,000 since the election.

We're creating a climate where business can succeed and in turn create jobs and prosperity by boosting skills.

And we're also creating a fairer country by extending opportunities to all, tackling poverty and increasing support to families through measures like the New Deal, the minimum wage and the Working Families Tax Credit—all of which the Tories would scrap.

It's what we mean by enterprise and fairness. They are the guiding principles of this government, and the driving force behind Gordon's package.

'We'll make Britain richer and fairer'

TONY BLAIR Prime Minister

track of their movements and tipped off the law at the crucial moment.

Then the careless coppers shopped the brave pair by broadcasting their names over the police radios, from which they were picked up by the Yardies' scanners.

Now mother and son continue to live in fear of their lives, for their tormentors, released because of 'legal complications', have launched a terrifying campaign of revenge.

Thames Valley police must round up and jail the thugs.

And this time they can't expect the public to do the job for them.

Aliens - the truth

THE government is to throw open its top-secret X-Files on UFOs and aliens.

Ministers have looked at them and decided that there is nothing too sensitive to hold back.

Enthusiasts are hoping at last to learn the truth about all the incidents reported over the last 30 years.

Cynics think it will all turn out to have been pie in the sky.

Thugs mar glory

A GREAT game it wasn't. A determined first half at Hampden was followed by a dull second.

But it did manage to focus for 90 minutes or so the combined passions of soccer fans the length and breadth of Britain.

Then, despite their victory, came the pointless violence when 400 English fans went on the rampage in the streets of Glasgow.

It's a poor omen for Wembley on Wednesday.

6/15

11

KIDNAP TERROR

A YOUNG mystery woman was at the centre of a kidnap scare last night after a blood-stained van she was bundled into was found abandoned.

Two men had earlier roughly draggged her screaming across a garage forecourt at Reading, Berks, during the rush-hour.

She was viciously beaten and thrown into the van.

A witness told police the woman, aged about 20, suffered facial injuries.

Detective Superintendent Trevor Davies said: "We are extremely worried. If this woman can get in touch with us she should."

A team of detectives were trying to identify the woman and scouring missing person reports. The CCTV footage from the garage has been seen by police.

WEIRD

LEE Si Chung, 26, who tried to save his Beijing-to-London fare by POSTING himself, got caught short in the sorting office and was jailed for four weeks.

WORLD

MODEL ROBBED

A GANG of Rolex robbers pounced on Andrea Foulkes, the QVC Shopping channel model, as she parked her car in the early hours.

The 29-year-old blonde was grabbed by the throat by one man while another snatched her £2,500 Cartier watch and a £200 necklace. Then they flung her to the ground and made off in a silver car with her bag containing £300 in cash.

The attackers, said to be black and in their 20s, struck as Andrea pulled up in Sloane Square, London.

WEIRD

COPS smashed into a car in Lyons, France, to rescue a man collapsed inside – and discovered a blow-up dummy used to fool car-jackers.

WORLD

MURDER OF BABY

AN eight-week-old boy was murdered in his home yesterday by a frenzied attacker.

Police found little Bradley George being cradled by his sobbing mother. He died four hours later in hospital from head injuries.

The tot's mum Samantha George, 20, and brother Christopher, five, also suffered head injuries in the attack at the two-bed council house in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

Neighbour Jeannette Hussey said: "I heard a woman screaming and a young boy crying. Samantha came out with her face covered in blood and was taken away in an ambulance."

A 26-year-old man was arrested by police at the house and was being questioned yesterday.

Watch this space for truth about aliens

MINISTER TO OPEN BRITAIN'S X-FILES

THE truth about whether aliens have ever visited Britain is to be revealed at last.

Top secret government X-Files on thousands of 'spaceship' riddles will be opened up to public gaze by Defence Minister Peter Kilfoyle.

They will include photos and details of every UFO investigation in the past 30 years. Every year, around 300 alien sightings are reported.

Plans by military experts for action in the event of an alien invasion of London will also be unveiled.

The files, stored in a nuclear bomb-proof bunker deep below Whitehall, should be released in three months.

The move, part of a government drive to end unnecessary secrecy, is sure to send UFO spotters into a frenzy. They will hope to learn secrets about:

●**A MASSIVE** craft spotted flying in zig-zags off Britain's North Sea coast last year. The 900ft UFO shot off at 17,000mph when pursued by two fighter jets.

●**CLAIMS** that seven UFOs have crashed in Britain since World War II.

●**SIGHTINGS** of a triangular three-legged spaceship in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, in 1980.

SIGHTED: Flying saucer

DUMMY: Roswell 'alien'

RIDDLE: Space invader

Hover

US airmen from two nearby bases claim the object rose hovering out of the trees, then blasted into space at an incredible speed. RAF investigators cordoned off the area, but their findings are still a closely-guarded secret.

Some details of UFO sightings in the Fifties and Sixties have already been made public under the Thirty-Year Rule appled to sensitive documents.

Among them is the famous 1962 incident in which 16-year-old Anne Heston was sworn to secrecy after she reported seeing a star-like object shooting out red and green flames above her home in Taunton, Somerset.

Ten years earlier, RAF Flight Lieutenant John Kilburn saw a shining object in the sky above a West Yorks air base. When jets were scrambled to investigate, the UFO took off at an incredible speed. But the facts about most later mysteries are still locked away.

They include the truth about claims by former defence chief Lord Hill-Norton that RAF Feltwell in Suffolk uses its space-age radar, built by the US Air Force, to track UFOs.

He quizzed ministers about the base, but never got a satisfactory answer. Several sightings in 1990 of a bright light above the Thames in London could also be explained.

The pledge to open up our X-Files follows similar moves in America.

The Yanks recently released a report of the notorious Roswell incident in 1947, in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at a secret New Mexico air base.

They explained the "bodies" were dummies from a secret weather balloon, but UFO theorists still believe there has been a cover-up.

Crank

Britain's files were prepared by the MoD's hush-hush Aircraft Secretariat, set up to investigate UFOs. Amazingly, its one-time boss Nick Pope believes **HE** was abducted by aliens while driving in Florida.

He kept mum while in his job for fear of being labelled a crank.

But after leaving the secret unit, he wrote a series of bestsellers about alien incidents.

He said: "My experiences convinced me that UFOs are a real and threatening phenomenon. We are not alone.

"Since 1959, the MoD has heard of 9,000 UFO sightings, though that's probably only the tip of the iceberg."

Defence Minister Mr Kilfoyle has told colleagues that, after a careful review of the files, he is "not convinced" about the existence of aliens.

But MoD staff say he wants people to be able to make up their own minds.

A source said: "These files are of huge public interest. They paint a fascinating picture of how UFO reports were investigated–and what would happen if aliens ever did land in Britain."

Our View: Page 22

EXCLUSIVE

BY IAN KIRBY
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Section 40

From: Section 40 DAS 4a(Sec)
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Secretariat (Air Staff)
Room 8243, Main Building, Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 020 7218 Section 40
(Switchboard) 020 7218 9000
(Fax) 020 7218 Section 40

FAX MESSAGE

TO: Section 40 "Files Out"

SUBJECT: Location of closed files

DATE: 11 Oct 00

NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS COVER: 2

LOCATION OF CLOSED FILES

I attach a list of files, all 'UFO' volumes, that appear to have been sent for destruction during March 1990.

Numbers 1-2 and 5-6 you have already searched for and confirmed that you still have 6 (D/DS8/75/1). I would be grateful if you would now check your records to see if you have any of those files up to and including number 17 and let me know the result of your search.

With thanks.

Section 40

UFO Files And Their Status

Key: D=Destroyed
C=Current
R/S=not quoted
hir=held in room

	Title & Date of Last Encl	Number	Part		Status
1.	UFO Policy & Policy Statements-22/2/68	AF/X58/64	1	DESTROYED	Confirmed destroyed local
2.	UFO Policy & Policy Statements-31/3/70	AF/X58/64	2	D	Confirmed destroyed local
3.	Parliamentary Enquiries on UFOs- Prime Minister's (JJA Hennessey)-1/7/70	AF/1505	2	D	D
4.	Parliamentary Questions and Enquires on UFO's-13/1/77	AF/1505	3	D	D
5.	UFOs- Policy Statements 18/1/79	D/DS8/75/1A	A	D	D Confirmed destroyed No local
6.	UFOs- Policy Statements 4/12/79	D/DS8/75/1	B	D	D - locales
7.	UFOs- Reports Correspondence 25/8/78	D/DS8/75/2/1	D	D	D
8.	UFOs- Reports Correspondence 10/1/79	D/DS8/75/2/1	E	D	D
9.	UFOs- Reports Correspondence JJA Hennessey-11/1/78	D/DS8/75/2/1/1	I	D	D
10.	UFOs- Correspondence-12/2/82	D/DS8/75/2/1	J	D	D
11.	UFOs- Reports Correspondence M.D.Davies-13/1/77	D/DS8/75/2/1/2	A	D	D
12.	UFOs Reports June-Oct 79 24/9/79	D/DS8/75/2/4	C	D	D
13.	UFOs Parliamentary Correspondence-25/1/79	D/DS8/75/3	B	D	D
14.	UFOs Parliamentary Correspondence-11/2/82	D/DS8/75/3	C	D	D
15.	UFOs Parliamentary Correspondence- House of Lords Debate Jan 1979 15/1/79	D/DS8/75/3/1	A	D	D

Section 40

UFOs Parliamentary Correspondence- House of Lords Debate Jan 29/9 13/2/79	D/DS8/75/3/1	B	D
UFOs Soviet Satellite Power Station Not Quoted	D/DS8/75/5	n/a	D/No Record
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-30/7/81	D/DS8/10/209	A	No Record
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-30/12/81	D/DS8/10/209	B	N/R
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-30/6/82	D/DS8/10/209	C	[redacted]
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-29/10/82	D/DS8/10/209	D	N/R
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-10/5/83	D/DS8/10/209	E	N/R
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-22/2/84	D/DS8/10/209	F	N/R
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-6/8/84	D/DS8/10/209	G	[redacted]
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence-24/12/84	D/DS8/10/209	H	N/R: D ?
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence. Reports 23/10/83	[redacted]		AT HAYES S/R
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence. Reports No date quoted	[redacted]		AT HAYES S/R
General Briefs + Reports UFO Correspondence. Reports No date quoted	[redacted]		AT HAYES S/R
UFOs- Policy	[redacted]		AT HAYES S/R
UFOs- Reports	D/DSec(AS)12/2	A	hir
"	"	B	hir
"	"	C	hir
"	"	D	hir
"	"	E	hir
"	"	F	hir
"	"	G	hir

TOTAL

48+1

Loose Minute

D Info(Exp)R/3/7/8

9 October 2000

APS/USofS

Copy to:

D Info(Exp)
DAS 4a(Sec)

"UFOs" - ENQUIRY BY [redacted] Section 40

Reference: A. D/DAS(SEC)/64/1 dated 6 October 2000
B. CS(RM)/4/6/37 September 1998
File → C. D/Sec(AS)/64/1 dated 18 November 1999

1. Reference A advised that as the information contained in reference B was more than two years old you might need an update.

2. As a consequence of a recent enquiry from a member of the public on this same subject the earlier advice has been reaffirmed. The files in question consist, in the main, of correspondence from and replies to members of the public. The MOD is obliged to protect the confidentiality of such third parties. This obligation may be overridden by consent, where it is in the overriding public interest, or where statutory law (eg the Public Records Act) allows. In order to release these 'UFO' records earlier than the 30-year point it would be necessary to delete from correspondence the personal information details of members of the public.

3. Over the years, and in support of the greater openness initiative, we have been able to release a significant volume of records by undertaking this type of action, but generally this has been by making a limited number of deletions, usually on defence security or intelligence sensitivity grounds. To undertake a special exercise to sanitise identifiable "UFO" files would take several months to the detriment of other business.

[redacted] Section 40
Departmental Record Officer
MT7/36 [redacted] MB Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

47

D/DAS(SEC)/64/1

6 October 2000

APS/US of S

copy to:
Hd of DR

'UFOs' - ENQUIRY BY Section 40

Reference:
A. CS(RM)/4/6/37 undated in Sept 98
B. D/Sec(AS)/64/1 dtd 18 Nov 99

1. As requested I attach copies of the above minutes. Reference A is a copy of a submission from Hd of CS(RM) (now Hd of DR) to PS/USofS advising on the subject of the early release of files. Reference B is a submission from Sec(AS) (now DAS(Sec)) to PS/USofS on the question of a face-to-face briefing for Section 40 on the Department's interest in 'UFOs'. The DAS(Sec) position remains as indicated at Reference B.

2. You mentioned that Section 40 's current interest, raised informally with USofS, might centre on the possible early release of files to the PRO. As the submission at Reference A is now two years old you may also wish to speak with Hd of DR, to whom I am copying this minute.

3. At your request two of our files accompany these papers. D/Sec(AS)64/3 containing letters from the Secretariat to members of the public and D/Sec(AS)/64/2 containing 'reports' of 'UFO' sightings.

Section 40

DAS 4a (Sec)
MB8243 MB Section 40

Copy also on 64/3

46

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

1 August 2000

DCC(RAF) – SO2(EC)

Copy to:

Gp Capt CC, HQSTC
DAO - ADGE1

REQUEST FOR FILMING – REAL WORLD PICTURES 'RAF UFO WATCH'

Reference: DCC(RAF)/337/04 dated 24 July 2000

1. Thank you for your minute about Real World's request and the attachment setting out their plans for a two-hour special investigating claims of 'UFOs' and alien abductions. I note that the company's aim is to show that there is no evidence to support claims of 'UFOs' and aliens; that belief in such claims can be 'deeply destructive' and that despite claims that 'thousands of people are being abducted by aliens and seeing UFOs, national defence systems are not picking up any alien space craft'. A laudable aim but we know from a wealth of experience that those who believe in the 'UFO' phenomena are not swayed by facts that do not meet their own interpretation of events.

2. Real World say that as part of their effort to bring people 'back to reality' they want to ask questions of someone responsible for the security of 'British Air Space' and film in a radar room. However, the questions they have in mind are wide of any MOD interests in alleged sightings of 'UFOs'. To date the Department has not accepted any media requests to participate in 'UFO'-related initiatives because of the very limited interest it (and the Government) has in these matters. Agreeing to this request would compromise the Department's integrity and we cannot support it. In reaching this decision I discussed the request with DAO staff; their view was that there was no value for the RAF in participating in the programme.

3. It might be helpful instead to offer Real World a note about our limited interest and you may wish to draw on the following paragraphs in your reply:

> The integrity of the UK's airspace in peacetime is maintained through continuous surveillance of the UK Air Defence Region and the MOD remains vigilant for any potential military threat. MOD's interest in reports it receives from members of the public witnessing something they are unable to identify is limited to establishing whether what has been seen might be of defence significance, namely whether the integrity of the UK Air Defence Region has been compromised by hostile or unauthorized air activity.
>
> All alleged sighting reports are looked at individually and examined in detail commensurate with the amount of information provided; the vast majority of

reports however, are very sketchy and vague. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, and to date no report has revealed such evidence, no attempt is made to identify the nature of the sighting reported. MOD believes that rational explanations could be found for them if resources were diverted for this purpose but it is not the function of the Department to provide this kind of aerial identification service. It would be an inappropriate use of defence resources if it was to do so.

MOD has no expertise or role in respect of 'UFO'/flying saucer matters, or the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial life forms about which it remains open minded. To date, however, it is unaware of any evidence to prove that these phenomena exist. Abduction is not a matter for MOD; it is a criminal matter and, therefore a civil police/Home Office issue.

Section 40

Section 40
AD/Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 MB Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)64/3

25 July 2000

Wing Commander Section 40
DAO – AD GE1

Copy for information to: Gp Capt CC –HQ STC - by CHOTS
DCC(RAF)SO2(EC)1 - by CHOTS

REAL WORLD PICTURES –REQUEST FOR FILMING

1. Please see attached a request we have received via DCC(RAF), from a production company who are making a programme for the Discovery Communications Channel on 'UFOs' and 'alien abductions'.

2. They say that the aim of the programme is to show that there is no evidence that aliens exist and that despite the claims of thousands of people that they have seen UFOs, national defence systems are not picking up any alien space craft. They have asked if they can film in a radar room and interview someone who is "responsible for the security of British Air Space". The questions they would ask the interviewee are also given in the request.

3. DCC(RAF) supports this request, but given the Department's limited interest in this subject I would be grateful for your thoughts as to whether you think it would be a good idea for the MOD to take part and if so, where could they film and who could they interview.

4. I would appreciate an early reply and please give me a call if you need any further information.

Section 40

SEC(AS)2A1
MB8245 Section 40 MB

FAX LEADER
DIRECTORATE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION (ROYAL AIR FORCE)
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Room 0356 Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB
Telephone: 020-721-8[redacted] Mobile: 0802-20[redacted] Fax: 020-721-8[redacted]

To:	For the attention of:	Tel:	Fax:
MOD	Sec(AS)2a1	MB [redacted]	MB [redacted]
HQ STC	[redacted] Gp Capt CC	95221-[redacted]	95221-[redacted]
	Gp Capt [redacted]		
Number of pages including leader: 2		24 Jul 00	DCC(RAF)/337/04
Please reply to: Wg Cdr [redacted] AE MIPR RAFR			**[DCC(RAF) SO2(EC)]**

REAL WORLD PICTURES: RAF 'UFO WATCH' REQUEST FOR FILMING

References:

A. Fax Sieff – [redacted] 17 Jul 00 – copy attached
B. Discussion – Gp Capt CC 24 Jul 00
C. Telcon – Sec(AS)2a1 24 Jul 00

1. My apologies for the delay in passing on the Real World request but initially I sought advice – in error - from Sec(AS)1 who, in any case, is on leave. Good start.

2. Discovery Channel is not one of our main target broadcasters, but, nonetheless DCC(RAF) supports the Real World request, in principle, subject to Sec(AS)2 advice, Command approval, operational convenience, and Security considerations.

3. As a next step it is requested that Sec(AS)2a1 advises Gp Capt CC direct for further action or refusal, copying Wg Cdr [redacted] SO1 (PP & Media Ops) at HQ STC (Fax 95221-6077).

4. If filming and interview are agreed, it is recommended that Gp Capt CC liaises with Real World and that the facility should be closely 'minded'. The interviewee will need to be well-prepared for any sensitive issues which may arise.

[redacted]

Wg Cdr RAFR
for
DCC(RAF)

REAL WORLD PICTURES

FAX TRANSMISSION:
If you experience transmission problems, please call [redacted]
Our Fax Number: [redacted] **E-mail:** [redacted]

TO:	Wing Commander [redacted]	**FAX:**	[redacted]
AT:	RAF	**DATE:**	17th July 2000
FROM:	[redacted]	**PAGES:**	1 (inc)

Dear Wing Commander [redacted]

I enjoyed speaking to you and am now putting my request on a fax as you suggested.

We are making a 2 hour special for Discovery Communications. It will be shown on The Learning Channel in the USA, Discovery Europe and Discovery International. Discovery Communications usually show their programmes at least 10 times and they reach an audience of 175 million people worldwide. The film we are making is being heavily promoted so we expect high audience figures.

Our film is investigating claims of UFOs and alien abductions and showing there is absolutely no evidence for them. More than that our film suggests that belief in UFOs and alien visitation can be deeply destructive. One key argument that we want to portray is that, despite the claims that thousands of people are being abducted by aliens and are seeing UFOs, national defence systems are not picking up any alien space craft. ?

As part of this effort to bring people back to reality we would like to interview somebody who is responsible for the security of British Air Space. We would like to film in a radar room and the questions we would ask an interviewee would go along the following lines:

1) To what extent are our skies watched?
2) What kind of objects can you see in the skies?
3) How many objects are not human-made aeroplanes?
4) Of the objects that are not aeroplanes have you seen any that you have thought were space craft from another civilization?
5) Do you think that your monitoring devices could pick up space-craft that were from another civilization?

Any help you can give me will be much appreciated and I can assure you that the RAF will get extremely wide exposure from this film.

I look forward to hearing from you and please call if you have any other questions.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Assistant Producer

NFA 18 July 00
1. Message left with Sec(A5) 1 ([redacted]
2. Answerphone.

NFA
24 July 00
1. Space C/c cc - explained case to Sec A5, for advice. C/c cc has been approached via Pylingdales.
2. Spoke Sec(A5)2 - [redacted] spoke Sec(A5)2a - [redacted]

Priory House, 85 Priory Grove, London SW8 2PD
Tel: 020 7978 [redacted] Fax: 020 7498 [redacted]
Real World Pictures is the trading name of Real World Pictures Ltd.
Incorporated in England No. 2778295. Registered Office: 176 Brownhill Road, London SE6 2PJ

Classification	U/C
Caveat	[redacted]
Covering	

45 F Sigs 927 (Int. 9/92)

Facsimile Transmission Cover Sheet

Transmission Details		Document Details
Serial No:	**Date and Time of Transmission:** 16 June 2000	**Reference:** PTC/356977/AMP Sec
From: AMP(Sec)2b	**Fax Number:** 95471 5986	**Subject:** Article For 'Unopened Files' Magazine – Final Letter
To:	**Fax Number:**	Total number of pages including this cover sheet: 2
D News	9621 [redacted]	
AD/Sec(AS)2	9621 [redacted]	
DCC(RAF)SO1(EC)	9621 [redacted]	
OC JSU Corsham	9544 [redacted]	

Authorizing Officer	Transmit Operators
Rank, Name and Appointment: HEC [redacted] AMP(Sec)2b	**Rank/Grade and Name:** AA [redacted] AMP(Sec)2b1a
Signature:	**Signature:**

Message/Remarks:

[redacted]

File.

Covering	
Caveat	[redacted]
Classification	U/C

AMP SEC 1b

Section 40

12/6

AmpSec dist:

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 020 721 82111/2/3

PSO/AoA
D News
AO/Sec (AF)2
Hd of EC (PTC)
OCC (RAF) SO1 (EC)
OC JSU Corsham
Editor RAF News

SECRETARY OF STATE

MO 22

7 June 2000

Dear Section 40

Thank you for your letter to the Defence Secretary of 26 April asking for permission to reprint an article on the underground facility at Corsham which was featured in the 17 March issue of RAF News.

I am advised by the RAF that they do not think that it would be appropriate for you to reproduce the RAF News article because it features several RAF personnel. However, if you are interested in the facility at Corsham, Section 40 the Head of External Communications at the RAF Personnel & Training Command will be able to provide you with more information.

Her address is:

Section 40
Head of External Communications
RAF Innsworth
Gloucester
GL3 1EZ

Section 40
Private Secretary

Section 40 Esq
Editor
Section 40

TOTAL P.02

F.A.O PTC – Section 40

I understand you spoke to Section 40 earlier today regarding Quest International and their interest in UFO's.

We know that Quest International publish a magazine which is aptly named "UFO Magazine". We believe they also publish another magazine called "Unopened Files". According to their letterhead Quest International was established in 1989 and has four Directors, all members of the Section 40 Their letterhead also claims that UFO Magazine is available in over 30 countries worldwide.

Our only direct contact with them was in February 1998 when the Features Editor, Section 40 wrote to Sec(AS) about white lights in the sky over Leeds on 2 February 1998. According to Section 40 over 100 people had seen two bright lights in the sky over the Leeds ring road, over Headingley and towards Garforth. The lights were apparently hovering and emanating a low humming sound. He also included a number of local newspaper cuttings about this incident. Section 40 asked for our assistance in identifying these objects and asked for copies of any UFO reports we had received for that day.

We wrote to Section 40 on 25 March explaining our limited interest in this subject and informing him that we had not received any reports for 2 February 1998 from anywhere in the UK.

To my knowledge we have had no further enquiries from this organisation. However, if we receive any telephone calls from the Press, Magazine or Media people we usually refer them to the Press Office and it is therefore possible that the Press Office might have knowledge of them. If you want to check their telephone number is MB Section 40

I hope this is helpful.

Section 40
Sec(AS)2A1
Room 8245MB MB Section 40

To Section 40
Company PTC-km Filo Building 255
From Section 40
Company Sec(AS)2a
Tel No. MB Section 40 No. of Pages 1
Ref No: 7688
954 71 Section 40

17th May 2000

SEC(AS)2

From: DCC(RAF) SO1(EC)
Sent: 11 May 2000 10:13
To: SEC(AS)2
Subject: RE: Quest International

Section 40

Thank you for this. In the words of the RAF News' Editor: 'We wouldn't touch this with a barge pole!'

However, I will wait to see what transpires and if we are 'directed' to provide assistance. Otherwise, it is not something I wish to be involved with.

Section 40

-----Original Message-----
From: SEC(AS)2
Sent: 10 May 2000 16:34
To: DCC(RAF) SO1(EC)
Subject: Quest International

Apologies for the e-mail but I cannot raise you on the telephone.

I have spoken with Section 40 DGCC Head of Comm Planning, about the copy of the correspondence from Secretary of State's office that you left with me. I have explained to Section 40 that although we know something about Quest International's UFO interests (and could provide a sentence or two on that), we cannot answer the question in their letter to SofS. Whether a third party (ie Quest Publications) can 'have permission to reproduce an article that first appeared in RAF News and use the associated photos' is surely a straightforward matter of copyright and, therefore, for the author, Editor of RAF News, and DGCC's staff to take a view on.

Section 40
AD/Sec(AS)2

[redacted]EC(AS)2

From: SEC(AS)2
Sent: 10 May 2000 16:34
To: DCC(RAF) SO1(EC)
Subject: Quest International

Apologies for the e-mail but I cannot raise you on the telephone.

I have spoken with [redacted] Section 40 DGCC head of Comm Planning, about the copy of the correspondence from Secretary of State's office that you left with me. I have explained to [redacted] Section 40 that although we know something about Quest International's UFO interests (and could provide a sentence or two on that), we cannot answer the question in their letter to SofS. Whether a third party (ie Quest Publications) can 'have permission to reproduce an article that first appeared in RAF News and use the associated photos' is surely a straightforward matter of copyright and, therefore, for the author, Editor of RAF News, and DGCC's staff to take a view on.

[redacted] Section 40
AD/Sec(AS)2

DCC(RAF) CORRESPONDENCE ACTION SLIP

SER No: 8686 | DATE IN: 04/05/00 | DOC TYPE: LM

DO NOT DESTROY

REFERENCE: MO 22/9

DATED: 03/05/2000

FROM: APS/S OF S

SUBJECT: **INFO ONLY!**

ARTICLE FOR UNOPENED FILES MAGAZINE

TO: DCC(RAF)

TO BE FILED ON (PLEASE INSERT)

SO1 COMMENTS

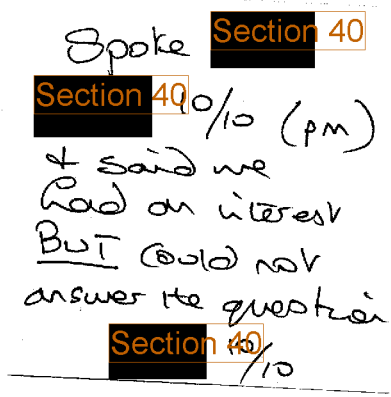
DPR COMMENTS

GENERAL REMARKS

DCC(RAF)	ACTION	INFO
PS	ACTION	INFO
SO1(IC+E)	ACTION	INFO
SO1(EC)	ACTION	INFO
SO2(EC)	ACTION	INFO
SIO	ACTION	INFO
SO3(EC)	ACTION	INFO
SO3(IC+E)	ACTION	INFO
SGT(INT)	ACTION	INFO
SGT(PHOT)	ACTION	INFO
ADMIN	ACTION	INFO
DPO(RAF)	ACTION	INFO
COPIES ONLY: GC CC STC	ACTION	INFO
COPIES ONLY: GC CC PTC	ACTION	INFO
COPIES ONLY: GC CC (RES)	ACTION	INFO

DEADLINE RESPONSE DATE

DPR STAFF DETAILED:


Spoke Section 40
Section 40 10/10 (PM)
& said we
had an interest
BUT could not
answer the questio
Section 40
/10

CLASSIFICATION: UK

PRIVATE OFFICE REFERENCE: MO 22/9

D News

ARTICLE FOR UNOPENED FILES MAGAZINE

1. I should be grateful for your advice on the attached correspondence from Section 40 Section 40 Director Quest Publications dated 25 April together with a draft reply, if appropriate. Other Departments or MOD Divisions should be consulted as necessary and the attachment should be placed on a Departmental Registered file.

2. Please submit your advice by no later than 17 May 00

3. Drafts should be sent by electronic mail to: SOFS-Private Office (for Unclassified and Restricted) or: SOFS-Private Office-S (for Confidential and above). Please use the "View Acknowledgement" or "Read Receipt" mechanism, in which case a separate hard copy should not normally be necessary.

4. I am sending copies of this minute, together with the attachment, to:

Dcc (RAF)		

5. The Open Government Code of Practice came into force on 4 April 1994. You should ensure that all replies to members of the public are provided in accordance with the procedures as set out in the Code. For further information see DCI(Gen) 223/99 or phone MB Section 40

6. Please provide a Private Secretary reply

Section 40 [redacted]

Date: 3 May 2000

APS/S of S
MB6165 MB Section 40
CHOTS: SOFS-Private Office
SOFS-Private Office-S

MINISTERIAL BUSINESS: TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES

MINISTERIAL BUSINESS: TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES

MINISTERIAL BUSINESS: TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES

Quest Publications International Ltd
Est. 1989

UFO MAGAZINE ™
The Unopened Files

Mark [redacted]
Editor: The Unopened Files
Features Editor: UFO Magazine

QUEST PUBLICATIONS INT. LTD,
[redacted]
ILKLEY,
[redacted]
England

Your Ref:
Our Ref:

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AGENDA, THE UFO DIRECTORY, UFO MAGAZINE VIDEO COLLECTION, PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY, NEWSCLIPPING SERVICE, UFO INTELLIGENCE RECORDS, CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Tel: [redacted] (6 lines) Fax: [redacted] e-mail: [redacted] World Wide Web: www.ufomag.co.uk

Geoffrey Hoon Esq.
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

26 April 2000

Dear Mr Hoon

I am writing to ask permission to reprint an article that first appeared in *RAF News,* and to use the associated photographs. I should like to reproduce these in Quest's own *Unopened Files.*

The feature concerned ran in the March 17 issue of RAF News and concerns the underground facility at Corsham, beneath the former station at Rudloe Manor. In the past, there have been some bizarre rumours about activities at RAF Rudloe Manor, and it would be of great interest to our readers to hear the official side of the story. We have featured an article about this facility in a previous issue, and the recent publication of Nicholas McCamley's book, *Secret Underground Cities* illustrates the level of public interest in such matters.

Unopened Files runs a wide range of government, military and intelligence issues, and while we are sometimes critical of what we see as excessive secrecy and official intrusion, we are deeply patriotic and loyal to our country. Many of our articles take a line entirely consistent with UK government policy, such as our features highlighting the threat posed to Earth by comets and asteroids - an issue on which the government is taking action. We also give prominence to articles on mysteries such as the search for the remains of Noah's Ark, and general matters of interest such as NASA's Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence programme.

I am sorry to trouble you with this matter, but I have had quite a frustrating time trying to track down who I need to ask, and what procedure I should follow when seeking permission. Given the Ministry of Defence's stated commitment to heritage issues on the defence estate, and in view of the wider commitment to open government, I hope that permission will be granted. Giving this article wider prominence can only result in good PR for the MOD and the RAF. I will ensure that the appropriate credits and details of copyright are clearly given.

We do not have a massive budget, but I am prepared to pay a small fee if necessary, either to *RAF News* or to the RAF Benevolent Fund. And indeed, on this matter, Quest's sister title *UFO Magazine* denotes £3,000 of free advertising each year to support the Royal International Air Tattoo (copy enclosed). We have been told by the RAF Benevolent Fund Enterprises committee, that Quest's advert is the best and most supportive in the country on this event.

I do look forward to hearing from you.

Section 40

[redacted]

Director QPIL

Classification	
Caveat	
Covering	

F Sigs 927
(Rev 8/93)

Facsimile Transmission Cover Sheet

Transmission Details		Document Details
Serial No:	Date and Time of Transmission: 30 MAR 00 13.17	Reference:
From: Section 40 RAF NEWS	Fax Number: 95471 Section 40	Subject: UNOPENED FILES
To: Wg Cdr Section 40 SO1 DCC RAF	Fax Number: 9621 8 Section 40	Total number of pages including this cover sheet: 2
Authorizing Officer		**Transmit Operators**
Rank, Name and Appointment:		Rank/Grade, Name and Telephone No.:
Signature: Section 40		Signature:

Message/Remarks:

DCC (RAF) SO1 (IC&C)

Please see attached request. I'm not inclined to accede to this request, but felt the MOD should be kept in the loop - particularly as the word 'conspiracy' crops up on almost every page of his publication!! Best regs Section 40

Covering	
Caveat	
Classification	

I:\copy\insec.a4\3amc

Quest Publications International Ltd

UFO MAGAZINE™
The Unopened Files

Est. 1989

Man[redacted]
Editor: The Unopened Files
Features Editor: UFO Magazine

QUEST PUBLICATIONS INT. LTD,
[redacted]
ILKLEY,
[redacted]
England

Your Ref:
Our Ref:

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AGENDA, THE UFO DIRECTORY, UFO MAGAZINE VIDEO COLLECTION, PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY, NEWSCLIPPING SERVICE, UFO INTELLIGENCE RECORDS, CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Tel [redacted] (6 lines) Fax: [redacted] e-mail [redacted] World Wide Web http://www.ufomag.co.uk

28 March 2000

Editor - RAF NEWS
RAF Innsworth
Room 591
Building 255
Gloucester
GL3 1EZ

Dear [redacted]

Please find enclosed copies of my magazine the Unopened Files.

I read with great interest your splendid feature on RAF Rudloe Manor in RAF News, and am very eager to obtain permission to use the story and photographs in a forthcoming issue of Unopened Files.

I would not change nor alter the wording in any way, and would mark the story © RAF NEWS or flag the piece with any i.d. you so wish. Furthermore, at the end of the article I would of course state - *First published in RAF News* (relevant number etc).

There have been many misguided stories and rumours published about RAF Rudloe Manor, and I think this would be a good opportunity to allow the ordinary members of public, a proper overview of the underground part of base.

In return, I could make a donation to a charity or an RAF benevolent fund of £75.00. I do hope this would be in order.

Many of our readers serve in the RAF, and the general policy of the Unopened Files is supportive of the security services and all aspects of Britain's armed forces.

Present circulation (worldwide is 40,000).

Best regards

[redacted]

Director [redacted]

Section 40

Classification	U/C
Caveat	
Covering	

F Sigs 927
(Int. 9/92)

43

For info

Section 40 24/5

Facsimile Transmission Cover Sheet

Transmission Details		Document Details
Serial No:	**Date and Time of Transmission:** 23 May 2000	**Reference:** PTC/356977/AMP Sec
From: AMP(Sec)2b	**Fax Number:** 95471 Section 40	**Subject:** Article For 'Unopened Files' Magazine
To: D News AD/Sec(AS)2 DCC(RAF)SO1(EC) OC JSU Corsham	**Fax Number:** 9621 Section 40 9621 9621 9544	Total number of pages including this cover sheet: 8

Authorizing Officer	Transmit Operators
Rank, Name and Appointment: HEO Section 40 AMP(Sec)2b	**Rank/Grade and Name:** AA Section 40 AMP(Sec)2b1a
Signature:	**Signature:**

Message/Remarks:

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS)1
23 MAY 2000
FILE

Covering	
Caveat	
Classification	U/C

PTC/356977/AMPSec

19 May 00

APS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

PSO/AOA
D News
AD/Sec(AS)2
Hd AMPSec
Hd of EC(PTC)
DCC(RAF)SO1(EC)
OC JSU Corsham
Editor RAF News

ARTICLE FOR 'UNOPENED FILES' MAGAZINE

1. The Director of Quest Publications International Ltd wrote to Secretary of State on the 26 April seeking permission to reprint an article contained in the March 17 issue (No. 994) of RAF News in 'The Unopened Files' Magazine. The article featured the underground facility at Corsham (formally RAF Rudloe Manor) and provided a brief history of the site as well as photographs of the many tunnels (the article is attached for your information).

2. The Director of Quest Publications International Ltd, also the Editor of 'The Unopened Files' Magazine, wrote initially to the Editor of RAF News seeking permission to use the story and photographs in a future issue. This was declined and this may have prompted the letter to Secretary of State citing the MOD's commitment to heritage issues and its wider commitment to open government as justification for its release.

3. You will be aware of the background to the site and that the facility houses Defence Communications equipment. The Editor of RAF News has expressed a view that permission should not be granted as it features RAF personnel and was published only on the approval of the present occupants. I have investigated the magazine's web site at www.ufomag.co.uk there appears to be little journalistic content in the magazine which depends upon editorial comment to stimulate some of the more imaginative members of the public to elaborate on factual articles. An article on a MOD underground facility, attributed to the RAF, could lead to this and similar locations generating a significant amount of attention. For these reasons, the consensus of opinion is that it would not be in the best interests of the RAF to be associated with such a magazine.

4. However, mindful that the article on the underground facility at Corsham is in the public domain, and that to flatly refuse to co-operate would only fuel potential issues, I suggest that the Editor of 'The Unopened Files' is instructed to write to the Head of Corporate Communications, RAF Innsworth, requesting a media brief on the site. This would enable the RAF to have an element of control over the content of any subsequent article without attribution. To this end, please find attached a draft reply which the

Private Secretary may wish to send to the Director of Quest Publications International Ltd.

Section 40

[redacted]

AMPSec2b
HQ PTC
GLF61 5101GE
Attachment:

1. Draft reply to the Director of Quest Publications International Ltd.
2. RAF News article – RAF Rudloe Manor.
3. Major features in the April/May issue of 'The Unopened Files' Magazine.

Section 40

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO REPRINT A RAF NEWS ARTICLE IN THE 'UNOPENED FILES' MAGAZINE - DRAFT REPLY

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of State dated 26 April in which you sought permission to reprint an article on the underground facility at Corsham which was featured in the March 17 issue of RAF News.

I am afraid that the article is not suitable for reproduction as it featured RAF personnel. However, if you write to the Head of External Communications, RAF Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1EZ, a media brief on the site can be provided.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful.

Wartime complex keeps its secrets underground

In an exclusive report for RAF News, Adrian Rondel goes below the former RAF station at Rudloe Manor, uncovering one of World War Two's most secret military sites. Personnel and Training Command photographer Cpl Bob Bishop produced these remarkable pictures in conditions of near and total darkness.

BENEATH a military installation near Bath lies one of the most remarkable and best kept secrets of World War Two.

In the area below the Joint Support Unit at Corsham (formerly RAF Rudloe Manor), commanded by Wg Cdr Chris Murray, lies an enormous disused ammunition depot and an abandoned aircraft engine factory.

Known as the Central Ammunition Depot, its existence was long suspected by the Germans, but they were never able to discover its exact location.

Today the facility is no longer used for ammunition storage with the last stocks removed in the 1960s.

The underground site now comes under the authority of FS Andy Quinn, RAF Police SNCO at Corsham. The tunnels are also still used by RAF firefighters for specialised underground training.

FS Quinn said: "The site is a remarkable example of military engineering and the fact that it was kept secret throughout the war is a testament to the personnel who worked here."

A tour of the complex is an unforgettable experience. Tunnels stretch out into the distance in all directions and without a guide, you would quickly become hopelessly lost.

"It does take a while to get your bearings" admitted Andy. "Another consideration is keeping an eye on your torch's power as much of the site is in pitch darkness and without artificial light you wouldn't want to be too far away from the exit."

Deep in the complex the silence is remarkable and not a little eerie. During the war it must have been a different story with the vast series of conveyor belts carrying ammunition stocks around the site.

The story of the depot's development is notable for the ingenuity of its builders and the efficiency of those who sought to conceal its existence.

Midway between the two world wars, the War Office decided it was necessary to build a site to protect ammunition stocks and so a nationwide search was launched.

Rudloe Manor was chosen as the area has been quarried for Bath Stone since Roman times. In the 19th Century, further work was carried out by the Great Western Railway adding the Box Tunnel, which is still in use today.

In 1935, the go-ahead was given to build three ammunition sub-depots at Monkton Farleigh, Basilays Ridge and at Tunnel Quarry.

It was estimated it would take four years to complete, but it was actually opened in April 1938.

When finished, the Tunnel sub-depot consisted of 10 districts, each with three acres of floor space (five acres gross).

Air was drawn in by large fans via vertical pressure shafts from a huge main fan called the cliff drift inlet. The air was heated and distributed via trunking, and other fans drew the air out to produce a stable atmosphere and 80 per cent humidity.

Ammunition arrived at the sites by either road or rail and the site had a full gauge railway with two 600 metre-long platforms.

Two massive diesel generators were installed next to the platforms, capable of supplying enough power for a small town.

A year later, a barrack block was constructed at Tunnel Quarry which could accommodate 300 personnel, equipped with bars and messing areas. It also had its own underground lake for drinking water; sewage and flood pumps were also provided.

All these elaborate facilities ensured that people could live and work underground to help maintain the site's secret status.

In February 1942, it was decided to establish a new RAF communications centre to serve the south-west of England and by August it was fully operational with personnel.

This centre occupies No 1 District which was never commissioned for ammunition storage.

It was also home to the underground Bristol Aircraft Engine Factory, which was sealed off from the ammunition site. To brighten up its gloomy canteen areas, the workers decided to paint the walls with murals.

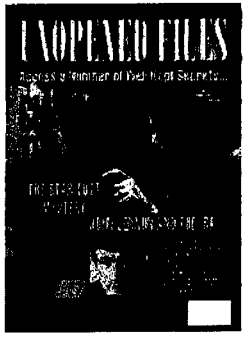
Permission was given, providing only primary colours paint from the engines was used. The result is a remarkable series of wonderfully preserved period pictures depicting idyllic scenes such as cricket, horse-racing barmaids with period hairstyles cheerfully serving drinks.

In fact, the whole site retains an atmosphere of the Much of the engineering equipment is well-preserved some paperwork survives from the 1940s and immed post-war period.

"It is very much as it was left and during my time I've managed to carry out a fair amount of research history," explained FS Quinn. "I would point out it is a small part of my responsibilities, but I suppose it is rather a unique aspect of my job.

"I admit that occasionally I've tried to picture what must have been like during its heyday. It must have been an impressive sight."

Check out the content of our latest issue!



A message from the publishers:

We are pleased to announce that from 27 January 2000, the Unopened Files will be available as a bi-monthly newsstand publication, beginning with our February/March issue. If you would like to access a number of well-kept secrets, covering a huge range of public interest topics, then Unopened Files is the magazine for you!

THE UNOPENED FILES

APRIL/MAY 2000 ISSUE NOW ARRIVED AT UK NEWSSTANDS

If you would like to access a number of well-kept secrets, covering a huge range of public interest topics, then Unopened Files is the magazine for you!

Major features in our April/May 2000 issue (on sale in UK newsstands from 29 March) include:

* **THE ARK AND THE CIA** - In a situation that mirrors the allegations of conspiracy recording the notorius 'Roswell Incident' of 1947 and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, a whole host of claims, counter-claims and assertions of high-level duplicity that would sit comfortably in an episode of The X-Files have surfaced regarding the Ark...' Nick Redfern reports.

* **FLYING FIASCOS** - Korean Air, South Korea's flagship airline, is not only a national embarrassment, but also a global jinx. It has one of the worst safety records in recent aviation history. Barry Robson asks... 'WHAT WENT WRONG?'

* **FILES LINK CIA TO CHILEAN MURDERS** - Did the CIA encourage authorities in Chile to murder two US citizens in 1973?

* **DID MI6 SUPPORT PLOT TO KILL COLONEL GADAFFI?** - Leaked British Intelligence documents connect MI6 with assassination attempt.

* **CAMP X: A VIEW TO A KILL** - Lifting the lid on James Bond creator Ian Fleming's amazing Canadian wartime secret.

* **HACKING THE HANGAR** - The art of computer hacking is both sophisticated and dangerous. No one knows this better than Mathew Bevan, a self-confessed computer hacker based in Cardiff and whose attempts to uncover the US Government's most guarded UFO secrets led him into the murky world of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio; the fabled 'Hangar 18'; Scotland Yard's Computer Crime Unit; covert telephone tapping operations; and Chines military intelligence. An exclusive interview with Nick Redfern.

*** HAS BRITAIN'S SECRET SERVICE ABANDONED ONE OF ITS AGENTS? -** India jails British arms dealer who alleges the Intelligence Service were fully aware of arms drop in 1995.

*** LEGITIMATE OFFICE SPYING -** In a business world of multi-billion pound computer transfers and commerce, one would expect to find high-tech security and surveillance systems in operation. However, this is almost certainly happening in your office, though your employer would probably deny it. Investigative journalist Kate Taylor asks if this is warranted, or yet another example of 'legitimate spying'?

*** IRVING'S WARS -** A current libel trial brought by historian David Irving has highlighted again the debate about the reality of the Holocaust. Haydon Coyle reports.

*** DOCUMENT NUMBER 65 -** Proof that China is willing to play the death card over Taiwan.

*** THE STAR DUST MYSTERY -** A 53-year-old mystery over the disappearance of a British South American Airways Lancastrian plane has finally been resolved after wreckage was discovered by a team of Argentinian Army climbers. The race is now on to locate ultra-top secret documents being carried by one of Britain's legendary 'King's Messengers' to Chile...

*** 'PRIVATE EYE' REVEALS NRO DISINFORMATION -** Secret Korean missile base holds no threat to West.

*** RWANDAN WARLORD ARRESTED -** United Nations War Crimes suspect arrested in London.

*** ECHELON -** French to sue Britain and USA over worldwide spy network.

*** THE SECRET COLD WAR TARGETS -** On a ground-breaking mission to study military archives in Moscow, Dr. Matthias Uhl of Halle University, located documents which showed that the USSR had secretly moved nuclear missiles into East Germany to strike at several locations in Suffolk, Norfolk and Lincolnshire - all of this some three years prior to the Cuban missile crisis - regarded as the first foreign deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons. The history books will now have to be re-written.

*** ELIMINATE DE GAULLE -** I ask my colleagues whether we should not now eliminate de Gaulle as a political force. He hates England and has left a trail of Anglophobia behind him everywhere. He has never himself fought since he left France and took pains to have his wife brought safely beforehand...' - Declassified documents reveal astonishing correspondence between Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt.

*** ARKAN: 'KING OF TIGERS' GUNNED DOWN -** Zeljko Raznatovic, a 47-year-old paramilitary better known as 'Arkan', the Serbian warlord, was shot dead by three assailants in Belgrade on 15 January 2000. Arkan and several of his men had been linked to a massacre at a hospital in Vukovar, Crotia, during the trouble there in 1991.

Who were the likely killers and what were the real motives behind his assassination?

*** HIT TO KILL MISSILE MISSES -** The Pentagon now faces a huge dilemma after the eagerly-awaited test launch of their 'hit-to-kill' missile missed its target. The project, supported by President Clinton, was intended to ressurect Ronald Reagan's idea of a space shield over America - or 'Star Wars'.

*** IS THE NET CLOSING ON JILL DANDO'S KILLER? -** Police hunting the killer of Jill Dando, a popular British television presenter who was gunned down at her London home on 26 April 1998, believe her personal address was traced using a service provided by the Internet.

*** JOHN LENNON SUPPORTED IRA & FINANCED TROTSKYIST -** FBI and British Intelligence fight to withhold Lennon's IRA link. A special report.

*** WATER WARS -** An almost unbelievable scenario will unfold in the early years of the new millennium. On a planet that has three quarters of its surface covered in water, by the year 2050, seventy-per-cent of its inhabitants will not have enough of it. Barry Robson reports.

*** AUSCHWITZ 'MEMOIR' A FANTASY, PUBLISHER ADMITS -** An award-winning book that purported to be the memories of a Latvian-Jewish man who had survived the Nazi death camps as a small child has

Section 40

been removed from German bookshops after its publishers declared it a hoax. A shocking expose on Bruno Doesseker, alias Binjamin Wilkomirski, who invented a story that moved many to tears, but whose fortune was ammassed at the expense of the true victims of the Holocaust.

* And there is much more in the Unopened Files which will both fascinate and delight those who have a liking for hard-hitting public interest topics which rarely see the light of day elsewhere.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE FIND A COPY OF THE UNOPENED FILES AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU CAN PLACE AN ORDER TO RECEIVE A REGULAR COPY WITH YOUR LOCAL NEWSAGENT. SIMPLY QUOTE THE TITLE AND GIVE HIM/HER THE NAME OF OUR DISTRIBUTOR - SEYMOUR.

ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU HAVE A CREDIT CARD YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE THROUGH THIS SECURE WEB SITE.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: UK £15.00 USA $38.00 CANADA C$45.00 EUROPE £17.00 REST OF WORLD $38.00 * NOTE ALL OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE SENT AIR MAIL.

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ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU HAVE A CREDIT CARD YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE THROUGH THIS SECURE WEB SITE OR SEND A POSTAL ORDER/CHEQUE TO OUR ILKLEY OFFICE.

GUARDIAN
25/05/00

Government remains 'too secretive'

David Hencke
Westminster correspondent

Government officials remain too secretive when releasing information to the public, the parliamentary watchdog said yesterday as the Scottish executive and the Welsh assembly challenged Jack Straw's plans for a restricted freedom of information bill.

Scottish and Welsh politicians said they planned to press ahead with a much broader definition of what information could be released than that allowed in England.

Michael Buckley, the parliamentary ombudsman, demanded that the home secretary take a more liberal view of the release of information on crime prevention and national security, areas where the release of documents faces a blanket ban under the freedom of information bill, now going through the Lords.

In three judgments Mr Buckley rebuked the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence for failing to release relatively harmless information – on the grounds that it could reveal operational data on fighting crime or be a threat to national security.

The ombudsman's finding against the Home Office is the third within a year.

Mr Buckley said: "The number of complaints coming to me about the refusal to release information remains low. If any lessons are to be drawn from so few investigations, it is, perhaps, that some information in sensitive areas such as crime prevention and national security can be released safely if departments take a realistic view of potential harm in relation to the public interest in disclosure."

Mr Buckley's report found the Home Office had wrongly withheld sections of The Internet Detective, a guide to online crime for criminal investigators.

Sections that had already been released to the press were censored, he said, although it was right to withhold those parts that had not already been published.

The MoD was the subject of two complaints. In one, it was right to withhold information about nuclear capabilities, security and intelligence matters, but should have issued less sensitive material.

In the other, officials who had refused to release information on UFOs relented after the ombudsman intervened and the man making the request agreed to pay for the cost of collating it.

In Wales Rhodri Morgan, the first minister, published a consultation document on the freedom of information code, announcing that in Wales government departments would have to prove "substantial prejudice" if they wanted to withold information from the public. This will immediately make it more difficult for Welsh departments to withold information than their English counterparts, who merely have to demonstrate "harm or prejudice" to stop information being published.

The Scottish executive yesterday received widespread backing for a similar decision.

Maurice Frankel, the director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said the announcements in Wales and Scotland "promise a remarkably powerful right of access".

He said Mr Buckley's criticisms "are significant as crime prevention is covered by class exemption in the bill. The ombudsman is saying this information can realistically be released but the bill does not say that, it simply exempts it."

INDEPENDENT
25/05/00

Complaints highlight 'culture of secrecy'

OPEN GOVERNMENT

BY SARAH SCHAEFER

GOVERNMENT officials remain too secretive when releasing information to the public, the parliamentary watchdog warned yesterday. Although the number of complaints about departments refusing to release documents remains low, there were cases where harmless information was wrongly withheld, the Ombudsman, Michael Buckley, said.

Campaigners lobbying for greater openness said his comments proved the Government's Freedom of Information Bill, which is currently before Parliament, would continue a culture of unnecessary secrecy.

Mr Buckley's observations came in a report on the outcome of five complaints against government departments.

"If any lessons are to be drawn from so few investigations, it is, perhaps, that some information in sensitive areas such as crime prevention and national security can be released safely if departments take a realistic view of potential harm in relation to the public interest in disclosure," he said.

Maurice Frankel, director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said the Ombudsman's comments showed that the Bill needed to go further. Current proposals would do little to improve openness because of blanket exemptions on information relating to crime, national security and government decisions, he said.

"The Ombudsman's comments are significant as crime prevention is covered by class exemption in the Bill," he said. "The Ombudsman is saying this information can realistically be released but the Bill does not say that, it simply exempts it."

Mr Buckley's report found that Home Office officials had wrongly withheld sections of *The Internet Detective* (a guide to online crime for criminal investigators) that had already been released to the press.

THE SUN
25/05/00

Shipyard saved by ferries deal

THE Govan shipyard **WILL** get a contract to build military ferries – saving it from closure, The Sun can reveal.

The deal will secure the struggling Clyde yard's long-term future and safeguard more than 8,000 jobs.

The move follows a storm of protest over Ministry of Defence plans to award a £1billion contract for six ferries to a leading German firm.

Govan's prospects looked bleak. But now ministers have ruled it will build **TWO** of the roll-on-roll-off ferries.

A ministerial source revealed Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon had "cooked the books" to give the yard a slice of the action. An announcement of the rescue is expected next month. The work will keep Govan going until it begins a Navy contract to build destroyers.

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From: Section 40, Secretariat (Air Staff)2
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Room 8247, Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 020 7218 Section 40
(Switchboard) 020 7218 9000
(Fax) 020 7218 Section 40

Section 40

Your Reference

Our Reference
D/Sec(AS)/64/1

Date
24 May 2000

Copy + Background Papers on 6f/3/1

Dear Section 40

Thank you for your letter of 1 May enclosing one from the Safety Regulation Group of the Civil Aviation Authority about Mandatory Occurrence Reports. You say that the Safety Regulation Group is the '*other official sources*' mentioned in your earlier correspondence and ask that the MOD Department holding the Reports mentioned in their letter conduct a full search of their records and provides you with any information meeting the criteria as defined in the Parliamentary Ombudsman's letter to Ieuan Wyn Jones MP (A.7/00 of 29 February 2000).

As you know, Sec(AS)2 is the MOD focal point for receipt of all 'UFO'-related sighting reports and correspondence. A thorough search has been made of the files during the agreed period (28 July 1998 to 28 July 1999). There is no record that Mandatory Occurrence Reports 199900648 dated 03/02/99 and 199903489 dated 05/06/99 were received. I contacted Section 40 Section 40 Corporate Affairs, Safety Regulation Group for further information. She said that they were copied to:

(AS)2
Main Building
Whitehall

I queried the brevity of the address. Section 40 said that it was the address they used to forward Reports. The omission of 'Ministry of Defence', 'London' and a postcode in the address could have accounted for the Reports not being received by Sec(AS)2. As could the fact that the Branch title used does not exist and there is no supporting Room number to help with identification. Nevertheless, checks have been made with Branches in MOD Head Office whose titles are similar to (AS)2 and those with an interest in aircraft safety. No trace of the Reports has been found.

It is some while since the two Reports were filed with the Safety Regulation Group. There has been nothing in the meantime to suggest that the integrity of the UK Air Defence Region was breached by what was reported to them. I am sure you will understand therefore that MOD has no

plans to carry out an investigation now of what might have occurred.

I can appreciate that you will be disappointed with the result of our enquiries. I can assure you that efforts were made to try and trace what happened to the Reports. The Safety Regulation Group has now been provided with full details of our address.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

Hidden copies to: Section 40
Ombudsman
ADGE 1
DCC RAF
OMD 19

Section 40 to add to the Task Force Papers

SEC(AS)2

From: D Nuc Pol(NMD)
Sent: 14 April 2000 12:37
To: SEC(AS)2
Subject: RE: NEOs Task Force

Section 40

Many thanks. I'm only the messenger - I didn't suppose you'd have any more of an interest than ourselves! Section 40

-----Original Message-----
From: SEC(AS)2
Sent: 14 April 2000 12:35
To: D Nuc Pol(NMD)
Subject: NEOs Task Force

<< File: Task Force.doc >>

Section 40 [redacted]

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1 (1) Ev 7o

14 April 2000 (2) file

D Nuc Pol(NMD)

TASK FORCE ON POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS NEAR EARTH OBJECTS (NEOs)

Reference:

A. BNSC's letter of 3 April 2000
B. DGISP's comments on D/F&S(S&T2(/5/4/3/1 (088/00) of 10 April 2000

1. Thank you for sight of the papers about the Task Force on NEOs. I am afraid they did not reach me until late yesterday afternoon.

2. I am happy to say that our 'UFO' remit is wide of the mark in respect of any involvement or interest in the Science Minister's Task Force. MOD's only interest in 'UFOs' is to establish from what is reported to us whether the integrity of the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by foreign hostile military activity. Sec(AS)2 acts as the Departmental 'UFO' focal point and deals with reports from members of the public who witness something they cannot identify (an unidentified flying object). Reports are examined, with Departmental experts as necessary. However, unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, no attempt is made identify the precise nature of what the witness might have seen (from the types of descriptions we receive it is clear that aircraft lights, balloons or natural phenomena account for the observations).

3. Any member of the public writing to us about 'UFOs' and seeking information about the work of the Task Force is advised to direct their enquiries about the latter to DTI/BNSC.

Section 40 [redacted]

Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 Section 40 MB

D Nuc Pol Distribution

DD [redacted] Please forward to Sec(AS) WFO/Spacedesk.

[redacted] ADBS

AD NAR

For you, rather than me I think!

NMD AH

Sec(AS) - we have no interest.

[redacted] File

[redacted] ,

Noting [redacted] s comment (overleaf), do you?

[redacted] [redacted]

was keen to he [redacted] represented at the 12/4 attached! I have said No CANDO – have asked DECISTAR ([redacted]) to look out for us!

[redacted] 11/4

Section 40 Section 40

PA/DGISP

From: DGISP
Sent: 11 April 2000 11:29
To: PA/DGISP
Subject: FW: (U/C) TASK FORCE ON ASTEROID HAZARDS
Importance: High

From: PS F+S(S+T)
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2000 11:29:13 AM
To: DGISP; PS/DSc(BMD)
Cc: CSA GROUP ROLE; MA/DCDS(EC); DG(R+T)/PA; EC(ISTAR)DEC; DR(S+T); DR(C); D Def RP; RP(Centre)DIR; EC(ISTAR)DDET; AD/F+S(S+T)2; F+S(S+T)2a
Subject: FW: (U/C) TASK FORCE ON ASTEROID HAZARDS
Importance: High
Auto forwarded by a Rule

Reference:
D/F&S(S&T2)/5/4/3/1(088/00) dated 10 April 2000

Following my referenced LM, a meeting has how been arranged with the BNSC Task Force on asteroid hazards.
It is the wish of the Chairman of the Task Force, Dr Harry Atkinson, that this meeting is held at the University College London, Gower Street - Room E1, Ground Floor, Department of Physics & Astronomy. It will commence at 1400hrs. on Thurs 13 Apr.
All addressees are invited to attend, or if this is not possible, to send a representative.

Section 40 and I will be attending in person and I shall also be accompanied by Section 40 F&S(S&T)2a. Section 40

Would you please let me know as soon as possible if you/your representative plan to attend, as we will then advise UCL accordingly.

Section 40
Hd F&S(S&T)

Section 40

[Copy faxed to action addressee DI50b : Section 40

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS)1
17 APR 2000
FILE

11/04/00

LOOSE MINUTE

D/F&S(S&T2)/5/4/3/1(088/00)

10 April 2000

10 APR 2000

No.

Section 40

Section 40

DI50b
DGISP
D Sc(BMD)
ADOR(ICS)Space

Copy to:
PS/CSA
MA/DCDS(EC)
DG(R&T)
DR(S&T)
DR(C)
D Def RP
D RP(Centre)

TASK FORCE ON ASTEROID HAZARDS

1. DUS(S&T) has asked me to represent him in meeting the BNSC task force on asteroid hazards. It is chaired by Dr Harry Atkinson with members Sir Crispin Tickell and Professor David Williams. They are seeking a meeting with MOD following their discussions with DoD and others in the US. They are interested in any insight MOD may have into the nature of the risk from asteroids (NEOs) impacting the Earth, and how this relates to other risks or threats that are currently considered. They say the task force would benefit from "an overview of MOD's current and possible UK contribution to international collaborative efforts" on the matter. They would therefore like to talk about:

(1) The MOD view of the nature of the NEO hazard and its view of the risk.

(2) UK/US collaboration with regard to comments made at the Pentagon.

(3) Possible UK/NATO activity in the area.

(4) Other MOD related areas for international collaboration in the NEO area.

(5) The use of current MOD resources within an internationally collaborative effort.

(6) Mitigation measures related to NEOs.

(7) The need for future Planetary Defence, any ideas on suitable mechanisms.

(8) Any MOD interest in the science issues related to NEOs.

(9) MOD views on the communication of NEO issues to the public.

2. It may be that our answer to most of the above is that we are doing nothing about it, have no money to spare, and are content to leave such matters to the BNSC. However, we presumably have to be diplomatic about the apparent USAF enthusiasm for microsatellites and other "spacewatch" expenditure funded by international collaboration. (I will circulate the notes supplied by BNSC of the task force's meeting in the Pentagon, once these have been scanned into Chots.)

3. I should be grateful therefore if action addressees could attend or be represented at a meeting with BNSC and the asteroid task force in DUS(S&T)'s office in his absence later this week (or elsewhere in Main Building early next week). Any advance comments you may have would also be welcome. My secretary will be in touch shortly about timings once we hear more from BNSC.

{CHOTS signed}

Section 40
Head F&S(S&T)
MB2389 [redacted] MB
Section 40

BNSC
BRITISH NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE

cc PFO → CDS(EC) Hd F&S(S&T)
I presume that the MOD has no remit to defend the earth against asteroids (or little green men, come to that). Subject to confirmation of that I can deal with the meeting. Hd F&S(S&T) will [illegible] but the first two [illegible] at very [illegible] [illegible]

Dr David Leadbeater
Deputy Director General
British National Space Centre
Room 180/Grey
151 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9SS

Email: david_leadbeater@dtl.gsi.gov.uk
Internet: http://www.bnsc.gov.uk

Mr Graham Jordan
DUS (S&T)
Room 6311
MOD Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

Direct line 020 7215 [redacted] Section 40
Local fax 020 7215 [redacted]
Our ref
Your ref
Date 3 April 2000

To Graham Jordan	
Company MOD	
From DR. LEADBEATER	Post-it® Fax Note
Company BNSC	
Tel No. 215-7905	No. of Pages 7
	Ref No: 7688

Section 40 [redacted]

Dear Graham

TASK FORCE ON POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS NEAR EARTH OBJECTS (NEOs)

You may be aware of a Task Force on Potentially Hazardous Near Earth Objects set up by Lord Sainsbury at the beginning of this year. Following a recent visit by the Task Force (TF) to the USA for discussions with NASA, Executive Office of the President and DoD, the TF would like to hold discussions with a senior team from MoD. I would appreciate your assistance in setting up an urgent meeting between the TF and MOD.

I attach a selection of documents relating to the Task Force:

1. Terms of Reference;
2. Press release on the occasion of the launch of the Task Force;
3. Summary of main points of a meeting of the TF at the Pentagon on 7 March;

The purpose of a meeting with MoD would be to discuss the MoD interests in the area related to the TF terms of reference. In particular, this could usefully cover any MoD insight into confirming the nature of the NEO risk and how it would relate to other risks or threats that are currently considered. As the issue is very much one of international concern, the TF would benefit from an overview of MOD's current and possible UK contribution to international collaborative efforts.

The TF would like the discussion to include:

1. The MoD view of the nature of the NEO hazard and its view of the risk;
2. UK/US collaboration with regard to comments made at the Pentagon;
3. Possible UK/NATO activity in the area;
4. Other MoD related areas for international collaboration in the NEO area;

5. The use of current MoD resources within an internationally collaborative effort;
6. Mitigation measures related to NEOs;
7. The need for future Planetary Defence, any ideas on suitable mechanisms;
8. Any MoD interest in the science issues related to NEOs;
9. MoD views on the communication of NEO issues to the public.

The discussion would greatly help the TF in writing its report, which will include risk analysis, countermeasures and emergency planning. The report is due to be presented to the DG of BNSC in less than two months' time.

The next meeting of the TF is on the 13 April am. It would be most convenient to meet MoD on the afternoon of that day. If that date is not possible, please let Mr Richard Tremayne-Smith Tel: Section 40 know as soon as possible. He is the Secretary of the TF.

I am copying this letter to Capt Section 40 so that Operational and Science aspects can be discussed with the TF.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

DAVID LEADBEATER
Deputy Director General

NEOTF(00)01 rev. 1

Task Force on Potentially Hazardous Near-Earth Objects

Terms of Reference

Rationale

The purpose of the Task Force is to make proposals to HMG on how UK should best contribute to international effort on Near-Earth Objects (NEOs).

Objectives

Specific tasks would be to:

1. Confirm the nature of the hazard and the potential levels of risk;

2. Identify the current UK contribution to the international efforts;

3. Advise HMG on what further action to take in the light of 1 and 2 above and on the communication of issues to the public.

Reporting

The Task Force will report to the Director General, BNSC, by mid-2000 on the tasks set out above.

Organisation

Administrative and financial support will be provided from within BNSC.

Membership

Chairman: Dr Harry Atkinson

Members: Sir Crispin Tickell

Professor David Williams

Richard Tremayne-Smith BNSC (Secretary)

P/99/1064

30 December 1999

SCIENCE MINISTER ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE ON POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS NEAR EARTH OBJECTS

A Task Force to look at the potential for risk posed by Near Earth Objects (NEOs) has been announced by Science Minister, Lord Sainsbury.

The three-strong team will make proposals to the British National Space Centre on the nature of the hazard and the potential levels of risk. It will also consider how the United Kingdom should best contribute to international effort on NEOs.

The Task Force will be chaired by Dr Harry Atkinson, formerly of the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC) and past Chairman of the European Space Agency's Council. Two other appointees, Sir Crispin Tickell and Professor David Williams join Dr Atkinson.

Lord Sainsbury said: "The risk of an asteroid or comet causing substantial damage is extremely remote. This is not something that people should lie awake at night worrying about. But we cannot ignore the risk, however remote, and a case can be made for monitoring the situation on an international basis.

"I hope that the setting up of this Task Force will help the UK play a full and prominent role in international discussions on this important issue. I am delighted to be able to announce such a well-qualified team of experts and I look forward to receiving their report by the middle of 2000."

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1. Near Earth Objects are either asteroids or comets. Many NEOs have been identified and their orbits determined using ground-based telescopes, including some of NASA's, in a number of countries, although many remain to be surveyed.

2. Of the known NEOs, none is believed to pose a significant risk to the Earth in the foreseeable future. However, on a time-scale of many millions of years, the Earth has been hit by objects of sufficient size to cause serious damage, including the object which is thought to have impacted the Earth about 65 million years ago, with global consequences including the extinction of the dinosaurs.

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included reviewing all governmental activities in environmental pollution.

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He helped to set up the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility at Grenoble and the EISCA facility in the Arctic Circle; and was concerned with the high-flux Beam Reactor (ILL), also at Grenoble. Until a year ago, he was Chief Scientist of the British insurance industry's Loss Prevention Council.

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http://www.dti.gov.uk

ENDS

MEETING OF THE NEO TF WITH THE PENTAGON
On 7 March, 2000
Present:
Gen. Section 40 USAF, Dep. Dir. Command and Control
Section 40
Section 40 USAF
Lt. Col. Section 40 USAF Space Command
Section 40 (Ex Washington)
NEO TF and Secretariat

An account was given of a 5-m object that exploded, about 20 km over the Yukon, on 18 January this year. The resultant electro-magnetic affect caused an approximate 5% voltage drop and a power failure in one of the area's main power switches, resulting in a power outage over a third of the Yukon. Some fragments were recovered from the ice and are of a carbonaceous chondrite material, they are now being analysed in Houston. A list of other such events detected by USAF Early Warning Satellites will be sent to the TF (there are about 30 events per year). However, release of the data depends on who is in command at the time. There is concern that if such an incident occurred over a volatile area, such as Tel Aviv, the reactions could be serious.

There are two areas of interest for the USAF with regard NEOs, military interest associated with space-based weapons and science. SDI caused bad press and a USAF mission, Clementine II, was vetoed in the defence budget; a political decision by the White House related to SDI. DoD budget for Applied and Technology Research contracts is approximately $12B/yr., for which Section 40 is senior DoD technical officer, is responsible. He sets policy over all defence agencies and oversees all science and technology budgets. As a physicist and ex-Ames director he would probably be interested in this work. Section 40 member of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, may also be interested. The threat is below the threshold for the Secretary of Defence.

The most important question for the USAF is where the money comes from. There is a growing requirement for space surveillance. The present USAF tracking system is old and really for tracking known objects, therefore the USAF is transiting to a new search/survey system, some of which will be space-based. Could the space-based IR system in LEO (originally for missile tracking) be used? An optical prototype (Midcourse Space Experiment, MSX), used to track GEO satellites, is already on orbit. NEO detections would typically be a by-product. The problem is one of overhead; it is less efficient for the satellites to integrate for asteroids *and* see GEO satellites. It would be possible to make plans for sharing the satellite time.

Ground based observations are still considered better than space-based; space-based use 18 mag. to see microsatellites on GEO, current ground based searches go down to 20 mag. USAF push is for space-based surveillance in visible and IR, but primarily in the visible (cheaper, longer lifetime). USAF has early warning radar, but is not interested in using it to look at asteroids; radar is considered too expensive. A Southern Hemisphere radar would be useful, but again, expensive. An optical telescope in the Southern Hemisphere seems a more reasonable option.

DoD has no official interest in visiting asteroids, but their scientists think we need to go there. USAF believe it is premature to make detailed mitigation plans, but not to think about the technology required and for example what the asteroids composition is etc. USAF has strong links with Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd. (SSTL), who they recognise as the world leader in microsatellites. DoD has considered a series of some 20 - 30 spacecraft to carry out the characterisation work. NASA is not geared for this type of work, they like to build different spacecraft and therefore the likelihood of a NASA categorisation and cataloguing program is unlikely. But a batch of spacecraft should mean production line cost reductions; the unit cost for an

SSTL microsatellite would be a few $M. Microsatellites can also be launched cheaply on the Ariane 5 ASAP ring. DoD has previously experienced difficulty obtaining Araine 5 ASAP launches, but the EELV ring should be complete soon and will be able to launch 200 kg payloads, allowing more fuel to be carried for the high delta v required to reach an asteroid. Discussions have also considered a ~200 kg class satellite in Venus orbit to search all of space for objects.

The microsatellite idea is interesting to USAF and they have good ties with SSTL and DERA. Surrey's ties with certain other countries are a problem and it may be difficult for them to work together on certain missions. This has been overcome in the past because the USAF has bought an SSTL product that needs no development; this may not be possible on an asteroid mission, which would need significant development.

Modifying the USAF GEODSS (optical telescope) systems has been workable, though it is not official USAF work. However there would be a struggle to argue for new USAF optical facilities for NEO work. It is probable that the USAF will:

1. Continue use of the GEODSS system (optical)
2. Eventually receive a government mission statement to tackle the problem.

NASA is a reluctant holder of the NEO survey task, doing the work because Congress ordered it to. Goldin is currently arguing for USAF to take over tracking of man-made objects. However the Canadian Foreign Minister is arguing to ban any military action in space, whilst the Canadian military is trying to work with the US DoD on Norad etc.

From the USAF point of view international collaborations are possible with a number of countries, although certain countries would be excluded. As far as collaborating with the UK goes, the USAF is very happy with this. They would like to see joint funding of the microsatellites. Another aspect where the USAF would like collaboration is on ground based optical or radar in the Southern Hemisphere. It is important to distribute telescopes; there have been dips in the discovery rate due to bad weather over the western US. PW would like to see the NEO TF suggest a joint working group to the Prime Minister.

What the USAF chooses to do depends largely on the November elections. If the Republicans win there will probably be a very ambitious program in this area. If the Democrats win there is unlikely to be a program as they don't think there is a problem and believe it is a science area, although their stance may be changing.

Section 40 (DERA-F)
R T-S

Duplicate of 3 April letter

PA/DGISP

From: DGISP
Sent: 10 April 2000 16:20
To: PA/DGISP
Subject: FW: (U/C) TASK FORCE ON ASTEROID HAZARDS
Importance: High

From: PS F+S(S+T)
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2000 4:20:16 PM
To: DGISP; PS/DSc(BMD); ADOR(ICS)Space
Cc: CSA GROUP ROLE; MA/DCDS(EC); DG(R+T)/PA; DR(S+T); DR(C); D Def RP; RP(Centre)DIR; EC(ISTAR)DDET; AD/F+S(S+T)2
Subject: FW: (U/C) TASK FORCE ON ASTEROID HAZARDS
Importance: High
Auto forwarded by a Rule

Reference: D/F&S(S&T2)/5/4/3/1(088/00) dated 10 April 2000

As mentioned in para 2 of referenced LM transmitted to you earlier today, herewith notes supplied by BNSC of the task force's meeting in the Pentagon which have been scanned into Chots.

PS/Hd F&S(S&T)

[Copy to DI50b sent by fax Section 40

[BNSC document scanned into Chots 10 April 2000]
[F&S(S&T) Ref 089/00]

BRITISH NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE

Dr David Leadbeater
Deputy Director General
British National Space Centre
Room 180/Grey
151 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9SS

Mr Graham Jordan
DUS(S&T)
Room 6311
MOD Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A2HB

Direct line 020 7215 Section 40
Local fax 020 7215
Date 3 April 2000

TASK FORCE ON POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS NEAR EARTH OBJECTS (NEOS)

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Task Force on Potentially Hazardous Near-Earth Objects

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Chairman:	Dr Harry Atkinson
Members:	Sir Crispin Tickell Professor David Williams Richard Tremayne-Smith BNSC (Secretary)

P/99/1064
30 December 1999

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ENDS

MEETING OF THE NEO TF WITH THE PENTAGON
On 7 March, 2000

Present:

Gen. [redacted], USAF, Dep. Dir. Command and Control
[redacted] USAF
[redacted] USAF Space Command
[redacted] (Bx Washington)
NEO TF and Secretariat

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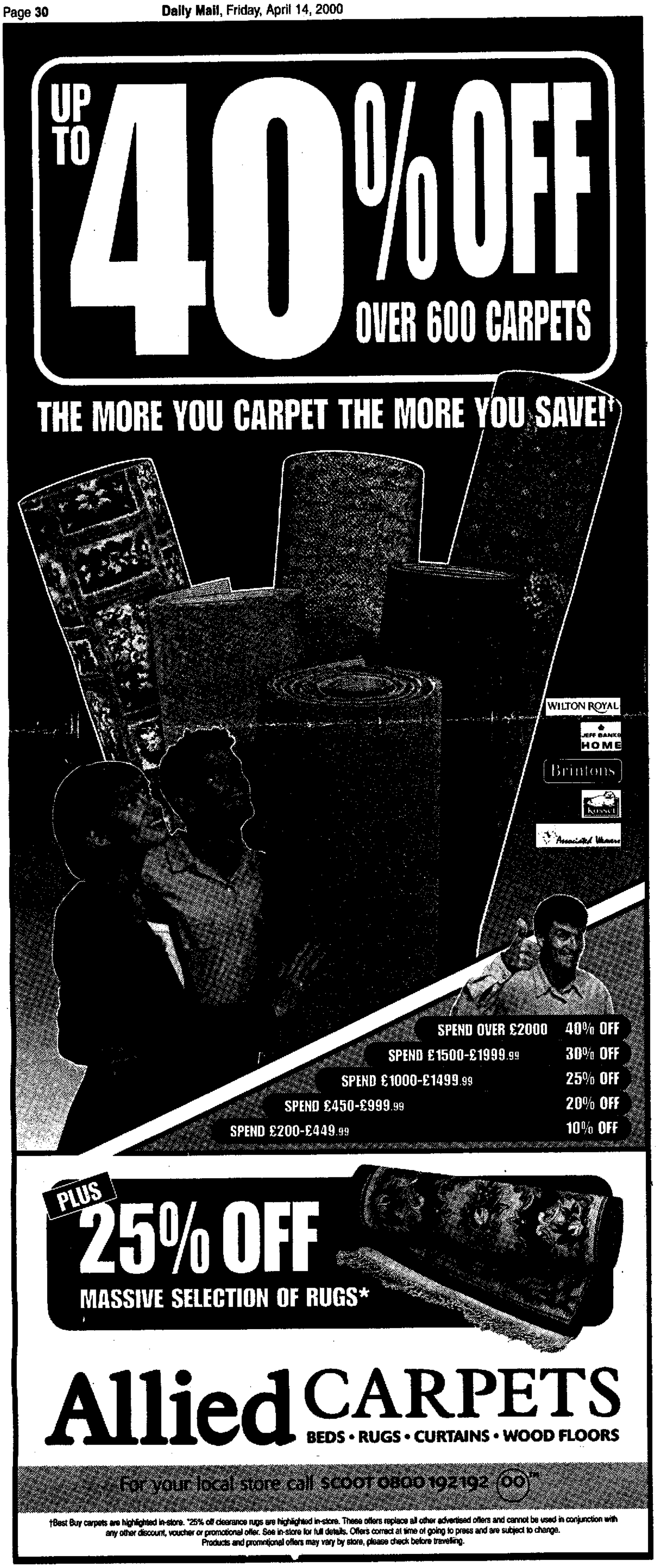
Section 40 (DERA-F)
RT-S



UFOs, mysterious lights and

by **Glenda Cooper**

MARCH 24, 1997 had been a quiet night for the Peak District Mountain Rescue Teams. The few people out on the hills were hoping to catch a glimpse of the Hale-Bopp comet, but heavy rain clouds obliterated the night sky and they had gone home in disgust.

Suddenly, the rescue teams received three separate, disturbing calls — including one from a police officer — reporting an aircraft flying very low over the moors and crashing. One worried farmer said the plane was so low that he instinctively ducked. Then a couple reported hearing the crash and seeing an orange glow light up the sky. A major incident had obviously occurred.

The seven Mountain Rescue controllers, including Longdendale Valley's Phillip Shaw, immediately dispatched their teams, in the hopes of dragging survivors from the wreckage. No effort was spared and for 15 hours, more than 140 people plus an RAF helicopter searched every inch of moorland.

Yet no trace was found of any aircraft. No one ever reported a missing plane. Whatever it was that the callers had seen and heard, had simply vanished. No wonder, then, that people began to ask if the fabled 'phantom bomber' of Longdendale Valley had returned?

Longdendale, situated in the Pennines between Manchester and Sheffield, is commonly referred to as 'The Haunted Valley'. For centuries, tales of the paranormal, the supernatural and the plain weird have been spun about this bleak, ten-mile stretch of countryside.

It falls within what is nicknamed 'UFO Alley' — the most active place for UFO sightings in Northern Europe, partly because of the Longdendale lights. These are eerie flickering flares which, in older times, were blamed on the devil, while modern superstition has linked them to alien spaceships.

The lights are also blamed for the high incidence of inexplicable plane crashes in this area during World War II— nearly 50 in all.

For the sceptical 21st century mind, colourful stories of ghostly spectres and close encounters stretch credulity. Even committed ufologists admit that the vast majority of occurrences have a logical explanation.

Yet such is the spooky activity that happens in the 'Pennine Triangle' that Europe's first tourist centre devoted to UFOs is due to open in June and scientists are conducting experiments to try to understand the phenomena that haunts it.

Walking to the top of Bleaklow Moor, more than 2,000 feet above sea level, it is not difficult to see how this valley got its dark reputation.

Forbidding gritstone crags rise up on all sides amid sparse clumps of heather. And when the wind drops, there is absolute silence. Barren, chilling and hostile, nature not man is firmly in control of the place Daniel Defoe dubbed 'the most desolate, wild and abandoned country in England'.

ON THE summit lies a vast array of twisted metal — one of the most spectacular wrecks that litter Bleaklow. It is of an American B29 which crashed in 1948 on a routine flight, killing all 13 crew.

Now poppies and old wooden crosses decorate the slowly rusting undercarriage, while the engines lie at a drunken angle, and a near complete wing has been tossed some 20 feet away.

There is something undeniably unsettling about the wreck, and it is no wonder that local people claim to have seen the ghost of Captain Landon P. Tanner, the pilot, resplendent in his leather flying jacket, wandering among the ruins.

It has been suggested that he, like many pilots, saw the Longdendale Lights and headed towards them thinking they represented the aerodrome and safety, rather than the surrounding wicked peaks.

The ethereal lights flicker on the moorland and hills, most commonly by an area known as 'Devil's Elbow' and sometimes appear as a ball of motionless light, and sometimes as a dancing string of lights.

The Mountain Rescue Team have been called out endless times to investigate — only to find nothing.

'Between them, the seven mountain rescue teams in the Peak are called out once a year by people who see lights in the hills and assume someone is in trouble,' says Phillip Shaw, the Mountain Rescue Controller.

'This has been going on for at least 20 years, but no one has ever been found. The reports have become so regular that police no longer pass on sightings of mystery lights to us unless they feel it is a genuine sighting of a red distress flare.'

YET HE takes the Longdendale lights seriously, though, after experiencing them himself. 'It was in 1980 at about this time of year,' he recalls.

'I was cycling along the road by Snake Pass and I saw what looked like a large searchlight on top of the moor. It would have been about four or five miles away, and it just sat there, not getting brighter or dimmer.

'I know the moors so well, I knew it was in a place where you couldn't get a vehicle anyway near, so it couldn't have been a car headlight. Also, it was far too large. Then, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, so it couldn't have been a beam reflecting off a cloud. To this day, it is something I cannot explain.'

Not that people haven't tried. Police point out that the Longdendale Moors lie between a major international air route for traffic approaching Manchester's Ringway airport, and so landing lights from aircraft could explain sightings of moving lights.

Others may have mistaken the flashing beacon of the Holme Moss TV transmitter to the north of the valley. Ball lightning and arcing from the pylons that criss-cross the valley bottom have also been suggested as possible explanations.

[redacted]

'If you look at accounts in the 19th century or before, you will see them described as 'devil's lights' or 'devil's bonfires',' he says. 'It's only as you move into this century that they become ghosts and flying saucers — it is all down to the culture of the time.'

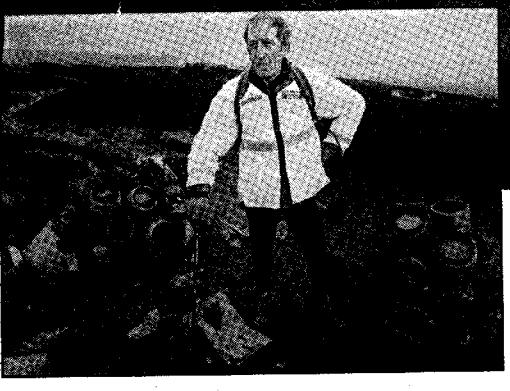
Traditionally, the lights hover round a mysterious mound near the summit of Bleaklow Hill which some archaeologists believe dates back as far as the Bronze Age.

Popular folk tales claim the lights are the phantom legions of Roman soldiers who tramp across the moors on the first full night of spring. The ghostly glow is said to be flames from their torches as the auxiliaries marched at night, hoping to avoid the ferocious Celtic Brigantes tribes in the hills.

For Michael Greaves, who lives in Glossop, a small town on the outskirts of the valley, there is another possible cause. Mr Greaves, a spokesman for Glossop Paranormal Investigators, says: 'In 1838, the Woodhead tunnel in the valley was built by Irish navvies, forced to live in appalling conditions. There was a cholera epidemic,

he unexplained plane crashes that haunt a valley in the Pennines

IS THIS BRITAIN'S SPOOKIEST PLACE?



Wreckage: Phil Shaw with debris from one of the crashed aircraft

Focus on fear: Debbie Fair seeks evidence of the paranormal

4 navvies died and were buried in nconsecrated ground.

'It is thought that the lights ould be their unquiet souls still arrying torches to work.'

That people are fascinated by the ghts is not in dispute. A year ago ebbie Fair, a local internet onsultant set up a webcam (a ideo camera linked up to the nternet) trained on Devil's Elbow.

Now more than a thousand isitors log on to her site www.hauntedvalley.com) every ay in the hope of catching sight of he famous lights.

TO DATE, nothing more exotic than some birds, clouds and a model aircraft have been caught on the site, but Mrs Fair ays such is the interest she has enerated that she will continue to ather evidence.

But enjoyable as the more hostly solutions are, Dr Clarke nd Britain's only full-time ufolo- ist Jenny Randles believe a more ntriguing explanation for the ights may have its basis in science, s is made clear in their new book, The UFOs That Never Were.

It is suggested the lights are so- called 'earth lights' — phenomena which occur during earthquakes when the tectonic plates of rock are put under tremendous strain and the ensuing friction produces sparking and glowing lights. This theory is backed by Dr Roger Musson, a seismologist with the British Geological Survey, who says scientists are presently trying to solve the puzzle of earthlights through laboratory experiments.

'Scientists now accept that these lights are seen during earthquakes, and now what we need to do is establish if and why they happen outside earthquakes,' says Dr Musson.

'It's thought to be something called triboluminescence, where friction between rocks gives off a charge — a partly mechanical and partly chemical process, but there still is a lot of fieldwork to be done.'

Ms Randles says: 'It may not sound as exciting as aliens and spaceships, but this is potentially very interesting. It means that there is an extremely powerful energy force which could be used in future.'

And if this theory is proved to be true, Ms Randles thinks it could also help explain other weird folk- lore. Experiments show rocks with a heavy quartz content, like Longdendale's, can cause ionisa- tion in the atmosphere, inducing altered states of consciousness in some people — which could explain the many tales of paranor- mal experience in the valley.

Walking in Glossop, a small but bustling town in the sunshine, everything seems so friendly and normal it is hard to believe that scores of ghost stories abound.

Yet there scarcely seems to be a pub or inn without its resident spectre — not all of which can be put down to an excess of the usual spirits behind the bar.

A TYPICAL tale is that of the 19th-century Norfolk Arms, where a ten-year- old girl, her hair in ringlets, has been seen running along the bar before ducking down and apparently disappearing.

According to Debbie Fair, during excavations, a previously unknown staircase to the cellar was unearthed at the exact spot at which the little girl used to disappear.

On The Haunted Valley website, she has painstakingly listed 20 separate locations for well-known haunted places, backed up by eyewitness accounts or contempo- raneous newspaper cuttings. These include the local theatre, newspaper office, railway tunnel and two local churches.

'My favourite tale is of the Partington Theatre which is said to be haunted by a Miss Hilda Knight, one of the founding members who died from TB,' says Mrs Fair. 'She appears in the shape of a colourful butterfly alighting on actors at the final curtain call, and has been seen so many times that a butterfly is now incorporated into the Partington Players' letterhead.'

However, many in Glossop are not content simply to recount the stories around the fire. The Glossop Paranormal Investigators, who have 30 members, spend large amounts of time conducting 'investigations' in haunted places such as the 16th-century Roe Cross Inn in Mottram, where GPI spokesman Michael Greaves claims to have seen the ghost of a woman called 'Elizabeth'.

She was hanged during the Civil War for revealing the position of Parliamentarian Colonel Robert Duckenfield's troops to Prince Rupert but now, according to Mr Greaves, haunts the restaurant by twisting spoons and breaking glasses.

Such is the fervour for the super- natural here that even somewhat unusual places are said to be affected. Mr Greaves says he has been called in to investigate the Co-Op superstore in Glossop after frightened staff claimed to have seen a small fair-haired child in a crinoline disappear around the superstore's Post Office counter.

He became convinced it was the ghost of Eliza Ann Hawk, a child who had been killed in 1856 while running through the railway yard (on which the supermarket was later built) to visit her grand- mother in Surrey Street.

Not to be outdone, the rival Tesco supermarket in Glossop told the local paper soon after that they, too, had their own resident ghost, a grey-haired man in wing collars and a long black coat.

However, while these are all good spine-chilling tales to be swopped on a Hallowe'en evening, Dr Clarke thinks they also have a more serious purpose as well — and one that we should be treasuring.

'Longdendale is particularly interesting because the people who live here have done so for generations and are open to different types of belief,' he says.

'They see the mysteries sur- rounding the valley in a traditional way which we are beginning to lose these days.

UNLIKE OTHER places, the old traditions have not passed away and it is still rich in folklore. If we lived in Scotland or Ireland or almost any other country, these stories would be cherished and noted down as part of our heritage. But because we are English, we get rather embarrassed and don't take it seriously. But we should.'

As dusk falls on the moor, Mr Shaw leads us down the winding paths between the peat mounds and then suddenly stops. There in front of us is the very rare white mountain hare, traditionally seen as a wizard or witch's familiar. It pauses, eyes us and then vanishes in a leap.

Perhaps, comforting as all the scientific explanations are, it was warning us that Longdendale still has some secrets to keep.

g.cooper@dailymail.co.uk

Copy on 64/3/1

38/1

File Note

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

14 March 2000

Section 40

1. Section 40 rang this afternoon (14 March) about 16.00 hours to offer details of the 'official' information he has been given about UFO sighting reports not included in the our response to him following his appeal to the Ombudsman. I declined to take any information over the 'phone requesting instead that he put the details in writing, copying it to all those he included in his previous letters. This he agreed to do.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2

Mr. Straw: Our estimate is that any change in the number of cases going to these courts will be de minimis.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what factors underlay his estimate of *(a)* the cost savings that would be made and *(b)* the number of defendants who would be tried in the magistrates' courts rather than the Crown court under (i) the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) (No. 2) Bill and (ii) the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) Bill; [112528]

(2) if he will provide a breakdown of the estimated savings to the criminal justice system from the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) (No. 2) Bill by each principal category of expenditure; and if he will make a statement. [112533]

Mr. Straw: For the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) Bill it was assumed that 12,000 fewer defendants would be tried in the Crown Court annually, resulting in resource savings to the criminal justice system of £105 million a year. For the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) (No. 2) Bill it is assumed that 14,000 fewer defendants would be tried in the Crown Court annually, resulting in resource savings to the criminal justice system of £128 million a year.

The £128 million estimated annual resource savings are made up as follows:

for the courts—£12.5 million on committals and £41.5 million on Crown Court trials which would no longer take place. This would be offset by the cost of magistrates' courts trials (£8.5 million, including the cost of any subsequent committals for sentence), and the cost (estimated at £0.5 million) of interlocutory appeals to the Crown Court.

for the Prison Service—savings of £83.5 million annually would result from a reduction in remand times and the shorter sentences imposed by magistrates' courts.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his policy that appeals to the Crown Court against magistrates' decisions as to mode of trial under the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) (No. 2) Bill should be heard (1) by circuit judges only; and if he will make a statement; [112536]

(2) in open court; and if he will make a statement. [112529]

Mr. Straw: The intention is that the appeal should be heard by the Resident Judge or by a deputy nominated by the senior presiding Judge. The Government believe that most appeals will be determined on the basis of the papers. It would however be open to the parties to seek to make oral representations, which the judge could agree to hear if he considered it necessary in the interests of justice; the arrangements for such an oral hearing would be a matter for the judge's discretion.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the length of the average waiting time for a trial in a magistrates court if the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial) (No. 2) Bill is enacted. [112517]

Mr. Straw: The magistrates' courts deal with over 400,000 either-way cases annually and will have no difficulty in absorbing the additional cases which it is expected that they will retain as a result of the Bill.

Asylum Seekers (Chelmsford)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers the Chelmsford Borough Council area will be expected to house from April; and if he will make a statement. [112493]

Mrs. Roche: The number and location of asylum seekers accommodated under the national asylum support scheme throughout the country will depend on where accommodation, whether in the private or public sector, is made available to the Home Office for that purpose, on where there are existing ethnic minority communities and on where there is the potential for support services to be developed.

The Home Office intends to secure accommodation from local authorities through Regional Consortia. Chelmsford is in the Eastern Region Consortium.

Freedom of Information

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will include in the code of practice on freedom of information a provision that, where a request is made for information about a third party, the holder of the information should consult the third party before deciding what information is to be released and in what form. [112676]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I can confirm that this will be covered by the code of practice, a working draft of which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I hope to place in the Parliamentary Libraries shortly.

Global Cultural Diversity Congress

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the minutes of all meetings of the Commission for Racial Equality at which the Global Cultural Diversity Congress and Global Cultural Diversity Congress 2000 Ltd. were discussed. [112682]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: No. Disclosure of minutes of meetings of the Commission for Racial Equality is a matter for the Commission.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the involvement of the Home Office Race Equality Unit in the Global Cultural Diversity Congress and the relationship between the Unit and Global Cultural Diversity Congress 2000 Ltd. [112716]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The head of the unit attended on my behalf at two meetings of the International Steering Committee of the Congress. The Unit provided names of possible speakers and suggested topics for workshops.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the persons who wrote messages of support in the Global Cultural Diversity Congress registration brochure published by the Commission for Racial Equality, indicating in each case when they were first informed that the Global Cultural Diversity Congress had been cancelled, and by whom. [112726]

Mr. Mike O'Brien: These are matters for the company and the Commission for Racial Equality.

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

18 November 1999

PS/USofS

Copy to:

APS/SofS
APS/Minister(DP)
APS/Minister(AF)
PS/2nd PUS
DAO
D News
D Fin Pol
DCC(RAF)
D News (RAF)
PCB(Air)
DCC(RAF)SIO
DRO
DR1

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Reference: D/USofS/PK/7/1/2/1 dated 15 November 1999

Issue

1. Should Section 40 of *The Sunday Times* be granted a face-to-face briefing on the Department's interest in 'UFOs'?

Recommendation

2. USofS declines. A briefing by officials might be offered instead.

Timing

3. Routine.

Background

4. Earlier this week the *News of the World, Daily Mail* and *Sun* ran speculative articles on the early release of MOD 'UFO' files. There is no substance to the articles. Files are routinely released to the Public Record Office under the 30-year rule and MOD 'UFO' files from 1969 will be made available in January.

5. Public interest in 'UFOs' and science fiction related issues (alien abduction, animal mutilation, crop circles etc) has grown rapidly in recent years fuelled by films,

TV programmes, books and media articles purporting to relate actual experiences or reconstruct alleged 'UFO' sightings. This in turn has prompted a small but vociferous number of 'ufologists' to demand MOD investigates all sighting reports whether or any defence-related interest has been reported. All attempts to explain MOD's limited interest are met with scepticism and, where these explanations do not accord with the inquirer's own views or interpretations, allegations of a cover-up or that information is held on secret files are made. No amount of reasoned explanation will convince them. The absence of substantiated information does not deter some journalists from filing fictitious articles illustrated with eye-catching pictures.

Briefing Options

6. USofS's name has already been quoted in highly speculative newspaper articles. If Minister was now to grant even a single journalist an interview about 'UFOs' it would be a scoop (no previous Minister has done so). It is highly likely to be interpreted by the lightweight press and sci-fi magazines as a subject in which he has a special interest and they will continue to lobby for interviews and 'quote' him. There is nothing Minister can say to any journalist about MOD's interest in 'UFOs' that has not already been said. Minister is strongly advised to decline all requests and distance himself from this subject.

7. USofS may wish instead to offer Section 40 an off-the-record briefing by officials. Sec(AS)2 could explain the policy aspects of the Department's limited interest in the subject and provide some sanitised examples of the sort of material held on Departmental files. A Departmental Records expert might sit in to answer any questions about early release of MOD files; and a member of D News's staff would need to be present. However, not even a briefing on these lines is without risk. Other journalists are likely to insist on similar facilities. Requests are received on a regular basis but because of the Department's limited interest in the subject all are refused and a written statement provided instead in an effort to avoid misleading and speculative reporting.

Conclusion

8. A face-to-face briefing in any circumstances poses a significant risk. There will be no control over what cascades from it so far as the tabloids and specialist press are concerned. Nevertheless, should Minister consider [redacted] Section 40 warrants special treatment, a briefing by officials is recommended.

Presentational Aspects

9. The routine release of MOD 'UFO' files in January will be of further interest the media. Any briefing of a journalist will add to this interest. It is therefore likely that Minister's name will continue to be reported in connection with this subject unless the Department does all it can to prevent it. As a first step, the Department in their dealings with the media should stop repeating his name; use of the press line at para 4 [sic] of the reference should be discontinued immediately. The lines provided in the News Brief (D/Sec(AS)64/1 of 15 Nov), should continue to be used. In the event Minister approves a briefing by officials, additional lines to take as necessary will be provided nearer the time.

[signed]
Section 40
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 Section 40

SEC(AS)2

From: AA1/USofS(Personal) on behalf of USofS/Mailbox
To: SEC(AS)2
Sent: 18 November 1999 17:55
Subject: Read: 'UFOs' - request for briefing

Your message

To:	USofS/Mailbox
Cc:	SOFS-Private Office; MIN(DP)/REGISTRY GROUP MAIL; MIN(AF)-REGISTRY GROUP MAIL; PS/2nd PUS; DAO; D News; D FinPol; DCC(RAF); D News RAF; Hd of AHB(RAF); DCC(RAF) SIO; Hd of DR; Hd of DR1
Subject:	'UFOs' - request for briefing
Sent:	18/11/99 17:41

was read on 18/11/99 17:55.

SEC(AS)2

From: SOFS-Registry1 on behalf of SOFS-Private Office
To: SEC(AS)2
Sent: 18 November 1999 17:49
Subject: Read: 'UFOs' - request for briefing

Your message

To:	USofS/Mailbox
Cc:	SOFS-Private Office; MIN(DP)/REGISTRY GROUP MAIL; MIN(AF)-REGISTRY GROUP MAIL; PS/2nd PUS; DAO; D News; D FinPol; DCC(RAF); D News RAF; Hd of AHB(RAF); DCC(RAF) SIO; Hd of DR; Hd of DR1
Subject:	'UFOs' - request for briefing
Sent:	18/11/99 17:41

was read on 18/11/99 17:49.

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

18 November 1999

PS/USofS

Copy to:

APS/SofS
APS/Minister(DP)
APS/Minister(AF)
PS/2nd PUS
DAO
D News
D Fin Pol
DCC(RAF)
D News (RAF)
PCB(Air)
DCC(RAF)SIO
DRO
DR1

Head of Sec(AS) Thank you. This looks fine 36

Section 40

I thought something on these lines might be appropriate. I really wanted to add a line somewhere about the need to 'restore Ministers' integrity' but thought it might be deemed OTT! Do you have any comment to add?

Section 40

18/11

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Reference: D/USofS/PK/7/1/2/1 dated 15 November 1999

Issue

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Recommendation

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LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

17 November 1999

Defence Records 2c2 – Section 40

CLOSED 'UFO' FILES FOR PERMANENT RETENTION

1. Please find attached the following closed 'UFO' files to be held in archives. Due to the public interest in this subject, these files are for permanent retention and should, in time, be transferred to the Public Record Office in accordance with the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967.

D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part L	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part M	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part N	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part O	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part P	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part Q	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part R	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part S	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/4	Part A	'UFOs' – Parliamentary Questions And Enquiries	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/4	Part B	'UFOs' – Parliamentary Questions And Enquiries	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/5	Part A	'UFOs' – Close Encounter Reports, Alien Entities, Abductions, etc	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/6	Part A	'UFOs' – Alleged 'UFO' Incident: Crash of Lightning F6 – 8 Sept 70	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/7	Part A	'UFOs' – Alleged 'UFO' Incident: 31 March 1993	Unclassified

2. If you have any queries regarding these files, please contact me on the number given below.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 [redacted] MB Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

17 November 1999

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D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part D	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part E	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part F	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part G	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Confidential
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part H	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part I	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part J	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part K	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified

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Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

17 November 1999

Defence Records 2c2 – Section 40

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D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part K	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part L	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part M	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part N	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part O	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2/1	Part A	'UFOs' – Report of Sighting, Rendlesham Forest, December 1980	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part A	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Confidential
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part B	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/3	Part C	'UFOs' – Correspondence	Unclassified

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Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1

MB8245 [redacted] MB Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

17 November 1999

Defence Records 2c2 – Section 40

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D/Sec(AS)/12/1	Part A	'UFOs' - Policy	Secret - UK Eyes A
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part A	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part B	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part C	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part D	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part E	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part F	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part G	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part H	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part I	'UFOs' – Reports	Confidential
D/Sec(AS)/12/2	Part J	'UFOs' – Reports	Unclassified

2. If you have any queries regarding these files, please contact me on the number given below.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40 MB

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

8 September 1999

APS/USofS

Copy to:

AO/AD1

'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS' – MOD INTEREST

ISSUE

1. To provide a note on the Department's interest in 'UFOs'.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To note.

DETAIL

Policy

3. It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

4. Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft). From that perspective, reports sent to us of 'UFO' sightings are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space: such as reports from credible witnesses (pilots, air traffic controllers etc); those supported by photographic, video or documentary evidence; corroboration by a number of witnesses; or are of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years in these categories and further investigation of them has found no evidence of a threat.

Airprox Reports

5. Where a military or civilian pilot considers that his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he was unable to

identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

Spaceguard Programme

6. The Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for the Spaceguard Programme. We understand that there are currently no plans to set up a national spaceguard agency; the potential threat of impact by near earth objects (such as asteroids) is taken very seriously but they regard this as an issue where a common international approach is essential. In June, the House of Lords debated the Spaceguard Programme; Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science at the DTI, led the debate for the Government.

Role of Sec(AS)2

7. Sec(AS)2 is the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police, all eventually make their way to Sec(AS)2 where each report is considered only to establish whether it has any defence significance. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year; so far this year c150 reports and 160 letters have been received. Sec(AS)2 is not constituted as a 'UFO' information bureau. There are no defence resources allocated for this purpose and, where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

8. Some 'ufologists' are unhappy with MOD's limited interest. A small number lobby vociferously for defence funds to be used for 'UFO' research, have their own agenda for such work and use all possible avenues (eg writing to the Prime Minister, other Government Departments, the media etc) to pursue their aims. All such approaches find their way to MOD, Sec(AS) for action.

'UFO' Files

9. As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention. However, since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

10. For some time, Lord Hill Norton, the only Parliamentarian with any interest in 'UFOs', has been asking that all files containing 'UFO' information be released to the PRO ahead of the 30-year point. We have looked carefully to see whether this is possible. However, in the absence of a Departmental-wide file database and without knowing the details of all the originating branches, a manual search of in excess of one million files at two main MOD archives would be necessary to locate and list

them. In November last year the location of some 55 'UFO' files was established. The files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. Legal advice was sought: the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect the third party confidentiality by use of the 30-year rule. Release after that date would present no problems to MOD, but release in advance would lay the Department open to the risk of legal action for breach of confidence. To remove the personal details from these files would be a time consuming task. Staff in CS(RM), the MOD's Records Branch would need to be diverted from their essential tasks to manually scrutinise and sanitise some 5,000 pages on the files. The knock-on effect would be a major disruption to the Department's overall programme for the release of files to the PRO and cannot be justified.

Mr Nicholas Pope

11. An ex-Sec(AS)2 employee, Nick Pope, has published two books on 'UFO' matters since leaving the branch in 1994: 'Open Skies, Closed Minds' and 'The Uninvited', the latter about alien abduction. A third book, about an alien invasion of the UK, is likely to be published next month. In all three books Mr Pope puts forward his personal views and is critical of MOD's limited interest in 'UFOs'. The two books already published resulted in an increase in media and public interest in 'UFOs', which in turn led to temporary increases in the number of enquiries and sighting reports received. Mr Pope continues to be employed by the Department.

CONCLUSION

12. There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs' or implement a research programme to investigate 'ufologists' claims. We are unable to release to the PRO all 'UFO' files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 [redacted] **MB**
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
Fax: MB [redacted]

Section 40
Section 40

Covering RESTRICTED

Loose Minute

[redacted]Sec(AS)64/1

15 November 1999

APS/USofS

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'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Issue

1. *News of the World* (14 Nov) and *Daily Mail* (15 Nov) articles about 'UFOs'.

Recommendation

2. To note.

Timing

3. As soon as possible in the event of any further media interest.

Background

4. It is standard practice to release to the Public Record office at the 30-year point MOD 'UFO' files. The files are withheld until that time to protect the personal details (names and addresses) of members of the public reporting what they have seen and themselves failed to identify. The files do not contain highly classified material (two examples are provided herewith). The issue of early release of files was address in September last year (CS(RM)/4/6/37 – copy attached for USofS) in response to Lord Hill Norton's request; legal advice was that the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it did so.

5. Under the 30-year rule, a total of 13 'UFO' files from 1969 have been passed to the Public Record Office and will be released on 1 January 2000. The files contain sighting reports, public correspondence and associated papers. As I explained (D/Sec(AS)/64/1 of 8 September copy also attached), it is simply not possible to say whether other 'UFO'-related papers might be filed elsewhere in MOD archives.

6. There is little factual information in the two newspaper articles. It is likely they are misrepresenting the arrangements for the Department's release of files, perhaps hoping to force MOD into expanding their limited interest in publicly reported unidentified sightings. I attach lines to take in the event of any further media interest.

Section 40

Section 40
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 Section 40 MB

NEWS BRIEF

DTG: 15 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: 'NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: 'UFOs'

SOURCE: Branch: Sec(AS)2: Section 40 Tel: MB Section 40

PRESS OFFICER: Section 40 (News RAF)

BACKGROUND

'News of the World' (14 Nov) and Daily Mail (15 Nov) have printed speculative articles that MOD is about to release all 'UFO' files.

KEY MESSAGE

MOD routinely releases files containing information from the public about alleged 'UFO' sightings under the 30-year rule. We are unable to release more recent files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality (ie the personal details of those providing information). There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs'.

KEY POINTS

* As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention but since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

* We have looked carefully to see whether early release of 'UFO' files is possible. However, the files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. MOD has a duty to protect the third party confidentiality. Staff would need to be diverted from essential tasks to manually scrutinise and remove all personal details on the files and the knock-on effect would be a major disruption to MOD's overall programme for release of files to the PRO. It cannot be justified.

* Mr Pope was an EO in Sec(AS)2; he left the Branch in Jul 94. The views expressed by Mr Pope in books and the media are entirely his own.

* It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. **MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity**, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

SUBSIDIARY POINTS

* Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft).

* Alleged sightings sent to us are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years that warranted any further investigation and no evidence was found of any threat.

* Where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

* Sec(AS)2 is the Air Staff Secretariat. It deals with a wide range of RAF-related issues. It also acts as the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police are forwarded to Sec(AS)2. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year

* Where a military or civilian pilot considers his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he is unable to identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

Loose Minute

CS(RM)/4/6/37

September 1998

PS/USofS *

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LORD HILL-NORTON: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FILES

Reference: A. D/USofS/JS 28/1/0 dated 9 March 1998 (not to all)
B. D/DOMD/2/3 dated 3 April 1998

Issue

1. To provide Lord Hill-Norton with the outcome of our consideration of his request for the early release of files on the subject of "unidentified flying objects".

Recommendation

2. That USofS responds in terms of the attached draft letter.

Timing

3. Routine.

Background

4. Lord Hill-Norton, aged 83, and Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971-73, has a long standing interest in "UFOs". He approached the department earlier this year (undercover of Reference A) pointing to the public interest in this topic and to the forthcoming Freedom of Information Act, requesting that all closed files on the subject of UFOs be released in advance of the normal, 30 year point.

5. In his submission dated 3 April 1998 (reference B) DOMD advised that in the region of 55 files were held with planned releases dates of 1999-2003, in addition a further 12 (with a release date of 2004) were in the early stages of preparation for transfer to the PRO. These files concern correspondence from members of the public reporting such occurrences, therefore question of personal confidentiality had to be resolved.

Outcome of our review

6. Three options have been considered:

(1) obtain permission from members of the public on an individual basis to the release of their details;

(2) remove personal details (the 55 processed files would require further examination and sanitisation in the order of 5,500 enclosures);

(3) agree that a shorter period, say 25 rather than 30 years, was acceptable for protection

of privacy.

The first option was considered time-consuming and, given the fact that we would be attempting to trace individuals whose addresses were 25 plus years old, impractical. Option two, is possible, but would represent a major diversion of resources as each file would have to be re-reviewed, a note made of every page requiring extraction/deletion of personally sensitive information and for these actions to be carried out. It is estimated some 200 man hours would be required and so as not to adversely affect our existing review and transfer programme the task spread over a six month period. For the third option advice was sought from MOD's Legal Advisers. Their advice is that the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect third party confidentially by use of the 30 year rule. Release of records pertaining to that period are, therefore, not a problem but the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it released documents containing the personal details of members of the public before the 30 year point. We have therefore concluded that, having rejected options (a) and (b), we are unable to make a block release of the files before the 30 year point. A draft letter to Lord Hill-Norton to this effect is attached.

Section 40
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Section 40

AS MINISTERS PLEDGE TO RELEASE TOP SECRET UFO RESEARCH . . .

Britain's X-Files (and yes, the truth is on this page)

DOCUMENTS and photographs detailing UFO investigations in Britain over 50 years are at last being made available for public scrutiny under New Labour's policy of greater openness in Government, according to reports at the weekend. Here, NICK POPE, the Ministry of Defence official formerly responsible for investigating extra-terrestrial visitations, previews the eagerly awaited contents.

OFFICIAL interest in UFOs has always had more to do with the Russians than any impending visit from Martians.

But in keeping an eye out for the Soviet aircraft that routinely probed our air defences during the Cold War, it soon became clear that there were other more exotic craft operating in British airspace.

There has been a steady stream of UFO reports sent to the Ministry of Defence over the past 50 years — between 200 to 300 each year. They fill more than 200 files, files to which I have had access. If, and when, they are made available publicly, I can promise some exciting revelations.

For three years it was my job in Secretariat (Air Staff) 2A at

reports, to determine any potential threat to the UK. I found explanations for 90pc of sightings, which turned out to be misidentifications of ordinary objects or phenomena; aircraft lights, satellites, meteors and airships.

However, there has always been a hard core of sightings that couldn't be explained in conventional terms, where trained observers such as police officers and pilots have seen unidentified craft doing speeds and manoeuvres way beyond our capabilities.

Britain's most sensational UFO case occurred in 1980 in Rendlesham Forest, near the USAF/RAF airbase at Woodbridge in Suffolk. UFO activity was witnessed over a series of nights, then on December 26 at 2am two patrolmen on a tour of the camp perimeter saw bright lights among the trees and went to investigate.

Initially, they thought an aircraft had overshot the runway, although there was no accompanying noise. But what they saw was like no aircraft they had ever encountered before; a large metallic, triangular object which they chased before losing it among the trees.

JUST two nights later, there was a similar sighting. This time the deputy base commander, USAF Lt-Col Charles Halt, led a team out to investigate. He submitted a report to the MoD, describing the UFO as 'metallic in appearance and triangular in shape'.

There is also an eerie 5-minute tape, which reveals conversations between Halt and his men as they moved to within 150 yards of the moving red and yellow lights.

The report says that suddenly the lights appeared to 'explode' in fragments of white light. Immediately, Lt-Col Halt observed three objects in the sky, like stars, but giving off red, green and

by NICK POPE

blue lights, darting off in all directions in sharp, angular movements.

The objects were visible for two to three hours, occasionally flashing down beams of light or energy. Radiation readings were subsequently taken from the landing site in the forest and were found to peak in the three indentations where the craft had touched down in a clearing.

There are a number of intriguing aerial encounters in Britain's so-called X-files, too. One of the earliest took place in August 1956, when a UFO was tracked on radar systems at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Two RAF jets were scrambled to intercept the mystery craft, and an energetic game of cat and mouse ensued as the pilots attempted to lock-on to the target. But the UFO was too quick and agile, and managed to elude the pilots, who eventually ran low on fuel and were forced to return to base.

Almost 40 years later, a number of RAF Tornado jets were overtaken by a UFO over the North Sea in November 1990. No adequate explanation was ever forthcoming.

Last year, also over the North Sea, a 900ft UFO was pursued by two fighter jets before it took off at 17,000mph.

More disturbing are the reports to the MoD that detail near-misses between UFOs and civil aircraft. There were two such cases in 1991, both over Kent.

In 1995, the pilots of a Boeing 737 encountered what they described as a brightly lit UFO while on their approach to Manchester Airport, and believed that it had passed only yards from their aircraft. This incident was investigated by the Civil Aviation Authority but remains a mystery.

One of the most fascinating cases that I investigated related to an incident that occurred in the early hours of March 31, 1993.

There had been a wave of UFO sightings that night, culminating in the direct overflight of two military bases, RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury in Shropshire.

The UFO was described by one of the military witnesses as being a vast, triangular craft only marginally smaller than a jumbo jet. It flew slowly over the base at a height of 200ft, firing a narrow beam of light at the ground, before flying off at high speed.

These then, are the sorts of incidents to be found in the MoD's UFO files.

But the files also contain reports of alien abductions, the appearance of crop circles and animal mutilations, all of which have been linked with UFOs.

THE MoD was drawn into the crop-circle debate in 1985 — five years after they first started appearing — when a farmer in Middle Wallop, Hampshire, found a quintuplet of crop circles and blamed the local Army air corps base.

A Lt-Col Edgecombe investigated and submitted photographs and reports to the MoD, a routine procedure but one which gave credence to the UFO link and allegations that then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had asked for a report on the phenomemon.

I have reviewed all the theories about crop circles and, while many are hoaxes, there are those which have yet to be explained; for example, why do crop samples taken from these 'genuine' circles show distinct cellular changes.

Some details of UFO sighting in Britain have, of course, already been made public under the 30-year rule which applies to sensitive documents, but by releasing files from more recent years the Government clearly hopes to end speculation that it has been covering up the truth about the phenomenon.

Unfortunately, releasing the files is a tactic that some people think could backfire.

A similar initiative in the U.S. simply fuelled interest in the subject, and led to accusations that other more highly classified papers were still being withheld.

The U.S. government's denial was not helped by the claims of a former U.S. army colonel, Philip Corso, who said that the so-called Roswell incident from 1947 — in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at an air force base in New Mexico — really did involve the crash of a UFO.

Colonel Corso claimed that he'd seen the bodies, and that his job at the Pentagon involved finding ways to use the technological secrets gleaned from the debris of the craft. He died of a heart attack shortly after going public with these claims, so took the secrets to his grave.

Conspiracy theorists love this sort of thing, and are unlikely to be satisfied by any release of papers that doesn't support their own theories.

But there really isn't any cover-up in the UK, although a letter sent from the MoD to the U.S. government in 1965 admits that MoD policy 'is to play down the subject of UFOs'.

My three years of official research into the UFO phenomenon changed my life for ever. I'd come into the job as a sceptic, but came to believe that some UFOs might well be extra-terrestrial.

If these files are to be made public, I think people are in for a big surprise, and I believe that, like me, they will come to see that this is a serious subject which raises important national security issues.

As far as these files are concerned... the truth is in there!

NICK POPE's latest book is Operation Thunder Child (Simon & Schuster, £9.99).

KIDNAP TERROR

A YOUNG mystery woman was at the centre of a kidnap scare last night after a blood-stained van she was bundled into was found abandoned.

Two men had earlier roughly draggged her screaming across a garage forecourt at Reading, Berks, during the rush-hour.

She was viciously beaten and thrown into the van.

A witness told police the woman, aged about 20, suffered facial injuries.

Detective Superintendent Trevor Davies said: "We are extremely worried. If this woman can get in touch with us she should."

A team of detectives were trying to identify the woman and scouring missing person reports. The CCTV footage from the garage has been seen by police.

WEIRD

LEE Si Chung, 26, who tried to save his Beijing-to-London fare by POSTING himself, got caught short in the sorting office and was jailed for four weeks.

WORLD

MODEL ROBBED

A GANG of Rolex robbers pounced on Andrea Foulkes, the QVC Shopping channel model, as she parked her car in the early hours.

The 29-year-old blonde was grabbed by the throat by one man while another snatched her £2,500 Cartier watch and a £200 necklace.

Then they flung her to the ground and made off in a silver car with her bag containing £300 in cash.

The attackers, said to be black and in their 20s, struck as Andrea pulled up in Sloane Square, London.

WEIRD

COPS smashed into a car in Lyons, France, to rescue a man collapsed inside – and discovered a blow-up dummy used to fool car-jackers.

WORLD

MURDER OF BABY

AN eight-week-old boy was murdered in his home yesterday by a frenzied attacker.

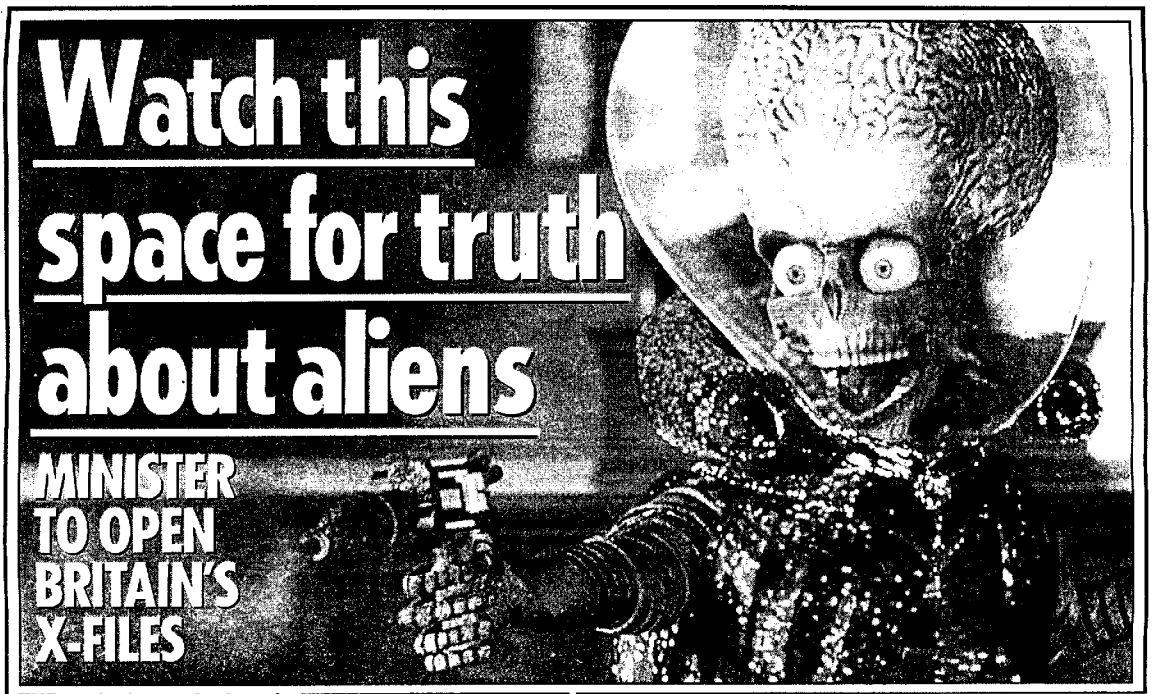
Police found little Bradley George being cradled by his sobbing mother. He died four hours later in hospital from head injuries.

The tot's mum Samantha George, 20, and brother Christopher, five, also suffered head injuries in the attack at the two-bed council house in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

Neighbour Jeannette Hussey said: "I heard a woman screaming and a young boy crying. Samantha came out with her face covered in blood and was taken away in an ambulance."

A 26-year-old man was arrested by police at the house and was being questioned yesterday.

Watch this space for truth about aliens



MINISTER TO OPEN BRITAIN'S X-FILES

THE truth about whether aliens have ever visited Britain is to be revealed at last.

Top secret government X-Files on thousands of 'spaceship' riddles will be opened up to public gaze by Defence Minister Peter Kilfoyle.

They will include photos and details of every UFO investigation in the past 30 years. Every year, around 300 alien sightings are reported.

Plans by military experts for action in the event of an alien invasion of London will also be unveiled.

The files, stored in a nuclear bomb-proof bunker deep below Whitehall, should be released in three months.

The move, part of a government drive to end unnecessary secrecy, is sure to send UFO spotters into a frenzy. They will hope to learn secrets about:

●A MASSIVE craft spotted flying in zig-zags off Britain's North Sea coast last year. The 900ft UFO shot off at 17,000mph when pursued by two fighter jets.

●CLAIMS that seven UFOs have crashed in Britain since World War II.

●SIGHTINGS of a triangular three-legged spaceship in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, in 1980.

Hover

US airmen from two nearby bases claim the object rose hovering out of the trees, then blasted into space at an incredible speed. RAF investigators cordoned off the area, but their findings are still a closely-guarded secret.

Some details of UFO sightings in the Fifties and Sixties have already been made public under the Thirty-Year Rule appled to sensitive documents.

Among them is the famous 1962 incident in which 16-year-old Anne Heston was sworn to secrecy after she reported seeing a star-like object shooting out red and green flames above her home in Taunton, Somerset.

Ten years earlier, RAF Flight Lieutenant John Kilburn saw a shining object in the sky above a West Yorks air base. When jets were scrambled to investigate, the UFO took off at an incredible speed. But the facts about most later mysteries are still locked away.

They include the truth about claims by former defence chief Lord Hill-Norton that RAF Feltwell in Suffolk uses its space age radar, built by the US Air Force, to track UFOs.

He quizzed ministers about the base, but never got a satisfactory answer. Several sightings in 1990 of a bright light above the Thames in London could also be explained.

The pledge to open up our X-Files follows similar moves in America.

The Yanks recently released a report of the notorious Roswell incident in 1947, in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at a secret New Mexico air base.

They explained the "bodies" were dummies from a secret weather balloon, but UFO theorists still believe there has been a cover-up.

SIGHTED: Flying saucer

DUMMY: Roswell 'alien'

RIDDLE: Space invader

Crank

Britain's files were prepared by the MoD's hush-hush Aircraft Secretariat, set up to investigate UFOs. Amazingly, its one-time boss Nick Pope believes **HE** was abducted by aliens while driving in Florida.

He kept mum while in his job for fear of being labelled a crank.

But after leaving the secret unit, he wrote a series of bestsellers about alien incidents.

He said: "My experiences convinced me that UFOs are a real and threatening phenomenon. We are not alone.

"Since 1959, the MoD has heard of 9,000 UFO sightings, though that's probably only the tip of the iceberg."

Defence Minister Mr Kilfoyle has told colleagues that, after a careful review of the files, he is "not convinced" about the existence of aliens.

But MoD staff say he wants people to be able to make up their own minds.

A source said: "These files are of huge public interest. They paint a fascinating picture of how UFO reports were investigated–and what would happen if aliens ever did land in Britain."

Our View: Page 22

EXCLUSIVE

BY **IAN KIRBY**

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

'We'll stop Britain being a pushover'

WILLIAM HAGUE Opposition Leader

W... do you ... are the most urgent problems facing Britain today?

Poor schools that aren't teaching children properly?

The crisis in our health service which means people are waiting longer and longer for treatment?

The desperate paralysis on our roads and public transport? Rising crime that makes none of us feel safe on our streets? The flood of bogus asylum seekers? The daily selling-out to Brussels on issues like British beef?

These are what I think are the urgent problems facing Britain today. You probably agree with me. If next week's Queen's Speech was setting out the programme of the next Conservative government, I'll tell you what would be in it. Education would be right at the heart of the speech.

There would be a law to guarantee to parents the power to do something about bad schools by sacking school managements. And there would be a law to turn every primary and secondary school in the country into a Free School where teachers could get on with improving standards.

Then we'd give patients in the NHS a unique guarantee. Patients with the most serious conditions would get a maximum waiting time based not on party political targets but medical need.

We would introduce a tough law to make sure unemployed people who can work take the jobs that are offered to them–or lose their unemployment benefit.

A revolution in crime-fighting would make sure criminals serve the sentence handed down in court, teaching prisoners what it's like to work, dealing out life sentences to drug dealers who sell to children, and helping police get out and on to the street.

We would help pensioners and savers by halving the startling rate of tax on savings and protect the homes and assets of people who save for their long-term care.

We would help working women who take career breaks to look after their children with Family Scholarships that will help them if they want to get back to work.

We would propose a Budget that would put an end to Labour's stealth taxes with this open and honest Tax Guarantee: we'll cut the overall burden of tax over the lifetime of a parliament. And we'd show everyone that Britain is no pushover in Europe by refusing to give away enough of this country's powers and rights to Brussels. The next Conservative government will make sure Britain is in Europe but not run by Europe.

So what is our Prime Minister doing about the issues? Nothing. If you don't believe me, just wait to see what the government announces in the Queen's Speech. It is likely to propose:

A NEW law about how political parties are run, a new law on the organisation of local government, a new law on motorway tolls and car park taxes, a new law creating a Right to Roam.

None of these laws will do anything to tackle the main problems that actually matter to the majority of people.

This week you will see a Labour government that is pursuing its own obscure political priorities instead of rising to the challenge of the real problems.

The next Conservative government would not duck the challenge. Our Queen's Speeches would turn the commonsense of the people into commonsense policies for the country.

'We'll make Britain richer and fairer'

TONY BLAIR Prime Minister

TODAY, on Remembrance Day, it's more important than ever to remember our debt to those who gave their lives to protect our country and the ideals we stand for.

It's important, too, that we continue repaying the debt to the whole generation who sacrificed so much.

Many pensioners feel they don't get a fair share of the nation's prosperity. We've improved things since we came to power but there's a lot more to do. Gordon Brown's announcements on free TV licences for the over-75s, the £100 winter allowance to be paid every year and raising the minimum income guarantee, went a little further in honouring our debt.

We are half way through this Parliament. We've done a lot. But there is much more to. Like getting the Health Service right. But that's why we're putting in the extra £21 billion investment over the next three years, recruiting the extra doctors and nurses, building new hospitals and introducing new services.

You didn't expect miracles from New Labour. You knew how much was wrong.

But what you wanted was a government to start moving us in the right direction. Nothing is more important for a government than running the economy well. And nothing has a great impact if the government fails. Whether Labour could be trusted on the economy was why many of you thought long and hard before voting for us.

I understand that. It's not always been the fault of past Labour governments. But memories of devaluation, of the IMF crisis and the winter of discontent still haunted those who lived through them.

I believe we have gone a very long way to burying those memories and the doubts they fuelled. And Gordon Brown, a brilliant, radical and reforming chancellor deserves credit for that. We inherited an economy devastated by the two deepest recessions since the war. Where Tory boom was all too quickly followed by Tory bust. A Government spending £28 billion a year more than it had.

Now inflation's low and on target. Government borrowing is under control. Employment is up by 700,000 since the election.

We're creating a climate where business can succeed and in turn create jobs and prosperity by boosting skills.

And we're also creating a fairer country by extending opportunities to all, tackling poverty and increasing support to families through measures like the New Deal, the minimum wage and the Working Families Tax Credit–all of which the Tories would scrap.

It's what we mean by enterprise and fairness. They are the guiding principles of this government, and the driving force behind Gordon's package.

---

track of their movements and tipped off the law at the crucial moment.

Then the careless coppers shopped the brave pair by broadcasting their names over the police radios, from which they were picked up by the Yardies' scanners.

Now mother and son continue to live in fear of their lives, for their tormentors, released because of 'legal complications', have launched a terrifying campaign of revenge.

Thames Valley police must round up and jail the thugs.

And this time they can't expect the public to do the job for them.

Aliens - the truth

THE government is to throw open its top-secret X-Files on UFOs and aliens.

Ministers have looked at them and decided that there is nothing too sensitive to hold back.

Enthusiasts are hoping at last to learn the truth about all the incidents reported over the last 30 years.

Cynics think it will all turn out to have been pie in the sky.

Thugs mar glory

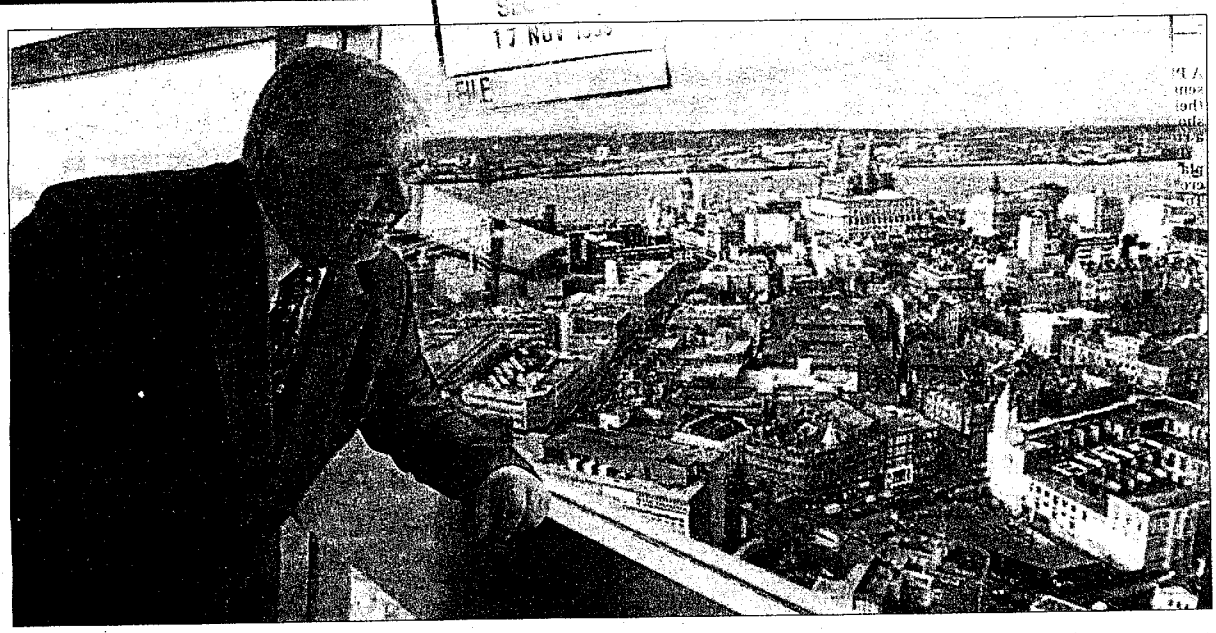
A GREAT game it wasn't. A determined first half at Hampden was followed by a dull second.

But it did manage to focus for 90 minutes or so the combined passions of soccer fans the length and breadth of Britain.

Then, despite their victory, came the pointless violence when 400 English fans went on the rampage in the streets of Glasgow.

It's a poor omen for Wembley on Wednesday.

CC: Sec(AS)2, DNews RAF file



□ NOTHING TO HIDE: MOD minister Peter Kilfoyle looking out from St John's Beacon

The MP who is opening up Britain's own X-files

By Rachael Tinniswood
Daily Post Staff

FOR years they have been hidden away in dusty filing cabinets at a secret office at Whitehall.

They are packed with classified information on suspected sightings of UFOs and other strange phenomenon being probed by a small team of civil servants.

But now these documents – Britain's very own X Files – will finally be revealed to the public, thanks to a Liverpool MP.

Defence Minister and Walton MP Peter Kilfoyle is to throw open the doors within the the next three months so that the public can inspect the papers on thousands of cases of UFO sightings which have for decades been shrouded in mystery.

Although Mr Kilfoyle has told colleagues that he is "not convinced" about the existence of aliens, we are now being given the chance to make up our own minds.

Sightings

Nationally, since 1959, the MoD has dealt with 9,000 UFO sightings. Every year, around 300 incidents are reported to the small team of MoD agents currently housed with the small team of dedicated Secretariat (Air Staff) 2 officials who sit in the MOD's giant Whitehall building.

But rather than prowling the country investigating the incidents, Mulder and Scully style, they simply write out a note of suspicious sightings that are channelled to the office from police forces or RAF bases.

They will then check if the mysterious lights in the sky tally with known aircraft in an effort to explain the occurrence.

However, once checked, the records are simply stowed in a filing cabinet.

Although some details of UFO sightings in the Fifties and Sixties have been made public under rules which lift restriction on documents after 30 years, this is the first time that contemporary sightings have been revealed.

Facts which have been kept under wraps until now could include the truth about claims by former defence chief, Lord Hill-Norton, that RAF Feltwell in Suffolk uses its space-age radar to track UFOs.

Another closely guarded secret came when US airmen from two bases in Suffolk reported sightings of a triangular three-legged spaceship in Rendlesham Forest. They claimed the object rose hovering out of the trees before blasting into space at an incredible speed in 1980. RAF investigators cordoned off the area, but their findings have never been revealed.

Sources at Westminster say that defence minister Mr Kilfoyle is ready to let the public see the files because he has looked at them and believes none of them show any evidence of alien beings.

The overwhelming majority of the cases are indeed explained away as sightings of aircraft landing lights, weather balloons and stars.

It is widely accepted now that the secrecy surrounding the files is unnecessary.

Restrictions were slapped on the files in the sixties during the height of the Cold War when Britain was worried that someone may unwittingly stumble on to a sighting of a secret weapon being developed.

But one local UFO researcher is sceptical about the government's motives.

Anthony Eccles, from Halewood, an accredited investigator with the British Unidentified Flying Object Research Association, said: "I wouldn't have any great expectations. I'm suspicious as to why a defence minister is now opening the door to British intelligence after they've lied to me time and time again.

"For instance, the government say the Merseyside area is a non-military aircraft zone – but if it is, so it is clear that they still lie."

Anthony, an archaeologist who works in the anthropology department in Liverpool Museum, said that of the 20-30 cases reported on Merseyside each year, only one or two remain unexplained.

Whenever a report is made to Mr Eccles he starts his investigations by contacting the military and civilian air authorities to check for aircraft in the area.

He said: "I then consult Bidston Observatory for weather conditions before making a final analysis to compare the position of lights in the sky with things like planets."

Anthony explained that these basic checking procedures are vital in ruling out sightings which could be explained.

□ X-FILES: Mulder and Scully

The truth of NW sightings may be there

UFO spotters in the North West will hope to discover what has been behind some local sightings when the secret files are made public.

These include a case in Burnley where a zombie-like man in black calling himself the Commander interrogated a young girl to such an extent that she was traumatised for years.

Another strange incident occurred when a woman was followed by a disc towards Runcorn. She actually drove at 90mph to get away from it in the hope that she would be stopped by the police and they could help her.

Twenty-five years ago, farmer Hugh Lloyd, of Llandrillo, North Wales, was a prime witness to a crashed spacecraft containing the bodies of several alien-like figures in the Berwyn mountains.

Fire evacuation

HOUSEHOLDERS were evacuated yesterday after a fire at a woodyard in Craven Street, Birkenhead.

Firefighters evacuated householders from surrounding streets at 1.45pm while they tackled the blaze at Sutton's woodlark.

Three fire crews were needed to extinguish the fire, although the cause is not yet known.

Probe into claims that Ford broke low price pledge

CAR giant Ford is facing a Government inquiry into allegations it has broken a promise to customers over prices.

It is claimed the company has saved £2m by failing to keep a pledge made to buyers of its Ford Focus model in September.

The company promised customers who bought a Ford Focus between September and the end of the year, that if it later cut the price of the car, they would be reimbursed the difference.

Since making the promise Ford has knocked £1,000 off the price of 2,000 Ford Focus cars, originally priced at £13,005, but has made no refunds to customers who bought at the higher price.

Consumer Affairs Minister Dr Kim Howells has ordered officials at the Department of Trade and Industry to investigate the case.

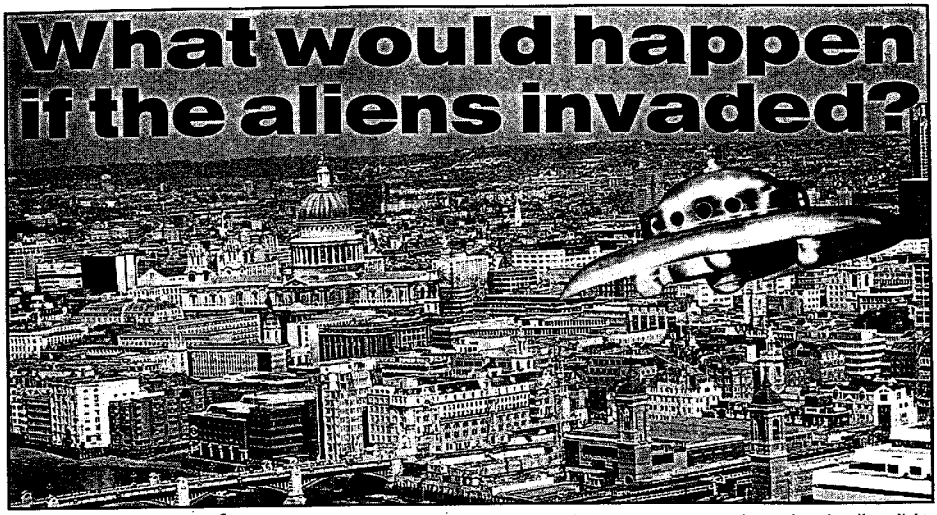
A spokeswoman for the DTI said a number of different officials would be involved in the investigation as it could have implications on a range of matters from consumer interests to competition between car firms.

Dr Howells will also call on the Advertising Standards Authority to investigate whether Ford published any misleading advertising relating to the offer.

But Ford dismissed the claim it had broken its promise, saying the cars sold at a lower price were old, unsold stock and so the cut was not a price reduction across the range.

THE SUN
16/11/99

What would happen if the aliens invaded?



By MARTIN PHILLIPS

(IN JUST THREE MONTHS YOU COULD FIND OUT

MILITARY plans to deal with an alien invasion of Britain could be among secret Government documents to be unveiled in three months.

Ministers are ready to let the truth be out there in line with New Labour's policy of greater openness.

The documents and photos cover investigation of UFO sightings over the last 50 years.

What people would like to know from the X Files is how the authorities planned to deal with any alien landings.

Nick Pope, who for three years headed the Ministry of Defence department investigating UFO sightings, says: "The most important thing for leaders to do would be to find out who the aliens were, what they wanted, and to try to find a peaceful resolution."

The Government would then have to decide how to release the news to avoid mass panic – and whether to attack the space creatures if all else failed. He adds: "Until there was anything to announce I don't suppose people would be told anything.

"But as soon as the situation became clear the safest thing would be to make the information public. It would have to be truthful and positive."

Nick says there are 200 to 300 alleged UFO sightings a year. Ninety per cent are explained by natural phenomena like aircraft lights, satellites, meteors and airships.

But, alarmingly, the others remain a mystery.

Nick's new novel, Operation Thunder Child, predicts what would happen in the event of an alien invasion. He said: "Part of the reason for writing it was to focus thought on what we should do."

He adds: "In my view, there should be a contingency plan so that if something happened we would be prepared."

Nick was sceptical about UFOs when he began his job. Here are five cases that changed his mind.

1 Britain's most celebrated UFO report centred around Rendlesham Forest, near the joint British and American airbase at Woodbridge, Suffolk, at Christmas 1980.

At 2am on Boxing Day, two patrolmen saw a large metallic triangular object. Two nights later, a military team investigated a similar sighting. They got within 150 yards of the moving red and yellow lights before they exploded into fragments of white light.

An officer reported three star-like objects in the sky which gave off red, green and blue lights. High levels of radiation were found where the craft had landed.

2 Tornado jets were overtaken by a UFO over the North Sea in November 1990. No explanation for the sighting was ever provided.

3 Last year, a 900ft-long UFO was chased by two fighter jets over the North Sea before it took off at 17,000mph, 20 times the speed of sound.

4 In 1995, the pilots of a Boeing 737 saw a UFO yards from their plane above Manchester Airport. The near-miss was investigated but never explained.

5 A wave of UFO sightings on March 30, 1993, climaxed with reports of a triangular, jumbo-jet size UFO flying over RAF bases at Cosford and Shawbury, Shropshire.

■ Operation Thunder Child, published by Simon & Schuster, price £9.99.

INDEPENDENT
16/11/99

PANDORA

pandora@independent.co.uk

UFO-WATCHERS will be relieved to hear that UFO-TREK, a worldwide, 24-hour hotline, has been launched. Current sightings recorded on the hotline, which "liaises closely with police forces and the Ministry of Defence", include silver spherical objects, white spherical objects and some rather worrying multi-coloured spherical objects spotted by an eagle-eyed pig farmer and his girlfriend over Guildford.

64/1

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

Section 40

Section 40

LOOSE MINUTE

D/US of S/PK 7/1/2/1

15 November 1999

Sec(AS)2

Copy to:

APS/SofS
APS/Minister(DP)
APS/Minister(AF)
PS/2nd PUS
DAO
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D Fin Pol

DCC(RAF)
D News(RAF)
PCB(Air)
DCC(RAF)SIO
Hd of CS(RM)1
Hd/Sec(AS)

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Reference: D/Sec(AS)64/1 dated 15 November 1999

1. Thank you for your minute at reference, the contents of which you discussed today with the Under Secretary of State.

2. The Under Secretary of State explained that he had been approached by Section 40 of the Sunday Times about the Department's position on UFOs. He had told Section 40 that he would consider offering him a briefing on the subject. (This was subsequently discussed with you and D News' staff although no decision had been reached). The Under Secretary of State had not discussed the issue with Section 40 the author of Sunday's News of the World article.

3. You explained the Department's position on UFOs and the early release of files, as set out at reference, which the Under Secretary of State noted.

4. The Minister remains keen to offer Section 40 a briefing to explain the Department's policy and the reasons behind it. If possible, he would like to show Section 40 some typical extracts from the files to support this. You undertook to consider this in conjunction with D News' staff and provide advice. I should be grateful to see this advice before the end of this week.

4. I agreed the following additional press lines with the Duty Press Officer last night, which could be used if pressed on whether Mr Kilfoyle had made any decisions or given any commitments on the publication of UFO files:

> Mr Kilfoyle has asked officials to consider whether there is any additional information which could be provided in response to requests about UFO reports, in the interests of removing the aura of mystery which surrounds the topic. He has not yet received that advice and no decisions have been taken.

Section 40

PS/US of S
MB 6215 Section 40 MB
CHOTS: USofS/Mailbox

ufodata only files we can deal with 13 files 1 Jan 2000 released

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS – FILES IDENTIFIED AS PRESERVED IN THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE TOGETHER WITH SCHEDULED RELEASE DATES – AS AT 15 November 1999[1]

64/1 33

Already open – 47

To be released:

2000	– 13
2001	– 12
2002	– 2
2003	– 14
2004	– 13
2005	– 1
2006	– 1
Total awaiting release	– 56

Total identified (released/unreleased) – 103

AIR CLASSES – RECORDS CREATED OR INHERITED BY THE AIR MINISTRY AND SUCCESSOR, THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, AND RELATED BODIES

AIR 2 – AIR MINISTRY: REGISTERED FILES

16918 1961–63 UFO's: sightings; reports by members of the public. AF/X59/64 Pt 5
File originally released in a sanitised form. Extracts subsequently released]

17318 1963 ditto AF/X59/64 Pt 6
[File originally released in a sanitised form. Extracts subsequently released]

17526 1964 UFO files. AF/X59/64 Pt 7
[File originally released in a sanitised form. Extracts subsequently released]

17527 1965 ditto AF/X59/64 Pt 8
17982 1965–66 ditto AF/X59/64 Pt 9
17983 1966 ditto AF/X59/64 Pt 10
[17527, 17982 and 17983 OPEN – released 1997]

17984 1966–67 ditto AF/X59/64 Pt 11
18115 1967 Unidentified flying objects: reports AF/CX38/67 Pt 1
18116 1967 ditto AF/CX38/67 Pt 2
[17984, 18115 and 18116 OPEN – released 1998]

18117 1967–68 ditto AF/CX38/67 Pt 3
[OPEN – released 1999]

18183 1968–69 Unidentified flying objects AF/7463/72 Pt 2
[Due for release 2000]

18564 1957–71 UFO Reports: West Freugh 1957

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[1] This list has been compiled on an ad hoc basis and is not intended to represent a complete lists of ufo, ufo related papers preserved at the PRO.

18565 1970–71 UFO Reports
[18564 and 18565 due for release 2002]

18831 1972 UFO reports AF/7463/72
[Due for release 2003]

18832 1972–73 UFO reports AF/7464/72
[Due for release 2004]

18833 1973–74 UFO reports AF/7464/72 Pt II
[Due for release 2005]

18874 1974–75 UFO reports AF/7464/72
[Piece no. to be allocated. Due for release 2006]

AIR 14 – BOMBER COMMAND

2800 1943 No 115 Squadron: news sheet "Bang On" No 1.
[OPEN – released 1972]

AIR 16 – FIGHTER COMMAND

1199 1952 Sept Flying saucers: occurrence reports: service personnel at Topcliffe station, Thirsk and local public sector IIH1/188/1/17
[OPEN]

AIR 20 – UNREGISTERED PAPERS

7390 1950–54 Unidentified aircraft (flying objects): reports II/127/3/48
9320 1957 Parliamentary question on UFOs MR 008614/193
9321 1957 ditto MR 008614/213
9322 1957 ditto MR 008614/220
9994 1953–57 Reports on aerial phenomena IIH/273/10/4
[7390, 9320 – 9322 and 9994 OPEN]

11612 1967–68 Unidentified flying objects MR 073414
11694 1968 Jan ditto AF/S4f(Air)512
11695 1968 Feb ditto AF/S4f(Air)513
11696 1968 Dec ditto AF/S4f(Air)523
[Pieces 11612, 11694 – 11696 OPEN – released 1999]

11887 1967 Aug ditto AF/S4f(Air)507
11888 1967 Sept ditto AF/S4f(Air)508
11889 1967 Oct ditto AF/S4f(Air)509
11890 1967 Oct ditto AF/S4f(Air)509
11891 1967 Nov ditto AF/S4f(Air)510
11892 1967 Nov ditto AF/S4f(Air)510
11893 1967 Dec ditto AF/S4f(Air)511
[11887 – 11893 OPEN – released 1998]

11894 1968 Mar ditto AF/S4f(Air)514
11895 1968 Apr ditto AF/S4f(Air)515
11896 1968 May ditto AF/S4f(Air)516

11897	1968 Jun	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)517
11898	1968 Jul	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)518
11899	1968 Aug	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)519
11900	1968 Sept	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)520
11901	1968 Oct	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)521
11902	1968 Nov	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)522

[11894 – 11902 OPEN – released 1999]

12055	1969 Jan	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)524
12056	1969 Feb	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)525
12057	1969 Mar	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)526
12058	1969 Apr	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)527
12059	1969 May	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)528
12060	1969 Jun	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)529
12061	1969 Jul	dItto	AF/S4f(Air)530
12062	1969 Aug	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)531
12063	1969 Sept	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)532
12064	1969 Oct	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)533
12065	1969 Nov	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)534
12066	1969 Dec	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)535

[12055 – 12066 due for release 2000]

12067	1970 Jan	ditto	AF/S4f(Air)536
12297	1970 Feb	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)537 & ID/48/94
12298	1970 Mar	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)538 & ID/48/95
12299	1970 Apr	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)539 & ID/48/96
12300	1970 May	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)540 & ID/48/97
12301	1970 June	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)541 & ID/48/98
12302	1970 July	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)542 & ID/48/99
12303	1970 Aug	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)543 & ID/48/100
12304	1970 Sept	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)544 & ID/48/101
12305	1970 Oct	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)545 & ID/48/102
12306	1970 Nov	ditto	AF/S4f(AIR)546 & ID/48/103

[12067, 12297 – 12306 due for release 2001]

12399	1971–72	UFO reports	ID/47/274 Pt 4
12400	1972 Jan	ditto	ID/48/117
12401	1972 Feb	ditto	ID/48/118
12402	1972 March	ditto	ID/48/119
12403	1972 April	ditto	ID/48/120
12404	1972 May	ditto	ID/48/121
12405	1972 June	ditto	ID/48/122
12406	1972 July	ditto	ID/48/123
12407	1972 Aug	ditto	ID/48/124
12408	1972 Sept	ditto	ID/48/125
12409	1972 Oct	ditto	ID/48/126
12410	1972 Nov	ditto	ID/48/127
12411	1972 Dec	ditto	ID/48/128

[12399–12411 due for release 2003]

12544	1973 Jan	ditto	ID/48/129
12545	1973 Feb	ditto	ID/48/130
12546	1973 Mar	ditto	ID/48/131

12547	1973 Apr	ditto	ID/48/132
12548	1973 May	ditto	ID/48/133
12549	1973 Jun	ditto	ID/48/134
12550	1973 Jul	ditto	ID/48/135
12551	1973 Aug	ditto	ID/48/136
12552	1973 Sep	ditto	ID/48/137
12553	1973 Oct	ditto	ID/48/138
12554	1973 Nov	ditto	ID/48/139
12555	1973 Dec	ditto	ID/48/140

[Pieces 12544 - 12555 due for release 2004]

AIR 22 - PERIODICAL RETURNS, SUMMARIES AND BULLETINS

93 1955 Air Ministry Secret Summary. Vol. 10. No 3 Article on Flying Saucers. IIG/101
[OPEN - released 1986]

BJ CLASSES - RECORDS OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

BJ5 - ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

311 1968-70 UFO: Met aspects AF/M 396/68
[Due for release 2001]

DEFE CLASSES - RECORDS CREATED OR INHERITED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE AND RELATED BODIES

DEFE 10 DIRECTORATE OF SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE AND JOINT TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE

496 1950 Apr - 1951 Dec Minutes of meetings
497 1952 Jan - 1954 Oct Minutes of meetings
[496 and 497 OPEN - released 1998]

DEFE 31 DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE STAFF: REGISTERED FILES

118 1958-63 UFO: policy DI/55/40/9/1 Pt1
119 1963-67 UFO: Policy DI/55/40/9/1 Pt2
[118 and 119 OPEN - released 1998]

DEFE 41 FOREIGN OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF DEFENCE: SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE BRANCH AND OVERSEAS LIAISON BRANCH: REGISTERED FILES

74 1950 DSI/JTIC: minutes 6005/8/D 17 Vol. 4
75 1951 DSI/JTIC: minutes 6005/8/D 17 Vol. 5
76 1952-54 DSI/JTIC: minutes 6005/8/D 17 Vol. 6
[74 - 76 OPEN - released 1996]

117 1949-50 Unorthodox Aircraft 9017/8 Vol. 1
(Includes UFO references, but limited to British and German press cuttings)

153 1953-54 DSI/JTIC papers D19/ Vol. 5
(Includes a list, as at August 1951, of all reports issued - "DSI/JTIC No 7 - Unidentified Flying Objects")
[117 and 153 OPEN - released 1995]

Annex B

PRO CLASSES CREATED FOR INTELLIGENCE RECORDS - UFO RELATED RECORDS - AS AT October 1998

11 classes have, to date, been identified for records created for the defence "intelligence" branches. They contain between them more than 15,750 intelligence records selected for permanent preservation.

The classes together with the date range and approximate number of pieces in each class:

RESEARCH WARNING. A COMPREHENSIVE SEARCH FOR UFO RELATED DOCUMENTATION HAS NOT BEEN CONDUCTED. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT RECORDS HAS BEEN ON THE "BEST GUESS" PRINCIPLE.

ADM 223 - Naval Intelligence Papers, 1914-1965, 840 files and volumes.

ADM 231 - Naval Intelligence Reports, 1883-1965, 54 volumes

AIR 40 - Directorate of Intelligence and other Intelligence Papers - 1926-1963, 2706 files and volumes

DEFE 10 - Major Committees: minutes and papers - 1942-1976, 504 bound volumes.

DEFE 10/496) These two pieces contain 7 items relating to Working Party on Flying Saucers and its subsequent
497) report.
[6 items were released in 1996 see DEFE 41/74-76]

(496 & 497 RELEASED 1998)

DEFE 21 - Joint Intelligence Bureau, Directorate of Scientific Intelligence: Registered files - 1946-1978, 77 files

DEFE 31 - Defence Intelligence Staff: Registered files - 119 files

DEFE 31/118 1958-63) UFO: policy
119 1963-67)
(118 & 119 RELEASED 1998)

DEFE 32 - Defence Intelligence Staff: Registered files - 1957- 1979, 99 files

DEFE 41 - Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence: Scientific Technical Intelligence Branch and Overseas Liaison Branch: Registered Files

DEFE 41/74) - Selection of minutes from DSI/JTIC Meetings.
75) - (6 items relating to Working Party on Flying Saucers
76) - and its report).
RELEASED 1996)

117 - Unorthodox Aircraft (ufo references limited to British/German press cuttings
(RELEASED 1995)

153 - DSI/JTIC papers (incl. reference to Report No. 7 "UFO's")
(RELEASED 1995)

DEFE 44 – Joint Intelligence Bureau: Reports – 1946–1971, 100 files and volumes

WO 106 – Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence – 1937–1961, 6228 boxes, files and volumes

WO 208 – Directorate of Military Intelligence – 1917–1961, 5187 boxes, files and volumes

6411

SEC(AS)2A1A

From: Hd of DR1
Sent: 15 November 1999 08:01
To: SEC(AS)2A1A
Subject: DAILY MAIL: NICK POPE

Gaynor,

I take it that you have seen today's Daily Mail?

I expect to hear from the PRO today about when we are releasing these files. So far as I'm aware there is only the usual release planned in January.

Do you know any more?

Section 40

Loose Minute

[redacted](CS)64/1

15 November 1999

APS/USofS

Copy to:

- APS/SofS
- APS/Minister(DP)
- APS/Minister(AF)
- PS/2nd PUS
- DAO
- D News
- D Fin Pol
- DCC(RAF)
- D News (RAF)
- PCB(Air)
- DCC(RAF)SIO

Hd of CS(RM)1

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Issue

1. *News of the World* (14 Nov) and *Daily Mail* (15 Nov) articles about 'UFOs'.

Recommendation

2. To note.

Timing

3. As soon as possible in the event of any further media interest.

Background

4. It is standard practice to release to the Public Record office at the 30-year point MOD 'UFO' files. The files are withheld until that time to protect the personal details (names and addresses) of members of the public reporting what they have seen and themselves failed to identify. The files do not contain highly classified material (two examples are provided herewith). The issue of early release of files was address in September last year (CS(RM)/4/6/37 – copy attached for USofS) in response to Lord Hill Norton's request; legal advice was that the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it did so.

5. Under the 30-year rule, a total of 13 'UFO' files from 1969 have been passed to the Public Record Office and will be released on 1 January 2000. The files contain sighting reports, public correspondence and associated papers. As I explained (D/Sec(AS)/64/1 of 8 September copy also attached), it is simply not possible to say whether other 'UFO'-related papers might be filed elsewhere in MOD archives.

6. There is little factual information in the two newspaper articles. It is likely they are misrepresenting the arrangements for the Department's release of files, perhaps hoping to force MOD into expanding their limited interest in publicly reported unidentified sightings. I attach lines to take in the event of any further media interest.

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 [redacted]MB Section 40

NEWS BRIEF

DTG: 15 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: 'NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: 'UFOs'

SOURCE: Branch: Sec(AS)2: Section 40 Tel MB Section 40

PRESS OFFICER: Section 40 (News RAF)

BACKGROUND

'News of the World' (14 Nov) and Daily Mail (15 Nov) have printed speculative articles that MOD is about to release all 'UFO' files.

KEY MESSAGE

MOD routinely releases files containing information from the public about alleged 'UFO' sightings under the 30-year rule. We are unable to release more recent files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality (ie the personal details of those providing information). There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs'.

KEY POINTS

* As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention but since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

* We have looked carefully to see whether early release of 'UFO' files is possible. However, the files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. MOD has a duty to protect the third party confidentiality. Staff would need to be diverted from essential tasks to manually scrutinise and remove all personal details on the files and the knock-on effect would be a major disruption to MOD's overall programme for release of files to the PRO. It cannot be justified.

* Mr Pope was an EO in Sec(AS)2; he left the Branch in Jul 94. The views expressed by Mr Pope in books and the media are entirely his own.

* It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. **MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity**, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

SUBSIDIARY POINTS

* Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft).

* Alleged sightings sent to us are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years that warranted any further investigation and no evidence was found of any threat.

* Where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

* Sec(AS)2 is the Air Staff Secretariat. It deals with a wide range of RAF-related issues. It also acts as the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police are forwarded to Sec(AS)2. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year

* Where a military or civilian pilot considers his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he is unable to identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

Queen's Speech showdown

BATTLE ROYAL

ON Wednesday the new Parliamentary session begins with the Queen's Speech. Here the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition say what they want to do for all of us.

WHAT do you think are the most urgent problems facing Britain today?

Poor schools that aren't teaching children properly?

The crisis in our health service which means people are waiting longer and longer for treatment?

The desperate paralysis on our roads and public transport? Rising crime that makes none of us feel safe on our streets? The flood of bogus asylum seekers? The daily selling-out to Brussels on issues like British beef?

These are what I think are the urgent problems facing Britain today. You probably agree with me. If next week's Queen's Speech was setting out the programme of the next Conservative government, I'll tell you what would be in it. Education would be right at the heart of the speech.

There would be a law to guarantee to parents the power to do something about bad schools by sacking school managements. And there would be a law to turn every primary and secondary school in the country into a Free School where teachers could get on with improving standards.

Then we'd give patients in the NHS a unique guarantee. Patients with the most serious conditions would get a maximum waiting time based not on party political targets but medical need.

We would introduce a tough law to make sure unemployed people who can work take the jobs that are offered to them–or lose their unemployment benefit.

A revolution in crime-fighting would make sure criminals serve the sentence handed down in court, teaching prisoners what it's like to work, dealing out life sentences to drug dealers who sell to children, and helping police get out and on to the street.

We would help pensioners and savers by halving the startling rate of tax on savings and protect the homes and assets of people who save for their long-term care.

We would help working women who take career breaks to look after their children with Family Scholarships that will help them if they want to get back to work.

We would propose a Budget that would put an end to Labour's stealth taxes with this open and honest Tax Guarantee: we'll cut the overall burden of tax over the lifetime of a parliament. And we'd show everyone that Britain is no pushover in Europe. This government has signed away enough of this country's powers and rights to Brussels. The next Conservative government will make sure Britain is in Europe but not run by Europe.

So what is our Prime Minister doing about the issues? Nothing. If you don't believe me, just wait to see what the government announces in the Queen's Speech. It is likely to propose:

A NEW law about how political parties are run, a new law on the organisation of local government, a new law on motorway tolls and car park taxes, a new law creating a Right to Roam.

None of these laws will do anything to tackle the main problems that actually matter to the majority of people.

This week you will see a Labour government that is pursuing its own obscure political priorities instead of rising to the challenge of the real problems.

The next Conservative government would not duck the challenge. Our Queen's Speeches would turn the commonsense of the people into commonsense policies for the country.

'We'll stop Britain being a pushover'

WILLIAM HAGUE Opposition Leader

TODAY, on Remembrance Day, it's more important than ever to remember our debt to those who gave their lives to protect our country and the ideals we stand for.

It's important, too, that we continue repaying the debt to the whole generation who sacrificed so much.

Many pensioners feel they don't get a fair share of the nation's prosperity. We've improved things since we came to power but there's a lot more to do. Gordon Brown's announcements on free TV licences for the over-75s, the £100 winter allowance to be paid every year and reliable the minimum income guarantee, went a little further in honouring our debt.

We are half way through this Parliament. We've done a lot. But there is much more to. Like getting the Health Service right. But that's why we're putting in the extra £21 billion investment over the next three years, recruiting the extra doctors and nurses, building new hospitals and introducing new services.

You didn't expect miracles from New Labour. You knew how much was wrong.

But what you wanted was a government to start moving us in the right direction. Nothing is more important for a government than running the economy well. And nothing has a great impact if the government fails. Whether Labour could be trusted on the economy was why many of you thought long and hard before voting for us.

I understand that. It's not always been the fault of past Labour governments. But memories of devaluation, of the IMF crisis and the winter of discontent still haunted those who lived through them.

I believe we have gone a very long way to burying those memories and the doubts they fuelled. And Gordon Brown, a brilliant, radical and reforming chancellor deserves credit for that. We inherited an economy devastated by the two deepest recessions since the war. Where every boom was all too quickly followed by Tory bust. A Government spending £28 billion a year more than it had.

Now inflation's low and on target. Government borrowing is under control. Employment is up by 700,000 since the election.

We're creating a climate where business can succeed and in turn create jobs and prosperity by boosting skills.

And we're also creating a fairer country by extending opportunities to all, tackling poverty and increasing support to families through measures like the New Deal, the minimum wage and the Working Families Tax Credit–all of which the Tories would scrap.

It's what we mean by enterprise and fairness. They are the guiding principles of this government, and the driving force behind Gordon's package.

'We'll make Britain richer and fairer'

TONY BLAIR Prime Minister

NEWS OF THE WORLD OUR VIEW

Shameful way to treat heroes

AS the nation pays a massive public tribute today to its war dead a cruel shadow hangs over a group of disabled veterans who survive.

Fifteen hundred of them are to lose their jobs as seven plants specially set up to provide work for them close down.

The bitter blow follows months of negotiations between their trade unions and Remploy, the employer.

In August the workers were told that any employee who wanted to stay at a Remploy factory could do so and that no plants would close.

Tomorrow they will be told the truth, with management blaming the job losses on a five-year freeze in their government grant.

When Remploy plants were first set up after World War II they were described as 'factories fit for heroes.'

What an ungrateful way to treat our heroes.

Repaid with horror

A MOTHER and son risked their lives to help police smash a Yardie drugs ring.

They befriended the mobsters, kept track of their movements and tipped off the law at the crucial moment.

Then the careless coppers shopped the brave pair by broadcasting their names over the police radios, from which they were picked up by the Yardies' scanners.

Now mother and son continue to live in fear of their lives, for their tormentors, released because of 'legal complications', have launched a terrifying campaign of revenge.

Thames Valley police must round up and jail the thugs.

And this time they can't expect the public to do the job for them.

Aliens - the truth

THE government is to throw open its top-secret X-Files on UFOs and aliens.

Ministers have looked at them and decided that there is nothing too sensitive to hold back.

Enthusiasts are hoping at last to learn the truth about all the incidents reported over the last 30 years.

Cynics think it will all turn out to have been pie in the sky.

Thugs mar glory

A GREAT game it wasn't. A determined first half at Hampden was followed by a dull second.

But it did manage to focus for 90 minutes or so the combined passions of soccer fans the length and breadth of Britain.

Then, despite their victory, came the pointless violence when 400 English fans went on the rampage in the streets of Glasgow.

It's a poor omen for Wembley on Wednesday.

KIDNAP TERROR

A YOUNG mystery woman was at the centre of a kidnap scare last night after a blood-stained van she was bundled into was found abandoned.

Two men had earlier roughly draggged her screaming across a garage forecourt at Reading, Berks, during the rush-hour.

She was viciously beaten and thrown into the van.

A witness told police the woman, aged about 20, suffered facial injuries.

Detective Superintendent Trevor Davies said: "We are extremely worried. If this woman can get in touch with us she should."

A team of detectives were trying to identify the woman and scouring missing person reports. The CCTV footage from the garage has been seen by police.

WEIRD

A.P.E. S. Chung, 26, who tried to save his Beijing-to-London fare by POSTING himself, got caught short in the sorting office and was jailed for four weeks.

WORLD

MODEL ROBBED

A GANG of Rolex robbers pounced on Andrea Foulkes, the QVC Shopping channel model, as she parked her car in the early hours.

The 29-year-old blonde was grabbed by the throat by one man while another snatched her £2,500 Cartier watch and a £200 necklace.

Then they flung her to the ground and made off in a silver car with her bag containing £300 in cash.

The attackers, said to be black and in their 20s, struck as Andrea pulled up in Sloane Square, London.

WEIRD

COPS smashed into a car in Lyons, France, to rescue a man collapsed inside – and discovered a blow-up dummy used to fool cyclists.

WORLD

MURDER OF BABY

AN eight-week-old boy was murdered in his home yesterday by a frenzied attacker.

Police found little Bradley George being cradled by his sobbing mother. He died four hours later in hospital from head injuries.

The tot's mum Samantha George, 20, and brother Christopher, five, also suffered head injuries in the attack at the two-bed council house in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

Neighbour Jeannette Hussey said: "I heard a woman screaming and a young boy crying. Samantha came out with her face covered in blood and was taken away in an ambulance."

A 26-year-old man was arrested by police at the house and was being questioned yesterday.

Watch this space for truth about aliens

MINISTER TO OPEN BRITAIN'S X-FILES

THE truth about whether aliens have ever visited Britain is to be revealed at last.

Top secret government X-Files on thousands of 'spaceship' riddles will be opened up to public gaze by Defence Minister Peter Kilfoyle.

They will include photos and details of every UFO investigation in the past 30 years. Every year, around 300 alien sightings are reported.

Plans by military experts for action in the event of an alien invasion of London will also be unveiled.

The files, stored in a nuclear bomb-proof bunker deep below Whitehall, should be released in three months.

The move, part of a government drive to end unnecessary secrecy, is sure to send UFO spotters into a frenzy. They will hope to learn secrets about:

● **A MASSIVE** craft spotted flying in zig-zags off Britain's North Sea coast last year. The 900ft UFO shot off at 17,000mph when pursued by two fighter jets.

● **CLAIMS** that seven UFOs have crashed in Britain since World War II.

● **SIGHTINGS** of a triangular three-legged spaceship in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, in 1980.

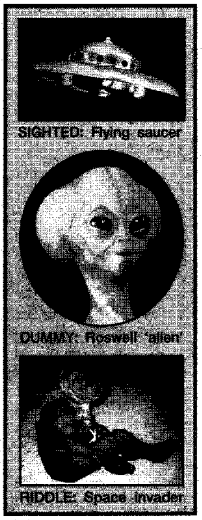
Hover

US airmen from two nearby bases claim the object rose hovering out of the trees, then blasted into space at an incredible speed. RAF investigators cordoned off the area, but their findings are still a closely-guarded secret.

Some details of UFO sightings in the Fifties and Sixties have already been made public under the Thirty-Year Rule applied to sensitive documents.

Among them is the famous 1962 incident in which 16-year-old Anne Heston was sworn to secrecy after she reported seeing a star-like object shooting out red and green flames above her home in Taunton, Somerset.

Ten years earlier, RAF Flight Lieutenant John Kilburn saw a shining object in the sky above a West Yorks air base. When jets were scrambled to investigate, the UFO took off at an incredible speed. But the facts about most later mysteries are still locked away.



SIGHTED: Flying saucer

DUMMY: Roswell 'alien'

RIDDLE: Space invader

EXCLUSIVE

BY **IAN KIRBY**
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

They include the truth about claims by former defence chief Lord Hill-Norton that RAF Feltwell in Suffolk uses its space-age radar, built by the US Air Force, to track UFOs.

He quizzed ministers about the base, but never got a satisfactory answer. Several sightings in 1990 of a bright light above the Thames in London could also be explained.

The pledge to open up our X-Files follows similar moves in America.

The Yanks recently released a report of the notorious Roswell incident in 1947, in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at a secret New Mexico air base.

They explained the "bodies" were dummies from a secret weather balloon, but UFO theorists still believe there has been a cover-up.

Crank

Britain's files were prepared by the MoD's hush-hush Aircraft Secretariat, set up to investigate UFOs. Amazingly, its one-time boss Nick Pope believes **HE** was abducted by aliens while driving in Florida.

He kept mum while in his job for fear of being labelled a crank.

But after leaving the secret unit, he wrote a series of bestsellers about alien incidents.

He said: "My experiences convinced me that UFOs are a real and threatening phenomenon. We are not alone.

"Since 1959, the MoD has heard of 9,000 UFO sightings, though that's probably only the tip of the iceberg."

Defence Minister Mr Kilfoyle has told colleagues that, after a careful review of the files, he is "not convinced" about the existence of aliens.

But MoD staff say he wants people to be able to make up their own minds.

A source said: "These files are of huge public interest. They paint a fascinating picture of how UFO reports were investigated–and what would happen if aliens ever did land in Britain."

Our View: Page 22

I'VE ONE THE LOTTO

MEG: Sunday stars

ONE lucky Lottery punter scooped last night's £6.2 million jackpot.

Another 25 won £76,804 each for five numbers plus the bonus, 940 won £1,276 for five and 58,205 players won £45 for matching four.

The £250,000 Thunderball jackpot also went to one ticketholder.

●IS your Lottery fortune written in the stars? Turn to Page 26 now and find the secrets of Mystic Meg's Mystic Wheel.

LUCKY CHOICE

YOU can also bet on the Irish Lotto by playing Lucky Choice at over 4,000 William Hill, Coral or Ladbrokes betting shops nationwide. Last Wednesday's Lotto numbers were: 8, 15, 18, 26, 32, 40. Bonus number: 30. Last night's numbers were: 5, 8, 9, 16, 23, 27. Bonus 13.

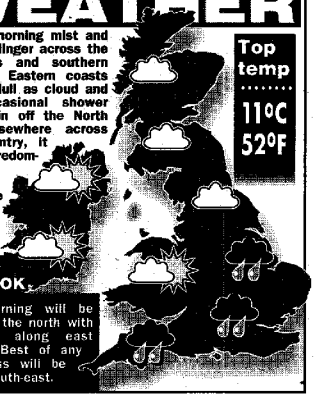
7 10 21 BONUS NUMBER 28 29 39 2

THUNDERBALL GAME

7 10 16 19 33

THUNDERBALL NUMBER 2

WEATHER



EARLY morning mist and fog will linger across the Midlands and southern England. Eastern coasts will be dull as cloud and the occasional shower stream in off the North Sea. Elsewhere across the country, it will be predominantly cloudy with the best of any sunshine in the west.

OUTLOOK

THE morning will be damp in the north with showers along east coasts. Best of any brightness will be in the south-east.

Jubilant England

SCOTCH

IT was the day the whole country went football daft . . . or rather the SCHOLES country.

BY **IAN EDMONDSON** & **JOHN CARTER**

Pubs were rocking and settee springs in homes up and down the land got a right pounding as England hero Paul pummelled the Scots at Glasgow's Hampden Park with two great first-half goals.

And boy, did we go wild. Celebrations lasted long into the night with supporters dancing in the streets.

At Hampden the afternoon was marred by some mindless England louts who went on the rampage through Glasgow after the game.

But for the massive telly audience up and down the land the first leg of the Euro 2000 qualifier–dubbed the Battle of Britain–was a resounding success.

TV bosses were punching the air along with the fans. Together with the Wembley return on Wednesday, viewing figures should hit 30 million.

And if you were anywhere near a screen yesterday, it was easy to see why.

FOR THE BEST BIG-MATCH REPORT sport OF THE WORLD

At London's Sports Cafe more than 2,000 people were crammed into the bar by kick-off time. The crowd had already roared themselves hoarse–singing Skinner and Baddiel's Three Lions anthem– well before the game began.

Richard Peterson, 30, was one of them–like so many thousands he had tried to get a ticket and failed.

"But this is the next best thing," he yelled above the roar. "The atmosphere is like being on the terraces," added Richard, of Highgate, north London.

Another fan, 23-year-old Chris Carter, told how he had travelled up from Brighton just to watch the game on TV in London.

"I came up here for the atmosphere. It's very loud. It was well worth it." When Manchester United star Scholes outstripped the Scotland defence to score his first, the bar exploded. After the second the chant was "Easy, Easy".

And the few brave Scots who had turned up had to suffer taunts of "You are only good for making whisky".

Meanwhile at Scottish pub the Rob Roy in London, the Scholes goals were greeted by a deafening silence. Instead it was the pumps and optics dancing up and down as fans queued five deep to drown their sorrows.

Photographer John McDonald, 28, said: "Everyone is feeling so frustrated." And BT engineer Dave Allen, 36, from Glasgow added: "I am feeling absolutely s***e at the moment. It's just so depressing."

In Glasgow, trouble flared after the match when around 400 drunken England fans ran through the streets terrorising shoppers.

Missiles

Peter Irvine, 52, of Livingston, said: "It was a disgrace. I saw one wee boy slumped against a car with blood all over him. His mother was distraught."

Dozens of supporters from both sides hurled missiles at each other in Buchanan Street and police reported several "skirmishes" in the city. By late afternoon, the number of arrests totalled 123.

Most of the England fans, however, were well behaved as they streamed towards the station.

One catching a train back to south-east London summed the day up. "I do feel sorry for Scotland," he said. "They played well but we deserved to win."

●Bookies were crying in their beer after the game. A William Hill spokesman said: "This result has cost bookies the best part of £2 million. Nine out of every 10 bets we took were for an England victory and 2–0 was by far the most popular scoreline at odds of 9/1."

JOBLESS TOUT MAKES £150,000 FROM FANS

BY **NADIA COHEN**

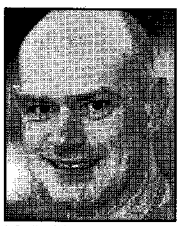
VILE ticket tout Dave Smith made a staggering £150,000 out of yesterday's game—charging patriotic supporters up to TWENTY-THREE times the £65 face value of tickets to see their idols.

The sinister conman blew apart police crowd segregation measures—selling his black market tickets indiscriminately to England and Scotland fans.

"I've done brilliantly," he bragged to our undercover reporter. Smith eagerly agreed to supply News of the World investigators with tickets after we rang his mobile phone.

"I don't know if you realise how much they go for," he sneered. "Fifteen hundred quid." When our reporter later asked if he was supplying tickets in bulk, he asked: "Do you want them in sequence? I've got mates in a couple of clubs.

"I'll have a phone round and see if I can get them."



LOATHSOME: Tout Smith

Smith, a 40-year-old father of five, lives on a council estate in Colchester, Essex. He lives off £85 a week sickness benefit.

He was forced to give up his job as a used car dealer after being blasted with a shotgun on his doorstep.

But his big money-spinner is touting—now our dossier on evil Smith is available to the authorities.

●A COMMONS investigation may be launched into claims that MPs have landed free tickets.

More than 50 MPs are understood to have received invitations for corporate seats at the second leg at Wembley. Under strict parliamentary rules they will have to declare that they accepted them at a time when thousands of ordinary fans were unable to get tickets.

DAILY MAIL
15/11/99

Britain's X-Files (and yes, the truth is on this page)

by NICK POPE

DOCUMENTS and photographs detailing UFO investigations in Britain over 50 years are at last being made available for public scrutiny under New Labour's policy of greater openness in Government, according to reports at the weekend. Here, NICK POPE, the Ministry of Defence official formerly responsible for investigating extra-terrestrial visitations, previews the eagerly awaited contents.

OFFICIAL interest in UFOs has always had more to do with the Russians than any impending visit from Martians.

But in keeping an eye out for the Soviet aircraft that routinely probed our air defences during the Cold War, it soon became clear that there were other more exotic craft operating in British airspace.

There has been a steady stream of UFO reports sent to the Ministry of Defence over the past 50 years — between 200 to 300 each year. They fill more than 200 files, files to which I have had access. If, and when, they are made available publicly, I can promise some exciting revelations.

For three years it was my job in Secretariat (Air Staff) 2A at the MoD to investigate such reports, to determine any potential threat to the UK. I found explanations for 90pc of sightings, which turned out to be misidentifications of ordinary objects or phenomena; aircraft lights, satellites, meteors and airships.

However, there has always been a hard core of sightings that couldn't be explained in conventional terms, where trained observers such as police officers and pilots have seen unidentified craft doing speeds and manoeuvres way beyond our capabilities.

Britain's most sensational UFO case occurred in 1980 in Rendlesham Forest, near the USAF/RAF airbase at Woodbridge in Suffolk. UFO activity was witnessed over a series of nights, then on December 26 at 2am two patrolmen on a tour of the camp perimeter saw bright lights among the trees and went to investigate.

Initially, they thought an aircraft had overshot the runway, although there was no accompanying noise. But what they saw was like no aircraft they'd ever encountered before; a large metallic, triangular object which they chased before losing it among the trees.

JUST two nights later, there was a similar sighting. This time the deputy base commander, USAF Lt-Col Charles Halt, led a team out to investigate. He submitted a report to the MoD, describing the UFO as 'metallic in appearance and triangular in shape'.

There is also an eerie 18-minute tape, which reveals conversations between Halt and his men as they moved to within 150 yards of the moving red and yellow lights.

The report says that suddenly the lights appeared to 'explode' in fragments of white light. Immediately, Lt-Col Halt observed three objects in the sky, like stars, but giving off red, green and blue lights, darting off in all directions in sharp, angular movements.

The objects were visible for two to three hours, occasionally flashing down beams of light or energy. Radiation readings were subsequently taken from the landing site in the forest and were found to peak in the three indentations where the craft had touched down in a clearing.

There are a number of intriguing aerial encounters in Britain's so-called X-files, too. One of the earliest took place in August 1956, when a UFO was tracked on radar systems at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Two RAF jets were scrambled to intercept the mystery craft, and an energetic game of cat and mouse ensued as the pilots attempted to lock-on to the target. But the UFO was too quick and agile, and managed to elude the pilots, who eventually ran low on fuel and were forced to return to base.

Almost 40 years later, a number of RAF Tornado jets were overtaken by a UFO over the North Sea in November 1990. No adequate explanation was ever forthcoming.

Last year, also over the North Sea, a 900ft UFO was pursued by two fighter jets before it took off at 17,000mph.

More disturbing are the reports to the MoD that detail near-misses between UFOs and civil aircraft. There were two such cases in 1991, both over Kent.

In 1995, the pilots of a Boeing 737 encountered what they described as a brightly lit UFO while on their approach to Manchester Airport, and believed that it had passed only yards from their aircraft. This incident was investigated by the Civil Aviation Authority but remained a mystery.

One of the most fascinating cases that I investigated related to an incident that occurred in the early hours of March 31, 1993. There had been a wave of UFO sightings that night, culminating in the direct overflight of two military bases, RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury in Shropshire.

The UFO was described by one of the military witnesses as being a vast, triangular craft only marginally smaller than a jumbo jet. It flew slowly over the base at a height of 200ft, firing a narrow beam of light at the ground, before flying off at high speed.

These then, are the sorts of incidents to be found in the MoD's UFO files.

But the files also contain reports of alien abductions, the appearance of crop circles and animal mutilations, all of which have been linked with UFOs.

THE MoD was drawn into the crop-circle debate in 1985 — five years after they first started appearing — when a farmer in Middle Wallop, Hampshire, found a quintuplet of crop circles and blamed the local Army air corps base.

A Lt-Col Edgecombe investigated and submitted photographs and reports to the MoD, a routine procedure but one which gave credence to the UFO link and allegations that then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had asked for a report on the phenomemon.

I have reviewed all the theories about crop circles and, while many are hoaxes, there are those which have yet to be explained; for example, why do crop samples taken from these 'genuine' circles show distinct cellular changes.

Some details of UFO sighting

DAILY MAIL
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in Britain have, of course, already been made public under the 30-year rule which applies to sensitive documents, but by releasing files from more recent years the Government clearly hopes to end speculation that it has been covering up the truth about the phenomenon.

Unfortunately, releasing the files is a tactic that some people think could backfire.

A similar initiative in the U.S. simply fuelled interest in the subject, and led to accusations that other more highly classified papers were still being withheld.

The U.S. government's denial was not helped by the claims of a former U.S. army colonel, Philip Corso, who said that the so-called Roswell incident from 1947 — in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at an air force base in New Mexico — really did involve the crash of a UFO.

Colonel Corso claimed that he'd seen the bodies, and that his job at the Pentagon involved finding ways to use the technological secrets gleaned from the debris of the craft. He died of a heart attack shortly after going public with these claims, so took the secrets to his grave.

Conspiracy theorists love this sort of thing, and are unlikely to be satisfied by any release of papers that doesn't support their own theories.

But there really isn't any cover-up in the UK, although a letter sent from the MoD to the U.S. government in 1965 admits that MoD policy 'is to play down the subject of UFOs'.

My three years of official research into the UFO phenomenon changed my life for ever. I'd come into the job as a sceptic, but came to believe that some UFOs might well be extra-terrestrial.

If these files are to be made public, I think people are in for a big surprise, and I believe that, like me, they will come to see that this is a serious subject which raises important national security issues.

As far as these files are concerned . . . the truth is in there!

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15/11/99

SERVICE DINNERS

4th Bn, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA)
Col M.P. Robinson presided at the annual dinner of the 4th Battalion, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA) held on Saturday in the Officers' Mess, Minden House, Pontefract.

The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish)
Maj Gen D.J.M. Jenkins, Colonel of the Regiment, presided at the annual Midlands reunion dinner of the Regimental Association of The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish) held on Saturday at the Post House Forte Hotel, Birmingham.

The Leeds Rifles (Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire)
Officers of The Leeds Rifles held their annual Remembrance Dinner on Saturday at Harewood Barracks, Leeds. Major R.M. Booker presided and Lt Col C.A. Kilburn, Commanding Officer, The East and West Riding Regiment, was principal guest.

United Services Mess
The Lord-Lieutenant for South Glamorgan, Capt Norman Lloyd-Edwards, Mess President, and the Deputy Lord Mayor of the City and County of Cardiff, Councillor C. Bettinson, attended the 84th annual dinner of the United Services Mess, Cardiff, held on Saturday at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff. Brig A.S. Ritchie, Director of Personal Services (Army), was principal guest. Mr A.C. Lewis, Mess Chairman, presided and Mr I.P. Murphy, QC, and Mr M.J. Phillips also spoke.

Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre Association
The 53rd annual meeting and dinner of the Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre Association was held on Saturday at the RAF Club. Mr John Morrison was in the chair.

Loose Minute

CS(RM)/4/6/37

September 1998

PS/USofS *

Copy to:

APS/SofS	*	PS/DUS(CM)	*	DDC&L(F&S)Legal	*	
PS/Min(AF)	*	DGMO	*	DMOD	*	
PS/Min(DP)	*	Hd Sec (AS)	*	PRO IDO	*	
PS/PUS	*	DISN	*			* CHOTS only

LORD HILL-NORTON: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FILES

Reference: A. D/USofS/JS 28/1/0 dated 9 March 1998 (not to all)
B. D/DOMD/2/3 dated 3 April 1998

Issue

1. To provide Lord Hill-Norton with the outcome of our consideration of his request for the early release of files on the subject of "unidentified flying objects".

Recommendation

2. That USofS responds in terms of the attached draft letter.

Timing

3. Routine.

Background

4. Lord Hill-Norton, aged 83, and Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971-73, has a long standing interest in "UFOs". He approached the department earlier this year (undercover of Reference A) pointing to the public interest in this topic and to the forthcoming Freedom of Information Act, requesting that all closed files on the subject of UFOs be released in advance of the normal, 30 year point.

5. In his submission dated 3 April 1998 (reference B) DOMD advised that in the region of 55 files were held with planned releases dates of 1999-2003, in addition a further 12 (with a release date of 2004) were in the early stages of preparation for transfer to the PRO. These files concern correspondence from members of the public reporting such occurrences, therefore question of personal confidentiality had to be resolved.

Outcome of our review

6. Three options have been considered:

(1) obtain permission from members of the public on an individual basis to the release of their details;

(2) remove personal details (the 55 processed files would require further examination and sanitisation in the order of 5,500 enclosures);

(3) agree that a shorter period, say 25 rather than 30 years, was acceptable for protection

of privacy.

The first option was considered time-consuming and, given the fact that we would be attempting to trace individuals whose addresses were 25 plus years old, impractical. Option two, is possible, but would represent a major diversion of resources as each file would have to be re-reviewed, a note made of every page requiring extraction/deletion of personally sensitive information and for these actions to be carried out. It is estimated some 200 man hours would be required and so as not to adversely affect our existing review and transfer programme the task spread over a six month period. For the third option advice was sought from MOD's Legal Advisers. Their advice is that the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect third party confidentially by use of the 30 year rule. Release of records pertaining to that period are, therefore, not a problem but the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it released documents containing the personal details of members of the public before the 30 year point. We have therefore concluded that, having rejected options (a) and (b), we are unable to make a block release of the files before the 30 year point. A draft letter to Lord Hill-Norton to this effect is attached.

Section 40
Hd CS(RM)
MTA8/3 [redacted] MB
Section 40

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

8 September 1999

APS/USofS

Copy to:

AO/AD1

'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS' – MOD INTEREST

ISSUE

1. To provide a note on the Department's interest in 'UFOs'.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To note.

DETAIL

Policy

3. It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

4. Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft). From that perspective, reports sent to us of 'UFO' sightings are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space: such as reports from credible witnesses (pilots, air traffic controllers etc); those supported by photographic, video or documentary evidence; corroboration by a number of witnesses; or are of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years in these categories and further investigation of them has found no evidence of a threat.

Airprox Reports

5. Where a military or civilian pilot considers that his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he was unable to

identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

Spaceguard Programme

6. The Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for the Spaceguard Programme. We understand that there are currently no plans to set up a national spaceguard agency; the potential threat of impact by near earth objects (such as asteroids) is taken very seriously but they regard this as an issue where a common international approach is essential. In June, the House of Lords debated the Spaceguard Programme; Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science at the DTI, led the debate for the Government.

Role of Sec(AS)2

7. Sec(AS)2 is the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police, all eventually make their way to Sec(AS)2 where each report is considered only to establish whether it has any defence significance. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year; so far this year c150 reports and 160 letters have been received. Sec(AS)2 is not constituted as a 'UFO' information bureau. There are no defence resources allocated for this purpose and, where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

8. Some 'ufologists' are unhappy with MOD's limited interest. A small number lobby vociferously for defence funds to be used for 'UFO' research, have their own agenda for such work and use all possible avenues (eg writing to the Prime Minister, other Government Departments, the media etc) to pursue their aims. All such approaches find their way to MOD, Sec(AS) for action.

'UFO' Files

9. As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention. However, since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

10. For some time, Lord Hill Norton, the only Parliamentarian with any interest in 'UFOs', has been asking that all files containing 'UFO' information be released to the PRO ahead of the 30-year point. We have looked carefully to see whether this is possible. However, in the absence of a Departmental-wide file database and without knowing the details of all the originating branches, a manual search of in excess of one million files at two main MOD archives would be necessary to locate and list

them. In November last year the location of some 55 'UFO' files was established. The files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. Legal advice was sought: the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect the third party confidentiality by use of the 30-year rule. Release after that date would present no problems to MOD, but release in advance would lay the Department open to the risk of legal action for breach of confidence. To remove the personal details from these files would be a time consuming task. Staff in CS(RM), the MOD's Records Branch would need to be diverted from their essential tasks to manually scrutinise and sanitise some 5,000 pages on the files. The knock-on effect would be a major disruption to the Department's overall programme for the release of files to the PRO and cannot be justified.

Mr Nicholas Pope

11. An ex-Sec(AS)2 employee, Nick Pope, has published two books on 'UFO' matters since leaving the branch in 1994: 'Open Skies, Closed Minds' and 'The Uninvited', the latter about alien abduction. A third book, about an alien invasion of the UK, is likely to be published next month. In all three books Mr Pope puts forward his personal views and is critical of MOD's limited interest in 'UFOs'. The two books already published resulted in an increase in media and public interest in 'UFOs', which in turn led to temporary increases in the number of enquiries and sighting reports received. Mr Pope continues to be employed by the Department.

CONCLUSION

12. There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs' or implement a research programme to investigate 'ufologists' claims. We are unable to release to the PRO all 'UFO' files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 87065MB
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
Fax: M Section 40

EU Readmission Issues

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the claim of the European Commission that the EU should have competence over readmission issues. [94133]

Mrs. Roche: Following the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty, matters concerning immigration and asylum co-operation are now contained within Title IV of the Treaty establishing the European Community and are therefore within Community competence. The Government is of the view that readmission issues could fall within the scope of Article 63(3)(b) TEC which provides for measures on immigration policy within the area of removal of illegal residents.

Under the terms of the Protocol on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland, annexed to the Treaties by the Treaty of Amsterdam, the United Kingdom may decide to participate in the adoption and application of any measures, including readmission measures, brought forward in Title IV, but it is not otherwise bound by Community law in this area. Should any readmission measures be considered to be a development of the Schengen acquis, the provisions of the Protocol integrating the Schengen acquis into the framework of the European Union would also be relevant.

Prison Education

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors are used to determine the allocation of resources for postgraduate education courses to prisoners serving lengthy prison sentences. [94704]

Mr. Boateng: The main priority for the Prison Service is to raise the levels of literacy and numeracy among prisoners, but there are opportunities for eligible prisoners to pursue courses of higher education where resources allow.

A prisoner would be deemed eligible if as a result of assessment a higher degree course was a requirement of the sentence plan. It would be necessary prior to embarking on this course of study for the prisoner to demonstrate that he or she was capable of attaining the qualification. Resources to pay for this could either come from the governor's budget, a charitable organisation or from the prisoner or a relative.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources are available for courses of study to further degree level in each prison; what criteria are applied in deciding the allocation of these resources; and if he will make a statement. [94583]

Mr. Boateng: It is for prison governors to decide how much from their annual budget to allocate to education. The main priority of the Prison Service is to raise the levels of literacy and numeracy among prisoners, but there are opportunities for eligible prisoners to pursue higher education studies. Each application is considered on its merits, and there is no predetermined level of funding specifically for degree courses. Before any application can be approved, the governor and education officer need to be satisfied that the prisoner has the aptitude, ability and motivation to complete their chosen course.

The Prison Service has made arrangements for eligible prisoners to undertake degree and other higher education courses with the Open University. These can be funded either by the prisoner, a relative, through a charitable trust or by the prison.

In addition, the Open University has a system of financial support which it has agreed, as from the academic year starting February 2000, it will extend to pay the fees for continuing students in prison and has allocated up to £100,000 for this purpose.

Freedom of Information

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will authorise correspondence and papers between Ministers and their US counterparts to be made available for public access, simultaneous to their availability in the USA under the provisions of that country's freedom of information legislation; and if he will make a statement. [94385]

Mr. Straw: The Code of Practice on Access to Government Information sets out current Government policy on access to information. The Code of Practice promotes a culture of openness. It makes the assumption that information should be released except where disclosure would not be in the public interest. Whilst the Code of Practice identifies categories of information that are exempt from the commitment to provide information, where there is a reference to harm or prejudice, there is the presumption that information should be disclosed unless the harm likely to arise from disclosure would outweigh the public interest in making the information available. The Code of Practice is a non-statutory regime which the Government plan to replace with a Freedom of Information Act. It will, however, continue to operate the Code of Practice until a new Act is brought into force. The Government plan to introduce a Freedom of Information Bill into Parliament as soon as the timetable allows.

The Government's proposals for a Freedom of Information Act are contained within Freedom of Information, Consultation on Draft Legislation. Under the provisions contained in the Bill, public authorities, including all central government departments, will have a duty to comply with requests promptly and in any event within a specified time limit. Where the information sought falls into an exempt area, it will be for the authority to consider, on a case by case basis, whether the information should be disclosed in the public interest. This will ensure that proper consideration is given to all requests by the authority. This is the appropriate way forward. It is for the United Kingdom Government to develop legislation which is appropriate to the needs of this country. It would be wrong to subject United Kingdom authorities to the scope of foreign legislation in the context of their activities in this country. It is for the Parliament of the United Kingdom to decide such matters, not the congress of the United States of America.

The draft Bill was the subject of pre-legislative scrutiny by the Public Administration Select Committee, as well as a Select Committee of the House of Lords and a period of public consultation. The Government will respond to the recommendations of the Select Committees and to the public consultation soon.

6411

21 Oct 99.

Section 40

Section 40 called this morning. Section 40 the Political Editor of The Times has been in touch with US&S about 'UFOs'. US&S is considering whether to have a meeting with Section 40 to discuss 'UFOs' face to face.

What are your views? Please call Section 40 back on x Section 40

I looked through our Press Cuttings file (attached) + there haven't been any big articles in The Times recently on 'UFOs'. There was an article in July on a Saturday but it was mostly about the United States, not the UK or MOD (see enc 109).

Section 40 will be leaving tonight at 1730 - 1745. If you're not back in time to tell him, give him a ring in the morning.

Section 40 pto.

Section 40 decided to advise US of U's office to tell Section 40 to go to X Press Office + get a written statement of MOD's role. He is still a journalist + should not be treated differently.

From: Section 40 Secretariat (Air Staff)2
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Room 8247, Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 0171 218 Section 40
(Switchboard) 0171 218 5000
(Fax) 0171 218 Section 40

Section 40
Air Attache
French Embassy
58 Knightsbridge
London SW1X 7JT

Your Reference

Our Reference
D/Sec(AS)/64/1
Date
1 October 1999

Dear Section 40,

We spoke on Wednesday evening about a request you had received from a retired French Air Force Air Marshal for information about the way the Ministry of Defence deals with reports of 'unidentified flying objects'. I said I would send you a note; this is attached.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS' – UK MOD INTEREST

It is UK Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for UK MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. UK MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

The military requirement to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace is met by a continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of air defence aircraft). From that perspective, reports provided to us of 'UFO' sightings are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years that warranted further investigation and none revealed any evidence of a threat.

Where a military or civilian pilot considered that his aircraft had been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object that he was unable to identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believed there had been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

Secretariat(Air Staff)2 is the focal point within UK MOD for the UK Government's limited interest in 'UFOs' and a 24-hour answerphone is provided so that anyone can telephone through sighting reports. There is no special form for reporting a sighting; information such as the date, time, location and a description of what has been seen can also be sent to the MOD by letter, e-mail or fax. Sighting reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police, are also forwarded to Sec(AS)2. Each report is considered only to establish whether it has any defence significance.

Although Sec(AS)2 is the focal point for dealing with any 'UFO' related public correspondence, it is not constituted as a 'UFO' information bureau. There are no defence resources allocated for this purpose and, where there is no evidence in a sighting report or letter of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen.

** TX CONFIRMATION REPORT ** AS OF 1 OCT '99 14:24 PAGE.01

SEC AS 2

	DATE	TIME	TO/FROM	MODE	MIN/SEC	PGS	STATUS
01	10/ 1	14:23		EC--S	01'01	02	OK

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

8 September 1999

APS/USofS

Copy to:

AO/AD1

'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS' – MOD INTEREST

ISSUE

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RECOMMENDATION

2. To note.

DETAIL

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'UFO' Files

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them. In November last year the location of some 55 'UFO' files was established. The files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. Legal advice was sought: the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect the third party confidentiality by use of the 30-year rule. Release after that date would present no problems to MOD, but release in advance would lay the Department open to the risk of legal action for breach of confidence. To remove the personal details from these files would be a time consuming task. Staff in CS(RM), the MOD's Records Branch would need to be diverted from their essential tasks to manually scrutinise and sanitise some 5,000 pages on the files. The knock-on effect would be a major disruption to the Department's overall programme for the release of files to the PRO and cannot be justified.

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11. An ex-Sec(AS)2 employee, Nick Pope, has published two books on 'UFO' matters since leaving the branch in 1994: 'Open Skies, Closed Minds' and 'The Uninvited', the latter about alien abduction. A third book, about an alien invasion of the UK, is likely to be published next month. In all three books Mr Pope puts forward his personal views and is critical of MOD's limited interest in 'UFOs'. The two books already published resulted in an increase in media and public interest in 'UFOs', which in turn led to temporary increases in the number of enquiries and sighting reports received. Mr Pope continues to be employed by the Department.

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Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 [redacted]**MB** Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
Fax: MB [redacted] Section 40

Not to be communicated to anyone outside HM Service without authority

DCI GEN 223
1999

Defence Council Instructions

General

Section 40

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
6 August 1999

DCIs are automatically cancelled after one year

Contents

[D/DOMD/2/3:84814MB]

About this DCI

1. This DCI provides guidance on the way in which Government information should be released or retained, including how to deal with queries from members of the public, Parliamentary Questions and Parliamentary Enquiries about the work of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Armed Services. It is based on the *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Second Edition, 1997)* and supersedes DCI 54/98. All employees of the MOD, its Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and the Armed Forces should be familiar with this guidance and ensure that it is fully and consistently applied. Copies of this DCI and Guidance on Interpretation of the Code can be found on MODWeb under 'Policy' then 'The Machinery of Government: Open Government in the Ministry of Defence', on DAWN under DCIs on the PE Knowledge Base, via the Internet at http://www.mod.uk/policy/opengovt/policy.htm, and from OMD14 on 84814MB. Further specialist advice on the disclosure of both official and personal information may be obtained from C&L(F&S)Legal 1.

2. This DCI has been produced by the Directorate of Organisation and Management Development (DOMD). DOMD is responsible for MOD policy on openness, monitoring the Code, and handling appeals. A list of useful guidance and contacts is at ANNEX A.

Freedom of Information

3. A Freedom of Information White Paper, 'Your Right to Know', was published in December 1997. This has now been followed by the publication of a Draft Freedom of Information Bill on 24 May 99. Following a period of consultation the Government is committed to introducing the Bill to Parliament as soon as the legislative programme allows. The purpose of the legislation 'is to increase openness and accountability by ending unnecessary secrecy in the public sector' by establishing a general statutory right of access to official records and information, and is linked with the general drive for higher standards of service. PUS reiterated MOD's position in Paper Clips (June 1999): 'We should see Freedom of Information as an opportunity to carry forward existing Departmental policy to be more open about Defence matters... Freedom of Information is about changing culture in favour of openness, and in recognising that more of our business may be open to disclosure than at present.' *Advice on how to operate the Act when it enters into force and procedures to be followed will be provided in due course.* Contacts for further information are listed under ANNEX A.

Applying the Code of Practice

4. In the meantime, the Government has made it clear that it wishes to continue to use the existing non-statutory Code of Practice as the basis for greater openness in government. Staff should note that the Code sets a minimum standard for

k. Other developments. This would include any other relevant developments over the year. Please also include specific examples of Code requests which have resulted in disclosure. These might include instances where information has been disclosed for the first time or where a request has resulted in a change in policy towards disclosure.

l. Progress on review of information currently withheld. Please provide details of any progress made regarding reviews of previously withheld material, including examples of any information or records which have been made available.

4. As stated above, those divisions receiving large numbers of requests are not expected to undertake fully comprehensive monitoring. The information requested may be obtained by sampling requests over a shorter period and extrapolating a figure for the year. You should note, however, that the operation of the Code is subject to audit and, therefore ensure that returns are as accurate as possible.

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Government openness. All parts of the MOD must, as a matter of policy, take a positive approach to the release of information and work on the presumption that information should be made available. This applies equally to dealings with members of the public and in responding to Parliamentary Questions and Parliamentary Enquiries.

5. Proposals that information should be withheld must be balanced with any public interest in disclosure. The Code includes exemptions (see Annex B) which specify when disclosure may be refused for specific reasons because it is not in the public interest, and a justification must be given in terms of the Code. The exemptions should be interpreted narrowly. Information should not be withheld simply because it is routinely classified within the MOD; the need for the classification should be re-examined in the light of the Department's policy on openness and the terms of the Code. Ways to disclose information should always be sought (e.g by releasing part of a document). *Staff are encouraged to seek advice from OMD14 in all cases when it is proposed that information should be withheld.*

6. The following information should be made routinely available:

- Facts and analysis of the facts considered relevant and important in framing major policy proposals and decisions;
- Explanatory material, including internal guidance on dealings with the public and on rules and procedures;
- Reasons for administrative decisions; and
- Full information about how public services are run, including details of any service standards and performance in relation to these.

Copies of documents of particular significance released to the public covering these and other areas should be sent to the Chief Librarian.

7. In addition, staff are encouraged to identify discrete blocks of records of more than ordinary interest to the public, which could be released to the Public Record Office ahead of the normal 30 year point. Details should be passed to: Defence Records 1 (DR1), Room A/82, Metropole Building, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP; Tel: [redacted] Section 40

Handling requests for information

8. The MOD has a duty to respond positively to any request for information (whether or not the Code has been specifically mentioned in the request). Failure to do so could result in an appeal to the Ombudsman (Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration) and ultimately to censure. In general, information should be released in the most cost effective manner. Where an individual has requested information contained wholly within a specific document or report, and no information within that document or report is exempt, it may be easier to disclose the whole document or report. DR1 and DOMD should be advised when a whole document is released.

9. *Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and Parliamentary Enquiries (PEs).* (See also the 'Useful guidance and contacts' at ANNEX A). Requests for information from MPs and Peers (PQs and PEs) should also be treated in accordance with the Code and specialist guidance as necessary. Answers must always be open, honest and unambiguous. They must not deceive or mislead. Information should only be withheld where the Code would allow it and the advice to Ministers should set out the information it is not possible to publish, together with an explanation why. The answer to the PQ or PE *must* include a specific reference to the exemption under which the Minister has decided to withhold the information requested. It is never acceptable to say simply, as has been done in the past, that it is not our practice to give a particular type of information.

10. *Response targets.* Requests for information should be replied to within 20 working days (simple requests should be replied to sooner). The Department is required to report on its performance against this target and PUS has personally emphasised the importance he attaches to achieving the target whenever possible. *On rare occasions where the target cannot be met because requests require more extensive work, an initial holding reply must be sent within 20 working days* (preferably earlier), explaining the reasons for any delay, and an indication of the time it will take to respond fully. Correspondents should be kept informed of the progress of their request.

11. *Charging.* Charges may be made to cover costs of identifying and releasing the information required. This will not apply to information which has traditionally been free. Further, no charge should be made for the first four hours spent replying to a request. After this time, a charge of £15.00 may be made for every extra hour (or part thereof) worked. Any cheques should be made payable to 'The Accounting Officer, MOD.' If dealing with a request would require an *unreasonable* diversion of resources, it may be refused (see exemption 9 of the Code). If charges are likely, an enquirer should be informed as early as possible of their estimated size and asked if he/she wishes the enquiry to proceed (see ANNEX C, para 2). This charging regime applies irrespective of the status of the enquirer (e.g. private individual or business).

12. *Withholding information.* No categories of information are automatically excluded from the Code. Categories of information which may be exempted from release when this is in the public interest are listed at ANNEX B. Each request should always be judged on its merits, and there should not be an assumption that if information is currently exempt it will always be exempt. The emphasis must always be on allowing as much information as possible to flow freely into the public domain. If information is refused, it should be made clear in the reply that the balance of public interest in the individual case has been considered and has been judged to weigh against disclosure. In order to ensure that these obligations are taken seriously, all refusals of requests must be cleared, in writing, at one-star level. Any letter of refusal must refer to the relevant Code exemption(s), give as much additional explanation as possible, and enclose a paragraph explaining the appeals procedure (see ANNEX C, para 1). Refusals of telephone requests must, like written refusals, make clear the right of appeal.

c. Number of 'Code requests 'for which a charge was made, and the amount charged in each case. You should comment if the fees do not cover the bulk of the costs incurred over the period, or if they are too severe.

d. Number of 'Code requests' which were refused.

e. Sources of 'Code requests ' The number of 'Code requests' coming from' members of the following groups:

- Private individuals
- Business (including legal firms)
- Media and journalists
- Academics
- Charities, lobby groups and campaigns (including Campaign for Freedom of Information)
- MPs/Peers
- Other (including MBPs)

f. Overall volume ofcorrespondence/information requests, not including 'Code requests'. An estimate of the overall volume of correspondence and requests for information received should be given. You are not expected to undertake comprehensive monitoring - a reliable figure that can be subsequently checked will suffice, together with a brief explanation of how it was reached.

Further information

Short contributions under each of the following headings should also be provided. Where appropriate, details should be given of how and where copies of the information or publications mentioned can be obtained (including prices).

g. *Facts and analysis with major policy announcements.* Details of any background material made available with Departmental policy announcements over the year.

h. *Reasons with decisions.* Any announcements of new areas or activities where reasons have been given for decisions for the first time as a result of the Code - and major examples of where they are already given.

i. *Internal guidance documents.* Details of any information published on the operation of Departmental systems or schemes, and in particular any internal guidance that have been made available over the year.

J. *Information under the Citizen's Charter.* Information about any new charters or publication of new information (league tables or similar) plus a brief description of existing information available.

ANNEX D

Monitoring Requirements

1. MOD is required annually to monitor performance against our targets and other commitments under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (the Code). All MOD divisions, units, Agencies and NDPBs should monitor performance and provide a return. The reporting period is the calendar year. Systems should be in place to collect data throughout the year (1 Jan 99 to 31 Dec 99) and returns should be provided through Command Secretaries early in January 2000. A reminder will be sent out in October/November 1999. You should note that the operation of the Code is subject to audit and hence ensure that returns are accurate.

2. Important, please read this carefully: **All** correspondence and requests for information received by MOD should be dealt with in accordance with the Code. *However, for monitoring purposes, only certain types of correspondence are categorised as 'Code requests'* (see para 3 and para 4 a.-e.). Only an overall volume figure of other requests is required (see para 4 f.)

3. For monitoring purposes 'Code requests' are defined as follows:

- Requests which specifically mention the Code;
- Requests for which a charge is made (see para 11 of this DCI); and
- Requests for which information has been refused under one or more Code exemption (see para 12 of this DCI).

If a request falls into more than one category it should only be counted once. Do not count Code requests which you have received but passed to another organisation to answer.

Parliamentary Questions should not be counted in the returns. Each *Parliamentary Enquiry* should be counted, but should be categorised in the same manner as all other requests for information according to the following means of identification; ie: PEs are *not necessarily* 'Code requests'.

Email correspondence should be treated as 'paper' correspondence and monitored in exactly the same way.

4. Data should be provided in the following format:

a. Number of 'Code requests' dealt with over the period.

b. Number of 'Code requests' answered within 20 working days.

13. *Email requests.* Requests made by email should be dealt with in accordance with the Code, as if they were 'paper' requests, and monitored on the same basis. Replies should be punctual, polite and informative. If information is being withheld, this must be done in accordance with the Code and an explanation of the appeals procedure must be given (see ANNEX C, part 1).

Appeals

14. All appeals will be dealt with centrally by DOMD. DOMD will require a full history of the case from the relevant branch, within ten working days, in order to complete the appeals procedure within the Department's target (20 working days). The review will ensure that the Department's position is justified, should the case be referred to the Ombudsman at a later date. Appeals can only be made in writing.

Monitoring Requirements

15. The MOD is required by the Home Office to compile data on the number of requests for information and their treatment (see ANNEX D). All divisions receiving requests from members of the public, or making documents public, are therefore asked to collate this data and return it to OMD14 for the Home Office deadline early in January 2000. More details, along with a reminder of this requirement and guidance on responses will be issued in the form of a minute to Command Secretaries in October/November 1999. In addition, divisions should keep, in a readily accessible form, records of all correspondence about the release of information. This is to allow a prompt response in the event of investigation by the Ombudsman.

ANNEX A

Useful guidance and contacts

Open Government, and the Contents of this DCI : OMD14, Room 617, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP; Tel: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

Freedom of Information: OMD/AD(E&MG), Room 617, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP; Tel: [redacted] Fax: [redacted] Information can also be found on MODWeb under 'Policy' then 'The Machinery of Government: Open Government in the Ministry of Defence' or on the Home Office website (http://www.homeoffice. gov.uk/foi). *Note: Further advice will be provided in due course.*

Disclosure of Official and Personal Information: DC&L(F&S)Legal 1, Room 3/18, Metropole Building, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP; tel: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

Management of Records: Defence Records 1, Room A/82, Metropole Building, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP; Tel: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

PQs and PEs: The KITE (Keep It To Essentials) booklet, 'Parliamentary Business.'Guidance on drafting answers to PQs (a 1997 DCI) can be found on MODWeb under 'Instructions' then 'DCIs', and on DAWN under DCIs on the PE Knowledge Base.

Environmental Information: Annex 3 of JSP 418

Public Enquiries Office: 0171 2186645

Complaints Contact Point: [redacted] Assistant Parliamentary Clerk. Room 6134MB, Parliamentary Branch; Tel: [redacted]

Media ContactPoint: Press Office: Tel: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

ANNEX C

Recommended text when withholding / charging for information etc.

1. *If with holding information (reference to a Code exemption and the paragraph explaining appeals must be included whenever information is withheld).* If it is necessary to withhold some or all of the information requested under the Code,.an explanation must always be given within the terms of the Code. Where possible, try to include any additional explanation (specifically what harm would be caused by disclosure):

'I am withholding this information in accordance with Exemption (e.g. 1) of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, which relates to (e.g. defence, security and international relations).

If you are unhappy with this decision and wish to appeal against it, you should write in the first instance to Ministry of Defence, DOMD, Room 619, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP. If, following the internal review you remain dissatisfied, you can ask your MP to take up the case with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) who can investigate on your behalf. The Ombudsman will not investigate until the internal review process has been completed.'

2. *If it will be necessary to charge an enquirer for information*
'The Ministry of Defence is bound by the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. This means that we are committed to providing you with the information you require, as long as it is not exempted under the Code. However, to ensure that this does not create an extra burden on the taxpayer, we have a charging regime for more complicated requests. If a request is likely to require over four hours' work, each hour's work over four hours (or part thereof) is charged at £15 per hour. I am writing to inform you that your enquiry will take more than four hours to deal with. Our estimate is that we will have to charge you £x. *I would be grateful for confirmation that you wish to proceed with this enquiry and that you are willing to meet this charge.* If the cost of obtaining the information is likely to be significantly greater than our estimate suggests we will contact you again before proceeding further.'

3. *Disclaimer*. The following disclaimer should be used if necessary:
'The information released to you was originally produced and retained solely for MOD purposes and, while every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy and completeness, no warranty can be given as to its accuracy or to its suitability for any other purpose. The MOD accepts no liability for loss or damage resulting from the use of this information.'

4. *Copyright*. Given the spirit of the Code, further copying and use of material should not normally be limited. If, however, in a particular case, you wish to limit reproduction, the following wording should be used:

'(C) Crown copyright reserved. For permission to reproduce, please apply to the Controller of HMSO.'

11. *Research, statistics and analysis*

a. Information relating to incomplete analysis, research or statistics where disclosure could be misleading or deprive the holder of priority of publication or commercial value.

b. Information held only for preparing statistics or carrying out research, or for surveillance for health and safety purposes (including food safety), and which relates to individuals, companies or products which will not be identified in reports of that research or surveillance, or in published statistics.

12. *Privacy of an individual.* Unwarranted disclosure to a third party of personal information about any person (including a deceased person) or any other disclosure which would constitute or could facilitate an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

13. *Third party's commercial confidences.* Information including commercial confidences, trade secrets or intellectual property whose unwarranted disclosure would harm the competitive position of a third party

14. *Information given in confidence*

a. Information held in consequence of having been supplied in confidence by a person who:

(1) gave the information under a statutory guarantee that its confidentiality would be protected; or
(2) was not under any legal obligation, whether actual or implied, to supply it, and has not consented to its disclosure.

b. Information whose disclosure without consent of the supplier would prejudice the future supply of such information.

c. Medical information provided in confidence if disclosure to the subject would harm their physical or mental health, or should only be made by a medical practitioner.

15. *Statutory and other restrictions*

a. Information whose disclosure is prohibited by or under any enactment, regulation, European Community law or international agreement.

b. Information whose release would constitute a breach of Parliamentary Privilege.

ANNEX B

Code of Practice on Access to Government Information

Reasons For Confidentiality

The following categories of information are exempt from the commitments to provide information in this Code. In those categories which refer to harm or prejudice, the presumption remains that information should be disclosed unless the harm likely to arise from disclosure would outweigh the public interest in making the information available.

References to harm or prejudice include both actual harm or prejudice and risk or reasonable expectation of harm or prejudice. In such cases it should be considered whether any harm or prejudice arising from disclosure is outweighed by the public interest in making information available.

The exemptions will not be interpreted in a way which causes injustice to individuals.

More detailed guidance on exemptions can be obtained from OMD14.

1. *Defence, security and international relations*

a. Information whose disclosure would harm national security or defence.

b. Information whose disclosure would harm the conduct of international relations or affairs.

c. Information received in confidence from foreign governments, foreign courts or international organisations.

2. Internal discussion and advice. Information whose disclosure would harm the frankness and candour of internal discussion, including:

a. proceedings of Cabinet and Cabinet committees

b. internal opinion, advice, recommendation, consultation and deliberation;

c. projections and assumptions relating to internal policy analysis; analysis of alternative policy options and information relating to rejected policy options;

d. confidential communications between Departments, public bodies and regulatory bodies.

3. *Communications with the Royal Household.* Information relating to confidential communications between Ministers and Her Majesty the Queen or other Members of the Royal Household, or relating to confidential proceedings of the Privy Council.

4. *Law enforcement and legal proceedings*

a. Information whose disclosure could prejudice the administration ofjustice (including fair trial), legal proceedings or the proceedings of any tribunal, public inquiry or formal investigations (whether actual or likely) or whose disclosure is, has been, or is likely to be addressed in the context of such proceedings.

b. Information whose disclosure could prejudice the enforcement or proper administration of the law, including the prevention, investigation or detection of crinie, or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

c. Information relating to legal proceedings or the proceedings of any tribunal, public inquiry or other formal investigation which have been completed or terminated, or relating to investigations which have or might have resulted in proceedings.

d. Information covered by legal professional privilege.

e. Information whose disclosure would harm public safety or public order, or would prejudice the security of any building or penal institution.

f. Information whose disclosure could endanger the life or physical safety of any person, or identify the source of information or assistance given in confidence for law enforcement or security purposes.

g. Information whose disclosure would increase the likelihood of damage to the environment, or rare or endangered species and their habitats.

5. *Immigration and nationality.* Information relating to immigration, nationality, consular and entry clearance cases. However, information will be provided, though not through access to personal records, where there is no risk that disclosure would prejudice the effective administration of immigration controls or other statutory provisions.

6. *Effective management of the economy and collection of tax*

a. Information whose disclosure would harm the ability of the Government to manage the economy, prejudice the conduct of official market operations, or could lead to improper gain or advantage.

b. Information whose disclosure would prejudice the assessment or collection of tax, duties or National Insurance contributions, or assist tax avoidance or evasion.

7. *Effective management and operations of the public service*

a. Information whose disclosure could lead to improper gain or advantage or would prejudice:

(1) the competitive position of a Department or other public body or authority;
(2) negotiations or the effective conduct of personnel management, or commercial or contractual activities;
(3) the awarding of discretionary grants.

b. Information whose disclosure would harm the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of a department or other public body or authority, including NHS organisations, or of any regnlatory body.

8. *Public employment, public appointments and honours*

a. Personnel records (relating to public appointments as well as employees of public authorities) including those relating to recruitment, promotion and security vetting.

b. Information, opinions and assessments given in confidence in relation to public employment and public appointments made by Ministers of the Crown, by the Crown on the advice of Ministers or by statutory office holders.

c. Information, opinions and assessments given in relation to recommendations for honours.

9. *Voluminous or vexatious requests.* Requests for information which are vexatious or manifestly unreasonable or are formulated in too general a manner, or which (because of the amount of information to be processed or the need to retrieve information from files not in current use) would require unreasonable diversion of resources.

10. *Publication and prematurity in relation to publication.* Information which is or will soon be published, or whose disclosure, where the material relates to a planned or potential announcement or publication, could cause harm (for example, of a physical or financial nature).

devolved bodies and central government. If, as a matter of generality, they are to be published they are available for public scrutiny and comment.

Viscount Waverley: My Lords, is it considered that concordats in Welsh placed in the Library will remain confidential?

Lord Williams of Mostyn: My Lords, they will not be confidential because my noble friend Lord Cledwyn, the noble Lord, Lord Roberts, and I will have read them.

Lord Strathclyde: My Lords, will the concordats to be made between the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly be debated in this House of Parliament?

Lord Williams of Mostyn: My Lords, no, that is not the intention. The relevant territorial Secretary of State will be authorised on behalf of the UK Parliament to enter into those agreements. It is then a matter for the devolved bodies as to what they want to debate, in what detail and in what form. It is entirely a matter for the Assembly, but I would expect that some of the concordats or memoranda of understanding will be debated.

Lord Roberts of Conwy: My Lords, the Minister has been most helpful, but can he tell the House a little more about what has been referred to in the other place as the "overarching" concordat dealing with the relationship between the Welsh Assembly and the UK representative in Brussels? What is the further scope of that concordat and does it involve Scotland too?

Lord Williams of Mostyn: My Lords, I am happy to assist your Lordships in answering that question. The overarching concordats—they are plural—relate to questions of Europe, international relations, statistics and inward investment between the United Kingdom Government and the devolved bodies. That is part of the continuing process of debate and negotiation taking place at the moment.

Spaceguard Programme

2.50 p.m.

Lord Tanlaw asked Her Majesty's Government:

What steps are being taken to form a national spaceguard centre, as part of a European spaceguard programme, to improve the assessment and probability factor of impact hazard of a near earth object on the continent of Europe or in the seas surrounding it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Lord Sainsbury of Turville): My Lords, the Government take the potential threat of impact by near earth objects very seriously, but we regard it as an issue where a common international approach is essential. The UK therefore supported a recent workshop on monitoring programmes for asteroids and comets in Turin earlier this month, which was sponsored by the European Space Agency and the Spaceguard Foundation among others. The European Space Agency is also mounting a study to produce a system for the co-ordination of the world-wide capability in near earth object research.

At the present moment, the Government have no plans to set up a national spaceguard agency, but we will consider the possibility when we receive the report of the Turin meeting. Any additional work undertaken in the UK must have benefit over and above that being taken internationally.

Lord Tanlaw: My Lords, I thank the Minister for Science for that Answer, which I shall study with interest. Is he aware of the most recent astronomical data which forecasts that a potentially hazardous asteroid designated 1999 AN 10, weighing approximately 2 million tonnes and a kilometre in size, will miss the earth by only 24,000 miles on 7th August 2027 and will possibly impact on its return in 2044?

Is he also aware that, unlike a NATO missile which travels at approximately 500 miles an hour on a pre-programmed trajectory, AN 10 is approaching earth at 25,000 miles an hour on a chaotic orbit and will require a more detailed observational data before the International Astronomical Union can definitely certify it as harmless in the years following its approach in the year 2027?

May I therefore ask the noble Lord the Minister for Science—I am sorry, but the issue is somewhat technical—how does he intend to calculate the risk for the next generation posed by the low probability but high consequence threat of 1999 AN 10 and other potentially hazardous asteroids which have a non-zero impact probability?

Furthermore, is the noble Lord the Minister for Science aware that only 10 per cent of near earth objects which could be classified as hazardous have been identified so far?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, I am aware of the situation and all that information on asteroid 1999 AN 10. It was discovered in January. The estimated probability is one in 500,000 of colliding with the earth during its 2024 encounter. It is therefore extremely remote. It is important that this information is transmitted regularly and we hope that in due course the spaceguard website will convey the information to the public.

Lord McConnell: My Lords, does the Minister agree that if such a centre is to be established in the United Kingdom the obvious place is Armagh observatory in Northern Ireland where they have the experience, have undertaken a great deal of research and where work can be carried out most effectively?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, one of the key issues in this regard is that any programme of detection or deflection should be on an international basis. In view of the fact that we would not be able to tell where such things were going to land until the last moment, it would be absurd if each country were to

[LORD SAINSBURY OF TURVILLE]
have its own detection and deflection programme. Therefore, it is important that we have an international effort. The ESA is working on an international effort. When it has been produced we will examine what contribution we can make and the Armagh observatory will be an obvious candidate to play a part in that.

Lord Winston: My Lords, in addition to consulting other agencies, has the Minister considered consulting the right reverend Prelates?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, I believe that prayer would certainly be a key part of any strategy.

Viscount Davidson: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware that the asteroid has already landed and is called William Hague?

Baroness Nicol: My Lords, am I right in believing in the odds quoted by the Minister are twice as good as the odds of winning the lottery? Does not that give him cause for concern?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, the odds are extremely remote and are comparable to winning the National Lottery. That means we should have one instance about every 100,000 years.

Lord Mackie of Benshie: My Lords, how does the Minister propose to deflect these objects?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, the main consideration in deflection, if it ever gets to that point, is that the longer time one has between the time one observes the object and the time of impact the easier it is to deflect it because one can deal with less force. A number of proposals have been made ranging from impact on the asteroid, to nuclear weapons, to detonation on the surface of the asteroid. Clearly, in most cases, if we observe it early enough it would be possible to think of a strategy to deal with it.

Lord Wilberforce: My Lords, is the Minister aware of the fact that the name of spaceguard and the concept of it was devised many years ago by the eminent science fiction writer, Arthur C. Clarke, now Sir Arthur Clarke, who is a British subject and has his own telescope? Does that not furnish a very strong reason why we should have our own national agency, no doubt working with the international agencies, in order to draw on the great experience and imagination of that great writer?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, I must disagree. There are more important considerations as to whether we have our own agency. The first question is whether work should be done by any of the current bodies rather than invoking new agencies.

Lord Tanlaw: My Lords, I am sorry that the Minister has been subjected to the giggle-factor, which is a problem involved with this subject. Does he agree on the general principle that if nations are prepared to pay to preserve their civilised past for the current generation, should they not be equally prepared to pay for the preservation of a civilised future for the next generation? Would not a first step in this direction be to subscribe to a national spaceguard centre as part of a European contribution to a global spaceguard programme which could benefit the future of all mankind?

Lord Sainsbury of Turville: My Lords, I would not wish to imply in any way that this is a trivial issue. It is a serious issue because mainly, while the chances of impact are extremely small, the impact of any object more than a kilometre in length could be considerable. Therefore, we propose to work through ESA. Of all subjects which come before this House, this is one in respect of which an international effort is the key. We shall play our part in that rather than acting independently.

Kosovo: Return of Refugees

2.57 p.m.

Lord Blaker asked Her Majesty's Government:

What preparations are being made for creating conditions in Kosovo which will encourage refugees to return there once a settlement of the dispute with Yugoslavia has been achieved.

Baroness Amos: My Lords, the refugees are keen to return to Kosovo as soon as their security is guaranteed. As the international security presence is established in Kosovo and as Federal Republic of Yugoslavia security forces withdraw, so we, in close collaboration with the military and UN, can begin the considerable task of providing the displaced persons and refugees with humanitarian support and assistance to rebuild their homes and essential infrastructure. The Department for International Development is currently establishing a field office in Pristina in order to better assist with this task.

Lord Blaker: My Lords, I thank the Minister for that statement. However, perhaps I may express my disappointment that this Question is not being answered by her noble friend Lady Symons who I informed yesterday that my Question would be a political one and not an aid question. I want to refer to a matter which I believe is relevant to the question of the enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm of the refugees to return to Kosovo; that is, the risk of continuing friction or disagreement between NATO and the Russians which could certainly discourage refugees returning.

Given the helpful role of Russia in securing the cease-fire and the known willingness of Russia to provide troops, is it not surprising that no role was provided for Russian troops in the military agreement? I am not justifying Russian action in relation to Pristina airport but it is important to understand why they may have taken this action.

Noble Lords: Order!

Lord Blaker: My Lords, with silence, I shall come to my Question. President Yeltsin referred to the

Issue 125 – June 1999

PAPER CLIPS

Freedom of Information

Last month, the Government published a draft Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill for a period of public consultation. More wide ranging than the present Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (it will apply not just to central Government, but to many more bodies, such as local authorities, the NHS and the Police), the subsequent FOI Act will have the following key features:

- it will give anyone a right of access to information held by public authorities, enforceable in law;
- it will normally require the release of documents where requested, not just of information;
- it will establish an Information Commissioner with the power to overturn a Department's decision to withhold information and order disclosure;
- recognising that certain information should be protected from disclosure, it will contain a number of exemptions allowing for non-disclosure of information for a variety of reasons including national security, defence, international relations, personal privacy, and commercial interests. Vexatious requests and those which could only be answered at disproportionate cost, can also be refused.

The PUS, Kevin Tebbit, writes about what this will mean for MOD. "Giving people a right of access to information is part of the wider programme to modernise Government. It is therefore an important development in the way we work. Although Government Departments have been operating in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information since its introduction in 1994, a Freedom of Information Act will put that right of access on a statutory footing, which gives it that much more emphasis. The Bill itself can look daunting because of the legal language in which it is written, but although the precise timescale is not yet certain, all staff will receive guidance in plain English

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contents

Please note that the deadline date for articles for Paper Clips is the 4th of the month. (i.e. 4th June for July issue).

For more copies or change of delivery (Admin Officers) please contact DSDC(L)3a at Llangennech on 01554 822 421 or 420.

Opinions expressed by contributors sending 'letters to the editor' are not necessarily those of the Editorial Team nor the official views of the MOD. The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions including letters.

about how to use it before the Act actually comes into force.

MOD – Openness

This does not mean that there will be compromises over national security. Where information has to be protected, the draft Bill recognises and allows for it. Nevertheless we can, and should, be more open about our business. We are already doing a great deal to remove unnecessary secrecy for which the Department does not always get the recognition it deserves. To take the most important recent example during the Kosovo operation journalists and film crews have been given unprecedented access to the Defence Crisis Management Centre briefing rooms; through briefings and use of the Internet (including translation of part of the MOD Website into Serbian), we are being as open as possible about our military action and the reasons for it. More generally, we recently held a Nuclear Information Declassification Seminar with academics, journalists, scientists and others to talk about the priorities for declassifying information about our past and present nuclear activities. In the refurbished Main Building, we plan to have a public area with exhibitions available to the general public.

Freedom of Information

So there is already greater transparency about what we do. We should see Freedom of Information as an opportunity to carry forward existing Departmental policy to be more open about Defence matters, where vital operational and security issues are not involved. This means too, that we should be more proactive and consider whether there are areas of our business where we should make more information available to the general public without waiting to be pressed for it, especially when it helps to ensure that our policies and activities are better understood and supported. We only have to look at the material produced when the outcome of the Strategic Defence Review was announced, or at the range of information now available on the MOD Internet site, to see how things have improved compared with only a few years ago.

So, Freedom of Information is about changing culture in favour of openness, and in recognising that more of our business may be open to disclosure than at present. But in MOD at least we will not be starting from a blank sheet, and I hope that we will be able to use it as a positive opportunity to help build support for defence in this country."

(More information on the draft Freedom of Information Bill can be found in the June edition of FOCUS, on MODWeb (under What's New), and in briefing material that has been provided to all TLB Command Secretaries, Agency Chief Executives and staff in MOD HQ. Any questions should be put to: DOMD, Room 617, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP).

The 1999 MOD Snooker Championships

Entries are now invited from all MOD Civilian, DERA and Agency staff, as well as retired staff, for the 1999 MOD Snooker Championships. All applicants must be members of the Civil Service Sports Council. The Championships will be held at The Dudley Snooker Centre, West Midlands, on the 7th and 8th October 1999. There is an entrance fee of £10.00 per person. Entry Forms can be obtained from [redacted] D8Ra, Room 0105, Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB. Tel: [redacted]. The competition, (which is singles only), will be played over the two days. The closing date for entries is Friday 3rd September 1999.

Section 40
Section 40

Section 40 for info. More can be found on the MoDWeb or CHOTS under policy, then open government.

Section 40 for info

Section 40

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION: HOW WILL IT WORK?

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 23

What is Happening and When?

1. On 24 May, the Government published a draft Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill for public consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny by the House of Commons Select Committee for Public Administration. This follows proposals set out in a White Paper entitled "Your Right to Know" published in December 1997. The consultation period ends in mid-July. The Government is committed to introducing the Bill to Parliament as soon as the legislative programme allows, but the precise timetable for implementation of a Freedom of Information Act is not yet known. Nevertheless, MOD is confident that there will be sufficient time before the Act comes into force to provide guidance to staff on how to operate in accordance with it.

2. In the meantime, the *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information* remains the principal guide to openness, and all staff should continue to operate in accordance with it. Guidance on the *Code* can be found in DCI 54/98, which will be updated shortly, or can be obtained from DOMD at the address given at the end of this note. The main differences between the *Code* and the FOI Act are:

- the FOI Act will be law;
- the Act will normally require the release of documents where requested, not just information;
- the Act will establish an Information Commissioner with the power to order disclosure.

Who Will the Freedom of Information Affect?

3. The FOI Act will have much greater scope than the present *Code* (which is basically limited to central government departments), with coverage extended to areas such as local government, the NHS, educational bodies and the Police. The Ministry of Defence (including its Agencies) will be covered along with all other Government Departments, the Armed Forces (except for the Special Forces and units assisting GCHQ), the MOD Police, and non-departmental public bodies. The intelligence and security agencies and the Royal Household will be excluded.

4. Clearly, MOD staff most affected will be those whose responsibilities include responding to letters from MPs, Peers and members of the public. But Freedom of Information is about a change in culture towards openness, and so will impinge on all who keep records. All of us will have a responsibility to ensure that information is properly recorded and is accessible, and we will all need to consider whether there is more information which could routinely be made public, and not simply wait for requests to come in.

Who Can Ask For Information?

5. The Act will give a right of access to any person or organisation, British or foreign, to all government information. The right of access is twofold: to know whether the information requested is held, and to have that information communicated. The Government recognises, however, that certain information properly needs to be protected from disclosure. The Bill, therefore, allows the non-disclosure of information if

it falls within one or more exemptions. The Bill also allows "neither confirm nor deny" answers, an ability to refuse vexatious or repeated requests, and has a disproportionate cost threshold, beyond which requests need not be answered (this will be set initially at £500, the same as for PQs). A 40 day period will be set for answering requests (it is 20 working days under the Code), and guidance and best practice on answering requests will be set out in a code of practice.

Exemptions from Right of Access

6. The exemptions (listed below) divide into those which are outright exemptions, and those which will be subject to a harm test. Some, such as that concerning policy advice, contain elements which are harm-tested, and others which are not. Each harm-tested exemption has its own self-contained definition, mainly expressed in terms of the ability to withhold information which "would, or would be likely, to prejudice" the interest in question. Decisions about whether or not to withhold information will also be able to take account of whether apparently innocuous information in conjunction with other information would be likely to cause harm (known as "cumulative harm").

7. Whilst these exemptions give scope to protect information which should be protected, the FOI Act is intended to contribute to a more open approach in the relationship between the public sector and the public. Decisions should therefore be made on a case by case basis, with a view towards disclosure where possible. The exemptions are as follows:

Outright exempted information which will not be harm tested

a. information already public (including information for which a charge is made, such as the services offered by the Met Office);

b. information intended for future publication;

c. information held by Departments which was supplied by, or relates to, the work of the security and intelligence agencies (including Armed Forces units in support of GCHQ), and the Special Forces;

d. information required for national security purposes;

e. confidential information from a foreign state or international organisation;

f. investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities;

g. information contained in specified courts;

h. information relating to the formulation or development of government policy, communications between Ministers, including Cabinet and Cabinet committee proceedings, and the operation of Ministerial private offices (see also the "internal discussion" exemption at (u) below);

i. personal information. The main effect here is to allow access by individuals to personal information about themselves only through the Data Protection Act;

j. information provided in confidence (to be subject to the Common Law of Confidence);

k. legal professional privilege;

l. trade secrets (but see the wider commercial interests exemption at (w) below);

m. honours;

n. information where a statutory bar to disclosure exists;

o. any additional information not covered by another exemption, which may be covered by an order-making power. Essentially, this is a fall-back which gives the Home Secretary the power to withhold something which would otherwise slip through the net;

Harm-tested exemptions (ie information can be withheld if it "would, or would be likely to prejudice" the interest in question)

p. defence of the UK or overseas territories, or the capability, effectiveness, or security of the armed forces or those of allies;

q. international relations;

r. relations within the UK (ie with devolved administrations);

s. the economy;

t. law enforcement;

u. internal discussion and advice (a wide exemption which will apply at all levels, not just Ministerial), or which would otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs;

v. health and safety (here, the threshold is "endanger");

w. commercial interests of public authorities or other bodies.

Who Decides?

8. Initial decisions about disclosure will, as is the case now, be made by the lead branch responsible for the subject in question. Central guidance will be produced, and advice will be available on individual cases from DOMD. There will be scope for Departments to establish an internal appeals process (as MOD currently has for the *Code*) to act as the first line for appeals.

9. An Information Commissioner, who will also be responsible for Data Protection issues - the post will be combined with that of the Data Protection Registrar - will act as the next line of appeal. The Commissioner will have a key part to play in promoting, interpreting and enforcing the Act, and will be able to overturn a decision of non-disclosure by a public authority if he or she considers the exemption is wrongly claimed (except in the case of national security).

10. Public authorities (or the requester, if unhappy with the Commissioner's decision) can then appeal to a 3-person Tribunal on the Data Protection model, one person representing legal interests (appointed by the Lord Chancellor), and the other two representing the interests of the public authority and requester of information respectively (both appointed by the Home Secretary). Appeals on national security,

however, go straight to a Tribunal and not through the Information Commissioner. Appeal against a Tribunal may then go to the Courts for judicial review.

11. Departments will also have a duty to consider exercising their discretion to disclose information technically exempted from the right of access, if they consider it to be in the public interest. The Information Commissioner will have a duty to see that Departments do consider using this discretion, but the decision whether or not to disclose exempted information in the public interest lies with the Department, and cannot be overturned by the Commissioner.

Duty to Publish

12. As part of the aim of increasing openness in the public sector, Departments will be required to make certain information available as a matter of course. Much of this MOD already does, through publications as the Defence White Paper, Annual Report, and Defence Statistics. Departments will, however, have to produce a publication scheme for approval by the Information Commissioner which sets out what information it intends to publish.

Fees and Charges

13. As under the present Code, Departments will be able to set up a charging regime within centrally set parameters under the disproportionate cost limit. Fees and charges are not, however, intended to recoup the full cost of the FOI regime.

Outstanding Issues

14. Devolution. Ministers have agreed that organisations dealing wholly or mainly with devolved matters (in Scotland), or transferred matters (in Northern Ireland) should be covered by local legislation. In other words defence, as a reserved matter, will be covered by the UK FOI Act. In addition, Ministers have agreed that the ability to legislate on information supplied by the UK Government in confidence, to ensure that it was disclosed according to the terms of the UK FOI Act only, is to be reserved to the UK Parliament.

15. Parliament. Further discussions are necessary about whether Parliament and bodies accountable to it will be covered by the legislation.

16. Environmental Information Regulations. The current environmental information regime needs to be modified to enable the UK to implement the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on access to information on environmental matters. The intention is to do this through the FOI Bill, but this will follow on after publication of the draft Bill.

FINALLY

17. This is a **draft** Bill, it has not yet become law and will not do so for some time. Guidance on how to comply with the Act will be provided for staff before it does. In the meantime, the *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information* remains in force, and replies to requests for information must be made in accordance with it - details can be found in DCI 54/98, but look out for a new DCI shortly.

Where Can I Find Out More?

A copy of the draft Bill and consultation paper can be purchased from the Stationery Office, but will be made available on MODWeb as soon as possible, and can also be

accessed at the Home Office website at *www.homeoffice.gov.uk/foi*. Links to the Home Office site can also be found through the Open Government section of the MOD Internet site. Articles on Freedom of Information will be appearing in the June editions of FOCUS and Paper Clips. Further questions or comments can be put to DOMD, which is the MOD policy lead on Freedom of Information. They should be addressed to:

DOMD

Rm 617 Northumberland House

Northumberland Avenue

London WC2N 5BP

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
From: Section 40 Sec(AS)2a1a
Secretariat (Air Staff)
Room 8245, Main Building, Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 0171 218 Section 40
(Switchboard) 0171 218 9000
(Fax) 0171 218 Section 40

FAX MESSAGE

TO: Section 40 Org 1c, HQPTC

SUBJECT: Orders for HQPTC Duty Staff Officer

DATE: 16 February 99 **PAGES TO FOLLOW:** 2

Section 40

Thank you for your fax of 8 Feb in which you asked whether your instructions for 'UFO' reporting were up to date. All the information contained in the Order is correct, however, I have attached an updated version of our 'UFO' report form which you may wish to use in future.

Yours,

Section 40

REPORT OF AN UNEXPLAINED AERIAL SIGHTING

1.	**Date and time of sighting.** (Duration of sighting.)	
2.	**Description of object.** (No of objects, size, shape, colour, brightness, noise.)	
3.	**Exact position of observer.** (Indoors/outdoors, stationary/moving.)	
4.	**How object was observed.** (Naked eye, binoculars, other optical device, camera or camcorder.)	
5.	**Direction in which object was first seen.** (A landmark may be more helpful than a roughly estimated bearing.)	
6.	**Approximate distance.**	
7.	**Movements and speed.** (side to side, up or down, constant, moving fast, slow)	
8.	**Weather conditions during observation.** (cloudy, haze, mist, clear)	

9.	**To whom reported.** (Police, military, press etc)	
10.	**Name, address and telephone no of informant.**	
11.	**Other witnesses.**	
12.	**Remarks.**	
13.	**Date and time of receipt.**	

** Transmit Conf. Report **

16 Feb '99 12:17

Secretariat(Air Staff)---> Section 40	
No.	2545
Mode	NORMAL
Time	1'25"
Pages	3 Page(s)
Result	O K

Classification	UNCLAS Restricted
Caveat	N/A
Covering	N/A

UNCLASSIFIED

Facsimile Transmission Cover Sheet

Transmission Details		Document Details
Serial No:	**Date and Time of Transmission:** 8 Feb 99	**Reference:**
From: ORG 1c	**Fax Number:** Section 40	**Subject:** Orders for HQPTC Duty Staff Officer - Order No 17
To: Sec (AS) 2a1	**Fax Number:** Section 40	Total number of pages including this cover sheet: 3

Authorizing Officer	Transmit Operators
Rank, Name and Appointment: EO, Section 40 ORG 1c	**Rank/Grade and Name:** EO, Section 40 ORG 1c
Signature: Section 40	**Signature:** Section 40

Message/Remarks:

Reference our telephone conversation this morning.

Find attached a copy of Order No 17 for the HQPTC Duty Staff Officer. The orders require examination as some are now over 12 months old.

Any assistance you are able to give me in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Covering	N/A
Caveat	N/A
Classification	UNCLAS Restricted

UNCLASSIFIED

ORDERS FOR HQPTC DUTY STAFF OFFICER

ORDER NO 17

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

1. All sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) are to be reported using the format at Annex A. Reports are to be submitted as follows:

a. Out of working hours and only if considered of major significance to Chief Defence Staff Duty Officer (CDSDO). The CDSDO may be contacted on MOD Main Building, Tel GPTN (96621) Ext [redacted] or Section 40

b. At any other time to Sec(AS)2a, MOD Main Building, Room 8245, Tel GPTN (96621) Ext 82140, Fax Ext [redacted] Section 40 Use 3IC - Z6F with signal messages.

2. CDSDO will pass all reports submitted out of hours to Sec(AS)2a. Under normal circumstances Sec(AS)2a will not respond to the originator.

3. Outside normal working hours all enquiries from the Press are to be referred to Duty Press Officer at MOD who may be contacted at MOD Main Building, Tel GPTN (96621) Ext 87907. The Press may be given the following direct dial BT Tel No for the Duty Press Officer 0171 21 7907.

kc 97

ANNEX A TO
HQFTC DSO
ORDER NO 17

FORMAT OF A REPORT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT (UFO)

A. Date, time and duration of sighting. (Local times to be quoted).

B. Description of Object. (Number of objects, size, shape, colours, brightness, sound, smell etc).

C. Exact position of observer. (Geographical location. Indoors or outdoors. Stationary or moving).

D. How observed. (Naked eye, binoculars, other optical device, still or movie camera).

E. Direction in which object was first seen. (A landmark may be more useful than a badly estimated bearing).

F. Angle of sight. (Estimated heights are unreliable).

G. Distance. (By reference to a known landmark wherever possible).

H. Movements. (Changes in E, F and G may be of more use than estimates of course and speed).

I. Meteorological conditions during observations. (Moving clouds, haze, mist etc).

J. Nearby objects. (Telephone lines, high voltage lines, reservoir, lake or dam, swamp or marsh, river, high buildings, tall chimneys, steeples, spires, TV or radio masts, airfields, generating plant, factories, pits or other sites with floodlights or other night lighting.

K. To whom reported. (Police, military organization, the Press etc).

L. Name and address of informant.

M. Any background on the informant that may be volunteered.

N. Other witnesses.

O. Date and time of receipt of report.

ENCLOSURE 20 NUMBER

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

7th January 1998

Comms Planning, DISN - Section 40

UNION SKYLINE REQUEST: 'RIDDLE OF THE SKIES'

Reference: Your memo and Union Skyline letter of 5 January 1999

1. We spoke about the request at Reference and I said that the Department does not participate in programmes about 'UFOs' (this is simply the latest in a steady stream of requests from 'UFO'-related TV and Radio programme makers and journalists wanting an MOD contribution to their work). I agreed to provide a written note about the reasons for this.

2. Sec(AS)2 acts as the MOD focal point for 'UFO'-related issues and, since no other Government Department has an interest in the subject, deals with Whitehall-wide correspondence and reported sightings from the public. MOD's interest in 'UFO' issues is **very limited**. Reported sightings and correspondence are examined **solely** to establish if what was seen might have some defence significance, namely whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity. Unless there is any evidence of such a threat and, to date, no 'UFO' report has revealed such evidence, no attempt at all is made to identify what might have been seen. Given MOD's limited interest in sighting reports, there is nothing it can contribute to programmes about 'UFOs' and instead, offers to provide a written statement on the Department's position.

3. I understand the Press desk has already provided the Company with the MOD official line (I can confirm that the version attached to your memo was provided by Sec(AS)2). If it helps with your discussions with the Union Skyline, I attach at Annex the same information but set out as responses to their questions.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
FAX : Section 40

Annex

QUESTIONS FROM UNION SKYLINE

1. What is the MOD's official line on 'UFOs'?

The Ministry of Defence examines any reports of 'unidentified flying objects' it receives solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely, whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity.

The MOD has no expertise or role in respect of 'UFO/flying saucer' matters or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms, about which it remains totally open-minded. To date, MOD knows of no evidence to substantiate the existence of these alleged phenomena.

2. Does MOD investigate reports? If so, what are the findings?
3. Is MOD proactive or reactive in it's investigations?

Unless a report provides evidence of a potential threat to the United Kingdom from an external military source, and to date no 'UFO' report has revealed such evidence, MOD makes no attempt to identify the precise nature of each reported sighting. MOD believes that rational explanations, such as aircraft lights or natural phenomena, could be found for them if resources were diverted for this purpose, but it is not the function of the MOD to provide this kind of aerial identification service and it would be an inappropriate use of defence resources if MOD was to do so.

4. Has MOD's attitude changed in the last 40 years?

No.

5. Would MOD consider investigating further objects for which there is initially no obvious explanation?

MOD's interest in these matters is limited to that set out in the response to Q1.

Defence Information Division

Ministry of Defence

[redacted] SECAS

We spoke. Pl see letter from Union Pipeline + statement passed to the Ag Press Office. Grateful if you'd confirm (or otherwise) you don't want anyone from MOD to put a quote in mag and let me know if statement is correct + up to date. Thanks

[redacted]

Comms Planning DIN

Ext 0270 [redacted]

With Compliments

Phone: Section 40
FAX: [redacted] Section 40

Union Skyline

36 Marshall St
London W1V 1LL

For transmission early pm Weds

Facsimile

To: Section 40 MOD
From: Section 40 [redacted]
Date: 05/01/99
Ref: INTERVIEW FOR C4 DOCUMENTARY
Fax: 218 Section 40
Tel: 218 Section 40
Pages: 2

Dear Section 40

Following my call to you yesterday I'm faxing you with a formal request for an interview with an official from the MOD in connection with the documentary series - Riddle of the Skies - that we are making for RTL (Germany), Channel 4 (UK) and The Learning Channel in the USA

The broad thrust of our series is a considered, journalistic, serious and rigorous scientific appraisal of the global phenomena of anomalous objects in the world's skies. The series is in three parts, each an hour in length, and will transmit in the UK in the middle of February (tbc). To date we have filmed in Chile, Mexico, all over the US, Belgium, Germany, Russia, Puerto Rico and of course the UK. Our interviewees reflect the seriousness of our programme, and encompass civil and military pilots, air traffic controllers, cosmonauts & astronauts from the space programmes in the US, Russia and Europe (serving and non-serving), and senior scientists drawn from civilian universities and from NASA.

Broadly speaking our series is divided into three subject areas. Part one sets out the history of this phenomena and specifically deals with testimony from space. With the growth in space travel sightings of unexplained objects are also increasing? Does this add to the evidence that UFOs are real or is there a simple explanation?

Part two returns closer to earth and looks at the area of black budgets, secret military developments and civil aviation. Could secret military testing and the growth in civil aviation in part explain many of the unusual things that are being reported?

Part three looks at the future of science and explores the gap between science fact and fiction; encompassing the theory of time travel, the research being done on faster than the speed of light and the remarkable work being done in the area of Quantum Transportation at Innsbruck University.

Any contribution from the MOD would be used in part two of the programme alongside contributions from the Belgian airforce, (F-16 pilot, former deputy head of the Belgian airforce, Professor at the Royal Military Academy, Brussels), senior contributors from NASA (Alan Ladwig - Senior Advisor to Head of NASA), the Chilean Airforce, the Head of the Federation of American Scientists, several senior personnel in the Russian Airforce and civil pilots from UK, US, Mexico and Germany - to name but a few.

already received

In all cases we are dealing with high-ranking officials and we are asking them for their organisations official line on the issue of Unidentified Flying Objects.

Specifically we would like to ask anyone the MOD can put up for interview:

1. What is the MODs official line on UFOs.

2. Do you investigate reports? If so what are your findings?

3. Is the dept proactive or reactive in it's investigations?

4. Has the MODs attitude to this phenomena changed in any way in the last 40 years?

5. Would the MOD consider investigating further objects for which there is initially no obvious explanation?

Hopefully this gives you some idea of the series and the kind of questions we would like to ask. As we discussed we would be happy simply to get on camera the official MOD line on this issue as outlined in the statement you faxed to me.

Hope this is all ok. Please call me on Section 40 you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

Section 40 Assistant Producer, Union Skyline

MOD INTEREST IN "UFO" SIGHTINGS

The Ministry of Defence has no interest or role with respect to "UFO/flying saucer" matters, or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms about which it remains open-minded. To date, however, the MOD is unaware of any evidence which proves that these phenomena exist.

The Ministry of Defence examines any reports of "UFO" sightings it receives solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely is there any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity.

The reports are examined, with the assistance of the Department's air defence experts as required. Unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, and to date no "UFO" sighting has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each sighting reported to us. We believe that down to earth explanations could be found for these reports, such as aircraft lights or natural phenomena, if resources were diverted for this purpose but it would be an inappropriate use of defence resources to provide this kind of aerial identification service.

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

12th December 1998

CR(RM)2e

Copy to:

CS(RM)1

Ex-S4f(Air) 'UFO' FILES

1. I enclose the following files for archiving:

AF584 to 602 inclusive (total 19 files)
(covering the period January 1974-July 1975)

AF447 Part 1 (total 1 file)
(covering the period August 1975-Jun 1976)

2. The files, which were opened by S4(Air), were transferred to Sec(AS)2 by AHB(RAF)PCB(Air), the Air Historical Branch, for onwards transmission. I am afraid that the whereabouts of the MOD Form 262a for each file is unknown to us. A completed MOD Form 262f for each file has been completed.

[redacted]
Sec(AS)2
MB8247 [redacted]MB
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
FAX : [redacted]MB

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

2 December 1998

MOD Main Building Switchboard Staff
MOD Public Enquiries Office

Copy to:
DCDSDO

OUT OF HOURS 'UFO' REPORTING BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Since February 1997, an answerphone facility has been provided by Sec(AS)2 to enable members of the public to report sightings of 'unidentified flying objects'. In the past, the answerphone was switched on between 0800-1700 Monday to Friday, however, with effect from 19 October 98, the answerphone has been left on 24 hours a day.

2. Now that this facility is constantly available, would you please ensure that members of the public, whether telephoning in or out of office hours, are put through to the answerphone (0171 218 2140) and not through to the CDSDO Cell.

3. If you have any queries regarding this minute please give me a call.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245
Chots: SEC(AS)2A1

Minute sent at request of DCDSDO

16

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

20 October 1998

CDSDO

OUT OF HOURS 'UFO' REPORTING BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Since February 1997, an answerphone facility has been provided by Sec(AS)2 to enable members of the public to report sightings of 'unidentified flying objects'. In the past, the answerphone was switched on between 0800 - 1700 Monday to Friday, however, with effect from Monday 19 October, the answerphone has been left on 24 hours a day.

2. Some members of the public may still be put through to you out of hours by the switchboard but you may transfer them or ask them to redial on 0171 218 2140 (x82140MB) to leave details of their report.

3. If you have any queries regarding this minute, please give me a call.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 MB
Chots: SEC(AS)2A1

Section 40

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

16 October 1998

***** F I L E N O T E *****

With effect from Monday 19 October 1998, the 'UFO' answerphone will be left on 24 hours a day. This is in response to PQ 3785i.

Section 40 [redacted]

Sec(AS)2a

ROYAL AIR FORCE

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 14

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
RAF COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICER (WALES)

Room 2-04 New Dolanog House
Severn Road Welshpool Powys SY21 7DA

Tel : 01938 556363
GPTN & Fax: Worcester MOD X1490

Section 40 [redacted]

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

What are the LTT on this incident; you will note that this piece of ancient history is being dredged up in the amusingly entitled TV programme, 'Weird Wales' later this wk.

Section 40 [redacted]

To: Roy Brewer, Sec (AS) 2b, MoD Main Building.

From: Brian [illegible]

Date: 12 Oct 98

Number of Pages Sent (Including Cover Sheet): 3

Message/Subject:

Re attached. I have heard stories about this incident before. Has anyone there thrown any light on what happened?

Regards,

Section 40 [redacted]

No mil a/c crashes as far as we can tell. UFO files from 1974 are stored in archives + without an exact date we would have to look through the reports individually. If we get ~~press~~ media interest, we can give the standard line on our policy Section 40 [redacted] 12 Oct 98.

PLEASE ADVISE PROMPTLY IF TRANSMISSION IS ILLEGIBLE OR INCOMPLETE

DAILY POST (WALES) 10 OCT 98

The Bala incidents: A case for Mulder and Scully?

Jill Tunstall talks to a UFO investigator about the strange goings-on in the Berwyn Mountains near Bala

ONE dark, winter's night back in 1974, as the people of the villages around the Berywn Mountains near Bala sat down to their evening's television, an earthquake shook their homes.

The huge rumble registered 3.5 on the Richter Scale and they ran from their houses, fearing another tremor, to witness a blaze of light on the mountain side above.

For most, their first instinct was to call the police. Surely there had been an air crash.

A local nurse, who made her way to the scene, was one of the first to realise that this was no ordinary crash. In fact there had been no aeroplane at all.

Instead, she and her daughters watched with a rising mixture of fear and disbelief as a huge egg shaped craft lay on the ground, ablaze with a pulsating orange and red glow. Within minutes they turned on their heels and fled.

That's just one of the eye witness accounts given for the Berwyn Mountains Mystery to Wales' leading UFO investigator Margaret Fry, who has been on the case for 20 years.

There are numerous others. All tell the same story of mysterious objects flying low over the mountains on that night. Farmers tending their sheep reported seeing craft landing and taking off.

Each one repeated seeing the strange red and orange glow of an egg shaped object, which Mrs Fry believes was definitely a UFO.

After over 40 years investigating unexplained objects Mrs Fry, from Llangernyw, is Wales' answer to Dana Scully. But it is not a title she'd welcome. The X Files is not her idea of a good night in front of the television. Mrs Fry will be watching this week's edition of Weird Wales, however, which re-examines the mystery of the Berwyn Mountains, dubbed the Welsh Roswell.

After the crash the MOD were among the first on the scene and cordoned the area off. One villager reported to Mrs Fry that secretive 'men in suits' checked into the hotel and visited the area daily.

Local people say they have never been given an explanation for what happened that night but Mrs Fry's theory is that an earthquake did happen and that it is not unusual for UFOs to be sighted in their aftermath.

□ THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE: Unexplained lights in the sky, earthquakes, secretive men in suits. It sounds as if it's another X-file waiting to be opened, but it all happened in Bala

'MAYBE they are curious about earthquakes or perhaps they affect their navigation," she says. "That n
over North
shire. I'm c
UFOs, one o
around 25 mi

In true X F
of soldiers m
the area and stopping people on their way home. One woman claimed she had seen 'coffin shaped' boxes being loaded aboard MOD vehicles and Mrs Fry says she has been contacted by soldiers since who say they removed 'bodies' to Porton Down, the top secret MOD germ warfare laboratory.

It is a tale of almost fantastic improbability but, as Mulder and Scully would say, the truth is out there somewhere.

After four decades investigating visitors from outer space Mrs Fry, the daughter of an MI5 officer, is used to the scepticism that surrounds any UFO claims.

She even admits to occasional doubts herself, despite having seen her first extra terrestrial craft back in 1955. It followed her car as she drove home from a night out.

Now getting on in years she is unable to sky watch because of bronchial problems, so doesn't hang around on chilly nights waiting for a visit. It's a one in a million chance anyway because only 10pc of sightings are UFOs, she revealed.

"I always say it's the great I am," she says philosophically. "If you have seen it you can believe it, if you haven't, well, it's
surprising people
m them for some
think 'Oh God, did
other sighting and
s all over again...

Reference .....

1974

29 OCT LIGHTNING 5325 N 0025 E FREE.

15 NOV 1039 AM PUMA 2M NORTH WHITCHURCH

1 NOV JETSTREAM 1/2 M LITTLE RIDINGTON.

21 NOV PHANTOM 5121 N 0600 E ENGINE FAILURE

5 DEC GNAT 1500 SM SW LEAD BURY BIRDSTRIKE CAT 4.

ASK Section 40 about map references.

Any in N WALES? — Not references used by complaints call so cannot tell

Section 40

38 A31 Whitchurch
16 B14 "

correct area (?) lots of Whitchurch's but not correct time.

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

25 August 1998

Sec(AS)1a - Section 40

CLAIM FOR PAPERBACK VERSION OF 'THE UNINVITED' BY MR N POPE

1. I am writing to request reimbursement of money I recently spent on the purchase of a paperback book on behalf of my branch.

2. The book, 'The Uninvited' by Mr Nicholas Pope, is about the alien abduction phenomenon. Sec(AS)2 has already purchased the hardback version, which we needed to do to ensure Head of Sec(AS)'s amendments had been actioned. However, it has come to our attention that in the paperback version some of the amendments have been edited out. We therefore intend to make a thorough examination of the paperback to see just how many of our requested amendments have be ignored in this latest version. Section 40 has approved the purchase.

3. My bank details are as follows:

Bank: Section 40

Sort Code:
Account no:
Staff no:

I have attached the receipt. If you require any further information please contact me.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a
MB8245 [redacted] MB
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A1A

Waterstone's

11/08/98 18:15 6 5 3182

1 @ 6.99 0671004964 £ 6.99

UNINVITED

TOTAL	£	6.99
TENDER CASH	£	20.00
CHANGE	£	13.01

Covent Garden, Garrick Street, London
TEL: 0171 836 6757 VAT NO: 710631184

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

30 July 1998

DPO(RAF) - Sqn Ldr Section 40

GRANADA TELEVISION - REQUEST FOR MOD POLICY ON 'UFO' SIGHTINGS

1. I have received the attached self-explanatory letter from a researcher at Granada Television. I should be grateful if the attached statement which sets out the MOD's interest in this subject could be sent to Section 40 through the Press Office.

2. If you have any queries, please give me a call.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1a
MB8245 Section 40 MB

GRANADA TELEVISION

To Whom it May Concern,

We are currently preparing to make a programme about UFO's, and I am writing to see if it would be possible for you to send me any information you may have about this subject. I would also be very grateful if you could send me an information pack on the policies of the M.O.D. I would be very grateful if you could assist me with the information that I need.

Thankyou very much

Yours Sincerely

Section 40

(Researcher)

GRANADA TELEVISION LIMITED
REGISTERED OFFICE: QUAY STREET, MANCHESTER M60 9EA
TELEPHONE: 0161 832 7211 GENERAL FAX: 0161 827 2029 TELEX: 668859
REGISTERED NUMBER: 840590 ENGLAND

MOD INTEREST IN "UFO" SIGHTINGS

The Ministry of Defence has no interest or role with respect to 'UFO/flying saucer' matters, or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms about which it remains open-minded. To date, however, the MOD is unaware of any evidence which proves that these phenomena exist.

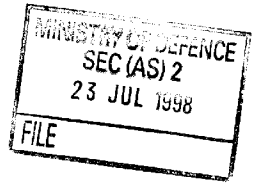
The Ministry of Defence examines any reports of 'UFO' sightings it receives solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely is there any evidence that the UK's airspace might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity.

The reports are examined, with the assistance of the Department's air defence experts as required. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat to the United Kingdom from an external military source we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each sighting reported to us. We believe that down to earth explanations could be found for these reports, such as aircraft lights or natural phenomena, if resources were diverted for this purpose but it would be an inappropriate use of defence resources to provide this kind of aerial identification service.

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DOMD/2/3/4

22 July 1998



Sec(AS)2a* - Section 40 ***by CHOTS**

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Thank you for your letter dated 21 July in which you ask for the latest `line to take' on the progression of the proposed Freedom of Information Act.

No it went as drafted

Provided Section 40 Section 40 not know we used the exact lines she provided. Section 40 24/7/98

2. Unfortunately, it seems that the information I provided to Section 40 back in January was passed on incorrectly in response to the member of the public who wrote to you. It was not the case that the consultation period for the White Paper `was followed by a draft Bill.' Having looked back at my response, I said that the consultation period `will be followed by a draft bill this spring.' It may therefore be worth providing both the previous correspondent to whom this information was given, and your latest enquirer with the following information (some of which is repeated from January for clarification):

"The Government is committed to the introduction of a Freedom of Information Act as part of its programme of constitutional reform and in fulfilment of its manifesto pledge. The FOI Act will apply to MOD as a whole, encompassing the Armed Forces, Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies, and requests for information on any aspect of the Department's business will need to be considered with a predisposition towards openness.

The Freedom of Information White Paper, `Your Right to Know' was published last December, and the consultation period ended in February. A draft bill is currently being produced, which it is proposed will be published later this year for further consultation. The Bill is currently intended to be placed before Parliament in the 1998/99 Session and will come into force sometime thereafter, although the precise timings are not yet known. Until this time, the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information will remain, unchanged, as the reference for the provision of information."

3. It should be noted that the proposed publication date for the draft bill has now slipped slightly, and will certainly not be before the Summer recess. The contact points remain the same as in my last letter: the White Paper can be ordered by telephoning the HMSO Publication Line on (0171) 873 9090 and quoting CM 3818. It can also be accessed on the Internet at: **http:// www.open.gov.uk/m-of-g/foihome.htm**

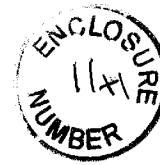
4. In addition, however, it seems to me that you need to address the implication from the correspondent that an FOI Act will allow access to information that is not releasable now. As far as Sec(AS) is concerned, I assume that this is not the case? You might therefore wish to add something along the following lines:

"The Ministry of Defence already operates in accordance with the existing Code of Practice on Access to Government Information which encourages the provision of information unless its disclosure would, for example, cause

harm to defence, invade on an individual's privacy, or if it would take an unreasonable diversion of resources to respond to a request. This branch, therefore, deals with requests in this light, with a predisposition towards openness. Details of MOD's Open Government policy can be found on the Internet at: **http://www.mod.uk/policy/opengovt/dci5498.htm**"

5. I hope that this is helpful. If you have any further queries, please do give me a call.

Section 40
OMD14
NH617 Section 40 MB



LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

21 July 1998

OMD 14 - Section 40

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

1. As you may know, Sec(AS)2 is the focal point for correspondence concerning 'unidentified flying objects'. I have received a letter from a member of the public who has asked if the UK is going to have a Freedom of Information Act so he can have access to more government material on this subject.

2. The last time this question arose we used the following statement provided by you:

"You may be interested to know that on 11 December 1997 the Freedom of Information White Paper, entitled "*Your Right to Know* - the Government's Proposals for a Freedom of Information Act," was published. The consultation period for the White Paper ended in February. This was followed by a draft Bill. The formal Bill is expected to be laid before Parliament during the 1998/99 session. Until that time, the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information will remain as the reference for the provision of information. A copy of the White Paper can be ordered by telephoning the HMSO Publication Line (tel: 0171 873 9090) quoting "CM 3818". It can also be accessed on the Internet at: 'http://www.open.gov.uk/m-of-g/foihome.htm'."

3. I should be grateful if you could let me have your latest line to take on this issue.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a
MB8245 Section 40
Chots: SEC(AS)2A1A

with the compliments of

Ministry of Defence

Section 40

I have spoken to Sec(AS)2a and as expected it would not be appropriate for me to be interviewed on this subject. Offer Granada the attached MOD statement instead.

6 Jul 98

Section 40

DD Form 195 (7/94)

MB.

Offered to GRANADA in response to their request to interview me on UFOs received on 3 Jul 98.

MOD INTEREST IN REPORTS OF 'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT' SIGHTINGS

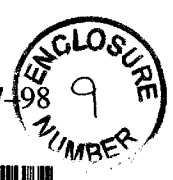
The Ministry of Defence has no interest or role with respect to 'UFO/flying saucer' matters, or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms about which it remains open-minded. To date, however, the MOD is unaware of any evidence which proves that these phenomena exist.

The Ministry of Defence examines any reports of 'UFO' sightings it receives solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely is there any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity.

The reports are examined, with the assistance of the Department's air defence experts as required. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat to the United Kingdom from an external military source, the MOD does not attempt to identify the precise nature of each sighting reported to it.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SESSION 1997-98



WH008976

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Third Report

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW: THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Volume II

Memoranda of Evidence

Ordered by The House of Commons *to be printed*
19 May 1998

LONDON: THE STATIONERY OFFICE
£19.50

HC398–II

An improvement on the current scheme would be the imposition of a duty on the statutory body to comply with an urgent response promptly, within 24 or 48 hours of a request being made. Such requests would only be made in genuinely urgent cases and we do not believe that a duty to comply with such a request would be onerous. In some cases, early disclosure of the file would allow resolution of the particular problem to be achieved without recourse to the courts. Where legal action is necessary to protect our client's interests, proceedings could be launched on a sure-footing if all relevant documents have been disclosed, so that both parties and the court are in no doubt as to the relevant issues.

April 1998

MEMORANDUM 95

Submitted by the Ministry of Defence

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Defence welcomes the opportunity to assist the Committee's inquiry into the Freedom of Information White Paper *Your Right to Know.* This memorandum aims to answer the specific questions posed by the Committee, bearing in mind that further work is currently in hand to translate the broad proposals of the White Paper into a draft Bill.

Q1. *What concerns do you have about the White Paper in terms of the impact on your department? What is likely to cause you particular difficulty?*

The Ministry of Defence already operates under the terms of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, which has done much to encourage a culture of increased openness and a willingness to provide information about how it does its business. The department already publishes a great deal of information about what it does in its annual White Paper, Departmental Performance Report, and many other publications, such as its conservation magazine, *Sanctuary.*

At least in the early stages, we anticipate an increase in applications for information, which could impose a heavy administrative load. The department is concerned that the FOI regime should be easily understood by all staff and be simple to operate in order that it does not become an excessive and costly burden. We need in particular to ensure that staff are clear about what is meant by "substantial harm" in order that they are able to operate the harm test effectively, both in order to favour release where possible, and to withhold information where that is warranted. In addition, the change to a requirement to provide copies of documents, rather than providing information, will require time and effort to identify specific documents and to decide whether all or part of them are suitable for disclosure.

Q2. *Will the exemption provisions of the White Paper provide sufficient protection to the kinds of information held by your department which you think need to be protected?*

The White Paper's proposals recognise, particularly in the specified interests covering national security, defence and international relations, and commercial confidentiality, that there are elements of defence business which should remain protected. There is further protection for such interests by the acknowledgement that a decision taken under the FOI Act should not force a disclosure under the Official Secrets Act. Whilst some issues remain to be clarified, such as what is meant by "substantial harm" and the mechanism for any third party right of appeal (given that the department holds a great deal of information provided by individuals, companies, foreign governments and international organisations), in general the proposals in the White Paper cover the types of information that the department believes needs to be protected.

Q3. *Can the FOI Act repeal and supersede all the existing statutory bars to disclosure in your department's field of responsibility? If not, which existing statutes need to be preserved, and why?*

There are provisions of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, Army Act 1955, and Air Force Act 1955 which contain bars to disclosure. Work is in hand to determine their future in relation to the FOI Act.

Q4. *What lessons have you learnt from the operation of the Code of Practice which are relevant to the likely operation of the FOI Act?*

The principal lessons are the importance of clear guidance for staff and the availability of a clear and well-publicised focal point for internal advice. We have a single secretariat which provides advice across the department and its existence helps to establish a consistent and positive approach towards the release of information throughout MoD.

Q5. *What do you estimate to be the likely volume of requests that you will receive after passage of the FOI Act? What is the basis of these estimates? (e.g., overseas comparisons; experience of the Code). What are the cost and staffing implications?*

We have made no estimates of the volume of requests under FOI nor of the likely cost implications. As the process is demand-led, such estimates would be highly speculative. We have assumed that there will be a considerable increase in FOI requests compared with Code requests, at least initially, simply because of the increased public awareness of the FOI Act. The number of formal Code requests received in 1997 was about 80 but we do not believe that this can be used as the basis for any estimate of the likely demand under FOI. We are currently considering the staffing implications, particularly of the likely need to increase the size of the central secretariat in order to provide training and advice, although this will depend in part on any decision on whether to phase in the Act. Clearly, however, we are not starting from a zero baseline as we already have experience of dealing with the Code.

Q6. *Is the proposed regime for fees and charges realistic and workable from the department's point of view?*

Yes it is. We already operate a charging regime under the Code for requests that involve significant costs, although it is rarely invoked.

Q7. *Will there be any difficulty in the overlapping access regimes for FOI and Data Protection proposed in Chapter 4?*

The White Paper acknowledges that the two regimes need to accommodate each other and that the access regime will be intended to ensure that any complexity is not reflected in the way that it is presented to the user. It will obviously be important for staff to be aware of any significant differences between the two regimes in order to operate them effectively.

Q8. *What difficulties will arise from the proposed third party notification procedure in cases of personal privacy, commercial confidentiality and information supplied in confidence (paragraph 5.19)?*

As noted in the response to Q2, MoD holds a great deal of information which is provided by or concerns third parties, whether they be individuals, defence companies, foreign governments or international organisations (such as NATO and the UN). The precise details of a third party appeal mechanism remain to be defined, but there will certainly be cases where the department will need to consult third parties prior to making a decision on disclosure. Clearly that could be a burdensome and time-consuming exercise if it has to be undertaken on a regular basis. The department will therefore be keen to consider procedures which avoid the need to contact third parties at the time of a request. These could include ensuring that third parties are aware in advance that information may be disclosed, and clarifying which elements they believe should not be disclosed, and why.

Q9. *Where you have contracted with private contractors to provide services to you, do you know whether they have received requests for access to information under the Code?*

We are not aware of any contractors receiving such requests, but we would expect that requests for information about MoD contracts for services (and goods) would usually be directed to the department. Moreover, it is likely that if contractors had received such requests, they would have sought guidance from the Department about the requirements of the Code.

Q10. *What training, if any, have your staff received for dealing with internal "appeals" against refusals before the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is resorted to?*

Guidance on how to operate the present Code of Practice is provided to all staff in the department, civilian and military, including within its agencies. That guidance includes an explanation of the review procedures, and is available on the department's main internal computer networks as well as the Internet. All appeals are handled by the single secretariat that provides the department-wide guidance, so although no formal training in dealing with appeals is given, a common approach is adopted. Assistance in interpreting the Code is gained from examples of cases that have been considered by the Ombudsman, and advice is also sought as required from the Cabinet Office's Freedom of Information Unit and the Ombudsman's office.

Q11. *In the contracts that you have with commercial organisations, is there anything which you think should remain commercially confidential? If so, what sort of things are they?*

The department would not wish to disclose information from our contracts with commercial organisations that would jeopardise our ability effectively to manage commercial transactions in a manner and to the standards

demanded of a public sector procurement organisation. In meeting these standards, the rights on which we rely are based on industry's clear understanding that the department can be relied on to protect commercially sensitive information. To prevent this position being prejudiced, there are four main categories into which fall information which we believe should remain commercially confidential (and thus should be covered by the specified interest of commercial confidentiality):

(1) Information that would prejudice negotiations or commercial/contractual activities;

(2) Information relating to trade secrets or intellectual property belonging to a third party which would harm the competitive position of a third party (e.g., an MoD contractor);

(3) Information given to MoD in confidence, such as price breakdowns and pricing data;

(4) The issue of commercial confidentiality also arises in the case of the Defence Export Services Organisation's support for defence exporters, where information is provided in confidence to MoD by exporting companies and foreign governments.

Q12. *Does the department have an Internet site? What documents have you published on the site? How often has it been updated? When was it last updated?*

The Ministry of Defence does have an Internet site at **http://www.mod.uk**

A wide variety of information is on it, including:

- speeches of the Secretary of State for Defence;
- documents and explanatory notes on NATO enlargement;
- information on the UK's bilateral defence relations with central and eastern Europe;
- a major section on Gulf veterans' illnesses, to address the concerns of Gulf War veterans and make available MoD-sponsored reports and research;
- the recent Green Paper on Defence Diversification; and
- information on doing business with MoD.

The site is updated regularly, usually around twice a week.

Work is now underway to re-establish the MoD's World-Wide Web presence on a basis more focused on the needs of the user. Based on extensive consultation, as well as analysis of telephone and written enquiries, the department is implementing a new strategy. The guiding principle is that information should be clear and easy to find, without needing prior knowledge of MOD's internal structure. There will also be an e-mail address for enquiries. A central internet team has been set up to develop and promote quality standards and to provide strategic, editorial and design assistance for information providers within the department.

April 1998

MEMORANDUM 96

Submitted by the Northern Ireland Office

1. *What concerns do you have about the White Paper in terms of the impact on your department? What is likely to cause you particular difficulty?*

Our experience of other initiatives, such as the six national standards of central government under the code on openness, is that we have *not* been inundated with requests for information. In addition, the new duties upon public authorities to make certain information publicly available as a matter of course, such as facts and analysis on policy proposals and decisions, should not cause particular difficulties as the department is already doing this.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), one of the department's NDPBs, has stressed the importance of maintaining confidentiality. Client confidentiality is crucial to the Board's work and PBNI have pointed out the risk of releasing information which could help directly or indirectly to identify individuals. Decisions about release of particular information will therefore have to be carefully balanced.

PBNI have also raised concerns about the possible emergence of a prescriptive approach to FOI. The department would hope to address this through the central co-ordination of the FOI initiative, by providing flexible guidance incorporating an element of discretion and through training.

2. *Will the exemption provisions in the White Paper provide sufficient protection to the kinds of information held by your department which you think need to be protected?*

The department considers that the exemption provisions will, in most cases, provide sufficient protection (see answer to question 3).

6411

ENCLOSURE 8 NUMBER

holdings? Would not a comprehensive property record held in an appropriate form have the potential to improve efficiency, reduce costs in use, increase occupancy rates and improve services to the public?

Mr. Kilfoyle: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that there is such as thing as the national assets register, which was published initially on 24 November last year. Details of those assets, including property holdings, are published on the internet and are accessible to the wider public.

Freedom of Information

8. **Mr. Ivor Caplin** (Hove): If he will make a statement on the report of the Select Committee on Public Administration on the Government's proposals for a freedom of information Act (HC 398). [43502]

Extracts attached

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Dr. David Clark): I welcome the Committee's report, which sets out a clear general endorsement of our proposals for a freedom of information Act. The report is a key element in the overall consultation process and we are studying all of the Committee's detailed recommendations carefully.

Mr. Caplin: I quote from the PAC report—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—which states:

"A Freedom of Information Act is long overdue."

We are allowed to quote.

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should read the report of the Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons.

Mr. Caplin: Conservative Members should know better. Is that not symptomatic of 18 years of Tory rule?

Will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster give an assurance that the report's 40 or so recommendations and conclusions on freedom of information will be given the utmost consideration in the generation of a freedom of information Bill?

Dr. Clark: I am particularly impressed by the Committee's report, because it raises certain important issues that have not been raised before. For example, its pertinent comments on coverage in Scotland following devolution and the interrelationship between freedom of information and data protection have certainly influenced my thinking.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross): Does the Chancellor accept that not only the Committee but most people who are anxious to open up and improve the quality of government welcome his White Paper, back his personal commitment to it and hope to see legislation at the earliest possible date? For the timetable on introducing legislation to slip would be a serious setback to the Government's goal of opening up decision making.

Dr. Clark: The right hon. Gentleman has a long record in this area, so I appreciate his kind comments. I repeat what I said earlier: no one in the House is keener than I am to get the draft Bill on to the statute book. No decision has been taken that will have delayed in any way consideration of that legislation for inclusion in the Queen's Speech later this year.

Elderly People

9. **Mr. Bob Blizzard** (Waveney): What proposals he has to improve the delivery of Government services to the elderly. [43503]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service (Mr. Peter Kilfoyle): Last week, we launched the better government for older people programme, which aims to improve public services for older people by better meeting their needs, listening to their views and encouraging and recognising their contribution.

Mr. Blizzard: I welcome the better government for elderly people project. When the 28 pilot schemes have been evaluated, will the best examples be rolled out nationwide?

Elderly people in my constituency complain from time to time that they have written to Government Departments and not received a reply. I have encouraged them to make their points through me, but I have sometimes had to wait up to three months for a reply, and then not received a reply signed by a Minister. Before I came to the House, the council that I led had to publish each year the percentage of replies that it had made within a certain period. Will my hon. Friend consider introducing league tables for Government Departments, so that they would reply within specified times?

Mr. Kilfoyle: The short answer to my hon. Friend's question about league tables is no, simply because we would not be comparing like with like. Nevertheless we are publishing the material that has always been published on the efficiency of replies to hon. Members and we shall shortly publish for the first time the figure for correspondence between the public and government.

On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, it is tru that we shall roll out the lessons to be learned from th 28 pilots. Before then, we are networking thos 28 authorities with the other 26 authorities that wanted t be part of such an adventurous pilot scheme, but coul not be. As the schemes roll out for the first two year those authorities will also benefit from the good practic

Mr. Eric Forth (Bromley and Chislehurst): If leag tables are good enough for hospitals and schools, wl are they not good enough for Government Department Following the excellent question from the hon. Memb for Waveney (Mr. Blizzard), will the Minister consic publishing the proportion of ministerial letters that h Members eventually get that are not signed by t Minister?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I recall crossing swords with the ri hon. Gentleman in the past on the subject of league tab He will recall that the argument always centred whether they were meaningful comparisons. As explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Wave (Mr. Blizzard), one cannot compare unlike Departme with each other. The comparisons would not be valid.

HOUSE OF COMMONS SESSION 1997–98

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Third Report

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW: THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Volume I

Report and Proceedings of the Committee together with Minutes of Evidence

Ordered by The House of Commons *to be printed*
19 May 1998

LONDON: THE STATIONERY OFFICE
£19·50

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE RIGHT OF PRIVACY

10. One of the most difficult and crucial issues that the Freedom of Information Act needs to address is the extent to which the public's right of access to information may override the individual citizen's right of privacy. Some of the issues of confidentiality involved are illustrated in the box below. This is the least satisfactory aspect of the proposed Act. It has been seriously complicated by the fact that there are three pieces of legislation which deal with these matters which have been, or are to be introduced separately: the Human Rights Bill; the Data Protection Bill; and the Freedom of Information Bill. **We have serious doubts that the regime proposed strikes the right balance between privacy and openness, or indeed whether it will be workable.**

PRIVACY VS THE RIGHT TO KNOW: WHAT SORT OF INFORMATION RAISES THESE PROBLEMS?

"Foster carers do not have the legal right of access to the records of the children and young people in their care. To give carers direct access would not only conflict with the rights of children to confidentiality, but also would not be practicable because of the nature of the records... Social Service Departments (SSDs) have a statutory duty to pass on all of the information that carers need to care for each child in placement... However, in practice, social workers make decisions about what information it is appropriate to pass on, and what is not. NFCA often hears from foster carers who find that crucial information about the child and his or her circumstances is not passed on. In the worst scenario, a foster carer may welcome into their home a young person who has already abused other children, without being told of this".[16] *National Foster Care Association.*

In a judgment in March (R v Chief Constable of North Wales Police and others ex parte P.Thorpe and another), Lord Woolf decided that the police had acted lawfully in informing the owner of a caravan site of the presence there of a couple who had been released after serving prison sentences for sexual offences against children. *The Times 19 March 1998, p.5.*

The fees earned by individual barristers from legal aid have hitherto been treated as confidential. But in April 1998 payments to the 20 solicitors' firms and 20 barristers who received the largest sums of money from the legal aid fund in 1996–97 were published by the Lord Chancellor's Department. *HC Deb 28 April 1998, 311 cols 65–7W.*

Do the press or public have a right to know the whereabouts of high profile prisoners, or is this personal information which should not be released?

Should a doctor be allowed to warn a patient that his or her partner is HIV positive, without the patient's consent?

Should employers be able to ascertain whether a job applicant has a criminal record, by requiring the applicant to request a copy of his or her own criminal record and then produce it to the employer (so-called "enforced subject access")?

[16] Ev. p.124.

11. In most countries which have separate privacy and Freedom of Information regimes, there is an inevitable conflict between the two competing values. The story of the relationship between the two in Australia and New Zealand indicates the possible results:

> "Australia has had a relatively weak Privacy Commissioner, who has not established a separate access regime under the 1988 Privacy Act; who has not succeeded in extending the privacy legislation to the private sector; and who has acquiesced in FOI being the governing statute. In New Zealand by contrast the Privacy Commissioner has been highly effective in arguing for the separate access regime in the new Privacy Act 1993; and in upholding privacy as a value. Freedom of Information observers remark on the chilling effect which the Privacy Act is beginning to have on Freedom of Information disclosures and on information policy more generally. In part this results from public ignorance or misinterpretation of the provisions of the Privacy Act; but in part it is because the Privacy Commissioner is an effective operator".[17]

The box opposite summarises the relationship between privacy and Freedom of Information regimes in other countries.

Protection for the individual's right of privacy

12. The UK does not have a single law defending individuals' privacy; but two Bills currently under consideration deal with privacy rights. The first of these is the Human Rights Bill, which will make provision in order to give fuller effect in UK domestic law to the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 8 of the Convention says that:

(a) "Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence

(b) There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well–being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others".

The freedoms in Article 8 are balanced by the freedom of expression in Article 10 of the Convention which includes the right to receive and impart information.

[17]Ev. p.188.

14. Freedom of Information and these two pieces of legislation inevitably pull in different directions. On the one hand, there is a risk that by taking a liberal approach to Freedom of Information the UK may find itself in breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. On the other, there is a risk that over-scrupulous concern for privacy may prevent the disclosure of information of legitimate concern to the public. The Lord Chancellor sought to reassure us about the conflict between the Convention and the Freedom of Information Act: "the important thing, I think, is that the Human Rights Bill represents a floor of rights; it does not represent a maximum of rights, it is a floor of rights beneath which people should not fall. These are minimum rights. However, there is nothing in the Human Rights Bill which prevents the freedoms and rights of individuals being enhanced above that floor. This is exactly what the Freedom of Information Bill does".[19] We agree with him on the Article 10 side, but whether that solved the Article 8 infringement problem is another matter. It might be added that the Council of Europe, which is responsible for the Convention, in 1981 recommended to Member States that they implement Freedom of Information laws.[20]

15. The difficulty for Freedom of Information represented by the Data Protection Bill is not easily assessed. In any conflict between the two regimes, the Data Protection Bill may well take precedence, because it is derived from European Community law. The Data Protection Registrar, Mrs Elizabeth France, argued that "there would be recourse to the European Courts directly if we were to deny people the rights which were contained in the Data Protection Bill".[21] If the Freedom of Information Bill were not drafted so as to be compatible with the Data Protection Directive, she said, "the courts would make it clear if challenged that in the case of an individual the Data Protection Bill's requirements would be the ones which took precedence".[22] Furthermore, the Registrar gave us an indication of what her approach will be to finding a balance between privacy and freedom of information: in cases relating to information supplied in confidence she was, she said, likely to "start from the position that processing such data in order to disclose it without the consent of the individual or some over-riding compelling public interest (such as the saving of life or the prevention or detection of serious crime) is either unlawful or unfair processing of personal data ... it is wrong to have to satisfy any test of harm in order to protect personal records from disclosure to third parties. Indeed, there is a strong public interest in preserving the privacy and confidentiality of individuals [which] will only be overridden (in the absence of consent) on limited compelling grounds of public interest or for the protection of the vital interests of individuals".[23] On the other hand, the provisions in the Data Protection Bill appear to allow for the disclosure of information without the consent of a third party if it is done "under any enactment", which would presumably include the Freedom of Information Bill. The White Paper seems surprisingly phlegmatic about the possibility of conflicts about the disclosure of personal information and their resolution. It says that "in the unlikely event of a dispute arising between the Commissioner and Registrar, on which they were unable to reach agreement, this would ultimately be resolved by the courts".[24] This may be true, but strikes us as an abdication of responsibility for drafting clear legislation, which avoids recourse to the courts except where unavoidable.

16. The right to privacy has a head start; the Government should ensure that the right of access to information is not left behind. **We accept the Data Protection Registrar's view that preserving the privacy and confidentiality of individuals is a vital interest, which should be overridden only on careful consideration and for good reasons.** But there must be a mechanism to ensure that it can be overridden where necessary and in a systematic way. In the absence of a joint Data Protection and Freedom of Information regime, there needs to be careful consideration to ensuring a proper balance between the two values of privacy and openness which does not stifle Freedom of Information early on. **We recommend that the Government clarify to what extent it believes that the Data Protection Bill will work to prevent access**

[19] Q.293.
[20] Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, R(81)19.
[21] Q.210; see also Ev. p.154.
[22] Q.211.
[23] Min of Ev. p.59, para. 7.2.
[24] para. 4.13.

by third parties to information about an individual, and how it is proposed that the Data Protection Bill is to provide the protection for the individual's right to privacy against the right to information held by the Government.

Access to personal information

17. Besides protecting the individual's rights of privacy, the Data Protection Act is also the vehicle for a certain type of Freedom of Information. The Data Protection Act 1984 gives individuals the right of access to information relating to themselves which is held on computer. Under the new Data Protection Bill they are also to gain the right of access to information relating to themselves held in ordinary (or "paper" or "manual") files. The Box opposite shows the main provisions concerned). The Freedom of Information Act, when enacted, is, in addition, supposed to give individuals another system of gaining access to information which directly relates to them. The Government has argued in the White Paper that it should therefore be possible for anyone to find out what is held by public authorities about themselves under either the Data Protection Act or the Freedom of Information Act. There would in other words be considerable overlap between the two regimes: they will, according to the White Paper, cover the same ground in providing access for an individual to data held about them by public authorities. This raises the possibility of a confusing and messy patchwork of different provisions under which one may obtain access to one's own file. How the system works for individuals is crucial: overseas experience suggests that a great majority of requests are likely to involve personal information. The White Paper suggests that these problems can be overcome. It says that "as far as is practicable, we will align the systems for access to personal information under Data Protection and Freedom of Information. This is likely to include the means of access, time limits for reply, charges and appeals... In addition the Government proposes that public authorities will have a duty to ensure that any significant difference between the two regimes is made known to any applicant who might be affected by such a difference".[25]

18. The access rights in the two pieces of legislation, however, will be very different. The Freedom of Information Bill will allow access to all records; the Data Protection Bill as introduced will allow access only to computerised, or "structured" personal files—information arranged "either by reference to individuals or by reference to criteria relating to individuals, in such a way that particular information relating to a particular individual is readily accessible" [clause 1]. The two pieces of legislation will have different exclusions and exemptions. For example, personal data processed for purposes of the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, or the assessment or collection of any tax or duty is exempt from the right of access to personal data under the Data Protection Bill in any case where disclosure would prejudice those purposes [clause 28]—a straightforward exemption based on a test of harm. Under the Freedom of Information Bill some of the same data may be completely excluded as information relating to the investigation and prosecution functions of the police, prosecutors and other bodies carrying out law enforcement work; or it may be exempt because it could "substantially harm the effectiveness of law enforcement or encourage the avoidance or evasion of tax"; or it may be disclosed because it would not cause substantial harm or because it was in the public interest to disclose it. Again, under the Data Protection Bill, a Minister will be able to issue a certificate exempting certain descriptions of personal data from most of the provisions of the Act on the grounds of national security; there will, however, be an appeal to the Data Protection Tribunal on the grounds that the decision to issue the certificate was not reasonable [clause 27]. The same information could be totally excluded from the Freedom of Information Bill, and therefore placed beyond the possibility of reference to the Information Commissioner, because it relates to the security services; or it could be exempt under the "national security" specified interest. An individual searching for personal files is likely to be left bewildered. Just as likely, the Information Commissioner and Data Protection Registrar[26] may make incompatible decisions in similar areas. The Data Protection Registrar told

[25] para 4.11.

[26] The Data Protection Registrar will become the Data Protection Commissioner under the provisions of the Bill. For the sake of simplicity, the Office is referred to as the Data Protection Registrar throughout this Report.

Protection regimes in order to make a more coherent and more workable system for access to personal information. We are most unhappy that the Government has been so vague about the relationship between the Freedom of Information proposals and the Data Protection Bill, and that it seems that it has not until very recently got to grips with the problems involved in reconciling the two. It is essential that the conflicts we have identified are resolved, and resolved soon. There must be a simple and comprehensible system for individuals to gain access to their own information, which avoids the complexities presented by differing access regimes and ensures that the right of access is effectively enforced.

Third party appeals

22. The White Paper asks for views on whether a mechanism should be established to allow third parties to appeal against decisions to release information which they believe would cause "substantial harm" to their interests.[32] As the Data Protection Registrar pointed out, Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights says that "in the determination of his civil rights ... everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law".[33] It seems difficult, therefore, to prevent such a system of appeal even if it were wished to do so. **We agree that a system of appeals for third parties is essential.** This does, of course, cause a number of practical problems. DSS have a great difficulty with it: the process of providing access to records could be complicated and delayed if the third party or parties had to be consulted about the release of their information in each case. "The Department will therefore be keen to explore the scope for procedures to avoid, as much as possible, the need to contact third parties at the time an access request is made. Letting third parties know in advance that information may be disclosed could be one way forward... Where a third party is aware of the possibility of disclosure there should be no need for further contact following an access request".[34] DTI make a similar point: "we would not wish, in the extreme, to be required unnecessarily by the Act to ask third parties whether they would object to the disclosure of information which they had provided to the Department in circumstances where the information was manifestly suitable for public consumption (eg was already in the public domain) and where the third party clearly could have no sustainable objection to its further promulgation".[35] It may be difficult to find the third party concerned; the public authority may not have a contact address for the person. Appeals would need to be heard before disclosure, and there may, in some circumstances, be compelling reasons to release information before an appeal can be dealt with. We are also concerned about the possibility of accidental or wrongful disclosure of commercial or other confidential information which causes damage or distress, and the legal implications this would have. It is not clear from the White Paper whether this possibility has been fully considered.

EXCLUSIONS

23. The White Paper says that Freedom of Information "as a fundamental element of our policy to modernise and open up government, should have very wide application".[36] The proposals are, it claims, designed to replace the previous "piecemeal and inadequate system with clear and consistent requirements which would apply across government".[37] **We have been impressed by the breadth of the White Paper's commitment to Freedom of Information. But this has made the Government's decision to exclude certain bodies and classes of information altogether from the scope of the proposed Act all the more regrettable.** This means that the information will not be accessible at all, unless it is voluntarily made public or is required under other statutory provisions; there will be no opportunity to request the information or to weigh the public interest in its provision against the public interest in withholding it. The Information

[32] para. 5.19.
[33] Min of Ev. p.60, para. 8.3.
[34] Ev. p.10.
[35] Ev. p.14.
[36] para. 2.1.
[37] para. 1.6.

Information is unlikely to be among its first priorities. It may be some time until it enacts legislation about Freedom of Information. The Lord Chancellor, in evidence to the Committee, accepted this point;[73] and we believe that the degree to which Freedom of Information should cover Scottish authorities should not be left in such doubt. The Scottish Consumer Council, in their submission to the Cabinet Office on the White Paper, point out that there is a further source of confusion in the fact that Data Protection (across all departments) is a reserved matter, for which the Westminster Parliament will continue to be responsible, while Freedom of Information (in relation to non-reserved matters) is not.[74] They also raised a concern that there might be differing provisions in Scotland and in the rest of the UK: "it will clearly be unsatisfactory if Scottish citizens do not have access to the same categories of information on the same basis as citizens in other parts of the UK". We do not regard it as unsatisfactory for the Scottish Parliament to be able to introduce differing provisions for Scotland to those of the rest of the UK; that is the nature of devolution. The rights of the Scottish Parliament to accept or to reject the provisions should be preserved. We do believe, however, that there needs to be a system which can be used to facilitate the application of the Act in Scotland as soon as possible. **We recommend that there should be provision to ensure that the Act will be brought into effect in Scotland in relation to devolved matters as soon as it comes into effect in the rest of the UK, to ensure that there would not be a lengthy period in which Freedom of Information will not apply to devolved matters in Scotland.**

"GATEWAY" PROVISIONS

47. The White Paper sets out a series of what amount to conditions for requesters: "applicants will be encouraged to act reasonably and not abuse or misuse the access rights that the Act provides".[75]

Making a request

48. As noted above, the White Paper says that there are a number of circumstances in which the authorities subject to the Act will not necessarily be required to deal with requests in the normal way, by assessing them against the harm and public interest tests and then taking a decision to release the information or not to release it. These circumstances would include, for instance, cases where the information was already available, or where the information would be published in due course; where the request was not specific enough to allow the body concerned to look for it; or where the request appeared to be a 'large-scale "fishing expedition"', or multiple applications for related material, and so on.[76]

49. We accept that some such defences for the bodies subject to the Act are necessary. There may well be vexatious requests, and it should not be the role of authorities to provide routinely information which could be easily obtained from (for example) a public library. But the option of not releasing information if it is likely to be published could be an excuse for indefinite delay in permitting access, and will need to be subject to clear guidelines; and the option of not dealing with a request if it is suspected that it is simply a "fishing expedition", or even an attempt to "obstruct or interfere with the public authority's business"[77] could be misused by some bodies, which might be too quick to make inaccurate assumptions about the nature of an application or the intentions of an applicant. These provisions need, therefore, to be balanced by provisions requiring bodies subject to the Act to help applicants find the information they want. During our visit to Ireland, we heard how its Freedom of Information Act required bodies subject to it to publish general guides to their role, operation and records, and also to publish internal guidance or rules they hold. A good deal of the second type of material has already been made available under the Code of Practice. But the first type, the general guide to the role, operation and

[73] Q. 391
[74] Ev. p.181.
[75] para. 2.23.
[76] para. 2.26.
[77] *ibid.*

records of the body concerned, has not. **We recommend that bodies subject to the Act should be obliged to publish a detailed booklet covering the role of the body, how it works, the type of records it holds, and its policies on disclosure of documents and that they should be under a statutory duty to advise and assist requesters to narrow and define the information they want.**

50. The Campaign for Freedom of Information proposes that the public should be given access to any internal indexes held by the authority. It also suggests that authorities should make available an index to the records they have released in response to Freedom of Information requests, and copies of those records; and that authorities should be required to provide public reading rooms where such information, as well as the guides and manuals whose disclosure is proposed in the White Paper, could be inspected. All of these proposals are reasonable ones for major bodies: government departments, for example, or local authorities. They may be less practicable for smaller bodies such as schools or small advisory NDPBs. Arrangements for these could no doubt be made, however, through larger bodies, for example the government departments or local authorities concerned, or else applicants might be allowed to use desks at the establishment concerned to review the records available. The Government resisted the suggestion that bodies to which the Act applies should be obliged to create indexes where they do not already exist. Dr Clark did say to us, however, that departments "may want for their own convenience to work out some form of index or list and if they do that then certainly it would be my intention that that information itself will be subject to ... freedom of information".[78] **We recommend that public authorities should be required to make available existing indexes to their records, where it is practicable to do so; should be required to create indexes to new records; and should be encouraged to create indexes for old records. We accept that this need not be in the Bill itself, but we recommend that authorities should be obliged to prepare a strategy for cataloguing their records.** The way that information is recorded or indexed is vital to an effective right of access; this is something the importance of which was made clear to us during our visit to Sweden; and we will return to the issue in our future reports. It will be essential to make sure that applicants are able to identify the documents they are seeking.

Fees and charges

51. The White Paper sets out a system of charges for applicants. It points out that Freedom of Information carries costs, and that "every major Freedom of Information regime in the world contains provisions for charging". It divides the systems into two types: flat-rate "entry charges" made each time an application is made and charges for dealing with the request, which may increase depending on the amount of work required in order to deal with it, and possibly also depending on the nature of the requester (whether an individual or a commercial operation).[79]

52. The White Paper proposes to employ both of these. Public authorities covered by the Act will be able to charge a "limited access fee per request", of no more than £10; then public authorities will be able to set their own charging schemes "within parameters laid down either in the Act itself or (more probably) an Order made under it".[80] These would exclude a power to make a profit; prevent bodies charging for information which a public authority is required under the Act itself to make publicly available; and "should be structured to fall primarily on the limited number of applications which involve significant additional work and considerable costs, rather than straight forward applications which, for public authorities, should be part and parcel of normal interaction with the public".[81]

53. How expensive is it likely to be to obtain the information requested? Under the Code, there is no access fee, but bodies subject to it could make charges depending on staff time required. The charges vary widely between departments. They are presented in the table on the

[78] Q.118.
[79] para. 2.29.
[80] para. 2.32.
[81] *ibid.*

interest.[151] Documents written by third parties (for example the government of a Member State) are also excluded from the regime and requests must be made to that third party.[152] Could the EC regime inform the approach of UK authorities to such requests when made to the UK 'author' of the document? Or would the EC regime influence the attitude of UK authorities in releasing other EC documents in their possession? If so, then this will probably result in a less liberal attitude than under the proposed Freedom of Information Bill.[153] The EU Ombudsman has managed by negotiation to extend the Code *de facto* to a wider range of EC bodies, including the EC Parliament and the ECJ is discussing a possible extension of the European Code to its own documents even though the latter is not within the jurisdiction of the European Ombudsman. (The European Ombudsman has said that a failure to adopt proper rules on access to information could amount to maladministration). The Amsterdam Treaty elevated the Freedom of Information question to a Treaty provision (new Article 255) stating that principles and limits would be set out in an act made under Article 251 and each institution covered by the provision: the Council, Commission and the European Parliament would elaborate specific provisions in its own Rule of Procedure.[154] This will take several years to achieve and there is no guarantee that the regime will be any more liberal than at present. We visited Sweden in May in order to discuss this point (among others), and we will return to it in our next report on the draft Bill.

PUBLIC RECORDS

98. The Freedom of Information Act, the White Paper says, will have a considerable impact on our public records system. The public already possesses the right of access to government records over 30 years old under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. The right applies to central government bodies and the courts. Most old records are, in fact, destroyed: only a small percentage of the records created by government are transferred to the Public Record Office and preserved permanently.[155]

99. The White Paper considers whether it should be necessary to unify the systems of access to "current" records—those less than 30 years old—and of access to older records. It proposes that the Freedom of Information Act should cover access to both current and historical material: "this will provide a comprehensive right of access to all records, regardless of their age". There will, however, continue to be different systems of access for current records and historical records. Records of over 30 years old will, as now, be assumed to be open to the public (with no need to apply the "harm" or "substantial harm" tests). Records that were created more recently may be released before their time; but in general they will only be available if they are not subject to an exclusion and if they pass through the harm tests.[156]

100. The White Paper discusses the possibility of lowering the threshold at which records pass from being "current" to becoming "historical". Its conclusion, that "it is preferable to retain the 30 year rule which is in line with international practice" is, it would seem, based largely on the cost of accelerating the process of reviewing old records to determine whether they should be preserved as "historical" or not. Changing the 30 year rule to a 25 year rule would cost £60 million over five years,[157] a cost, the White Paper says, which "would not constitute the best use of scarce public resources".[158] The White Paper does, however, commit the Government to

[151] See *World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) v Commission* [1997] ECR II, 313. The court of first instance said that reasons have to be given even when it is decided that mandatory interests should prevent disclosure.
[152] See also Declaration 35 of the Amsterdam Treaty, from which it may be inferred that the exclusions will not cover parties other than member states.
[153] See van der Waal v European Commission, Case T 83/96 (19 March 1998) on a request for access to documents in the Commission sent by national courts relating to points of competition law and policy.
[154] See also the new Article 207(3).
[155] paras. 6.1–6.4.
[156] paras. 6.5–6.6.
[157] Min of Ev. p.84.
[158] para. 6.5.

releasing more records earlier than the 30 year threshold. Earlier release is already encouraged under the Code of Practice.[159]

101. Not all preserved records are opened after 30 years. Some may be withheld for longer, and are either retained within departments indefinitely or sent to the Record Office but closed for a specified period. In either case, departments have to show that the records comply with criteria for non–disclosure laid down in 1993 Guidelines. Documents whose disclosure might harm the defence, international relations, or national security of the country may be closed for up to 40 years; documents containing information supplied in confidence may be closed for periods of up to 100 years; and so on. The Home Secretary said that the earliest files in existence in the Home Office that were still closed date from 1874 and concerned files created by the then Irish Secret Police.[160] The White Paper says that these criteria—already not too dissimilar to the specified interests under Freedom of Information—will be recast to make the relationship between them much closer.

102. There is already a system by which it is possible to appeal against extended closure of some documents. Appeal is to the Advisory Council on Public Records which advises the Lord Chancellor. The White Paper argues that this is ineffective; it proposes to direct appeals on public records instead to the Information Commissioner.[161] We note, however, the point made in evidence to us by the Royal Historical Society, who argue that the Information Commissioner should be supported by professional historical advice in reaching a judgement on such cases.[162]

103. Our principal concern about this section of the White Paper is about its application to bodies outside central government to which the Freedom of Information Act will apply. The White Paper itself is silent on this; the background paper says merely that "Records of local authorities are not covered by the Public Records Acts: separate provision is made for these records to be made available to the public. It is envisaged that this will continue under FOI".[163] This is inadequate in relation to local authorities; and more inadequate in relation to all the other bodies concerned. It is reasonable that the Public Record Office should not become a repository for the records of bodies not within central government; but further consideration might have been given to whether other bodies ought to be required to meet the standards of central government in record keeping, and whether the rights of access given to central government records, currently through the Public Records Acts, and in the future through the Freedom of Information Act, should cover the other bodies as well. Lord Irvine referred to such an extension of the Act as constituting an "upheaval";[164] but it is not clear to us why ensuring that central government standards of record-keeping apply to other government bodies as well should cause an upheaval. If it is not done, freedom of information will almost inevitably be less effective as it applies to these other bodies.

104. The White Paper also refers to the importance of proper records management. It proposes "to place an obligation on departments to set records management standards", with regard to best practice guidance drawn up by the Public Record Office—and particularly relating to the implications of the new extensive use of electronic systems for processing information and for communicating. As the White Paper says, "statutory rights of access are of little use if reliable records are not created in the first place, if they cannot be found when needed, or if the arrangements for their eventual archiving or destruction are inadequate".[165] The Public Record Office is only likely to help those government bodies which come under its remit. There will be a great need—a greater need—for the same sort of help among the other bodies to which the Act applies—local authorities, schools, contractors, the utilities—which may not have been used to the discipline which a statutory obligation to keep records requires. **We recommend that the expertise and assistance of the Public Record Office should be made available to these bodies as well as those which it is obliged to help.**

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[159] paras. 6.7–6.9.
[160] Q.534.
[161] para. 6.11.
[162] Ev. p.168.
[163] p.65, fn.18.
[164] Q.440.
[165] para. 6.12.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE Rm 8245
Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 7

Telephone (Direct dial) 0171 218 [redacted] Section 40
(Switchboard) 0171 218 9000
(Fax) 0171 218 [redacted] Section 40

Section 40 [redacted]
British National Space Centre

== by fax ==
Section 40 [redacted]
(2 Pages)

Your reference

Our reference
D/Sec(AS)/64/1

Date
18 June 1998

QUESTION RELATING TO "UFOs" ON BNSC WEB SITE

1. Thank you for your fax message of 17 June, in which you sought our confirmation that we would be content for a question on Government responsibility for this subject to be included on the BNSC's Web Site.

2. Attached you will find the text we would prefer to see used. If you wish to discuss further with me please feel free.

Section 40 [redacted]
SECRETARIAT(AIR STAFF)2A1

Enc.

Q To whom do I talk about "Unidentified Flying Objects?"

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is the Government focal point. However, it only examines the reports it receives for one reason: to establish whether there is evidence that the UK's air defences have been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless the sighting reveals evidence of a potential threat from an external military source, no attempt is made to determine its precise nature. The MOD does not provide an aerial identification service in cases where there is no defence interest.

The MOD focal point for queries relating to the above is:

Ministry of Defence
Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

** Transmit Conf. Report **

18 Jun '98 13:40

Secretariat(Air Staff)--->	
No.	0218
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ENCLOSURE NUMBER 6

64/1
letter fax sent back to AP
18 Jun.

BNSC
BRITISH NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE

FAX COVER SHEET

To:	Secretariat (Air Staff)2a Main Building MoD	**From:**	Section 40 British National Space Centre 151 Buckingham Palace Road London. SW1W 9SS
Fax:	Section 40	**Tel:**	Section 40
Date:	17 June 1998	**Fax:**	
Total Pages	2	**Ref:**	

Update of BNSC's Web Site

You will recall that Mr Battle- the DTI Minister for Science- has received a number of letters recently from members of the public regarding the government's policy on UFOs. BNSC sought your advice, for which we were grateful, before answering these letters.

BNSC is currently in the processing of updating its website. We intend to include a page called "Frequently asked Questions" where we will provide answers to the most common questions asked by the public. It has been suggested that we include a question on UFO's and I attach with this fax a copy of the question and answer we intend to put on the website.

I would be grateful if you could confirm that you are content for BNSC to include such a question on our site and that you are happy with the answer and the fact that it gives your address as the appropriate contact point.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Section 40

Frequently asked Questions

1. Whom do I talk to about Unidentified Flying Objects?

Government policy on "UFO" reports is to investigate any sighting in order to establish whether the UK Air Defence Region has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military forces. Unless the sighting reveals evidence of a potential threat from an external military source - and to date no "UFO" sighting has revealed such evidence - no attempt is made to determine the precise nature of the sighting. The Government does not feel that investigating each report would generate sufficient benefit to justify the large public resources required.

Lead responsibility for Government policy on this issue lies with the Ministry of Defence (MoD). For more information, please contact the MoD at the following address:

Secretariat (Air Staff)2a
Ministry of Defence
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
London. SW1A 2HB

ENCLOSURE 5 NUMBER

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

9th June 1998

DDI Sec

DI55c

PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE ON 'UFOs'

Reference:

A. D/DI(Sec)6/2 dated 3rd June 1998 enc 311
B. D/DI55/108/15 dated 7th April 1998

1. You asked (Reference A) if we would reply to the letters from Section 40 and Section 40 about 'UFO' research. I agree that another line of correspondence with members of the public on 'UFOs' would be unhelpful. We have a voluminous file of correspondence from Section 40 each letter more insistent than the one before that we provide information to support his pet theories. I am happy to take this latest missive on and the similar approach from Section 40

2. Section 40 is an expert when it comes to expanding officially provided fact with fiction to suit his own purposes. He is adept at offering such hybrid information to others as reassurance that he already 'knows' something in the hope they will be lulled into providing further information. I can assure you that the only information we have given to Section 40 about DI55 is the penultimate paragraph in the attached letter. It was provided by Wg Cdr Section 40 at Reference B. Sec(AS)2 staff have not provided any other information about your organisation, and certainly not official addresses (which, for the record, he has not sought from us).

Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 Section 40 MB
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
FAX : Section 40 MB

From: Section 40 Secretariat (Air Staff)2
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Room 8247, Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 0171 218 Section 40
(Switchboard) 0171 218 9000
(Fax) 0171 218 Section 40

Section 40

Your reference

Our reference
D/Sec(AS)/64/3
Date
24th April 1998

Dear Section 40

I have received your letter dated 8th March.

In response to your further questions about the alleged Rendlesham Forest Incident, I should explain that there are no reports on our files from the Defence Radiological Protection Service about Colonel Halt's memorandum concerning the radiation levels mentioned in that document. The content of any internal memos held on our files would not be open for disclosure because they contain opinions and/or views not intended for publication. You will know that Departmental files on alleged 'UFO' sightings are routinely preserved for public release at the 30-year point and I can assure you that any internal memos would remain on the files and be released at that time.

You also ask about unusual radar tracks. It is for the operators of radar equipment, using their experience and expertise, to define at any moment in time what might be an unusual track; the Official Secrets Act covers the disclosure of any information of a classified nature; where it was judged that an external military threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom Air Defence Region was of concern, action as appropriate to that threat would be instigated; and, witnesses would not be 'interrogated' where circumstances did not warrant such action.

I am sorry I am unable to provide any details about DSTI branches from 1967 onwards or how they might have been reorganised. You will, perhaps, know that DI55 is a branch within the MOD which is concerned with scientific and technical intelligence in matters of air defence.

Finally, I have to say that the information you are seeking about possible radar and visual sightings for the last five or thirty years cannot be provided since to try and gather the information from a very large number of files would involve significant staff effort to the detriment of essential defence-related tasks.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

See (a1)2a

KP

HEADQUARTERS LOGISTICS COMMAND

Royal Air Force Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE18 8QL

Telephone: Huntingdon (01480) 52151 ext Section 40
RAFTN x 95331 ext Section 40
Fax ext Section 40

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 4 64/1

Please reply to the Air Officer Commanding in Chief

For the attention of: CS(Fin Sec)1

See Distribution

Our Reference: LC/356805/3/F&S

Date: 8 June 1998

Please find attached a copy of our reply to Section 40 who has made further enquiries about RAF Rudloe Manor and in particular the role of Building Property Facility Management (BFPM) Ltd and Building and Property Defence (BPD) Ltd.

Addressees will wish to note that Section 40 is now describing himself as a "student studying a course in Environmental Sciences"!

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Section 40

For AOCinC

Telefax

To: See (AS)1a
Fax: 9(0)21 Section 40
From: Section 40
Date: Pages: 3

Distribution:

External:

Information:

Sec(AS)1a*
FS Section 40 RAF Rudloe Manor*
Section 40 Building 32, Erskine Barracks, Wilton, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 0AG
Building & Property Defence Ltd, Corsham Navy, Old Shaft Road, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN1 9RF

From: Section 40

HEADQUARTERS LOGISTICS COMMAND

Royal Air Force Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE18 8QL

Telephone: Huntingdon (01480) 52151 ext Section 40
RAFTN x 95331 e
Fax ext Section 40

Section 40

Please reply to the Air Officer Commanding in Chief

For the attention of: CS(Fin Sec)1

Our Reference: LC/356805/3/4/F&S

Date: 29 May 1998

Dear Section 40

Thank you for your letter of 6 May in which you enquire about the role of Building and Property Facilities Management (BFPM) Ltd and Building and Property Defence (BPD) Ltd. I am also replying to your identical letter to the Secretary of State for Defence.

Although I believe that you have already been given the information you are seeking from me, the points of contact are as follows:

For the Wiltshire Works Services Management Contract:

Section 40
Building 32
Erskine Barracks
Wilton
Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 0AG.

For the Avon Works Services Management Contract:

Section 40
Building and Property Defence Ltd
Corsham Navy
Old Shaft Road
Corsham, Wiltshire, SN1 9RF.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

Section 40

This letter implies that we are responsible for ✱ and that we have not accurately reflected ¥ in correspondence with this public. I have prepared a draft for your consideration back to DDI Sec setting the record straight. (see attached).

Section 40 5/6

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DI(Sec)6/2

3 June 1998

Sec(AS)2a

Copy to:

DI55c

REQUEST FOR UAP SIGHTING RECORDS FROM Section 40

1. You will see from the attached that AD DI55 has received correspondence direct from Section 40 and one of his associates. We are uncertain as to how AD DI55's address was revealed since his move to Room 283 only happened at the end of last year. There appears to have been a breach of classified information. ✱

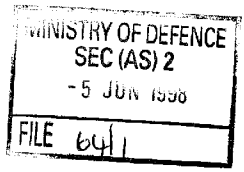
2. Section 40 and his colleague are obviously under the misapprehension that we keep comprehensive records of all sightings of unidentified aerial phenomena(UAP). They are also overlooking the fact that reports passed to the MOD are on a confidential basis.

3. It would be unhelpful if we replied directly and developed a second line of correspondence from the MOD. Moreover although the DIS is an avowed organisation, individual appointments and detailed organisational responsibilities remain classified. Therefore there is little scope for entering into direct correspondence with the public.I would be grateful if you could respond on behalf of AD DI55 pointing out that the reports MOD receives are official and in confidence. It would assist us if you could also inform them that DI55 is concerned with scientific and technical intelligence in matters of air defence and does not undertake any wider responsibilities in relation to UAP; as such DI55 does not receive all UAP reports. ¥

Section 40

DDI SEC
WH212 x Section 40

Replies sent to Section 40
held on 6413 pt N.



WALES FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT UFOLOGISTS

Everyday people searching for answers

Anglesey Branch Co-ordinator: Section 40 **C. Chem., M.R.S.C.**
Correspondence Address: Section 40 **PENTRAETH,** Section 40

AD/DI55
Room 283
Old War Office Building
Whitehall
London

21/5/98

Dear Sir,

I am an industrial chemist and a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). My main interest lies in the field of unidentified aerial phenomena. I have learned of your Department's extensive role in this field through Section 40 of Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a and also through data currently available in the Public Record Office.

I am currently in the process of collating as much data as possible on aerial phenomena. This information will be archived either in the Royal Astronomical Society or RSC sections at Burlington House. In particular, I need details on close-up visual sightings by aircrew, details on radar sightings, details on soil/vegetation analysis and also, most importantly, classification charts on craft types.

I appreciate that you are a busy Department; however, this is precisely why we need the information so urgently. I think it's time you lads had a little help from industry and academia-if we work together, I think we can achieve this.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

Section 40

24 May 1998

AD/DI55
Room 283
Old War Office Building
Whitehall
London

Re: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Dear Sir,

I am assisting a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) in archiving data on unidentified aerial phenomena. Through the Parliamentary Office of the RSC, Section 40 has presented a report to the Select Committee on Science and Technology outlining data currently available in the Public Record Office.

It is clear from Section 40's research that a large body of information is still unaccounted for since there are no classification charts to categorise the unidentified objects and numerous incidents alluded to in Intelligence reports are simply not available.

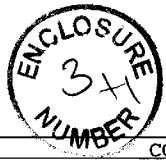
My understanding is that all information obtained will be archived in the library at Burlington House, the HQ of the RSC. The aim here is to provide sufficient evidence to promote the formation of a SETI sectoral panel for the next round of the DTI Foresight Programme.

I trust that you will co-operate with me on what is clearly a tremendous opportunity for DI55 to publicise some of the work that has been carried out into investigating unidentified aerial phenomena.

Kind Regards,

Section 40

64/1



DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
01/06/98	ICS(OR)1ADV	PUBLIC LINES ON MOD INTEREST IN	[ ]

Sent: 01/06/98 at 16:12
To: ICS(OR)1ADV
CC:

Ref: 1803
Subject: PUBLIC LINES ON MOD INTEREST IN REPORTS OF 'UFOs' AND ON THE ALLEGED 'UFO' SIGHTING OVER THE NORTH SEA
Text: [redacted] Still have not tracked down the article. My colleague has looked through the Telegraph as well as The Times, Guardian and Independent. Are you sure it's in today's paper?
I attach some lines which you may find of use. I'll ensure [redacted] (DPO(RAF)) is alerted to the latest Press mischief.

Section 40
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Section 40

Priority: Urgent View Acknowledge [*] Attachments [1]
Reply Request [ ] Delivery Acknowledge [*] Codes [ ]

MOD INTEREST IN REPORTS OF 'UFO' SIGHTINGS

The Ministry of Defence has no interest or role with respect to 'UFO/flying saucer' matters, or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms about which it remains open-minded. To date, however, the MOD is unaware of any evidence which proves that these phenomena exist.

The Ministry of Defence examines any reports of 'UFO' sightings it receives solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely is there any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity.

The reports are examined, with the assistance of the Department's air defence experts as required. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat to the United Kingdom from an external military source, and to date no 'UFO' sighting has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each sighting reported to us. We believe that down to earth explanations could be found for these reports, such as aircraft lights or natural phenomena, if resources were diverted for this purpose but it would be an inappropriate use of defence resources to provide this kind of aerial identification service.

Any further Press Enquiries should be directed towards:

DPO(RAF) - Section 40
0171 218 Section 40

Enquiries from members of the public may be directed **in writing only** please to:

Ministry of Defence
Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
SW1A 2HB

Public Line concerning the alleged North Sea 'UFO' sighting reported in the Daily Mail and Daily Express on 27 April 1998

There were a number of Press Articles in April alleging a 'UFO' sighting over the North Sea. All of the Press reports were incorrect and speculative. RAF Fylingdales has not tracked any 'UFOs' on its radar. The RAF Cranwell 'Military Exploitation of Space' Symposium in June is not concerned with alleged 'UFO' sightings.

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
01/06/98	ICS(OR)1ADV	SUBMISSION TO USofS	[ ]

Sent: 01/06/98 at 15:40
To: ICS(OR)1ADV
CC:

Ref: 1802
Subject: SUBMISSION TO USofS

Text: Section 40 The submission I've just sent you is classified RESTRICTED. As you are on CSV8 it won't show when you print it out. Will you please write it on the document, especially if you intend copying it to any of your colleagues.
Thank You
Section 40

Priority: Urgent View Acknowledge [*] Attachments [ ]
Reply Request [*] Delivery Acknowledge [*] Codes [ ]

Mon 1 Jun, 1998 15:34 mailbox log Page 1

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
01/06/98	ICS(OR)1ADV	SUBMISSION TO USofS CONCERNING	[ ]

Sent: 01/06/98 at 15:34
To: ICS(OR)1ADV
CC:

Ref: 1801
Subject: SUBMISSION TO USofS CONCERNING PRESS ARTICLES ON THE MILITARY EXPLOITATION OF SPACE SYMPOSIUM AND "UFOs".
Text: Section 40 Attached as promised a further copy of the above mentioned submission. DPO(RAF) is out of office at present but on his return I'll find out what he knows of the latest article. I am trying to lay my hands on a copy now. I'll send you down some lines on our general interest in reports of 'UFOs' and what we said about the articles at the time shortly. Section 40

Priority: Urgent View Acknowledge [*] Attachments [1]
Reply Request [ ] Delivery Acknowledge [*] Codes [ ]

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/5

30 Apr 98

APS/USofS
(thro Section 40)

Copy to:

DPO(RAF)
ADGE1
AD OR(ICS)1
PSO/ACAS

UFO ARTICLES - DAILY MAIL AND DAILY EXPRESS - 27 APRIL 1998

ISSUE

1. To provide advice following the Daily Mail and Daily Express articles of 27 April alleging a 'UFO' sighting over the North Sea.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To note.

BACKGROUND

3. On Sunday 26 April the MOD Press Office received calls from the Daily Mail and Daily Express about an alleged 'UFO' sighting over the North Sea involving an object 'the size of a battleship' travelling at around '17,000 mph' (the published articles subsequently alleged 24,000 mph). No additional information about the date of this alleged incident was provided at the time or has been since. A further 20 phonecalls from the print and broadcast media have now been received.

Source of the Story

4. The Daily Mail has said that Section 40 was the source of the story. Section 40 a former editor of the Section 40, is believed to have left the paper under a cloud and has, we understand, been contributing material to the national Press on a freelance basis since that time. Section 40 is known to be rather inventive of the facts.

RAF Fylingdales, Yorkshire

5. The Fylingdales radar is tasked only to detect and track objects in orbit and those with a ballistic trajectory. The Officer Commanding at RAF Fylingdales has confirmed that for the

35 years it has operated, no 'UFOs' have been tracked. It is the case that the radar is not configured to track such objects, particularly in the reported areas, and there is therefore no substance to the claim that recorded data of this nature is held at RAF Fylingdales.

6. OC Fylingdales also confirmed that the station has not been approached to provide supporting information for the Space Symposium at RAF Cranwell in June. The RAF Fylingdales Crew Commander received a call from a journalist on Sunday but was asked only about RAF Fylingdales' involvement with the Symposium. The Crew Commander denied all knowledge of any involvement and referred the journalist to the MOD Press desk.

Symposium at RAF Cranwell

7. The Air Warfare Centre and the MOD branch Operational Requirements (Information & Communication Services) are jointly hosting a *'Military Exploitation of Space'* Symposium on 3-4 June at RAF Cranwell. It is open to Service and MOD civilian personnel and industrialists with an interest in this subject and is mentioned on the Internet.

8. The newspaper articles allege plans for one of the speakers at the Symposium to present radar tapes from RAF Fylingdales to substantiate the 'UFO' claims. Neither the Air Warfare Centre's focal point for this event, nor OR(ICS) staff, have knowledge of any material of this nature on the agenda and have confirmed that the Symposium has nothing whatsoever to do with 'UFOs'. A copy of a brochure about the Symposium is attached for information.

Conclusion

9. All enquiries indicate that there is nothing of substance in the claims made by the media.

Section 40 [redacted]
Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 [redacted]
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A1

Section 40

actual in-year figures and at constant 1997–98 prices (i.e. uplifted for inflation by use of the Treasury GDP deflator):

(a) Car mileage claims paid

£

Financial year	Actual cost	Constant price at 1997–98 values
1991–92	11,800,000	13,954,000
1992–93	11,840,000	13,437,000
1993–94	11,230,000	12,384,000
1994–95	11,500,000	12,493,000
1995–96	12,200,000	12,896,500
1996–97	12,700,000	13,043,000
1997–98	12,100,000	12,100,000

The cost of rail travel undertaken by civil servants on official duty over the same period and given in the same format is as follows:

(b) Cost of rail fares

£

Financial year	Actual cost	Constant price at 1997–98 values
1993–94	5,229,660	5,767,148
1994–95	4,140,617	4,498,253
1995–96	4,817,745	5,092,796
1996–97	4,888,864	5,020,863
1997–98	4,897,573	4,897,573

The total mileages, and percentage changes by year, which are reflected in the figures provided at *(a)* above from 1994–95 onwards are as follows:

Financial year	Total mileage (million)	Percentage variation
1994–95	43.8	—
1995–96	46.1	+5
1996–97	47.3	+2.5
1997–98	45.4	–4

Mr. Stunell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of staff of all grades employed by his Department; and what percentage of these staff were eligible to claim a car mileage allowance on 31 March in each year since 1990. [42555]

Dr. Reid: The total number of civilian staff of all grades employed by the Ministry of Defence on 31 March in each year since 1990 are listed in the table.

Year	Number
1990	139.100
1991	138.000
1992	137.300
1993	126.900
1994	123.900
1995	118.000
1996	111.600
1997	111.000
1998	105.900

For each year, all staff with a valid driving licence and vehicle insurance were eligible to claim a car mileage allowance while on detached duties. The Department does not record the number of employees who hold such documents.

Departmental Energy Use

Mr. Stunell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the quantity of *(a)* oil, *(b)* gas and *(c)* electricity purchased for the heating, lighting and powering of all accommodation occupied by his Department within the UK in each year since 1989–90; and what was the total cost in real terms of *(a)* to (c) in each year; [42553]

(2) what proportion of his Department's energy usage was from *(a)* renewable energy and *(b)* combined heating in each year since 1989–90. [42556]

Mr. Spellar: The MOD is committed to energy management and each major site is required to have an Energy Manager, amongst whose responsibilities is the collection of relevant data. However, this material is not held centrally in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department operates a monitoring exercise of persistent inquirers for information. [42629]

Mr. Spellar: We do not monitor inquiries in such an exercise centrally. We do, however, monitor correspondence from the public sent to Ministers to determine our performance in responding to it. Where a correspondent has persistently corresponded with the Department on a particular issue and has been given the fullest possible answer, several times, it is our practice to send a formal letter stating that no further purpose will be served by continuing the correspondence. This decision is taken by an official at Grade 7 level or above and in accordance with Exemption 9 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information: Voluminous or vexatious requests.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to reply to the letter of 17 March from the hon. Member for Totnes, about Mrs. K. Graymore and the Dartmouth Royal Naval College. [42696]

Mr. Spellar: My office has no record of receiving the hon. Member's letter. We have, however, now obtained a copy and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Defence Analytical Services Agency

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Quinquennial Review of the Defence Analytical Services Agency; and what key targets have been set for the Agency for 1998–99. [43074]

Dr. Reid: The Defence Analytical Services Agency (DASA) was set up in 1992 and the Quinquennial Review of the Agency has now been completed. The Evaluation Phase of this Review concluded that the Agency had made remarkable strides in a short time, had succeeded in providing its customers with an improved standard of

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

19 May 98

DPO(RAF)

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 1

REPORT OF AN EXPLOSION OFF THE BUTT OF LEWIS ON 26 OCTOBER 1996 - PRESS LINES

1. As requested, attached please find the line to be taken in response to the request for information you have received from the BBC on the above mentioned subject.

2. For your background information, media reports at the time focused on the possibility that the incident was caused by space debris, although the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System at RAF Fylingdales, which tracks all satellites in orbit within the UK's area of responsibility, had no evidence to support that theory.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A1

REPORT OF AN EXPLOSION OFF THE BUTT OF LEWIS ON 26 OCTOBER 1996

Following media reports of an explosion on 26 October 1996, initially attributed to a mid-air collision north of the Butt of Lewis, an extensive search of the area was carried out by RAF and Coastguard Search and Rescue assets but was later abandoned after it became clear that no aircraft had been reported overdue. There was no evidence to support any of the media theories about the cause of the incident.

Spare Copy

Loose Minute

[redacted]Sec(AS)64/1

15 November 1999

Section 40

APS/USofS

Thank you.

Copy to:

Section 40

- APS/SofS
- APS/Minister(DP)
- APS/Minister(AF)
- PS/2nd PUS
- DAO
- D News
- D Fin Pol
- DCC(RAF)
- D News (RAF)
- PCB(Air)
- DCC(RAF)SIO
- Hd of CS(RM)1

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Issue

1. *News of the World* (14 Nov) and *Daily Mail* (15 Nov) articles about 'UFOs'.

Recommendation

2. To note.

Timing

3. As soon as possible in the event of any further media interest.

Background

4. It is standard practice to release to the Public Record office at the 30-year point MOD 'UFO' files. The files are withheld until that time to protect the personal details (names and addresses) of members of the public reporting what they have seen and themselves failed to identify. The files do not contain highly classified material (two examples are provided herewith). The issue of early release of files was address in September last year (CS(RM)/4/6/37 – copy attached for USofS) in response to Lord Hill Norton's request; legal advice was that the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it did so.

5. Under the 30-year rule, a total of 13 'UFO' files from 1969 have been passed to the Public Record Office and will be released on 1 January 2000. The files contain sighting reports, public correspondence and associated papers. As I explained (D/Sec(AS)/64/1 of 8 September copy also attached), it is simply not possible to say whether other 'UFO'-related papers might be filed elsewhere in MOD archives.

6. There is little factual information in the two newspaper articles. It is likely they are misrepresenting the arrangements for the Department's release of files, perhaps hoping to force MOD into expanding their limited interest in publicly reported unidentified sightings. I attach lines to take in the event of any further media interest.

Section 40

[redacted]

Section 40
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 MB Section 40

NEWS BRIEF

DTG: 15 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: 'NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: 'UFOs'

SOURCE: Branch: Sec(AS)2: Section 40 Tel: MB Section 40

PRESS OFFICER: Section 40 (News RAF)

BACKGROUND

'News of the World' (14 Nov) and Daily Mail (15 Nov) have printed speculative articles that MOD is about to release all 'UFO' files.

KEY MESSAGE

MOD routinely releases files containing information from the public about alleged 'UFO' sightings under the 30-year rule. We are unable to release more recent files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality (ie the personal details of those providing information). There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs'.

KEY POINTS

* As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention but since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

* We have looked carefully to see whether early release of 'UFO' files is possible. However, the files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. MOD has a duty to protect the third party confidentiality. Staff would need to be diverted from essential tasks to manually scrutinise and remove all personal details on the files and the knock-on effect would be a major disruption to MOD's overall programme for release of files to the PRO. It cannot be justified.

* Mr Pope was an EO in Sec(AS)2; he left the Branch in Jul 94. The views expressed by Mr Pope in books and the media are entirely his own.

* It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. **MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity**, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

SUBSIDIARY POINTS

* Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft).

* Alleged sightings sent to us are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years that warranted any further investigation and no evidence was found of any threat.

* Where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

* Sec(AS)2 is the Air Staff Secretariat. It deals with a wide range of RAF-related issues. It also acts as the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police are forwarded to Sec(AS)2. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year

* Where a military or civilian pilot considers his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he is unable to identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

DAILY MAIL
15/11/99

Britain's X-Files (and yes, the truth is on this page)

DOCUMENTS and photographs detailing UFO investigations in Britain over 50 years are at last being made available for public scrutiny under New Labour's policy of greater openness in Government, according to reports at the weekend. Here, NICK POPE, the Ministry of Defence official formerly responsible for investigating extra-terrestrial visitations, previews the eagerly awaited contents.

by NICK POPE

OFFICIAL interest in UFOs has always had more to do with the Russians than any impending visit from Martians.

But in keeping an eye out for the Soviet aircraft that routinely probed our air defences during the Cold War, it soon became clear that there were other more exotic craft operating in British airspace.

There has been a steady stream of UFO reports sent to the Ministry of Defence over the past 50 years — between 200 to 300 each year. They fill more than 200 files, files to which I have had access. If, and when, they are made available publicly, I can promise some exciting revelations.

For three years it was my job in Secretariat (Air Staff) 2A at the MoD to investigate such reports, to determine any potential threat to the UK. I found explanations for 90pc of sightings, which turned out to be misidentifications of ordinary objects or phenomena; aircraft lights, satellites, meteors and airships.

However, there has always been a hard core of sightings that couldn't be explained in conventional terms, where trained observers such as police officers and pilots have seen unidentified craft doing speeds and manoeuvres way beyond our capabilities.

Britain's most sensational UFO case occurred in 1980 in Rendlesham Forest, near the USAF/RAF airbase at Woodbridge in Suffolk. UFO activity was witnessed over a series of nights, then on December 26 at 2am two patrolmen on a tour of the camp perimeter saw bright lights among the trees and went to investigate.

Initially, they thought an aircraft had overshot the runway, although there was no accompanying noise. But what they saw was like no aircraft they'd ever encountered before; a large metallic, triangular object which they chased before losing it among the trees.

JUST two nights later, there was a similar sighting. This time the deputy base commander, USAF Lt-Col Charles Halt, led a team out to investigate. He submitted a report to the MoD, describing the UFO as 'metallic in appearance and triangular in shape'.

There is also an eerie 18-minute tape, which reveals conversations between Halt and his men as they moved to within 150 yards of the moving red and yellow lights.

The report says that suddenly the lights appeared to 'explode' in fragments of white light. Immediately, Lt-Col Halt observed three objects in the sky, like stars, but giving off red, green and blue lights, darting off in all directions in sharp, angular movements.

The objects were visible for two to three hours, occasionally flashing down beams of light or energy. Radiation readings were subsequently taken from the landing site in the forest and were found to peak in the three indentations where the craft had touched down in a clearing.

There are a number of intriguing aerial encounters in Britain's so-called X-files, too. One of the earliest took place in August 1956, when a UFO was tracked on radar systems at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Two RAF jets were scrambled to intercept the mystery craft, and an energetic game of cat and mouse ensued as the pilots attempted to lock-on to the target. But the UFO was too quick and agile, and managed to elude the pilots, who eventually ran low on fuel and were forced to return to base.

Almost 40 years later, a number of RAF Tornado jets were overtaken by a UFO over the North Sea in November 1990. No adequate explanation was ever forthcoming.

Last year, also over the North Sea, a 900ft UFO was pursued by two fighter jets before it took off at 17,000mph.

More disturbing are the reports to the MoD that detail near-misses between UFOs and civil aircraft. There were two such cases in 1991, both over Kent.

In 1995, the pilots of a Boeing 737 encountered what they described as a brightly lit UFO while on their approach to Manchester Airport, and believed that it had passed only yards from their aircraft. This incident was investigated by the Civil Aviation Authority but remained a mystery.

One of the most fascinating cases that I investigated related to an incident that occurred in the early hours of March 31, 1993. There had been a wave of UFO sightings that night, culminating in the direct overflight of two military bases, RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury in Shropshire.

The UFO was described by one of the military witnesses as being a vast, triangular craft only marginally smaller than a jumbo jet. It flew slowly over the base at a height of 200ft, firing a narrow beam of light at the ground, before flying off at high speed.

These then, are the sorts of incidents to be found in the MoD's UFO files.

But the files also contain reports of alien abductions, the appearance of crop circles and animal mutilations, all of which have been linked with UFOs.

THE MoD was drawn into the crop-circle debate in 1985 — five years after they first started appearing — when a farmer in Middle Wallop, Hampshire, found a quintuplet of crop circles and blamed the local Army air corps base.

A Lt-Col Edgecombe investigated and submitted photographs and reports to the MoD, a routine procedure but one which gave credence to the UFO link and allegations that then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had asked for a report on the phenomenon.

I have reviewed all the theories about crop circles and, while many are hoaxes, there are those which have yet to be explained; for example, why do crop samples taken from these 'genuine' circles show distinct cellular changes.

Some details of UFO sighting

DAILY MAIL
15/11/99

in Britain have, of course, already been made public under the 30-year rule which applies to sensitive documents, but by releasing files from more recent years the Government clearly hopes to end speculation that it has been covering up the truth about the phenomenon.

Unfortunately, releasing the files is a tactic that some people think could backfire.

A similar initiative in the U.S. simply fuelled interest in the subject, and led to accusations that other more highly classified papers were still being withheld.

The U.S. government's denial was not helped by the claims of a former U.S. army colonel, Philip Corso, who said that the so-called Roswell incident from 1947 — in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at an air force base in New Mexico — really did involve the crash of a UFO.

Colonel Corso claimed that he'd seen the bodies, and that his job at the Pentagon involved finding ways to use the technological secrets gleaned from the debris of the craft. He died of a heart attack shortly after going public with these claims, so took the secrets to his grave.

Conspiracy theorists love this sort of thing, and are unlikely to be satisfied by any release of papers that doesn't support their own theories.

But there really isn't any cover-up in the UK, although a letter sent from the MoD to the U.S. government in 1965 admits that MoD policy 'is to play down the subject of UFOs'.

My three years of official research into the UFO phenomenon changed my life for ever. I'd come into the job as a sceptic, but came to believe that some UFOs might well be extra-terrestrial.

If these files are to be made public, I think people are in for a big surprise, and I believe that, like me, they will come to see that this is a serious subject which raises important national security issues.

As far as these files are concerned . . . the truth is in there!

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15/11/99

SERVICE DINNERS

4th Bn, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA)

Col M.P. Robinson presided at the annual dinner of the 4th Battalion, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA) held on Saturday in the Officers' Mess, Minden House, Pontefract.

The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish)

Maj Gen D.J.M. Jenkins, Colonel of the Regiment, presided at the annual Midlands reunion dinner of the Regimental Association of The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish) held on Saturday at the Post House Forte Hotel, Birmingham.

The Leeds Rifles (Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire)

Officers of The Leeds Rifles held their annual Remembrance Dinner on Saturday at Harewood Barracks, Leeds. Major R.M. Booker presided and Lt Col G.A. Kilburn, Commanding Officer, The East and West Riding Regiment, was principal guest.

United Services Mess

The Lord-Lieutenant for South Glamorgan, Capt Norman Lloyd-Edwards, Mess President, and the Deputy Lord Mayor of the City and County of Cardiff, Councillor C. Bettinson, attended the 84th annual dinner of the United Services Mess, Cardiff, held on Saturday at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff. Brig A.S. Ritchie, Director of Personal Services (Army), was principal guest. Mr A.C. Lewis, Mess Chairman, presided and Mr I.P. Murphy, QC, and Mr M.J. Phillips also spoke.

Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre Association

The 53rd annual meeting and dinner of the Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre Association was held on Saturday at the RAF Club. Mr John Morrison was in the chair.

What are the most urgent problems facing Britain today?

Poor schools that aren't teaching children properly?

The crisis in our health service which means people are waiting longer and longer for treatment?

The desperate paralysis on our roads and public transport? Rising crime that makes none of us feel safe on our streets? The flood of bogus asylum seekers? The daily selling-out to Brussels on issues like British beef?

These are what I think are the urgent problems facing Britain today. You probably agree with me. If next week's Queen's Speech was setting out the programme of the next Conservative government, I'll tell you what would be in it. Education would be right at the heart of the speech.

There would be a law to guarantee to parents the power to do something about bad schools by sacking school managements. And there would be a law to turn every primary and secondary school in the country into a Free School where teachers could get on with improving standards.

Then we'd give patients in the NHS a unique guarantee. Patients with the most serious conditions would get a maximum waiting time based not on party political targets but medical need.

We would introduce a tough law to make sure unemployed people who can work take the jobs that are offered to them–or lose their unemployment benefit.

A revolution in crime-fighting would make sure criminals serve the sentence handed down in court, teaching prisoners what it's like to work, dealing out life sentences to drug dealers who sell to children, and helping police get out and on to the street.

We would help pensioners and savers by halving the startling rate of tax on savings and protect the homes and assets of people who save for their long-term care.

We would help working women who take career breaks to look after their children with Family Scholarships that will help them if they want to get back to work.

We would propose a Budget that would put an end to Labour's stealth taxes with this open and honest Tax Guarantee: we'll cut the overall burden of tax over the lifetime of a parliament. And we'd show everyone that Britain is no pushover in Europe and rights to Brussels. The next Conservative government will make sure Britain is in Europe but not run by Europe.

So what is our Prime Minister doing about the issues? Nothing. If you don't believe me, just wait to see what the government announces in the Queen's Speech. It is likely to propose:

A NEW law about how political parties are run, a new law on the organisation of local government, a new law on motorway tolls and car park taxes, a new law creating a Right to Roam.

None of these laws will do anything to tackle the main problems that actually matter to the majority of people.

This week you will see a Labour government that is pursuing its own obscure political priorities instead of rising to the challenge of the real problems.

The next Conservative government would not duck the challenge. Our Queen's Speeches would turn the commonsense of the people into commonsense policies for the country.

'We'll stop Britain being a pushover'

WILLIAM HAGUE Opposition Leader

TODAY, on Remembrance Day, it's more important than ever to remember our debt to those who gave their lives to protect our country and the ideals we stand for.

It's important, too, that we continue repaying the debt to the whole generation who sacrificed so much.

Many pensioners feel they don't get a fair share of the nation's prosperity. We've improved things since we came to power but there's a lot more to do. Gordon Brown's announcements on free TV licences for the over-75s, the £100 winter allowance to be paid every year and raising the minimum income guarantee, went a little further in honouring our debt.

We are half way through this Parliament. We've done a lot. But there is much more to. Like getting the Health Service right. But that's why we're putting in the extra £21 billion investment over the next three years, recruiting the extra doctors and nurses, building new hospitals and introducing new services.

You didn't expect miracles from New Labour. You knew how much was wrong.

But what you wanted was a government to start moving us in the right direction. Nothing is more important for a government than running the economy well. And nothing has a great impact if the government fails. Whether Labour could be trusted on the economy was why many of you thought long and hard before voting for us.

I understand that. It's not always been the fault of past Labour governments. But memories of devaluation, of the IMF crisis and the winter of discontent still haunted those who lived through them.

I believe we have gone a very long way to burying those memories and the doubts they fuelled. And Gordon Brown, a brilliant, radical and reforming chancellor deserves credit for that. We inherited an economy devastated by the two deepest recessions since the war. Where Tory boom was all too quickly followed by Tory bust. A Government spending £28 billion a year more than it had.

Now inflation's low and on target. Government borrowing is under control. Employment is up by 700,000 since the election.

We're creating a climate where business can succeed and in turn create jobs and prosperity by boosting skills.

And we're also creating a fairer country by extending opportunities to all, tackling poverty and increasing support to families through measures like the New Deal, the minimum wage and the Working Families Tax Credit–all of which the Tories would scrap.

It's what we mean by enterprise and fairness. They are the guiding principles of this government, and the driving force behind Gordon's package.

'We'll make Britain richer and fairer'

TONY BLAIR Prime Minister

off the law at the crucial moment.

Then the careless coppers shopped the brave pair by broadcasting their names over the police radios, from which they were picked up by the Yardies' scanners.

Now mother and son continue to live in fear of their lives, for their tormentors, released because of 'legal complications', have launched a terrifying campaign of revenge.

Thames Valley police must round up and jail the thugs.

And this time they can't expect the public to do the job for them.

Aliens - the truth

THE government is to throw open its top-secret X-Files on UFOs and aliens.

Ministers have looked at them and decided that there is nothing too sensitive to hold back.

Enthusiasts are hoping at last to learn the truth about all the incidents reported over the last 30 years.

Cynics think it will all turn out to have been pie in the sky.

Thugs mar glory

A GREAT game it wasn't. A determined first half at Hampden was followed by a dull second.

But it did manage to focus for 90 minutes or so the combined passions of soccer fans the length and breadth of Britain.

Then, despite their victory, came the pointless violence when 400 English fans went on the rampage in the streets of Glasgow.

It's a poor omen for Wembley on Wednesday.

KIDNAP TERROR

A YOUNG mystery woman was at the centre of a kidnap scare last night after a blood-stained van she was bundled into was found abandoned.

Two men had earlier roughly draggged her screaming across a garage forecourt at Reading, Berks, during the rush-hour.

She was viciously beaten and thrown into the van.

A witness told police the woman, aged about 20, suffered facial injuries.

Detective Superintendent Trevor Davies said: "We are extremely worried. If this woman can get in touch with us she should."

A team of detectives were trying to identify the woman and scouring missing person reports. The CCTV footage from the garage has been seen by police.

WEIRD

LEE Si Chung, 26, who tried to save his Beijing-to-London fare by POSTING himself, got caught short in the sorting office and was jailed for four weeks.

WORLD

MODEL ROBBED

A GANG of Rolex robbers pounced on Andrea Foulkes, the QVC Shopping channel model, as she parked her car in the early hours.

The 29-year-old blonde was grabbed by the throat by one man while another snatched her £2,500 Cartier watch and a £200 necklace.

Then they flung her to the ground and made off in a

Watch this space for truth about aliens

MINISTER TO OPEN BRITAIN'S X-FILES

THE truth about whether aliens have ever visited Britain is to be revealed at last.

Top secret government X-Files on thousands of 'spaceship' riddles will be opened up to public gaze by Defence Minister Peter Kilfoyle.

They will include photos and details of every UFO investigation in the past 30 years. Every year, around 300 alien sightings are reported.

Plans by military experts for action in the event of an alien invasion of London will

EXCLUSIVE

BY **IAN KIRBY**

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

gate, the UFO took off at an incredible speed. But the facts about most later mysteries are still locked away.

They include the truth about claims by former defence chief Lord Hill-Norton that RAF Feltwell in Suffolk uses its space-age radar, built by the US Air Force, to track UFOs.

He quizzed ministers about the base, but never got a satisfactory answer. Several sightings in 1990 of a bright light above the Thames

black and in their 20s, struck as Andrea pulled up in Sloane Square, London.

WEIRD

COPS smashed into a car in Lyons, France, to rescue a man collapsed inside – and discovered a blow-up dummy used to fool car-jackers.

WORLD

MURDER OF BABY

AN eight-week-old boy was murdered in his home yesterday by a frenzied attacker.

Police found little Bradley George being cradled by his sobbing mother. He died four hours later in hospital from head injuries.

The tot's mum Samantha George, 20, and brother Christopher, five, also suffered head injuries in the attack at the two-bed council house in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

Neighbour Jeannette Hussey said: "I heard a woman screaming and a young boy crying. Samantha came out with her face covered in blood and was taken away in an ambulance."

A 26-year-old man was arrested by police at the house and was being questioned yesterday.

SIGHTED: Flying saucer

DUMMY: Roswell 'alien'

RIDDLE: Space invader

Hover

US airmen from two nearby bases claim the object rose hovering out of the trees, then blasted into space at an incredible speed. RAF investigators cordoned off the area, but their findings are still a closely-guarded secret.

Some details of UFO sightings in the Fifties and Sixties have already been made public under the Thirty-Year Rule applied to sensitive documents.

Among them is the famous 1962 incident in which 16-year-old Anne Heston was sworn to secrecy after she reported seeing a star-like object shooting out red and green flames above her home in Taunton, Somerset.

Ten years earlier, RAF Flight Lieutenant John Kilburn saw a shining object in the sky above a West Yorks air base. When jets were scrambled to investi-

ker deep below Whitehall, should be released in three months.

The move, part of a government drive to end unnecessary secrecy, is sure to send UFO spotters into a frenzy. They will hope to learn secrets about:

● **A MASSIVE** craft spotted flying in zig-zags off Britain's North Sea coast last year. The 900ft UFO shot off at 17,000mph when pursued by two fighter jets.

● **CLAIMS** that seven UFOs have crashed in Britain since World War II.

● **SIGHTINGS** of a triangular three-legged spaceship in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, in 1980.

UFOs are a real and threatening phenomenon. We are not alone.

"Since 1959, the MoD has heard of 9,000 UFO sightings, though that's probably only the tip of the iceberg."

Defence Minister Mr Kilfoyle has told colleagues that, after a careful review of the files, he is "not convinced" about the existence of aliens.

But MoD staff say he wants people to be able to make up their own minds.

A source said: "These files are of huge public interest. They paint a fascinating picture of how UFO reports were investigated–and what would happen if aliens ever did land in Britain."

Our View: Page 22

lar moves in America.

The Yanks recently released a report of the notorious Roswell incident in 1947, in which alien corpses were allegedly seen at a secret New Mexico air base.

They explained the "bodies" were dummies from a secret weather balloon, but UFO theorists still believe there has been a cover-up.

Crank

Britain's files were prepared by the MoD's hush-hush Aircraft Secretariat, set up to investigate UFOs. Amazingly, its one-time boss Nick Pope believes **HE** was abducted by aliens while driving in Florida.

He kept mum while in his job for fear of being labelled a crank.

But after leaving the secret unit, he wrote a series of bestsellers about alien incidents.

He said: "My experiences convinced me that

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/1

8 September 1999

APS/USofS

Copy to:

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'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS' – MOD INTEREST

ISSUE

1. To provide a note on the Department's interest in 'UFOs'.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To note.

DETAIL

Policy

3. It is Government policy that any air defence or air traffic implications of 'UFOs' are a matter for MOD and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) respectively. MOD's interest is limited to establishing from any reported sightings it receives whether the UK Air Defence Region has been breached by hostile military activity, and responding to any associated public correspondence.

4. Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture (radar) and an air policing capability. Any threat to the UK Air Defence Region would be handled in the light of the particular circumstances at the time (it might, if deemed appropriate, involve the scrambling or diversion of RAF air defence aircraft). From that perspective, reports sent to us of 'UFO' sightings are examined, but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only where there is sufficient evidence to suggest a breach of UK air space: such as reports from credible witnesses (pilots, air traffic controllers etc); those supported by photographic, video or documentary evidence; corroboration by a number of witnesses; or are of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection. Only a handful of reports have been received in recent years in these categories and further investigation of them has found no evidence of a threat.

Airprox Reports

5. Where a military or civilian pilot considers that his aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft (including any flying object he was unable to

identify), or in regulated airspace where an Air Traffic Controller believes there has been the risk of a collision, the pilot or ATC would be obliged to file an airmiss report (Airprox).

Spaceguard Programme

6. The Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for the Spaceguard Programme. We understand that there are currently no plans to set up a national spaceguard agency; the potential threat of impact by near earth objects (such as asteroids) is taken very seriously but they regard this as an issue where a common international approach is essential. In June, the House of Lords debated the Spaceguard Programme; Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science at the DTI, led the debate for the Government.

Role of Sec(AS)2

7. Sec(AS)2 is the focal point within MOD for the Government's limited interest in 'UFOs'. A 24-hour answerphone is provided so that members of the public can telephone through sighting reports. Reports made elsewhere, either to military establishments, air traffic control centres or the civilian police, all eventually make their way to Sec(AS)2 where each report is considered only to establish whether it has any defence significance. Some 230 sighting reports and 250 letters were received last year; so far this year c150 reports and 160 letters have been received. Sec(AS)2 is not constituted as a 'UFO' information bureau. There are no defence resources allocated for this purpose and, where there is no evidence in a report of defence concern, no action is taken to try and identify what might have been seen. From the types of descriptions generally received, aircraft or natural phenomena probably account for most of the observations.

8. Some 'ufologists' are unhappy with MOD's limited interest. A small number lobby vociferously for defence funds to be used for 'UFO' research, have their own agenda for such work and use all possible avenues (eg writing to the Prime Minister, other Government Departments, the media etc) to pursue their aims. All such approaches find their way to MOD, Sec(AS) for action.

'UFO' Files

9. As is the case with other Government files, MOD files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967 and official files generally remain closed for 30 years. Prior to 1967 it was the case that 'UFO' files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient interest in the subject to warrant their retention. However, since 1967 all 'UFO' files have been preserved and routinely released to the Public Record Office at the 30-year point.

10. For some time, Lord Hill Norton, the only Parliamentarian with any interest in 'UFOs', has been asking that all files containing 'UFO' information be released to the PRO ahead of the 30-year point. We have looked carefully to see whether this is possible. However, in the absence of a Departmental-wide file database and without knowing the details of all the originating branches, a manual search of in excess of one million files at two main MOD archives would be necessary to locate and list

them. In November last year the location of some 55 'UFO' files was established. The files contain personal details of all those contacting and corresponding with the Department. Legal advice was sought: the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect the third party confidentiality by use of the 30-year rule. Release after that date would present no problems to MOD, but release in advance would lay the Department open to the risk of legal action for breach of confidence. To remove the personal details from these files would be a time consuming task. Staff in CS(RM), the MOD's Records Branch would need to be diverted from their essential tasks to manually scrutinise and sanitise some 5,000 pages on the files. The knock-on effect would be a major disruption to the Department's overall programme for the release of files to the PRO and cannot be justified.

Mr Nicholas Pope

11. An ex-Sec(AS)2 employee, Nick Pope, has published two books on 'UFO' matters since leaving the branch in 1994: 'Open Skies, Closed Minds' and 'The Uninvited', the latter about alien abduction. A third book, about an alien invasion of the UK, is likely to be published next month. In all three books Mr Pope puts forward his personal views and is critical of MOD's limited interest in 'UFOs'. The two books already published resulted in an increase in media and public interest in 'UFOs', which in turn led to temporary increases in the number of enquiries and sighting reports received. Mr Pope continues to be employed by the Department.

CONCLUSION

12. There is no evidence to support the view that the UK Air Defence Region is being breached by hostile foreign military activity or anything else. There are no plans to change Government policy on 'UFOs' or implement a research programme to investigate 'ufologists' claims. We are unable to release to the PRO all 'UFO' files because there is a need to maintain third party confidentiality.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 [redacted]MB Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
Fax: MB[redacted] Section 40

Loose Minute

CS(RM)/4/6/37

September 1998

PS/USofS *

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LORD HILL-NORTON: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FILES

Reference: A. D/USofS/JS 28/1/0 dated 9 March 1998 (not to all)
B. D/DOMD/2/3 dated 3 April 1998

Issue

1. To provide Lord Hill-Norton with the outcome of our consideration of his request for the early release of files on the subject of "unidentified flying objects".

Recommendation

2. That USofS responds in terms of the attached draft letter.

Timing

3. Routine.

Background

4. Lord Hill-Norton, aged 83, and Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971-73, has a long standing interest in "UFOs". He approached the department earlier this year (undercover of Reference A) pointing to the public interest in this topic and to the forthcoming Freedom of Information Act, requesting that all closed files on the subject of UFOs be released in advance of the normal, 30 year point.

5. In his submission dated 3 April 1998 (reference B) DOMD advised that in the region of 55 files were held with planned releases dates of 1999-2003, in addition a further 12 (with a release date of 2004) were in the early stages of preparation for transfer to the PRO. These files concern correspondence from members of the public reporting such occurrences, therefore question of personal confidentiality had to be resolved.

Outcome of our review

6. Three options have been considered:

(1) obtain permission from members of the public on an individual basis to the release of their details;

(2) remove personal details (the 55 processed files would require further examination and sanitisation in the order of 5,500 enclosures);

(3) agree that a shorter period, say 25 rather than 30 years, was acceptable for protection

of privacy.

The first option was considered time-consuming and, given the fact that we would be attempting to trace individuals whose addresses were 25 plus years old, impractical. Option two, is possible, but would represent a major diversion of resources as each file would have to be re-reviewed, a note made of every page requiring extraction/deletion of personally sensitive information and for these actions to be carried out. It is estimated some 200 man hours would be required and so as not to adversely affect our existing review and transfer programme the task spread over a six month period. For the third option advice was sought from MOD's Legal Advisers. Their advice is that the Public Record Act gives an implied override of the Department's duty to protect third party confidentially by use of the 30 year rule. Release of records pertaining to that period are, therefore, not a problem but the Department would be at risk of legal action for breach of confidence if it released documents containing the personal details of members of the public before the 30 year point. We have therefore concluded that, having rejected options (a) and (b), we are unable to make a block release of the files before the 30 year point. A draft letter to Lord Hill-Norton to this effect is attached.

Section 40
Hd CS(RM)
MTA8/3 [redacted] MB
Section 40