

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Date opened (Date of first enclosure)

Registered file reference

Mo 9/18

Part No. 2

1. Attention is drawn to the notes on the inside flap.

2. Enter notes of related files on page 2 of this jacket

DIVISION/ESTABLISHMENT/UNIT/BRANCH

[FULL ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER]

SUBJECT

DEFENCE POLICY ISSUES

UFOs

[BLOCK CAPITALS]

RECORD OF KEYWORDS:



Referred to	Date	Min/Encl	Referred to	Date	Min/Encl	Referred to	Date	Min/Encl	Referred to	Date	Min/Encl
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DEFE 24 / 31 22 / 1

FOR DRO USE ONLY

1st Review date

2nd Review date

PA ACTION

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

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RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Power 2020
MANAGE
MOD Form 329D
(Revised 800)
PPQ = 100

Date opened (Date of first enclosure)

6/8/1997

1. Attention is drawn to the notes on the inside flap.
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DIVISION/ESTABLISHMENT/UNIT/BRANCH

SQ76

[FULL ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER]

SUBJECT DCEE/PA Party ISSUES
DFO'S

[BLOCK CAPITALS]

RECORD OF KEYWORDS:

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

CRS 205905

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1st Review date

2nd Review date

PA ACTION

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

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Design Studio B5DA (FC) KY # 0117-9378256

0-70



File Ref. MO/9/18
Part. 2

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RCU001118955 T&T

NOTES, DECISIONS AND PRECEDENTS

FORMER REFERENCE NUMBER

Mo 26/19

SUBSEQUENT REFERENCE NUMBER

Registered File Disposal Form

MOD Form 262F
(Revised 1/00)

FILE TITLE: (Main Heading - Secondary Heading - Tertiary Heading etc) DEFENCE Policy Issues - UFO's	Reference: (Prefix and Number) MO 9/18 Part: A 2
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PROTECTIVE MARKING (including caveats & descriptors): **UNCLASSIFIED; Policy; MANAGEMENT**

Date of last enclosure: **15/3/00** Date closed: **1/8/05**

PART 1. DISPOSAL SCHEDULE RECOMMENDATION (To be completed when the file is closed)	FOR DEFENCE RECORDS (DR) USE ONLY
Destroy after <u>20</u> years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> Date of 1st review Date of 2nd review Forward Destruction Date
Forward to DR after <u>2</u> years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reviewer's Signature: _____ Reviewer's Signature: _____
No recommendation <input type="checkbox"/>	

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

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

b. (i) To be retained for 20 years (from date of last enclosure) for the following reason(s):

LEGAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DEFENCE POLICY + OPERATIONS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CONTRACTUAL <input type="checkbox"/>	ORIGINAL COMMITTEE PAPERS <input type="checkbox"/>
FINANCE/AUDIT <input type="checkbox"/>	MAJOR EQUIPMENT PROJECT <input type="checkbox"/>
DIRECTORATE POLICY <input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER (Specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Section 40

(ii) Key enclosures which support the recommendation are:

_____ **S.40** _____

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

Destroyed

Considered by DR for permanent preservation

c. Of no further administrative value but worthy of consideration by DR for permanent preservation.

PART 3. BRANCH TITLE AND FULL ADDRESS (HEO/equivalent)

Signature: _____

Name: _____ Section 40
(Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: B2 Date: 1/8/07

Branch Title and Full Address:

**S OF S FOR DEFENCE
PRIVATE OFFICE ROOM 205
OLD WAR OFFICE BUILDING
WHITEHALL,
LONDON SW1A 2EU**

Tel No: _____ Section 40

Produced by Ministry of Defence, DSDA(PC) KY Tel. _____ Section 40

PART 4 DESTRUCTION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the specified file has been destroyed.

Signature: _____

Name: _____
(Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by (TOP SECRET* and SECRET only)

Signature: _____

Name: _____
(Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: _____ Date: _____

*(FOR DR USE ONLY)

23/7

Must you will be able to assist to ensure there are no misunderstandings

Section 40 15/3/00

THIS IS A COPY - ORIGINAL CLOSED UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 S40

P.S. Would you wish all the best from me in her new promotion.

[Tel. ()] 15 March, 2000

Section 40
Sec. (Air Staff) 2a
Room 8245
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2HB

21...
WHITEHALL
LONDON

- ① Copy as before.
- ② SOMO - Please deal.

Section 40 21/3

Your Ref: D/Sec (AS)/64/3/1

Dear Section 40,

Thank you for your letter of the 13th March. May I respectfully point out that the agreement was not for reported sightings by the public of unidentified flying objects but for abstracts from all UFO reports witnessed by commercial pilots, military pilots and radar personnel between 0100 Hrs 28 July 1998 and 0100 Hrs on 28 July 1999.

Paragraph 9 of the Ombudsman's letter to my MP dated 29th February stated quite categorically that the Permanent Secretary had asked the responsible division within the Department to make the information available with regard to the narrower request for specific information regarding UFO sightings between 28th July 1998 and 28th July 1999.

SoC: Case No: A.7/00, Page 2 to 3, Item 5 defines the specific information requested as Abstracts from all UFO reports witnessed by commercial pilots, military pilots and radar personnel between 0100 Hrs 28 July 1998 and 0100 Hrs on 28 July 1999. Details required:-

1. Estimated sizes, shapes and speeds
2. Unusual Flight Patterns
3. Conclusions reached

I understand from historical records that there are other Departments within the MoD who have dealings within this particular field. I have copied this letter to the Permanent Secretary, the Ombudsman and my MP to keep everyone up to speed. I apologise if I have sent the cheque to the wrong Division; however, I trust that between yourselves and the Permanent Secretary you will be able to inform the appropriate Division of my agreement to pay the agreed fee for the agreed information.

APS/S45
PS/US45
PS/204 PWS
PS/PWS (CH)
DGM0

HM Sec (A-)
D New
Hd of PR.

Yours Sincerely
Section 40



From: [redacted] Secretariat(Air Staff)2a, Room 8245
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct dial) 0171 218 2140
(Switchboard) 0171 218 9000
(Fax) [redacted]
Section 40

[redacted]
Section 40

Your Reference

Our Reference
D/Sec(AS)/64/3/1
Date
13 March 2000

Dear [redacted]

Section 40

Thank you for your letter of 4 March addressed to [redacted]. You have confirmed that you wish the Department to carry out a search of reported sightings by the public of 'unidentified flying objects' for the period 01.00 hours 28 July 1998 to 01.00 hours 28 July 1999, and enclose a cheque for £75. I am replying as [redacted] has moved on promotion to another Division in the Ministry of Defence.

The letter from the Ombudsman to Ieuan Wyn Jones MP explained (paragraph 10), that MOD's charge for the work would be a maximum of £75. As soon as the work is completed I shall write again to provide details of the cost involved. Your cheque is returned herewith.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]
Section 40

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

-9

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 investigate 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.

RESTRICTED MANAGEMENT
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[signed]
[redacted]
Sec(AS)2
MB 8247 [redacted]

RESTRICTED MANAGEMENT
UNCLASSIFIED

RECEIVED
16 NOV 1999



PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

S/S 9
to see 16/11

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
D News
D Fin Pol

DCC(RAF)
D News(RAF)
PCB(Air)
DCC(RAF) SIO
Hd of CS(RM)1
Hd/Sec(AS)

'UFOs': NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

below.

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 [S 40] had made any decisions or given any commitments on the publication of UFO files:

Mr [S 40] 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.

[Redacted]
Section 40

PS/US of S

MB 6215 [Section 40]

CHOTS: USofS/Mailbox



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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

SJS
to see
15/4

'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.

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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.

7. The *Daily Mail* article is attributed to Section 40

Section 40

Sec(AS)2

MB 8247

Section 40

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NEWS BRIEF

DTG: 15 NOVEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: 'NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: 'UFOs'

SOURCE: Branch: Sec(AS)2: [Section 40] Tel: [Section 40]

PRESS OFFICER: [Section 40] 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.

[Section 40]

* 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 airmis report (Airprox).

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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.

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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 airmis 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)2 for action.

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'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.

Section 40

Section 40

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.

[Redacted]

Sec(AS)2

MB8247 [Redacted]

CHOTS: SEC(AS)2

Fax: [Redacted]

Personal/Parliament/ufos@brief99

RECEIVED
JUL 11 1999

LOOSE MINUTE

PCB(Air)3698

29 Jul 99

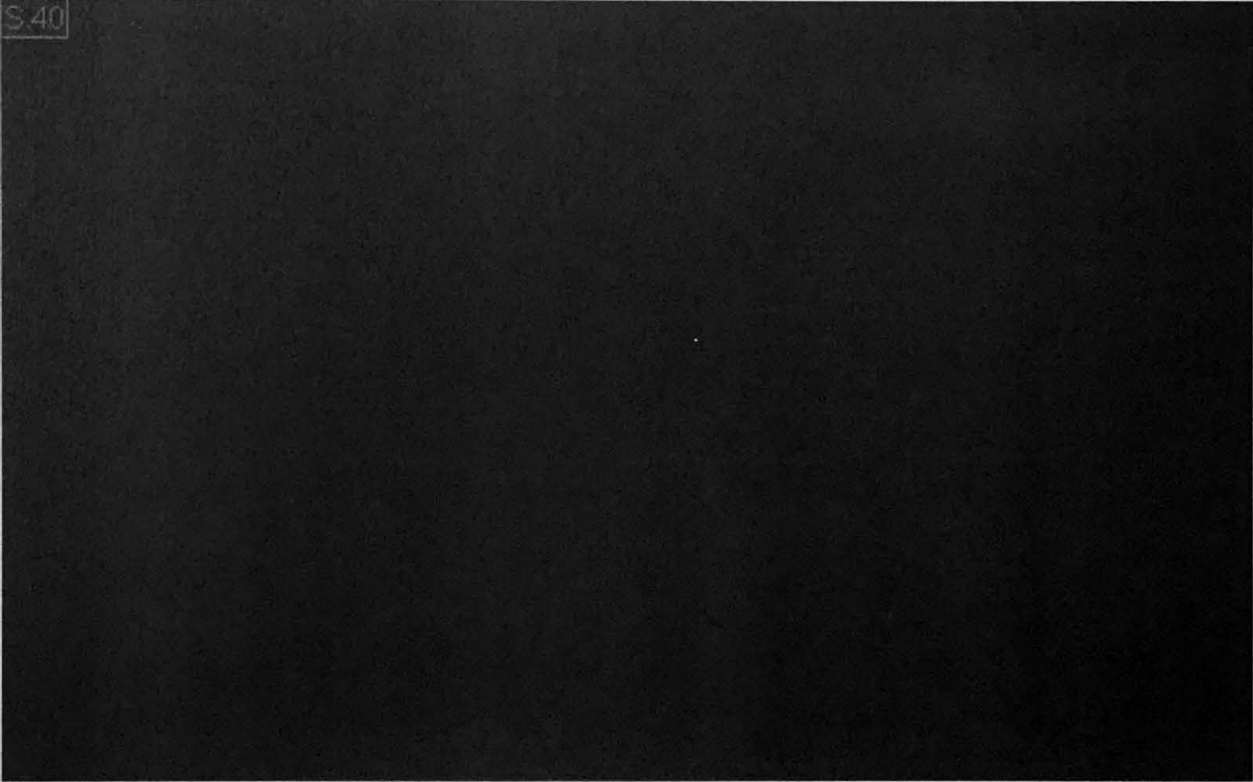
PS/SofS
PS/USofS
PS/MinDP
PA/DISN

ES
info!
Section 40
Good handling
Shes
Section 40
1.8
307
7

PUBLICATION OF FICTITIOUS NOVEL "OPERATION THUNDER CHILD" BY N G POPE

1. Your principals to be aware that the above mentioned book has recently been considered and cleared by PCB(Air) for open publication.

S.40



Section 40

Hd of AHB(RAF)&PCB(Air)

Section 40

Chots e-mail: Hd of AHB(RAF)

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

23rd October 1998

PE Unit

Copy to:

APS/Sofs
APS/Min(DP)
APS/USofs
PSO/ACAS
ADGE1
Sec(AS)1
DI Sec
CS(RM)1

'UFOs': LORD HILL-NORTON

Reference: PE US3909/98 dated 13 October 1998

ISSUE

1. Lord Hill-Norton's dissatisfaction with the Department's limited interest in 'UFO' phenomena.

RECOMMENDATION

2. USofs to write; Sofs has asked to see the draft.

TIMING

3. Routine

BACKGROUND

4. Lord Hill-Norton believes in 'UFOs' and has taken on himself the mission of persuading Government to take seriously the notion that we are being visited by craft of extra-terrestrial origin. He pursues this with evangelical fervour through numerous PQs and PEs, and is something of a champion of the cause of 'ufologists' in this country.

MOD Interest in 'UFOs'

5. Military Task 9 is to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace. This requirement is met by the continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability. From that perspective we read reports sent to us of 'UFO' sightings but consultation with air defence staff and others as necessary is considered only

Sofs 6
Lord Hill-Norton asks you to take a personal interest but unless you so choose, Mr. Speller will reply. 26/10
I'm happy to Mr Speller to reply. I make no other - though sorely tempted.

Section 40

27/10

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.

6. The most recent full investigation by the Department, in October 1996, was prompted by reports of lights in the sky over the sea in the Wash at the same time as Claxby radar was reporting an unidentified plot over Boston. The investigation, carried out by MOD Air Defence Staff, included discussions with civil and military observers and operators, examination of duty radar logs and advice from the Royal Greenwich Observatory. It concluded the radar plot to be a permanent echo from a church spire appearing only in certain weather conditions, and the lights in the sky to be in all probability the planet Venus, particularly bright at that time of the year.

Re-investigation of Alleged Sightings

7. Lord Hill-Norton continues to question decisions made years ago. He does not accept that the 'Rendlesham Forest' incident (involving the then Deputy Base Commander of RAF Bentwaters/RAF Woodbridge) was investigated satisfactorily in 1980-81. We have tried to explain on numerous occasions that decisions made in the past were reached by those responsible for considering the relevant material available at the time. It would not be possible to recreate the circumstances of what was seen, and witness recollections would have blurred with the passage of time. All of the available information about decisions made more than 30 years ago is available for public scrutiny at the Public Record Office.

US Position

8. US DOD interest in 'UFOs' has been limited for some years to a statement on their Internet web site of their 1950s and 1960s research into the phenomenon ('Project Blue Book'), which concludes that they no longer have any interest in 'UFO' reports and related matters. Those seeking to report a 'sighting' are invited to contact a local law enforcement agency.

SUMMARY

9. The root of Lord Hill-Norton's dissatisfaction is that Government policy relating to 'UFOs' is narrower than he considers appropriate and there are no plans to widen it. He is unwilling to accept this policy. There is no evidence to support Lord Hill-Norton's claims that 'UFO' sighting reports are of defence significance, and his suspicion that the Department actively discourages or ignores reports is unfounded. Very few reports are worthy of departmental action, but that is a different point.

[signed]

[redacted]

Sec(AS)2

MB8247 [redacted]

CHOTS: SEC(AS)2

FAX : [redacted]

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D/USofS/JS

Thank you for your letter of 7 October about 'unidentified flying objects'. I am also replying to the similar letter of the same date to George Robertson.

I hope you will be reassured when I say that when dealing with letters and questions from Parliamentary colleagues, Defence Ministers receive written briefing, supplemented as necessary with oral advice, on the facts of the case. It is only having satisfied ourselves that it is pertinent to the matter in hand, that we respond to our colleagues.

You ask a number of questions in your latest letters; where these have not previously been dealt with insofar as my Department's interest is concerned in correspondence or Parliamentary answer, I can add the following information.

Military Task 9 requires the integrity of UK airspace to be maintained and this is fulfilled by the continuous air picture and air policing capability. There is therefore no requirement for 'UFO' reports to be forwarded to my Department, but any that are sent will of course be read. Where the contents justify it, our air defence and other experts as necessary are consulted. As you now know from Lord Gilbert's answer on 21 October (Official Report col 158), an answering machine is left permanently on to receive

any reports.

You say that sighting reports have increased significantly each year but this is not the case. The figures for the last ten years are as follows:

1988 (397); 1989 (258); 1990 (209); 1991 (117); 1992 (147);
1993 (258); 1994 (250); 1995 (373); 1996 (609); 1997 (425);
1998 to end September (163).

I recognise of course that you remain dissatisfied with the responses you have received to Parliamentary Questions and letters in recent months. I can only repeat that there is no defence requirement for research or investigation into allegations of 'UFO' activity where there is no perceived threat to the integrity of UK airspace.

JOHN SPELLAR

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton

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39091

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

PERSONAL

The Rt Hon George Robertson MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Defence
Main Building Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

7 October, 1998

Dear Secretary of State,

As you know, I take an active interest in the matter of unidentified flying objects, and you will doubtless have seen my recent letters and PQs on this subject. Frankly, I am extremely dissatisfied with the responses I have received, which clearly show that the subject is not being treated with the seriousness I believe it deserves.

Your own files are brimming with reports that should be of extreme concern to your Department. The Deputy Base Commander at RAF Bentwaters/Woodbridge reported the sighting of a craft "metallic in appearance and triangular in shape" in December 1980. All the witnesses were members of the United States Air Force. In March 1992, military personnel at RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury reported seeing an unidentified craft fly over these bases. Later in 1993, the Station Commander at RAF Donna Nook saw a UFO while driving along a road near Louth.

In all the above cases - and these are just the tip of the iceberg - the MOD's official position seems to be that the events were of no defence significance. This sounds to me like a fancy way of saying that you don't know what happened. Have you or any of your Ministers even been briefed on these incidents? Have you taken the time to talk directly to any of the witnesses, instead of merely listening to advice from officials who weren't present, and often didn't speak to the witnesses themselves? If not, why not?

Your Department's whole attitude to this subject seems to be to regard it as an embarrassing irritation, and indeed one MOD document at the Public Record Office states "Our policy is to play down the subject of UFOs and to avoid attaching undue attention or publicity to it". That was written in 1965, and much has changed since then. For a start, the number of reports you receive from the public each year has increased roughly tenfold. This brings me neatly to my next point.

Continued:



- 2 -

Your Department now appears to be implementing a deliberate policy to attempt to reduce the number of reports it receives, presumably in an attempt to justify ~~later~~ on a total cessation of any work on the subject. This seems to have been done in two ways. Firstly, I understand that it is no longer a requirement for RAF Stations to forward UFO reports they receive. This seems ludicrous in the face of the facts (though I realise you do not know them), and one can have no confidence in the MOD view that UFOs are of no defence significance if you aren't even looking at all the data you have. Secondly, the answering machine now installed on the number used to report UFOs seems to be switched off outside working hours. Presumably we are to hope that nothing of any import occurs outside the hours of 9am to 5pm, or at a weekend? Is it really too much trouble to leave this machine on, or divert calls to a continuously manned number? As a matter of interest may I be told how many people who have left details of a sighting on the answering machine have subsequently been contacted by your officials?

You (or perhaps your people) seem remarkably confident that there is nothing to worry about here, but your confidence seems to be based on nothing more substantial than the advice of civil servants who show no sign of any knowledge of the contents of your own files. The philosophy seems to be that unless something shows up on radar and behaves like a conventional aircraft you'll ignore it. Those in charge of the Iraqi Air Defence network in January 1991 probably had a similar mindset.

I shall doubtless receive similar platitudes to those I have received before, but can assure you that I shall continue to press this issue until such time as I am convinced that this subject is being properly addressed. If anyone allows their own media-fuelled prejudices about UFOs to blind them to a potential threat, then this is a triumph of ignorance over evidence. I would therefore ask that at the very least you get a proper oral briefing on some of the incidents mentioned in this letter, not just from civil servants but from RAF Air Defence experts, and Defence Intelligence Staff specialists. In short, I really do ask you to take a personal interest at least to inform yourself better on this subject. I do not ask you to share my views until or unless you know as much about it all as I do.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

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Loose Minute

CS(RM)/4/6/37

September 1998

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* 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 -3

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)

Section 40

DRAFT REPLY FROM USofS TO THE LORD HILL-NORTON

Further to my letter dated 7 April 1998 I can now advise you of the outcome of our consideration of the release of a number of files relating to reports of "unidentified flying objects".

You will recall I advised you that whilst I was prepared to consider on their merits individual requests for the early release of files, resource considerations and the need to protect information provided in confidence by members of the public had first to be investigated.

Although there are a number of "ufo" files, containing correspondence between officials and members of the public, at various stages of preparation for transfer to the PRO we are mindful of our responsibility to protect third party confidentiality. Release ahead of the 30 year point would only be possible by the removal of all data that would reveal the identity of correspondents. Such an activity would only be possible through a major diversion of resources. A diversion I am unable to justify. Nevertheless, these files will continue to be released routinely at the normal 30 year point, subject to the continued willingness of the PRO to accept the material.

I am sorry to give you what will be a disappointing reply.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 0171-21.....(Direct Dialling)
0171-21 89000 (Switchboard)



PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

US of S Dist - DOMD
APS/SofS, PS/MIN(AF), PS/MIN(DP)
PS/PUS, PS/DUS (CM), DGMO,
HD SEC (AS), DISN. & CAL (FAS),
HD of Cs(RM)
D/US of S/JS 28/1/0

The Lord Hill-Norton GCB
Admiral of the Fleet
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

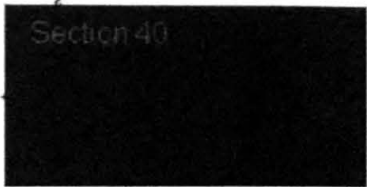
7 April 1998

Dear Lord Hill-Norton,

Thank you for your letter of 3 March in which you request the release of files containing information about alleged of 'unidentified flying objects'.

As you know, the Ministry of Defence has only a very limited interest in the sightings that are reported to us as unidentified aerial phenomena.

MOD has a well-established review programme to release files after 30 years in accordance with the terms of the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967. Whilst I am prepared to consider on their merits individual requests for the early release of files, I must take full account of the overall implications, including the diversion of resources from the review programme, and the need to protect information provided in confidence by members of the public, before agreeing to them. Nevertheless, in the light of the Government's commitment to greater openness, and given the public interest in this matter, I have asked that some files that would be due for release to the Public Record Office in the next few years be considered for earlier release. This will require some work, including, for example, the need to check whether personal details of members of the public should be protected. At this time, therefore, I cannot give an undertaking that such early release will be possible. I shall, however, write to you again when the necessary work has been completed and the way ahead is clear.



JOHN SPELLAR MP



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D/DOMD/2/3

3 April 1998

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Copy to:
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LORD HILL-NORTON: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FILES

Reference:

A. D/USofS/JS 28/1/0 dated 9 Mar 98 (not to all) ⁻²

Issue

1. How to respond to the request from Lord Hill-Norton for the release of all closed 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 1971-1973, has a long-standing interest in 'UFOs'. He was a member of the (long defunct) House of Lords All-Party 'UFO' Study Group and has written the forewords for at least two books on the subject. Over the years he has supported individual 'UFO' causes and late last year, tabled PQs about a 'UFO' incident in 1980 outside RAF Woodbridge/RAF Bentwaters (Rendlesham Forest). He subsequently wrote to Minister(DP) complaining that the Department was not prepared to review decisions made at that time. Pointing to the public interest in this topic and the forthcoming Freedom of Information Act, he has requested that all closed files on the subject of UFOs be released now.

5. Ministers will know that the Department's interest in 'UFOs' is limited to establishing whether there is any associated evidence of an unauthorised incursion of the UK Air Defence Region by foreign military activity.

Departmental Records

6. The MOD has a well-established review programme (in line with

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Public Record Office (PRO) guidance), which ensures that records are reviewed to enable release after 30 years. MOD's key review occurs around the 25 year point and involves files surviving earlier branch and Central Services(Records Management - CS(RM)) reviews. Some 12% of records survive this selection process (of the order of 4,500 files each year) and must be catalogued and conservation action taken before acceptance by the PRO and release at the 30-year point.

7. Under existing commitments to openness, staff are already 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. Staff were recently reminded of this requirement in reissued instructions on Open Government (DCI Gen 54/98). However, in considering proposals for a Freedom of Information Act, Ministers decided not to reduce the general 30 year period, in part for reasons of cost. The Public Record Act has provisions for the release of records at dates other than the normal 30 year point, subject to the Lord Chancellor's approval.

8. The PRO has, nevertheless, on occasion rejected files for preservation and release. The Department's review programme therefore takes into account not only the requirements of the national archive, but also considers the interests of the more specialist museums. Should the PRO decline to accept 'UFO' files (they are viewed by Kew as trivia) the Department would have to decide how their contents might be made available to the public; this may mean seeking the Lord Chancellor's approval for transfer to a museum.

'UFO' Files

9. A decision was taken and an undertaking given in 1967 in the light of increasing public interest in 'UFOs' that these files should be retained. Files over 30 years old (including any

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remaining from years prior to 1967) have already been released. In considering Lord Hill-Norton's request for the release of all closed files, I took as a starting premise that, in the spirit of openness, and given the undoubted public interest in this subject, we should try to meet it. However, after discussion with CS(RM) and Secretariat(Air Staff - Sec(AS)), the Division mainly involved, I have concluded that to do so would carry considerable resource implications, in particular in the effort needed to identify, review and sanitise files. This could not be attempted without significant disruption to the normal process of record reviewing or the provision of additional staff. By way of illustration, it is estimated by CS(RM) that the review of currently identified Sec(AS) UFO files alone (held by the Division itself or at Hayes) would require some 6 man-months. Furthermore, whilst there may be no security concerns about early release of 'UFO' files, a degree of sensitivity has been attached to them because reports and letters contain personal details of members of the public.

10. However, as part of its continuing structured review programme, CS(RM) has some 55 files relating to 'UFOs' with planned release dates of 1999-2003 ready for the PRO. A further 12 (release date 2004) currently await listing/conserving. With a view to going some way to meeting Lord Hill-Norton's request without an unreasonable diversion of resources, permission for early release of these files could be sought. Subsequent releases of such files would therefore be at the 25-year point. The confidentiality aspect of 'UFO' files has been effectively managed on the basis that a 30-year closure period provides sufficient protection for the personal privacy of correspondents. There are three options for dealing with the personal privacy concerns relating to earlier release:

- a. obtain permission from members of the public on an individual basis to the release of their details;
- b. remove personal details (the 55 processed files would require examination and sanitisation of some 5500 enclosures);
- c. agree that a shorter period, say 25 rather than 30 years, was acceptable for protection of privacy.

The first method would be time-consuming and probably impractical, particularly in the case of the oldest files; the second would be possible, but would represent a considerable diversion of resources for CS(RM). Preliminary legal advice on the third option suggests that MOD would be protected against any charge of breaching confidentiality if files were released in advance of 30 years as long as the new period (eg 25 years) had been properly approved by the Lord Chancellor in exercising his statutory discretion in accordance with the Public Record Act. However, there is also a requirement on Departments that consideration is given to whether releasing information gained from members of the public might constitute a breach of good faith, and this would have to be considered for the files in question.

11. Even if agreed, such a move would, of course, be unlikely to satisfy the 'UFO' community which would be convinced that other files

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were being withheld, and it could spark similar requests from other interest groups. Nevertheless, it has merit as a sign of a commitment to openness, it need not act as a precedent and, given the resource implications, would not commit the Department to more widespread release in response to other requests.

Conclusion

12. In the light of the discussion above, it is recommended that, subject to confirmation of legal advice about the protection of third party confidentiality, CS(RM) takes steps towards effecting early release (probably in January 1999, along with the next batch of releases to the PRO) of the 55 files that have already been identified, together with the additional 12 under preparation. Given the uncertainties involved in the possible need for sanitisation of personal details, obtaining the Lord Chancellor's approval and the PRO's reaction to accepting the files, I recommend that a holding reply, along the lines of the attached draft, is sent to Lord Hill-Norton at this stage. Some defensive press lines are also attached should Lord Hill-Norton wish to make something of this reply. An appropriate news brief to accompany any release in due course will be essential. CS(RM) will advise in due course on the outcome of the review/release process.

{signed}

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DRAFT REPLY FROM USofS TO THE LORD HILL-NORTON

Thank you for your letter of 3 March in which you request the release of files containing information about alleged sightings of 'unidentified flying objects'.

As you know, the Ministry of Defence has only a very limited interest in the sightings that are reported to us as unidentified aerial phenomena.

MOD has a well-established review programme to release files after 30 years in accordance with the terms of the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967. Whilst I am prepared to consider on their merits individual requests for the early release of files, therefore, I must take full account of the overall implications, including the diversion of resources from the review programme, and the need to protect information provided in confidence by members of the public, before agreeing to them. Nevertheless, in the light of the Government's commitment to greater openness, and given the public interest in this matter, I have asked that some files that would be due for release to the Public Record Office in the next few years be considered for earlier release. This will require some work, including for example, the need to check whether personal details of members of the public should be protected. At this time, therefore, I cannot give an undertaking that such early release will be possible. I shall, however, write to you again when the necessary work has been completed and the way ahead is clear.

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News Brief

Subject: Early Release of "UFO" Files

Source: [redacted] Branch: DOMD Officer: [redacted] Section 40 Tel:
[redacted] Section 40

BACKGROUND

In a letter to SofS dated 3 Mar 98, Lord Hill-Norton requested early release of all closed files on the subject of "UFOs". USofS, in responding, explained that release of all files was not possible, partly for resourcing reasons, but that the Department would consider the early release of files that were due to be presented to the Public Record Office over the next few years. However, to do this required some additional consideration, and he could not, therefore, give a firm undertaking. He did undertake to write back to Lord Hill-Norton when a final decision has been made. (A separate news brief will be provided at that time). The purpose of this brief is to provide some lines to take should Lord Hill-Norton decide to publicise this reply.

KEY MESSAGE

In line with the Government's commitment to greater openness, and in view of the public interest, MOD is considering whether some files related to the subject of "UFOs" could be released to the Public Record Office in advance of the normal 30 year point.

KEY POINTS TO SUPPORT THE MESSAGE

- * Some additional work is required, for example, to ensure that we do not breach third party confidentiality (much of the material in question has been provided by members of the public).
- * No final decision on early release has therefore yet been taken.
- * (If raised) Lord Hill-Norton has made a request for files to be released, but staff are already encouraged to identify discrete blocks of records of more than ordinary interest to the public which could be released to the Public Record Office (PRO) ahead of the normal 30 year point.
- * MOD already has a well-structured programme to release files to the PRO after 30 years. The recent White Paper on Freedom of Information stated the Government's view that the 30 year rule should not be reduced, as meeting the considerable costs for earlier release of all historical records was not considered to be the best use of scarce public resources.

SUBSIDIARY POINTS

- * MOD examines any reports of "UFO" sightings it receives solely to

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establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance.

- * Defence significance constitutes evidence that UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity.
- * Unless there is evidence of a potential threat to the UK from an external military source, MOD does not attempt to identify the precise nature of each sighting reported.
- * MOD has no expertise or role with respect to the question of extraterrestrial lifeforms and it would be an inappropriate diversion of defence resources to investigate this issue.

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COVERING SECRET/CONFIDENTIAL/RESTRICTED/MANAGEMENT/

REFERENCE D/US of S/JS 28/1/0

DOMD.

FOI & VFOs.

I am attaching a letter/minute from Lord Hill - Norton
to SofS dated 3.3.98

Will you please consult other Departments, divisions and branches
as necessary and submit advice, together with a draft reply,
in order to reach US of S not later than 23.3.98


I am sending copies of this to:

- ~~.. APS/SofS - Mr Kernohan~~
- .. APS/Min (DP)
- .. APS/Min (AF)
- .. HO. Sec (AS)

The Open Government Code of Practice came into force on 4 April 1994 and you should ensure that replies to members of the public are provided in accordance with its procedures.



Date: 9.3.98

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



ps/as of S
[redacted]
Could you deal with
this pte as a
FOI. [redacted] name?

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

40

PERSONAL

The Rt Hon George Robertson MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Defence
Main Building Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

3 March, 1998

Dear Secretary of State,

As you may know, I have for some years taken a keen interest in the issue of unauthorised penetrations of the UK Air Defence Region by unidentified craft. For the most part your officials refer to these incidents as "UFO" sightings, and this language ensures that such events are hardly ever pursued by the serious media or by the Establishment.

I recognise, of course that most such incidents can be explained as misidentifications of various aerial objects and phenomena. That said, there is a hard core of events, including incidents where uncorrelated targets have been detected on radar, and RAF aircraft scrambled in attempts to intercept the craft, which cannot be so explained. A number of these have come to light through a careful study of around twenty five of your Department's old files (some of which were classified at the level of Secret) on this subject, available at the Public Record Office in Kew. This brings me to the point of this letter.

There is wide spread suspicion about the role of your Department in relation to these events, and Head of Secretariat (Air Staff) will doubtless be able to give you a brief on the level of public interest in this subject. When the UK's Freedom of Information Act comes into force, your Department can expect to receive huge numbers of requests for UFO information, taking up endless hours of valuable staff time.

Continued:



- 2 -

It seems to me that there is a way to avoid this burden, and at the same time deal with some of the criticisms currently being made. My request is that you authorise the immediate release of all closed files on this subject. I understand that such a move would not run counter to the terms of either of the Public Record Acts, and that in spite of the old "Thirty Year Rule", departmental records management staffs are actively encouraged to identify discrete blocks of files for early release. Such a move would be greatly appreciated by those of us who take a serious interest in this subject, and would be a litmus test of your Department's commitment to Open Government.

I naturally hope you will agree to this move, and do most strongly urge that you should consider the matter yourself. More generally, may I suggest that you ask for a detailed briefing on the UFO issue from your staff - preferably from the appropriate specialists from within the Defence Intelligence Staff, as opposed to the civil servants from Sec(AS). I am pretty sure you will find there is rather more to this subject than you might currently suppose.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

R709/18
LOOSE MINUTE

D/GF/1/1/8 (133/97)

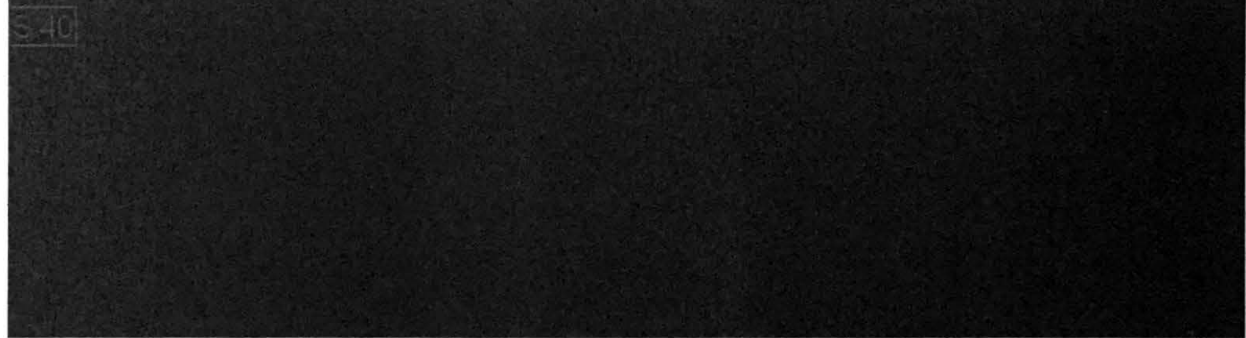
6 May 1997

PS/Minister (AF)

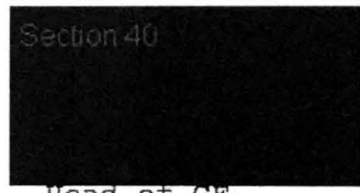
- Copy to:
- APS/S of S
- PS/US of S
- PS/PUS
- PS/2nd PUS
- DUS(RP&F)
- Press Secretary
- AUS(GF)
- Head of Sec(AS)
- Head of PCB(Air)

BOOK WRITTEN BY MOD EMPLOYEE

The Minister will wish to be aware that one of my staff



3. The book makes it clear that the views expressed are the author's own and have no official status.



Head of GF
Section 40
CHOTS: PA/Head of GF