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Registered File Disposal Form

MOD Form 262F
(Revised 9/01)

FILE TITLE: (Main Heading - Secondary Heading - Tertiary Heading etc)

UFOs
Parliamentary Questions and Enquiries

Reference:
(Prefix and Number):
D/Sec(AS)64/4
Part: E

PROTECTIVE MARKING (including caveats & descriptors): ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ UNCLASSIFIED

Date of last enclosure: 19 OCTOBER 1998

Date closed:

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

	✓
~~Destroy after _____ years~~	
Forward to INFO(EXP)-R after 10 years	
FOR PERMENANT RETENTION ~~No recommendation~~	

FOR DEFENCE INFO(EXP)-R USE ONLY

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

Reviewer's Signature: _____ Reviewer's Signature: _____

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

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

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

	✓		✓	
LEGAL	☐	DEFENCE POLICY & OPERATIONS	☐	
CONTRACTUAL	☐	ORIGINAL COMMITTEE PAPERS	☐	
FINANCE/AUDIT	☐	MAJOR EQUIPMENT PROJECT	☐	(Public Interest.
DIRECTORATE POLICY	☐	OTHER (Specify)	☑	For Permanent Reservation in The National Archive

PPQ = 100

(Continued overleaf)

(ii) Key enclosures which support the recommendation are:

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

Destroyed ✓

Considered by DR for permanent preservation

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

PART 3. BRA [redacted] **below C2/equivalent)**

Section 40

Signature:

Name: (Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: B2 Date: 29/6/04

Branch Title and Full Address:

Tel No:

PART 4 DESTRUCTION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the specified file has been destroyed.

Signature:

Name: (Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: Date:

Witnessed by (TOP SECRET* and SECRET only)

Signature:

Name: (Block Capitals)

Grade/Rank: Date:

*(FOR DR USE ONLY)

Produced by MOD, DSDA(PC) KY Tel. 0117 9376256

MOD Form 174D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 48

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS)64/4

Enclosure Jacket No. 9

DATE OPENED 19.10.98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: PQ 3785

LORD HILL-NORTON

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

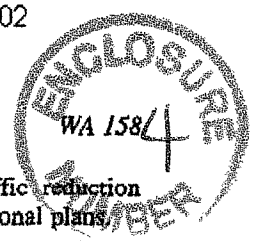
This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on ..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer .....

Date ..... Appointment and Branch .....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

22 Oct '98 12:43 P.02



aim of bringing it into effect at the earliest available opportunity. This will require primary legislation.

National Air Traffic Services Ltd.

Lord Gladwin of Clee asked Her Majesty's Government:

When they expect to announce proposals for a public/private partnership for National Air Traffic Services Ltd. [HL3503]

Lord Whitty: We have today published a consultation paper on the Government's preferred option for a public/private partnership (PPP) for National Air Traffic Services Ltd.

The safe and efficient provision of air traffic control services is rightly a matter of great public interest and, since the PPP was announced, a debate has begun on key issues such as safety, the national interest and public accountability. The Government now want to launch a structured, full and open consultation on these issues. The consultation document therefore sets out a wide range of matters on which we are looking for views. Safety remains our top priority and we believe that the proposed PPP offers the opportunity to establish a structure which will strengthen safety, satisfy the public interest and the needs of aviation users while providing for the sound future of National Air Traffic Services Ltd. and its employees.

We hope that all those with an interest in this subject, whatever their views on the Government's preferred option, will take the opportunity to respond to the consultation document.

Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997

Viscount Simon asked Her Majesty's Government:

What plans they have to implement the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997. [HL3496]

Lord Whitty: It is clear that the setting of road traffic reduction targets will be an integral part of the process of drawing up local transport strategies. Local transport plans are a centrepiece of the Government's transport proposals and it is vital that we get implementation right. We have listened to the Local Government Association and local authority concerns about the difficulty of producing robust local transport plans by July 1999. We will therefore invite local highway authorities to produce "provisional" five year plans by July 1999, covering the period 2000/01–2004/05. These would be the basis for allocating resources for 2000/01 only. Authorities would then roll their plans on by one year and submit "full" plans for 2001/02–2005/06 in July 2000, when resources would be allocated across the plan period.

Statutory reports produced under the provisions of the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 will therefore be submitted in July 2000, as part of the first round of full local transport plans. We will expect authorities to submit non-statutory "interim" road traffic reduction reports in July 1999, as part of the provisional plans.

The London boroughs are not covered by the White Paper requirement to produce local transport plans, but will be separately required to produce *local implementation plans* which are in keeping with the Mayor's integrated transport strategy for London. We are taking this forward separately.

The Road Traffic Reduction (National Targets) Act 1998 requires the Government to consider the setting of national targets. We will therefore require a greater degree of standardisation from local authorities in the measurement of existing traffic levels and forecasts—in order that we can assess the national implications. We believe this can be done by building on the data already collected for national surveys. It will take some time to get an assessment framework in place. This is something we would like to take forward jointly with local authorities under the auspices of the Transport Statistics Liaison Group. The existing draft guidance on the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 will be revised in the light of this work. The Government have also undertaken that they will produce a first report to Parliament on the issue of national traffic targets by the end of 1999 (which will also need to reflect the views of the Commission for Integrated Transport, when appointed). To achieve this, they will need to draw on existing sources of information together with any useful inputs from local authorities from their 1999 plans, accepting that at this stage the material will not be in a standardised format.

UFOs: MoD Answering Machine

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will ensure that the answering machine which the Ministry of Defence uses both to explain its policy on unidentified flying objects and to provide a facility for the public to report sightings is turned on at all times and not switched off outside working hours. [HL3407]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): Yes.

Medical Negligence Claims

Lord Clement-Jones asked Her Majesty's Government:

What activity the Department of Health is currently engaged in to review its exposure to medical negligence claims and its processes and procedures for dealing with them. [HL3460]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Baroness Hayman): On 29 April 1998 my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Health wrote to a number of organisations representing professional, legal, National Health Service and patient interests seeking their views on what can be done to reduce the number of incidents which give rise

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON MONDAY 19 OCTOBER 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3785i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	APS/SofS, APS/USofS

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will ensure that the answering machine which the Ministry of Defence uses both to explain its policy on unidentified flying objects and to provide a facility for the public to report sightings is turned on at all times and not switched off outside working hours. (L 3407)

DRAFTED BY : Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7 [signed] TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

Yes.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is the latest in the raft of Questions from Lord Hill Norton about 'UFO'-related issues. Of late he has been particularly concerned about the arrangements within the Department for handling 'UFO' sighting reports, 'UFO' files held in the Public Record Office, and the role of RAF Feltwell.

2. This latest Question follows on from PQ 3293 (Official Report 15 July col WA26). A copy is attached at Tab A together with the relevant background note. In parallel Lord Hill-Norton has written to SofS and USofS (PE US3909/98, copies at Tab B). It is clear from the letters that he believes the installation of the answerphone to have been a deliberate ploy to reduce the number of reported sightings. This is not the case; it was installed in February 1997 to free more time during the working day for the desk officers in the Section to deal with core tasks. The number of reported sightings has decreased in 1998, but probably because 1997 saw an increase in media interest stemming from a number of books, television programmes and other events, not sustained this year.

3. In the past, sightings could always be reported out of hours to MOD duty officers. Leaving the answerphone on will relieve them of this chore (though this is probably not Lord Hill-Norton's motive) and we will start doing this with immediate affect.

4. Draft replies to Lord Hill-Norton's letters will be provided shortly.

NATO: New Members and Command Structure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

Lord Gilbert: It is planned that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will fill posts in the new NATO command structure. The exact number, seniority and location of these has not yet been determined.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

When arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up-to-date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence; and [HL2607]

What follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when it receives a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. [HL2609]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of unidentified flying objects is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity and whether reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MoD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of unidentified flying objects are examined with the assistance of relevant MoD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

Lord Gilbert: The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996: 609

1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorised foreign military activity, we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

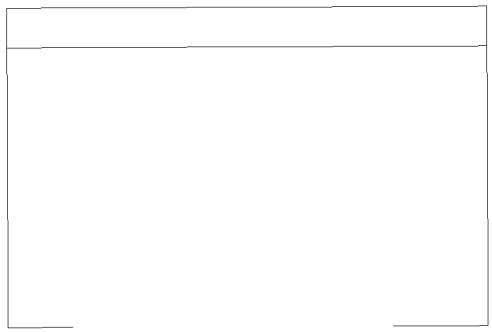
Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;



PO 3293

7. A significant amount of media interest in 1996 in 'UFOs' coincided with the publication of Nicholas Pope's book '*Open Skies Closed Minds*'. Pope, who had previously worked in Sec(AS) and is still employed within the MOD, set out his personal views supporting the existence of 'UFOs' and was critical of the way MOD deals with this subject. The number of 'UFO' reports made to the Department increased by over 50% to 609 in 1996, and continued at this level for much of 1997 whilst the media covered the events associated with the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. The number of 'UFO'-related letters and telephone calls to Sec(AS) also rose significantly. It was the case that the public had direct telephone access to Sec(AS)2 desk officers to report 'UFO' sightings. However, callers became more frequent in their efforts to discuss MOD's policy in respect of this subject and pass on details of their personal concerns outwith the Department's remit (alien abductions, crops circles, extraterrestrial lifeforms, ghosts, animal mutilations etc). As a consequence, staff effort became increasingly diverted from core tasks. The outgoing answerphone message (ANNEX A) makes clear the Department's limited interest in the subject and that further contact will be made by Sec(AS) only if it is appropriate within the terms of our remit in respect of this activity.

Section 40

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:

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 a 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

PE

09 OCT 1998

— Mi (AP)

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB — Sec (A1)

— UFO's

Mr John Spellar MP
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

cc WOJS - for info

7 October, 1998

— 3354/93

Dear Mr Spellar,

Thank you for your letter of 15th September, concerning the policy of the Ministry of Defence with regard to unidentified flying objects.

I was disturbed to learn that there is no longer a requirement to forward UFO reports to the MOD. Previously, the RAF used to have a formal Standard Operating Procedure, and there was a standard form which was circulated to RAF stations, where those concerned were instructed to forward details of all sightings to the Department, irrespective of whether the witnesses were Service personnel or members of the public. I believe that these forms were also sent to police stations and airports, as these are the sorts of places that tend to receive sighting reports from the public. I have three questions on this, to which I would like specific answers. When was this policy stopped? Who was consulted in making this change of policy? Who took the final decision?

In public statements on this subject, your officials have often said that in examinations of UFO sighting reports, nothing of any defence significance has been found. But it seems to me that if the MOD is not prepared to look at all the available data, no meaningful assessment of the phenomenon can be made. As such, your "no defence significance" statement is invalid, because it is based on an incomplete picture. I presume that you are not being advised to pretend that the radar cover to which you refer is total, all the time.

The pity of the situation is that there is a wealth of interesting data in the public domain, about which I can only assume you and your officials are totally unaware. As an example, a panel of scientists led by Dr Peter Sturrock - a physicist from Stanford University - recently put together an analysis of physical evidence relating to UFO reports. Their examination included looking at cases involving photographic evidence, radar evidence and ground trace evidence. Has anybody in your Department even read the report summarising this work?

Continued:

PARLIAMENTARY
BRANCH
12 OCT 1998
ROOM 6134 MAIN BLDG

If you are to continue to assure everyone that reports of UFOs are of no defence significance, then I suggest you would be better advised to do so from an informed position, on the basis of having weighed the evidence and found it wanting. I consider it insulting to people's intelligence to do so solely on the basis of a selective trawl of the few sightings that are still sent to you, despite your best efforts to withdraw from this subject. I would really like to know how you have been persuaded to catch this line.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

[redacted]

(The number of reported sightings has decreased in 1998, but ~~this~~ because 1997 saw an increase in media interest stemming from a number of books, television programmes and other events, not sustained this year.

3. In the past, sightings could always be reported out of hours to MOD duty officers. Leaving the answerphone on will relieve them of this chore (though this is probably not Lord Hill-Norton's motive) and we will start doing this with immediate effect.

4. Draft replies to Lord Hill-Norton's letters will be provided shortly.

Section 40 - a few amendments.

Section 40

ENCLOSURE 2 NUMBER

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON MONDAY 19 OCTOBER 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3785i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	APS/SofS, APS/USofS

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will ensure that the answering machine which the Ministry of Defence uses both to explain its policy on unidentified flying objects and to provide a facility for the public to report sightings is turned on at all times and not switched off outside working hours. (L 3407)

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 Section 40 16/10
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7 [signed] TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER: Yes.

~~It was~~ always the case that outside normal working hours ~~members of the public were not able to speak direct with Secretariat (Air Staff)2 staff.~~ Nevertheless, as an additional facility I can confirm that in future the ~~answerphone will be turned on~~ at all times.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is the latest in the raft of Questions from Lord Hill-Norton about 'UFO'-related issues. Of late he has been particularly concerned about the arrangements within the Department for handling 'UFO' sighting reports, 'UFO' files held in the Public Record Office, and the role of RAF Feltwell. ~~Lord Hill-Norton is well known for his personal~~ views on 'UFO' and believes that the Department should devote more resources to investigating this phenomenon. He is clearly unwilling to accept the Department's limited interest ~~in the subject~~.

2. This latest Question follows on from PQ 3293 (Official Report 15 July col WA26). A copy is attached at Tab A together with the relevant background note. In parallel Lord Hill-Norton has written to SofS and USofS (PE US3909/98, copies at Tab B). It is clear from the letters that he believes the installation of the answerphone to have been a deliberate ploy to reduce the number of reported sightings. This is not the case; it was installed to free ~~up~~ more time during the working day for the desk officers in the Section to deal with core tasks.

in February 1997

3. Prior to the installation of the answerphone, members of the public had no direct telephone access to report sightings to Sec(AS)2 staff outside normal working hours. As with all Departmental business it was possible then and, post installation, still is the case that callers can speak to the out of hours duty officers via the telephone switchboard operators.

4. Although the answerphone was installed in February 1997, it is only during this last year that the number of sighting reports has reduced significantly. Lord Hill Norton is trying to link the two issues and perhaps hoping to prove his case if the answerphone is left on outside normal working hours. We believe a more rational explanation for the current lack of sighting reports is the reduced amount of media fuelled public interest compared to 1996 when Nicholas Pope's first book was published and 1997 when his second book, and the 50th anniversary of the first alleged sighting of a 'UFO' in the USA were widely reported.

5. We are content to leave the answerphone connected outside of normal office hours and will deal with any calls received in the usual way the following working day.

6. A draft reply for USofS to send to Lord Hill Norton covering the various issues raised in the letters will follow shortly.

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 1

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

TO: SEC(AS) PQ REF NUMBER: 3785

DATE: 13/10/98 FROM: Parliamentary Branch TEL: Section 40
FAX:

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION WHICH HAS BEEN TABLED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE/HM GOVERNMENT

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 2
13 OCT 1998
FILE

****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

DATE FOR RETURN 1998	:	**12:00 ON MONDAY 19 OCTOBER**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3785i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will ensure that the answering machine which the Ministry of Defence uses both to explain its policy on unidentified flying objects and to provide a facility for the public to report sightings is turned on at all times, and not switched off outside working hours. [HL3407]

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWER IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

ALL DRAFT REPLIES MUST BE CLEARED AT SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE (GRADE 5) OR ONE STAR LEVEL OR ABOVE

THE CHECKLIST IS TO HELP YOU DRAFT THE ANSWER PROPERLY YOU MUST USE IT

REPLIES SHOULD BE SENT BY CHOTS E-MAIL (URGENT & VIEW ACKNOWLEDGE) TO "**Parliamentary Questions**". DIVISIONS NOT ON CHOTS SHOULD SEND THEIR DRAFTS BY FAX TO THE PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH (x Section 40

ALWAYS QUOTE THE QUESTION (PQ) NUMBER, AND THE NAMES AND CONTACT NUMBERS OF THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAFTING THE REPLY AND THE SENIOR OFFICIAL WHO APPROVED IT.

IF YOU REQUIRE ANY ADVICE, PLEASE CALL (MB x Section 40

1. WRITTEN POS

All written PQs **must** be answered within 14 days of being tabled, even if the House is by then in recess.

2. DEADLINE FOR REPLY

a. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline, you should contact this Branch to see if an extension to the deadline can be given. **You should do this before 12.00 on the day on which you are due to return the PQ answer.**

b. You must provide a full explanation of why you cannot meet the deadline.

c. If it is impossible to answer the question within 14 days the Minister has to write to the Lord concerned explaining the circumstances and undertaking to provide a full answer as soon as possible. You must provide the draft letter.

3. OPEN GOVERNMENT

a. A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 54/1998.

b. Replies must be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exemption in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am witholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

4. DRAFTING THE ANSWER

- USE THE CHECKLIST -

a. The draft reply should be concise, clear and meticulously accurate. It should have a positive tone where possible.

b. Use clear and direct language to avoid any ambiguity. Short everyday words and short sentences are best. Avoid cliches and MOD/ Service jargon. Use abbreviations only after using the words or name in full.

c. The answer must be unclassified.

d. If you refer to a previous PQ answer or document, send a copy.

5. BACKGROUND NOTE

a. Ministers need a short note explaining the facts and thinking behind the suggested reply if it is not completely obvious from the reply itself.

b. If the answer varies from a previous answer or statement explain fully why this is so.

c. If new information comes to light in your research which might affect this or previous answers or statements you must ring the Minister's Private Office **AT ONCE** as well as stating this clearly in the background note.

6. GROUPED PQS

Related PQs, tabled by an individual Lord for answer on the same day may be grouped together and given a single answer. This Branch can give advice on grouping.

7. PARTIAL REPLIES

If a full reply is not possible you should give what information is available and make it clear in the answer what you are doing.

8. COST OF GIVING A REPLY

If the cost of giving a reply will exceed £500 you can recommend to Ministers that the reply should be along the lines of "This information [is not held centrally] and could only be provided at disproportionate cost". You must explain in the background note how these costs - usually staff costs - would arise. The decision whether or not then to give an answer depends on the merits of the case.
As a rough guide use these hourly rates:
AO-£8, EO-£13, HEO-£15, SEO-£18, G7-£22, G5-£31.
Capitation rates can be increased by 50% forfor Service equivalents.

9. LONG REPLIES

If the reply is long (ie will fill more than a page of Hansard) it may, exceptionally, be better to give the information in a letter to the Lord or put information in the Library of the House. In these cases the reply is "I will write to the noble Lord (or "my noble Friend") and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House" or "I am placing the information requested in the Library of the House". This Branch is responsible for placing material in the Library. We need 6 copies of any document placed in the Library.

10. INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE FROM PUBLIC SOURCES

PQs are expensive in terms of Ministers' and officials' time. Lords should be encouraged to get information from published sources where it is already available in the Library of the House. In such cases the reply is along these lines "The information requested is contained in para X of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1996 (Cm 3223), a copy of which is in the Library of the House".

11. PQS ASKING FOR STATISTICAL INFORMATION

a. PQs which ask for statistical information will be sent normally to the Chief Executive of DASA and copied to the relevant policy branch.

b. If such a question has not been sent to DASA please let us know. In any event you should liaise with DASA about the reply in case there are policy implications of which they are unaware.

12. TRANSFER OF PQS

a. To another Government Department
If you think this PQ is not primarily a matter for MOD tell this Branch **AT ONCE.**
We will need the name and Branch of an official in the more appropriate Department who has agreed to take the PQ. Parliamentary Branches in other Government Departments will usually only agree to transfers on this basis.

b. To another Branch
If a PQ has been sent to you incorrectly, please let this Branch know **AT ONCE.** If you know who is responsible for the subject please pass it to them as well.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ANSWERING PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. Never forget Ministers' obligations to Parliament which are set out in the Cabinet Office publication "Ministerial Code: A code of conduct and guidance on procedure for Ministers". It states that:

"It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister. Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest, which should be decided in accordance with relevant statute and the Government's Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Second Edition, Jan 1997)

2. It is a civil servant's responsibility to Ministers to help them fulfil those obligations. It is the Minister's right and responsibility to decide how to do so. Ministers want to explain and present Government policy and actions in a positive light. They will rightly expect a draft answer that does full justice to the Government's position.

3. Approach every question predisposed to give relevant information fully, as concisely as possible and in accordance with guidance on disproportionate cost. If there appears to be a conflict between the requirement to be as open as possible and the requirement to protect information whose disclosure would not be in the public interest, you should check to see whether it should be omitted in accordance with statute (which takes precedence) or the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, about which you should consult your departmental openness liaison officer if necessary.

5. Do not omit information sought merely because disclosure could lead to political embarrassment or administrative inconvenience.

6. Where there is a particularly fine balance between openness and non-disclosure, and when the draft answer takes the latter course, this should be explicitly drawn to the Minister's attention. Similarly, if it is proposed to reveal information of a sort which is not normally disclosed, this should be explicitly drawn to Ministers' attention.

7. If you conclude that material information must be withheld and the PQ cannot be fully answered as a result, draft an answer which **makes this clear and which explains the reasons in equivalent terms to those in the Code of Practice, or because of disproportionate cost or the information not being available.** Take care to avoid draft answers which are literally true but likely to give rise to misleading inferences.

PQ CHECKLIST

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

* YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY
* MEET THE DEADLINE & CONSULT EARLY IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS
* YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE
* IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE FROM A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT WITH EXPERTISE IN ANSWERING PQs

PQ ANSWER

* DO USE PLAIN AND PRECISE LANGUAGE
  - is the answer unambiguous and free from jargon?
* DO BE OPEN, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND HONEST
  - have you included all the facts necessary for a full and unambiguous answer?
  - do you fully understand the policy governing the answering of PQs? See attached note on Government Policy
  - if you have excluded anything can it be justified under the Open Govt Code (see DCI GEN 54/98)
* DO CHECK SOURCES AND ENSURE EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE TO BACK UP ANSWERS
  - is sufficient documentary evidence available to back up the answer if challenged?
  - does anybody outside your management area need to be involved? Have you consulted them?
* DO CHECK PREVIOUS ANSWERS ON THE SAME SUBJECT
* DO MAKE CLEAR THE BASIS ON WHICH YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION
  - if you have gone beyond a literal interpretation of the question have you made it clear?
* DON'T RELY ON HEARSAY OR GUESSWORK
  - are you confident that the information provided will stand up to detailed scrutiny?
* DON'T BE ABSOLUTE UNLESS YOU HAVE THE PROOF
  - think very carefully before you say "all" or "never" or "not possible"
  - does it differ from the views of outside experts, if so why?

BACKGROUND NOTE

* DO KEEP IT RELEVANT
  - does it explain the answer?
* DO EXPLAIN JUDGEMENTS MADE, AND ANY DOUBTS OR CAVEATS
* DO MAKE IT CLEAR IF INFORMATION IS BEING RELEASED FOR THE FIRST TIME OR IF IT IS DIFFERENT FROM INFORMATION RELEASED PREVIOUSLY
  - have you sought and included advice on the wider implications (including PR)?
* DO GIVE A CLEAR EXPLANATION FOR WITHOLDING INFORMATION
  - details of disproportionate cost included?
  - have you explained your justification for exclusion under the Open Govt Code?
* DO RECORD THE SOURCES RELIED ON IN PREPARING YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER
  - have you included details of those who have provided you with information?

Doc: LordsWrite

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

MOD Form 174D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 47

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS) 6444

Enclosure Jacket No. 8

DATE OPENED 9.10.98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: PQ: 37761
LORD HILL NORTON

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on ..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer .....

Date ..... Appointment and Branch .....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE 4 OCTOBER

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes are published in the Annual Report. A list of the current membership is also attached to the press releases announcing meetings of the committee. Copies of all these documents are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Salmon Fishing

The Earl of Shrewsbury asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in the light of the recommendations of the Environment Agency that a 10-year ban on the fishing for salmon with rod and line be imposed on rivers in England and Wales, they will take immediate steps to close down the North East coast drift net fisheries. [HL3344]

Lord Donoughue: The Environment Agency has not recommended a 10-year ban on fishing for salmon by rod in England and Wales. The agency is however considering a range of measures to reduce exploitation of spring salmon: these include postponing the start of the salmon netting season and requiring the release of all salmon caught by rod in the first half of the year. It is currently consulting its statutory advisory committees, and, in the light of the advice it receives, will decide whether to proceed with formal proposals.

Sand Eel Population: Protection

The Earl of Shrewsbury asked Her Majesty's Government:

What steps they intend to take to protect the sand eel population around the coasts of the United Kingdom. [HL3345]

Lord Donoughue: The Government set annual restrictions on sand eel fishing in the inshore fisheries around the Shetland Islands and Western Isles. In addition, they have proposed to the European Commission the introduction of a seasonal ban on sand eel fishing off the North Sea coast from the Orkneys to Humberside. This would be an international closure introduced through European Community rules.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 3 September (*WA 60*), whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations are still required to forward details of any report they receive of an unidentified flying object to the Ministry of Defence, or whether such action is now only discretionary, following the April 1997 review of procedures. [HL3313]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): There is no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to the MoD, other than for military air defence purposes. However, any reports sent to the department will be given the attention they deserve, commensurate with the quality of information provided.

Defence Diversification

Lord Judd asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they have studied the paper by Ian S. Goudie on Defence Diversification published by the International Security Information Service; what conclusions they have drawn; and what action they are proposing to take. [HL3319]

Lord Gilbert: The Government have considered the paper submitted by Mr. Goudie as part of the consultation process following publication of the Green Paper "Defence Diversification: Getting the most out of defence technology", Cm 3861.

A wide range of comments were received and the Government are grateful to all those who commented. The views received have, as far as possible, been taken into account in reaching conclusions. These will be published in the form of a White Paper later in the autumn.

Military Attachments: Estonia and Latvia

The Earl of Carlisle asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they intend to attach, as military advisers, an officer of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to the Ministries of Defence of Estonia and Latvia as they have done to the Ministry of Defence of Lithuania. [HL3334]

Lord Gilbert: We attach great importance to defence co-operation with the Baltic States and continue to provide military-related assistance to them in accordance with their priorities. The attachment of a military officer to the Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence (MoD) was to meet a specific Lithuanian requirement for advice on military training. Although we have no specific plans for military attachments elsewhere in the region at the moment, we keep our defence assistance programmes under review, considering all requests for assistance as they arise.

Northern Ireland: Abortion Laws

Lord Alton of Liverpool asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the answer made by Lord Dubs on 5 October (H.L. Deb., Col. 228), whether government time will be made available in the House of Commons for a Private Member's Bill seeking to extend the abortion laws to Northern Ireland; and whether they accept the principle established by John Major MP that the existing laws will not be changed either by a government initiative or by the

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON FRIDAY 9 OCTOBER 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3776i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 3rd September (WA 60), whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations are still required to forward details of any report they receive of an unidentified flying object to the Ministry of Defence, or whether such action is now only discretionary, following the April 1997 review of procedures. (HL 3313)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 : Section 40 7/10/98 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7 7/10/98

AUTHORISED BY: M J D FULLER TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS Section 40 7.10.98

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER: There is no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to the MOD, other than for military air defence purposes. However, any reports sent to the Department will be given the attention they deserve, commensurate with the quality of information provided.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is yet another PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton. It follows up PQ 3733 (Official Report and background attached at TAB A) and specifically seeks further clarification about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. Lord Hill-Norton wrote to Minister(DP) in August (TAB B) expressing his dissatisfaction with the answer. In Lord Gilbert's absence USofS replied at TAB C. The draft answer to this PQ essentially reiterates the comments made in the letter.

either police or military personnel; and whether they will place copies of any such agreements in the Library of the House. [HL2808]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): No formal arrangements to provide training for police or military personnel have been conducted with the Turkish authorities since 1 May 1997. The UK Government have, however, a programme of practical assistance to help the Turkish civil authorities in the field of human rights. This programme was announced in October 1997 and includes police training in the areas of public order policy, detainee rights, domestic violence and the role of an independent police complaints authority. Details of the military training given to Turkish personnel was set out in the reply I gave the noble Lord, Lord Hylton on 22 April, (*Official Report*, WA 212) and in the reply given by my right honourable friend the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Dr. Reid, to the honourable Member for Tooting, Mr. Cox, on 14 July 1998 (*Official Report*, col. 173).

NATO Members: Defence Expenditure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the need to increase defence expenditure is generally discussed within NATO; and whether the statement of the Turkish Minister of National Defence, Mr. Ismet Sezgin, that the Turkish armed forces need an investment of 150 billion United States dollars is agreed within NATO. [HL2955]

Lord Gilbert: At their meeting on 11 June 1998, NATO Defence Ministers noted that the armed forces needed in the new strategic environment, while smaller than before, still require significant funding levels. However, the setting of the overall level of defence expenditure of an individual NATO member is not a matter for the Alliance as a whole.

RAF Feltwell: Units and Roles

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will list those units based at RAF Feltwell, and what functions each of these units carries out. [HL3237]

Lord Gilbert: The units based at RAF Feltwell and their roles are:

UNIT: USAF 5th Space Surveillance Squadron

ROLE: Tracking of man-made objects in space.

UNIT: US Department of Defence Schools

ROLE: Educational establishments for dependants of USVF personnel.

UNIT: US Mathes Airmen's Leadership School

ROLE: Training for Junior NCOs.

UNIT: US Contracting Squadron

ROLE: US Visiting Forces contracting authority.

UNIT: US Army Veterinary Detachment

ROLE: Provision of veterinary services.

UNIT: US Army Air Force Exchange Services (AAFES)

ROLE: Furniture and retail warehouse.

UNIT: US Defence Audit Agency

ROLE: Provision of audit services.

RAF Feltwell: Space Tracking System

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is the role of RAF Feltwell in relation to the tracking of unidentified objects in space; how many objects detected by the Deep Space Tracking System at RAF Feltwell remain unidentified; and how many of these were transmitting a signal. [HL3238]

Lord Gilbert: RAF Feltwell is responsible for tracking man-made objects in deep space. I am withholding the further information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15 July (*WA 25*), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. [HL3239]

Lord Gilbert: Procedures were clarified to ensure that reports received by the department would have the attention they deserved. The department's responsibilities for maintaining the integrity of UK airspace, as set out in the Strategic Defence Review, are well known. Anybody may send in reports for assessment in that context.

Medical and Dental Officers: Pay Awards

Lord Vivian asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the recent pay award to medical and dental officers in the Armed Forces is being awarded in two stages, with 2 per cent. being paid from 1 April and the remainder payable from 1 December. [HL3240]

Lord Gilbert: In line with government policy on public sector pay, the award for medical and dental officers has been staged in the same way as the pay

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COVERING RESTRICTED-POLICY

NATO: New Members and Command Structure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

Lord Gilbert: It is planned that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will fill posts in the new NATO command structure. The exact number, seniority and location of these has not yet been determined.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

When arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up-to-date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence; and [HL2607]

What follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when it receives a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. [HL2609]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of unidentified flying objects is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity and whether reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MoD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of unidentified flying objects are examined with the assistance of relevant MoD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

Lord Gilbert: The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996: 609

1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorised foreign military activity, we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;

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BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is the seventh PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton within the last three weeks. It is linked to a further two on the role of RAF Feltwell (3730/3732). This PQ follows up PQ 3291 (Official Report attached) and specifically seeks further information about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. Public interest in the 'UFO' phenomenon gathered pace during 1996/97 following media interest in the publication of various 'UFO'-related books (including two by Nicholas Pope who had previously worked in Sec(AS)) and the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. This increasing interest necessitated an internal review in April 1997 to assess the level of staffing appropriate for the limited interest the Department has in this subject. It was agreed with Air Defence and Defence Intelligence staff that for the future it would be appropriate to staff only those reports in the following categories for further, defence related advice:

- **Credible Witness Reports:** Reports received from service personnel, civil pilots, staff working in air traffic control centres and the emergency services, or those complete with documented evidence such as photographs, video footage etc.

- **Corroborated Sightings:** A series of reports apparently describing the same phenomenon and provided by separate and independent sources where these could not be readily explained.

- **Timely Sightings:** Reports of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection by Air Defence or other assets such as military aircraft or radar observers.

3. The Parliamentary Clerk agreed an extension to the deadline to the reply for this PQ.

UNCLASSIFIED

Sec(A)
UFO

Section 40

26/8

TAB B

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

The Lord Gilbert
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

RECEIVED

21 August, 1998

Dear Lord Gilbert,

Perhaps you would read again your reply dated 19 August 1998 to my Question about the reporting of unidentified flying objects. It does not answer my question, which was " ..... whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required (my emphasis) to send them to the MOD".

Of course "anybody may send in ......". but that was not the question. I should be grateful if you would now answer it. In short, are the people listed REQUIRED (by you) to send them to the MOD?

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

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

TAB C

D/US of S/JS 3354/98/P

15 September 1998

Dear Lord Hill-Norton,

Thank you for your letter of 21 August to Lord Gilbert in which you seek further clarification of the Ministry of Defence's interest in the reporting of 'unidentified flying objects'. I am responding as Lord Gilbert is currently away

As you will know, the Ministry of Defence's interest in the subject of unidentified flying objects is limited to ensuring that the integrity of UK airspace is maintained. This is achieved by using a combination of civil and military radar installations, which provide a continuous real-time "picture" of the UK airspace, and an airborne military Air Defence capability.

There is, therefore, no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to the MOD. If any such reports are submitted, the Department will give them the attention they deserve commensurate with the quality of information provided.

Section 40 [redacted]

JOHN SPELLAR MP

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 2
16 SEP 1998
FILE

Recycled Pa

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 5

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

10 Sep 98

PE Unit
(thro Section 40 [redacted]

Copy to:

ADGE1

DP 3354/98: LORD HILL-NORTON

1. I attach a draft reply to send to Lord Hill-Norton who is dissatisfied with the answer he was given to a recent PQ (No 3733 - copy and background note attached).

2. The requirements of SDR Military Task 9 (ie. to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace) are fully met by a continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability. In a similar way, our NATO commitment in respect of the UK Air Defence Region is met. As we are confident that the requirements of MT9 are fully met, it follows that there is no requirement at all to solicit 'UFO' sighting reports through any means whatsoever. The answer to the PQ was designed to convey this message.

3. As explained in the background note to the PQ, of those sighting reports forwarded to us, only those in very clearly defined categories are examined further. We have however, been careful not to release details of these categories publicly so as to avoid the possibility of 'UFO' sighting evidence being falsely manufactured. We should continue to classify this information, thereby preventing any misuse of defence resources on unwarranted investigations.

4. The draft reply attached tries, once more, to explain to Lord Hill-Norton that we are not reliant on 'UFO' reports to maintain the integrity of UK Airspace.

5. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 54/98).

Section 40 [redacted]

Sec(AS)2A1
MB8245 Section 40

Enc.

DP 3354/98 September 1998

D R A F T

Thank you for your letter of 21 August in which you seek further clarification of the Ministry of Defence's interest in the reporting of 'unidentified flying objects'.

You will know by now the limited interest the Department has in this whole subject. You will also know that the Department's responsibility for the integrity of UK airspace is fully met. It is, therefore, the case that there is no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to us. If they are submitted, we will give them the attention they deserve commensurate with the information provided.

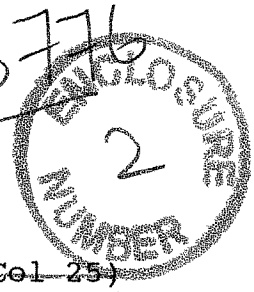
LORD GILBERT

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

Working Papers
Background Note & Answer.

PQ 3776

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 2



ANSWER: ~~You will know from my answer of 15 July (WA Col 25) the Ministry of Defence's limited interest in the subject of unidentified flying objects.~~ Other than for military air defence purposes, there is no specific requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to the MOD. However, any reports sent ~~submitted~~ to the Department will be given the attention they deserve, commensurate with the quality of information provided.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is yet another PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton. It follows up PQ 3733 (Official Report and background attached at TAB A) and specifically seeks further clarification about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. Lord Hill-Norton wrote to Minister(DP) in August (TAB B) expressing his dissatisfaction with the answer. In Lord Gilbert's absence, ~~our suggested response (TAB C) was passed to USofS for reply. In the event a more detailed letter was sent to Lord Hill-Norton (TAB D) without further reference to Sec(AS).~~ US of S replied at TAB C.

~~3.~~ The draft answer to this PQ essentially reiterates the comments made in ~~TAB D~~. Step

~~the letter~~
the letter.

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON FRIDAY 9 OCTOBER 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3776i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 3rd September (WA 60), whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations are still required to forward details of any report they receive of an unidentified flying object to the Ministry of Defence, or whether such action is now only discretionary, following the April 1997 review of procedures. (HL 3313)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 [redacted] TEL: Section 40 [redacted]

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 [redacted]: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: M J D FULLER TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

You will know from my answer of 15 July (WA 00125) limited

ANSWER: The Ministry of Defence's interest in the subject of unidentified flying objects ~~is limited to ensuring that the integrity of UK airspace is maintained. This is achieved by using a combination of civil and military radar installations, which provide a continuous real-time 'picture' of the UK airspace, and an airborne military Air Defence capability.~~ There is ~~, therefore,~~ no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to the MOD. ~~If~~ However, any ~~such~~ reports ~~are~~ submitted, the Department will give ~~them~~ the attention they deserve, commensurate with the quality of information provided.

other than for [illegible] air defences purposes,

specific

BACKGROUND NOTE:

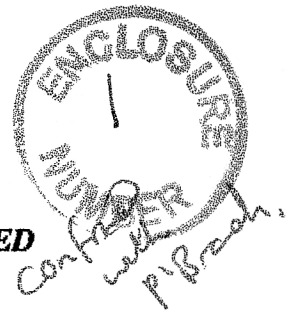
1. This is yet another PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton. It follows up PQ 3733 (Official Report and background attached at TAB A) and specifically seeks further clarification about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. ~~Shortly after we responded to PQ 3733~~ Lord Hill-Norton wrote to Minister(DP) (TAB B) expressing his dissatisfaction ~~at~~ with the answer ~~he had received.~~ Our suggested response (TAB C) ~~is the background note and draft reply we forwarded, which in the event~~ was passed to USofS ~~office~~ for reply. ~~TAB D is the rely to the letter at~~ (TAB D) ~~which USofS' office slightly redrafted~~ without reference to Sec(AS).

In Lord Gilbert's absence

In the event a more detailed letter was sent to Lord Hill Norton (TAB D) further

3. The draft answer to this PQ answer essentially reiterates the comments made in TAB D.



****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

Friday

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON ~~Thursday~~ 9 October 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3776i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 3rd September (WA 60), whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations are still required to forward details of any report they receive of an unidentified flying object to the Ministry of Defence, or whether such action is now only discretionary, following the April 1997 review of procedures. [HL3313]

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 46

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

TO: SEC(AS)

PQ REF NUMBER: 3775; 3776; 3777; 3778;

DATE: 5/10/91 FROM: Parliamentary Branch TEL: Section 40
FAX:

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION WHICH HAS BEEN TABLED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE/HM GOVERNMENT

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 1
05 OCT 1991
FILE 64/4

Classification:

Caveat:

Covering:

F Sigs 927
(Rev 2/95)

Facsimile Transmission Cover Sheet

Serial Number:	Transmission: Date: 6 OCT Time:
From: SECRETARIAT (AIRSTAFF) ROOM 8245 MOD MAIN BUILDING	Fax Number: Section 40 Tel Number: Section 40
Authorised by: Rank Name Appointment Section 40 Sec(AS)2A1	
Signature: Section 40	

Document Reference: D/Sec(AS)/	
Total number of pages including this one: 6	
To: Section 40 CS(RM)	Fax Number: Section 40
Transmitted by: Rank Name Tel Number	
Signature:	

Subject: PQs 3777 + 3778

Section 40

As discussed!

Section 40

Section 40 confirmed Lord Chancellor will answer these – they relate to the Public Record Office – another Gov. Dept.

Classification:

Section 40

Caveat:

Covering:

****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON Thursday 9 October 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3777i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	CS(RM)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	SEC(AS)

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will list the document references and titles of all open files at the Public Record Office that contain information about unidentified flying objects. [HL3314]

REMEMBER you are accountable for the accuracy and timeliness of the advice you provide. Departmental Instructions on answering PQs are set out in DCI GEN

150/97 and can be viewed on the CHOTS public area and on DAWN.

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON Thursday 9 October 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3778i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	CS(RM)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	SEC(AS)

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

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

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will list the document references and titles of all closed files at the Public Record Office that contain information about unidentified flying objects. [HL3315]

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

Secretariat(Air Staff) Fax:Section 40

** Transmit Conf.Report **

6 Oct '98 10:25

Secretariat(Air Staff)---> Section 40	
No.	1185
Mode	NORMAL
Time	2'43"
Pages	6 Page(s)
Result	O K

****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

- confirm with PJBranch.

Friday

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON Thursday 9 October 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3776i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 3rd September (WA 60), whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations are still required to forward details of any report they receive of an unidentified flying object to the Ministry of Defence, or whether such action is now only discretionary, following the April 1997 review of procedures. [HL3313]

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

I've given this Q to Sec 1b to answer.

****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON Thursday 9 October 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3775i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Deep Space Tracking Facility at RAF Feltwell has a role in tracking or searching for satellites, space debris, ballistic missiles and space probes. [HL3312]

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

PQ CHECKLIST

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

* YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY
* MEET THE DEADLINE & CONSULT EARLY IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS
* YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE
* IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE FROM A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT WITH EXPERTISE IN ANSWERING PQs

PQ ANSWER

* DO USE PLAIN AND PRECISE LANGUAGE
  - is the answer unambiguous and free from jargon?
* DO BE OPEN, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND HONEST
  - have you included all the facts necessary for a full and unambiguous answer?
  - do you fully understand the policy governing the answering of PQs? See attached note on Government Policy
  - if you have excluded anything can it be justified under the Open Govt Code (see DCI GEN 54/98)
* DO CHECK SOURCES AND ENSURE EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE TO BACK UP ANSWERS
  - is sufficient documentary evidence available to back up the answer if challenged?
  - does anybody outside your management area need to be involved? Have you consulted them?
* DO CHECK PREVIOUS ANSWERS ON THE SAME SUBJECT
* DO MAKE CLEAR THE BASIS ON WHICH YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION
  - if you have gone beyond a literal interpretation of the question have you made it clear?
* DON'T RELY ON HEARSAY OR GUESSWORK
  - are you confident that the information provided will stand up to detailed scrutiny?
* DON'T BE ABSOLUTE UNLESS YOU HAVE THE PROOF
  - think very carefully before you say "all" or "never" or "not possible"
  - does it differ from the views of outside experts, if so why?

BACKGROUND NOTE

* DO KEEP IT RELEVANT
  - does it explain the answer?
* DO EXPLAIN JUDGEMENTS MADE, AND ANY DOUBTS OR CAVEATS
* DO MAKE IT CLEAR IF INFORMATION IS BEING RELEASED FOR THE FIRST TIME OR IF IT IS DIFFERENT FROM INFORMATION RELEASED PREVIOUSLY
  - have you sought and included advice on the wider implications (including PR)?
* DO GIVE A CLEAR EXPLANATION FOR WITHOLDING INFORMATION
  - details of disproportionate cost included?
  - have you explained your justification for exclusion under the Open Govt Code?
* DO RECORD THE SOURCES RELIED ON IN PREPARING YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER
  - have you included details of those who have provided you with information?

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWER IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

ALL DRAFT REPLIES MUST BE CLEARED AT SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE (GRADE 5) OR ONE STAR LEVEL OR ABOVE

THE CHECKLIST IS TO HELP YOU DRAFT THE ANSWER PROPERLY YOU MUST USE IT

REPLIES SHOULD BE SENT BY CHOTS E-MAIL (URGENT & VIEW ACKNOWLEDGE) TO "**Parliamentary Questions**". DIVISIONS NOT ON CHOTS SHOULD SEND THEIR DRAFTS BY FAX TO THE PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH (x Section 40

ALWAYS QUOTE THE QUESTION (PQ) NUMBER, AND THE NAMES AND CONTACT NUMBERS OF THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAFTING THE REPLY AND THE SENIOR OFFICIAL WHO APPROVED IT.

IF YOU REQUIRE ANY ADVICE, PLEASE CALL (MB x Section 40)

---

1. WRITTEN POS

All written PQs **must** be answered within 14 days of being tabled, even if the House is by then in recess.

2. DEADLINE FOR REPLY

a. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline, you should contact this Branch to see if an extension to the deadline can be given. **You should do this before 12.00 on the day on which you are due to return the PQ answer.**

b. You must provide a full explanation of why you cannot meet the deadline.

c. If it is impossible to answer the question within 14 days the Minister has to write to the Lord concerned explaining the circumstances and undertaking to provide a full answer as soon as possible. You must provide the draft letter.

3. OPEN GOVERNMENT

a. A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 54/1998.

b. Replies must be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exemption in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am witholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

4. DRAFTING THE ANSWER

- USE THE CHECKLIST -

a. The draft reply should be concise, clear and meticulously accurate. It should have a positive tone where possible.

b. Use clear and direct language to avoid any ambiguity. Short everyday words and short sentences are best. Avoid cliches and MOD/ Service jargon. Use abbreviations only after using the words or name in full.

c. The answer must be unclassified.

d. If you refer to a previous PQ answer or document, send a copy.

5. BACKGROUND NOTE

a. Ministers need a short note explaining the facts and thinking behind the suggested reply if it is not completely obvious from the reply itself.

b. If the answer varies from a previous answer or statement explain fully why this is so.

c. If new information comes to light in your research which might affect this or previous answers or statements you must ring the Minister's Private Office **AT ONCE** as well as stating this clearly in the background note.

6. GROUPED PQS

Related PQs, tabled by an individual Lord for answer on the same day may be grouped together and given a single answer. This Branch can give advice on grouping.

7. PARTIAL REPLIES

If a full reply is not possible you should give what information is available and make it clear in the answer what you are doing.

8. COST OF GIVING A REPLY

If the cost of giving a reply will exceed £500 you can recommend to Ministers that the reply should be along the lines of "This information [is not held centrally] and could only be provided at disproportionate cost". You must explain in the background note how these costs - usually staff costs - would arise. The decision whether or not then to give an answer depends on the merits of the case.
As a rough guide use these hourly rates:
AO-£8, EO-£13, HEO-£15, SEO-£18, G7-£22, G5-£31.
Capitation rates can be increased by 50% forfor Service equivalents.

9. LONG REPLIES

If the reply is long (ie will fill more than a page of Hansard) it may, exceptionally, be better to give the information in a letter to the Lord or put information in the Library of the House. In these cases the reply is "I will write to the noble Lord (or "my noble Friend") and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House" or "I am placing the information requested in the Library of the House". This Branch is responsible for placing material in the Library. We need 6 copies of any document placed in the Library.

10. INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE FROM PUBLIC SOURCES

PQs are expensive in terms of Ministers' and officials' time. Lords should be encouraged to get information from published sources where it is already available in the Library of the House. In such cases the reply is along these lines "The information requested is contained in para X of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1996 (Cm 3223), a copy of which is in the Library of the House".

11. POS ASKING FOR STATISTICAL INFORMATION

a. PQs which ask for statistical information will be sent normally to the Chief Executive of DASA and copied to the relevant policy branch.

b. If such a question has not been sent to DASA please let us know. In any event you should liaise with DASA about the reply in case there are policy implications of which they are unaware.

12. TRANSFER OF PQS

a. To another Government Department
If you think this PQ is not primarily a matter for MOD tell this Branch **AT ONCE.**
We will need the name and Branch of an official in the more appropriate Department who has agreed to take the PQ. Parliamentary Branches in other Government Departments will usually only agree to transfers on this basis.

b. To another Branch
If a PQ has been sent to you incorrectly, please let this Branch know **AT ONCE.** If you know who is responsible for the subject please pass it to them as well.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ANSWERING PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. Never forget Ministers' obligations to Parliament which are set out in the Cabinet Office publication "Ministerial Code: A code of conduct and guidance on procedure for Ministers". It states that:

"It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister. Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest, which should be decided in accordance with relevant statute and the Government's Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Second Edition, Jan 1997)

2. It is a civil servant's responsibility to Ministers to help them fulfil those obligations. It is the Minister's right and responsibility to decide how to do so. Ministers want to explain and present Government policy and actions in a positive light. They will rightly expect a draft answer that does full justice to the Government's position.

3. Approach every question predisposed to give relevant information fully, as concisely as possible and in accordance with guidance on disproportionate cost. If there appears to be a conflict between the requirement to be as open as possible and the requirement to protect information whose disclosure would not be in the public interest, you should check to see whether it should be omitted in accordance with statute (which takes precedence) or the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, about which you should consult your departmental openness liaison officer if necessary.

5. Do not omit information sought merely because disclosure could lead to political embarrassment or administrative inconvenience.

6. Where there is a particularly fine balance between openness and non-disclosure, and when the draft answer takes the latter course, this should be explicitly drawn to the Minister's attention. Similarly, if it is proposed to reveal information of a sort which is not normally disclosed, this should be explicitly drawn to Ministers' attention.

7. If you conclude that material information must be withheld and the PQ cannot be fully answered as a result, draft an answer which **makes this clear and which explains the reasons in equivalent terms to those in the Code of Practice, or because of disproportionate cost or the information not being available.** Take care to avoid draft answers which are literally true but likely to give rise to misleading inferences.

RESTRICTED/~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

POLICY

RESTRICTED/~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

UNCLASSIFIED

MOD Form 174D

POLICY

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE 45 NUMBER

REGISTERED FILE No. D | SEC(AS) 6414

Enclosure Jacket No. 7

DATE OPENED 10 SEPT 98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A.

SUBJECT:

PE: DP 3354/98

LORD HILL NORTON

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on ..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer .....

Date ..... Appointment and Branch .....

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED/~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

RESTRICTED/~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

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

ENCLOSURE 6

Note
We drafted for Lord Gilbert who I doubt would have been so polite given the background between him & D. L H-N.

D/US of S/JS 3354/98/P

15 September 1998

Dear Lord Hill-Norton,

Thank you for your letter of 21 August to Lord Gilbert in which you seek further clarification of the Ministry of Defence's interest in the reporting of 'unidentified flying objects'. I am responding as Lord Gilbert is currently away

As you will know, the Ministry of Defence's interest in the subject of unidentified flying objects is limited to ensuring that the integrity of UK airspace is maintained. This is achieved by using a combination of civil and military radar installations, which provide a continuous real-time "picture" of the UK airspace, and an airborne military Air Defence capability.

There is, therefore, no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to the MOD. If any such reports are submitted, the Department will give them the attention they deserve commensurate with the quality of information provided.

[redacted]

JOHN SPELLAR MP

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC(AS)2
16 SEP 1998
FILE

COVERING

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED — POLICY

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 5

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

10 Sep 98

PE Unit
(thro [redacted]

Copy to:

ADGE1

DP 3354/98: LORD HILL-NORTON

1. I attach a draft reply to send to Lord Hill-Norton who is dissatisfied with the answer he was given to a recent PQ (No 3733 - copy and background note attached).

2. The requirements of SDR Military Task 9 (ie. to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace) are fully met by a continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability. In a similar way, our NATO commitment in respect of the UK Air Defence Region is met. As we are confident that the requirements of MT9 are fully met, it follows that there is no requirement at all to solicit 'UFO' sighting reports through any means whatsoever. The answer to the PQ was designed to convey this message.

3. As explained in the background note to the PQ, of those sighting reports forwarded to us, only those in very clearly defined categories are examined further. We have however, been careful not to release details of these categories publicly so as to avoid the possibility of 'UFO' sighting evidence being falsely manufactured. We should continue to classify this information, thereby preventing any misuse of defence resources on unwarranted investigations.

4. The draft reply attached tries, once more, to explain to Lord Hill-Norton that we are not reliant on 'UFO' reports to maintain the integrity of UK Airspace.

5. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 54/98).

[redacted]
Sec(AS)2A1
MB8245 [redacted]

Enc.

COVERING

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED — POLICY

DP 3354/98 September 1998

D R A F T

Thank you for your letter of 21 August in which you seek further clarification of the Ministry of Defence's interest in the reporting of 'unidentified flying objects'.

You will know by now the limited interest the Department has in this whole subject. You will also know that the Department's responsibility for the integrity of UK airspace is fully met. It is, therefore, the case that there is no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to us. If they are submitted, we will give them the attention they deserve commensurate with the information provided.

LORD GILBERT

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

COVERING UNCLASSIFIED — POLICY

either police or military personnel; and whether they will place copies of any such agreements in the Library of the House. [HL2808]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): No formal arrangements to provide training for police or military personnel have been conducted with the Turkish authorities since 1 May 1997. The UK Government have, however, a programme of practical assistance to help the Turkish civil authorities in the field of human rights. This programme was announced in October 1997 and includes police training in the areas of public order policy, detainee rights, domestic violence and the role of an independent police complaints authority. Details of the military training given to Turkish personnel was set out in the reply I gave the noble Lord, Lord Hylton on 22 April, (*Official Report*, WA 212) and in the reply given by my right honourable friend the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Dr. Reid, to the honourable Member for Tooting, Mr. Cox, on 14 July 1998 (*Official Report*, col. 173).

NATO Members: Defence Expenditure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the need to increase defence expenditure is generally discussed within NATO; and whether the statement of the Turkish Minister of National Defence, Mr. Ismet Sezgin, that the Turkish armed forces need an investment of 150 billion United States dollars is agreed within NATO. [HL2955]

Lord Gilbert: At their meeting on 11 June 1998, NATO Defence Ministers noted that the armed forces needed in the new strategic environment, while smaller than before, still require significant funding levels. However, the setting of the overall level of defence expenditure of an individual NATO member is not a matter for the Alliance as a whole.

RAF Feltwell: Units and Roles

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will list those units based at RAF Feltwell, and what functions each of these units carries out. [HL3237]

Lord Gilbert: The units based at RAF Feltwell and their roles are:

UNIT: USAF 5th Space Surveillance Squadron
ROLE: Tracking of man-made objects in space.

UNIT: US Department of Defence Schools
ROLE: Educational establishments for dependants of USVF personnel.

UNIT: US Mathes Airmen's Leadership School
ROLE: Training for Junior NCOs.

UNIT: US Contracting Squadron
ROLE: US Visiting Forces contracting authority.

UNIT: US Army Veterinary Detachment
ROLE: Provision of veterinary services.

UNIT: US Army Air Force Exchange Services (AAFES)
ROLE: Furniture and retail warehouse.

UNIT: US Defence Audit Agency
ROLE: Provision of audit services.

RAF Feltwell: Space Tracking System

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is the role of RAF Feltwell in relation to the tracking of unidentified objects in space; how many objects detected by the Deep Space Tracking System at RAF Feltwell remain unidentified; and how many of these were transmitting a signal. [HL3238]

Lord Gilbert: RAF Feltwell is responsible for tracking man-made objects in deep space. I am withholding the further information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15 July (*WA 25*), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. [HL3239]

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Medical and Dental Officers: Pay Awards

Lord Vivian asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the recent pay award to medical and dental officers in the Armed Forces is being awarded in two stages, with 2 per cent. being paid from 1 April and the remainder payable from 1 December. [HL3240]

Lord Gilbert: In line with government policy on public sector pay, the award for medical and dental officers has been staged in the same way as the pay

COVERING UNCLASSIFIED-POLICY

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3733i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government, Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15th July(WA25), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and wheter airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. (HL 3239)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 : [signed] TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 : [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: M J D FULLER [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

Procedures were clarified to ensure that reports received by the Department would have the attention they deserved. The Department's responsibilities for maintaining the integrity of UK airspace, as set out in the Strategic Defence Review, are well known. Anybody may send in reports for assessment in that context.

UNCLASSIFIED

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is the seventh PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton within the last three weeks. It is linked to a further two on the role of RAF Feltwell (3730/3732). This PQ follows up PQ 3291 (Official Report attached) and specifically seeks further information about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. Public interest in the 'UFO' phenomenon gathered pace during 1996/97 following media interest in the publication of various 'UFO'-related books (including two by Nicholas Pope who had previously worked in Sec(AS)) and the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. This increasing interest necessitated an internal review in April 1997 to assess the level of staffing appropriate for the limited interest the Department has in this subject. It was agreed with Air Defence and Defence Intelligence staff that for the future it would be appropriate to staff only those reports in the following categories for further, defence related advice:

- **Credible Witness Reports:** Reports received from service personnel, civil pilots, staff working in air traffic control centres and the emergency services, or those complete with documented evidence such as photographs, video footage etc.

- **Corroborated Sightings:** A series of reports apparently describing the same phenomenon and provided by separate and independent sources where these could not be readily explained.

- **Timely Sightings:** Reports of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection by Air Defence or other assets such as military aircraft or radar observers.

3. The Parliamentary Clerk agreed an extension to the deadline to the reply for this PQ.

UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 4

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
09/09/98	ADGE1	PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY FROM LORD	[ ]

Sent: 09/09/98 at 11:34
To: ADGE1
CC:

Ref: 1976
Subject: PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY FROM LORD HILL-NORTON (DP 3354/98)

Text: Section 40
We proposed to use the attached draft as a response to the latest Hill-Norton letter to Min(DP). I'd be grateful if you could confirm that you have no difficulties with what we plan to say (the bits highlighted in particular). Head of Sec(AS) has decided that we should start being more bullish. Section 40

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]
View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]
Attachments [1]
Codes [ ]

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

9 Sep 98

D R A F T

PE Unit
(thro Section 40)

DP 3354/98: LORD HILL-NORTON

1. I attach a draft reply to send to Lord Hill-Norton who is dissatisfied with the answer he was given to a recent PQ (No 3733 - copy and background note attached).

2. **The requirements of SDR Military Task 9 (ie. to maintain the integrity of the UK's airspace) are fully met by a continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability. In a similar way, our NATO commitment in respect of the UK Air Defence Region is met. As we are confident that the requirements of MT9 are fully met, it follows that there is no requirement at all to solicit 'UFO' sighting reports through any means whatsoever.** The answer to the PQ was designed to convey this message.

3. As explained in the background note to the PQ, of those sighting reports forwarded to us, only those in very clearly defined categories are examined further. We have however, been careful not to release details of these categories publicly so as to avoid the possibility of 'UFO' sighting evidence being falsely manufactured. We should continue to classify this information, thereby preventing any misuse of defence resources on unwarranted investigations.

4. The draft reply attached tries, once more, to explain to Lord Hill-Norton **that we are not reliant on 'UFO' reports to maintain the integrity of UK Airspace from the threat of hostile foreign military activity, which is the limit of our interest in these matters.**

5. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 54/98).

Section 40
Sec(AS)2A1
MB8245 Section 40

Enc.

DP 3354/98 September 1998

D R A F T

Thank you for your letter of 21 August in which you seek further clarification of the Ministry of Defence's interest in the reporting of 'unidentified flying objects'.

You will know by now the limited interest the Department has in this whole subject. You will also know that the Department's responsibility for the integrity of UK airspace is fully met. It is, therefore, the case that there is no requirement for anyone to submit 'UFO' sighting reports to us. If they are submitted, we will give them the attention they deserve commensurate with the information provided.

LORD GILBERT

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

Content, thank you

Head of Sec(AS)

We discussed. Are content we respond as drafted?

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

LOOSE MINUTE Section 40 [redacted]

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

Sep 98

Section 40 [redacted]

8/9

PE Unit
(thro Section 40 [redacted])

D R A F T

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Section 40 [redacted]
Sec(AS)2A1
MB8245 Section 40

Enc.

DP 3354/98 September 1998

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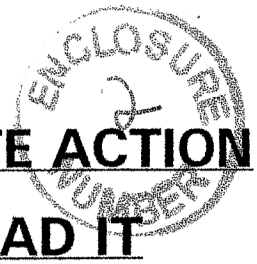
LORD GILBERT

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 2



PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

TO: SEC(AS)2 PE REF NUMBER: DP 3354/98

MINISTER REPLYING: Min(DP) DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 10/9/98

DATE: 28/8/98 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

********* IMPORTANT UPDATES *********

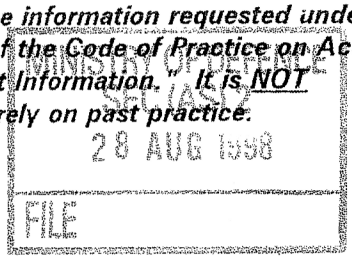
1. Ministerial responsibilities changed.

2. Opening and Closing All Ministers prefer to start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... to George Robertson/Doug Henderson/John Gilbert/John Spellar on behalf etc"
Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

3. Open Government A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1998. It is set out in DCI GEN 54/98.

Replies MUST be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exception in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am withholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SEC(AS)2 28 AUG 1998 FILE



Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within **15 working days** to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

Departmental action Action on the same case should be held until the Minister has sent a full reply. Please discuss any questions about the substance of the drafts or other policy aspects direct with the relevant private office.

Ministers place great importance on the content style and speed of the replies. Letters should be polite, informal, to the point and in clear, simple language. Avoid acronyms and MOD jargon. Always emphasise the positive aspects of Government policy. No background note is required unless essential to explain the line taken in the draft reply.

Layout Draft replies should be double spaced. **Always** include the full PE reference number at the top left of the draft.

Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: **PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to** Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

Min(DP
Sec(AS)
UFO

Section 40
[redacted] 26/8

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

The Lord Gilbert
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

RECEIVED

21 August, 1998

Dear Lord Gilbert,

Perhaps you would read again your reply dated 19 August 1998 to my Question about the reporting of unidentified flying objects. It does not answer my question, which was " ..... whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required (my emphasis) to send them to the MOD".

Of course "anybody may send in .....". but that was not the question. I should be grateful if you would now answer it. In short, are the people listed REQUIRED (by you) to send them to the MOD?

Yours sincerely,

Section 40
[redacted]

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15th July (WA25), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. (HL 3239)

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement, Lord Gilbert:

Procedures were clarified to ensure that reports received by the Department would have the attention they deserved. The Department's responsibilities for maintaining the integrity of UK airspace, as set out in the Strategic Defence Review, are well known. Anybody may send in reports for assessment in that context.

Section 43 [redacted]

Ministry of Defence

19 August 1998

3733I

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3733i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government, Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15th July(WA25), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and wheter airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. (HL 3239)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 [signed] TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: M J D FULLER [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

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WORKING PAPERS

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 1

LORD HILL NORTON'S LETTER TO LORD GILBERT OF 21 AUGUST 1998

Copy in folder

Issue

his letter asks us to read his question again [PQ 3733] and answer it..... *whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of 'UFOs' **are required** to send them to the MOD.*

Question

Does the MOD require that these establishments forward "UFO" reports received?

There are two strands to this Question:

But if we are satisfied that we are meeting SOR MTQ1 we don't need UFO reports from anyone - we just look at those people feed in

(a) Reports made to these establishments received from members of the Public?

Generally No.

HOWEVER, our policy states that we should look at reports from the public when they are:

- from multiple, independent witnesses;
- reports backed up by documented evidence, ie. videos, photographs;
- timely reports, ie. occurring now and might be capable of detection.

(b) Reports from these establishments made by members of staff working there (ie. servicemen, police officers etc)?

According to our policy - Yes.

Answer

Overall yes we DO require them to send them to us. [we then filter out those we don't need to bother with].

Opinion

In the past instructions have been issued to RAF stations, police stations and civil air traffic control centres telling them where they should forward any "UFO" reports. (We only know this because these establishments seem to 'know' where to send them to and do).

why? We don't want any of them we decided in Apr 97 that we would look at least our colleagues - not that we wanted them

In *theory*, post the April 1997 review we should have issued instructions to these establishments telling them, from a defence perspective, the types of report we are interested in seeing, and telling them not to bother taking down and forwarding singleton reports from the public which tell us nothing. However, in *practice* we cannot do this as it would reveal our policy and there would be a risk that it would be divulged to the 'UFO' fraternity which would not be helpful.

A13. **MT9: Integrity of United Kingdom Airspace in Peacetime**
A continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability is needed to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace, and meet NATO commitments in the United Kingdom Air Defence Region.

UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

POLICY

UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

either police or military personnel; and whether they will place copies of any such agreements in the Library of the House. [HL2808]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): No formal arrangements to provide training for police or military personnel have been conducted with the Turkish authorities since 1 May 1997. The UK Government have, however, a programme of practical assistance to help the Turkish civil authorities in the field of human rights. This programme was announced in October 1997 and includes police training in the areas of public order policy, detainee rights, domestic violence and the role of an independent police complaints authority. Details of the military training given to Turkish personnel was set out in the reply I gave the noble Lord, Lord Hylton on 22 April, (*Official Report*, WA 212) and in the reply given by my right honourable friend the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Dr. Reid, to the honourable Member for Tooting, Mr. Cox, on 14 July 1998 (*Official Report*, col. 173).

NATO Members: Defence Expenditure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the need to increase defence expenditure is generally discussed within NATO; and whether the statement of the Turkish Minister of National Defence, Mr. Ismet Sezgin, that the Turkish armed forces need an investment of 150 billion United States dollars is agreed within NATO. [HL2955]

Lord Gilbert: At their meeting on 11 June 1998, NATO Defence Ministers noted that the armed forces needed in the new strategic environment, while smaller than before, still require significant funding levels. However, the setting of the overall level of defence expenditure of an individual NATO member is not a matter for the Alliance as a whole.

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ROLE: Training for Junior NCOs.

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Lord Gilbert: In line with government policy on public sector pay, the award for medical and dental officers has been staged in the same way as the pay

file

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 43

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3733i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government, Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15th July(WA25), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and wheter airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. (HL 3239)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 [signed] TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: M J D FULLER [signed] TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

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UNCLASSIFIED

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is the seventh PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton within the last three weeks. It is linked to a further two on the role of RAF Feltwell (3730/3732). This PQ follows up PQ 3291 (Official Report attached) and specifically seeks further information about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. Public interest in the 'UFO' phenomenon gathered pace during 1996/97 following media interest in the publication of various 'UFO'-related books (including two by Nicholas Pope who had previously worked in Sec(AS)) and the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. This increasing interest necessitated an internal review in April 1997 to assess the level of staffing appropriate for the limited interest the Department has in this subject. It was agreed with Air Defence and Defence Intelligence staff that for the future it would be appropriate to staff only those reports in the following categories for further, defence related advice:

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- **Timely Sightings:** Reports of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection by Air Defence or other assets such as military aircraft or radar observers.

3. The Parliamentary Clerk agreed an extension to the deadline to the reply for this PQ.

UNCLASSIFIED

NATO: New Members and Command Structure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

Lord Gilbert: It is planned that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will fill posts in the new NATO command structure. The exact number, seniority and location of these has not yet been determined.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

When arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up-to-date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence; and [HL2607]

What follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when it receives a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. [HL2609]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of unidentified flying objects is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity and whether reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MoD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of unidentified flying objects are examined with the assistance of relevant MoD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

Lord Gilbert: The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996: 609

1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorised foreign military activity, we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;

A10. **MT6: Military Search and Rescue in Peacetime**

The Armed Forces provide a 24-hour peacetime search and rescue capability, with the priority task of rescuing Service personnel in the United Kingdom and surrounding seas. Search and Rescue for the civil community is provided in conjunction with other relevant agencies.

A11. **MT7: Nuclear Accident Response**

The Department maintains a capability for nuclear accident response to ensure, in conjunction with civil agencies, an effective response to incidents or accidents in the United Kingdom involving nuclear weapons, defence nuclear materials or naval reactors; and, when requested, to provide assistance to civil authorities in accidents with civil nuclear facilities.

A12. **MT8: Integrity of United Kingdom Waters in Peacetime**

To demonstrate British sovereignty within and ensure the integrity of the United Kingdom's territorial waters (and where necessary to protect the United Kingdom's rights and interests in the surrounding seas), a military presence is maintained which provides routine sea and air surveillance of these waters in peacetime.

A13. **MT9: Integrity of United Kingdom Airspace in Peacetime**

A continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability is needed to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace, and meet NATO commitments in the United Kingdom Air Defence Region.

A14. **MT10: Intelligence**

Defence intelligence collection, processing and analytical capability is required to support policy makers, planners and operational commanders.

A15. **MT11: Hydrographic, Geographic and Meteorological Services**

Hydrographic surveying and geographic mapping and survey services are a defence responsibility because of the security aspects of providing hydrographic support for the strategic deterrent, anti-submarine warfare and mine countermeasures operations, and the need to maintain a survey capability for operations and emergencies. The Meteorological Office provides essential meteorological services and weather forecasts for the Armed Forces; and undertakes meteorological and climate research activities in order to retain Britain's world class reputation in meteorology.

A16. **MT12: Evacuation of British Citizens Overseas**

In cases where civil contingency plans prove insufficient, defence capabilities held for other purposes may be used to evacuate United Kingdom entitled personnel from countries where their lives may be at risk.

A17. **MT13: Public Duties and VIP Transport**

The Department provides military personnel for state ceremonial and routine public duties, and secure air transport for the use of the Royal Family and senior members of the Government.

SECURITY OF THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

A18. **MT14: Security of the Overseas Territories**

The Ministry of Defence is responsible for the external security of Britain's Overseas Territories, and provides support and assistance to the civil authorities as required.

DATE	FROM	SUBJECT	CODES
11/08/98	Parliamentary Ques	View Acknowledgement	[ ]

Intended :
Sent : 11/08/98 14:23 Delivered: 11/08/98 14:24

Viewed : 11/08/98 14:23

Ref : 1067

Recipient: Parliamentary Questions
Intended :

Codes [ ]

DATE	FROM	SUBJECT	CODES
11/08/98	Delivery Report	Ref: 1067	[ ]

Report For Ref: 1067 Delivered: 11/08/98 13:46

Delivered To:

Parliamentary Questions

Not Delivered To:

Codes [ ]

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3733i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government, Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15th July(WA25), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and wheter airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. (HL 3239)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: M J D FULLER TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

Procedures were clarified to ensure that reports received by the Department would have the attention they deserved. The Department's responsibilities for maintaining the integrity of UK airspace, as set out in the Strategic Defence Review, are well known. Anybody may send in reports for assessment in

ANSWER: that context.

Arrangements have been clarified to ensure that reports received are disseminated within the MOD commensurate to the nature of the observation reported.

As set out in the Strategic Defence Review, the MOD is committed to maintaining the integrity of the UK's airspace by the utilization of a continuous recognized air picture and air policing capability. In recognition of this, MOD is satisfied that current air defence capabilities fully meet any perceived threat. The MOD does not therefore insist that all reports from external sources are forwarded for consideration, but is willing to assess those that are received. RAF Standing Instructions require RAF Stations Commanders to forward reports of all 'UFO' sightings, to the Secretariat (Air Staff) Branch 2a.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

1. This is the seventh PQ on the subject of 'UFO'-related issues tabled by Lord Hill-Norton within the last three weeks and is linked to a further two on the role of RAF Feltwell (3730/3732). ~~For ease of reference the background note for the previous questions (3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335) and Official Report, are attached~~. This PQ follows up PQ 3291 and specifically seeks further information about 'UFO' reporting procedures.

2. We have separated out in the answer how reports received by RAF stations are handled in view of an earlier reply to the late Martin Redmond (copy attached) which explains the existence of RAF Standing Instructions for this purpose.

~~3. We do not insist, however, that 'UFO' reports received~~ elsewhere must be forwarded to us, but in practice police stations and air traffic controller etc are only to willing to send them on so as to avoid the need for any follow up action themselves.

4. Strategic Defence Review Military Task 9 (copy attached) makes clear the Department's responsibility to maintain the integrity of UK airspace in peacetime. With proper arrangements already in place to meet any perceived threat, there is no practical need to rely on 'UFO' reports from members of the public to meet this responsibility. The answer ~~makes this clear.~~

3. The Parliamentary Clerk agreed an extension to the deadline to the reply for this PQ.

2. [Insert X-Y] from attachment

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ENCLOSURE NUMBER 41

POLICY & STAFF

BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

1. Lord Hill-Norton, aged 83, and Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971-1973, has tabled six 'UFO'-related PQs (3290/1/2/3/5 and 3335). He has a long-standing interest in 'UFOs', was a member of the (long defunct) House of Lords All-Party 'UFO' Study Group and has written the forewords for a least two books on the subject. Over the years Hill-Norton has supported individual 'ufologists'' causes and, in the last nine months, we have answered seven further PQs (Hansard Extracts attached).

2. In April he wrote asking for all 'UFO' files held in MOD archives to be released to the Public Record Office (ie. in advance of the 30 year rule). DOMD, the MOD focal point for Access to Government Information, is currently seeking legal advice on third party confidentiality issues in respect of this request.

PQ 3291, 3292, 3335

3. MOD examines 'UFO' sighting reports, with the assistance of MOD experts as necessary, solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely whether there is any evidence that UK airspace might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. The integrity of the UK's airspace is maintained by a continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability. There is no evidence to suggest that our Air Defence system does not fully meet the currently perceived threat from foreign military activity.

4. X Media interest in the 'UFO' phenomenon gathered pace during 1996/97 (see para 7 below) necessitating an internal review in April 1997 to assess the level of staffing appropriate for the limited interest the Department has in this subject. It was agreed with Air Defence and Defence Intelligence staff that for the future it would be appropriate to staff only those reports in the following categories for further, defence-related advice:

- **Credible Witness Reports:** Reports received from service personnel, civil pilots, staff working in air traffic control centres and the emergency services, or those complete with documented evidence such as photographs, video footage etc.

- **Corroborated Sightings:** A series of reports apparently describing the same phenomenon and provided by separate and independent sources where these could not be readily explained.

- **Timely sightings:** Reports of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection

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by Air Defence or other assets such as military aircraft or radar observers.

5. Sec(AS), the MOD focal point, generally receives 'UFO' reports from RAF stations, police stations, air traffic control centres and directly from members of the public. It is a well-known and well-established point of contact for these reports and we do not consider there is any need for the Department to publicize the details further. We firmly believe that to do so would suggest greater credibility for the subject and invite yet more reporting of what is a very minor defence-related issue and, in the main, attracts only a small, but single-minded group of people to respond.

PQ 3290

6. Advice is sought from Air Defence and Defence Intelligence experts on any reports received from the specific categories listed above; very occasionally, establishments such as the Royal Observatory or RAF Fylingdales will also be consulted. However, the majority of 'UFO' reports received are vague and lack substance.

PQ 3293

7. A significant amount of media interest in 1996 in 'UFOs' coincided with the publication of Nicholas Pope's book '*Open Skies Closed Minds*'. Pope, who had previously worked in Sec(AS) and is still employed within the MOD, set out his personal views supporting the existence of 'UFOs' and was critical of the way MOD deals with this subject. The number of 'UFO' reports made to the Department increased by over 50% to 609 in 1996, and continued at this level for much of 1997 whilst the media covered the events associated with the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. The number of 'UFO'-related letters and telephone calls to Sec(AS) also rose significantly. It was the case that the public had direct telephone access to Sec(AS)2 desk officers to report 'UFO' sightings. However, callers became more frequent in their efforts to discuss MOD's policy in respect of this subject and pass on details of their personal concerns outwith the Department's remit (alien abductions, crops circles, extraterrestrial lifeforms, ghosts, animal mutilations etc). As a consequence, staff effort became increasingly diverted from core tasks. The outgoing answerphone message (ANNEX A) makes clear the Department's limited interest in the subject and that further contact will be made by Sec(AS) only if it is appropriate within the terms of our remit in respect of this activity.

PQ 3295

8. This alleged sighting has been the subject of previous PQs (Hansard extracts attached). The lights in the sky witnessed in the early hours of 31 March 1993 were seen by a number of people in the West Country and South Wales area. Witnesses included two

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members of a mobile RAF police patrol on duty at RAF Cosford, a Meteorological Officer at RAF Shawbury and several police officers. All reports were examined at the time but nothing conclusive was established and it must therefore be assumed that officials at the time did not view the alleged incident of defence concern. Pope, who was the Sec(AS)2 desk officer involved at the time made much of this alleged incident in his book. It is not clear from the papers held on file whether the Met Officer was a serviceman or civilian and we have not therefore speculated on this point in the answer.

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ANNEX A

OUTGOING MESSAGE ON THE SECRETARIAT (AIR STAFF) PUBLIC ENQUIRY LINE FOR LEAVING REPORTS OF 'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS'

"You have reached the Ministry of Defence Air Staff Secretariat. You may use this voicemail facility to make reports of unusual aerial observations which you wish to draw to the attention of the MOD. However, the Department's interest is confined only to establishing whether there is evidence of unauthorized military activity in UK airspace.

On this basis if you wish to register a report please leave your name, address and telephone number after the tone giving brief details of what you have seen. Please remember to include the date, time and precise location. You will be contacted further only in the event that we consider any follow-up is required.

If your enquiry concerns the MOD's policy on the so-called "UFO" phenomenon, you will need to write to us at the:

Ministry of Defence
Secretariat (Air Staff)2
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
SW1A 2HB.

Press Enquiries should be directed through the MOD Press Office."

HILL-NORTON PQs

Written Answers

Tuesday, 28th October 1997.

Mr. Reginald Buckland: Court Documents

Lord Burton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of the judgment delivered at Cambridge Crown Court on 11 September 1997, and all other papers and documents submitted to the court, in case A970014, the appeal of *Reginald Buckland* v. *The Chief Constable of Cambridge* before His Honour Judge Haworth heard on 15 August 1997 against the refusal of the Chief Constable to vary the conditions of a firearms certificate, and in particular all other papers, documents, disclosures and submissions which Mr. Robert Gardiner, Clerk to the Court, has failed to provide upon request by Lord Burton.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Irvine of Lairg): The Question concerns a matter which has been assigned to the Court Service under the terms of its Framework Document. I have therefore asked the Chief Executive to respond.

Letter to Lord Burton from the Chief Executive of the Court Service, Mr. M. D. Huebner, dated 28 October 1997.

RELEASE OF COURT DOCUMENTS

The Lord Chancellor has asked me to reply to your Question about the release of papers and documents submitted to the court in the case of *Reginald Buckland* v. *The Chief Constable of Cambridge*.

A copy of the judgment was placed in the Library of the House on 7 October. As the remaining documents are the property of the party who filed them, there is no obligation or authority for the court to disclose them. With Mr. Buckland's consent, copies of correspondence between himself and the respondent were provided to you on 15 October, and will today be placed in the Library.

Central and Eastern Europe: Military Training Assistance

The Earl of Carlisle asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many individual service personnel and military training teams from the United Kingdom Armed Forces will be deployed throughout 1998, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which were formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, to assist with the training of their Armed Forces.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): The Ministry of Defence currently expects to deploy six individual Service personnel and 10 military Short Term Training Teams to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1998. All are deployed at the specific request of the countries concerned, who seek to benefit from the expertise of the United Kingdom's Armed Forces. The aim of the training teams is to advise on the conduct of either officer or non-commissioned officer training. The individual Service personnel, all officers, are deployed to provide expertise in specific areas of defence management.

RAF Bentwaters and Woodbridge: Nuclear Weapons Allegations

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the allegations contained in the recently published book *Left at East Gate*, to the effect that nuclear weapons were stored at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in violation of UK/US treaty obligations are true.

Lord Gilbert: It has always been the policy of this and previous governments neither to confirm nor to deny where nuclear weapons are located either in the UK or elsewhere, in the past or at the present time. Such information would be withheld under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they are aware of reports from the United States Air Force personnel that nuclear weapons stored in the Weapons Storage Area at RAF Woodbridge were struck by light beams fired from an unidentified craft seen over the base in the period 25–30 December 1980, and if so, what action was subsequently taken.

Lord Gilbert: There is no evidence to suggest that the Ministry of Defence received any such reports.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What information they have on the suicide of the United States security policeman from the 81st Security Police Squadron who took his life at RAF Bentwaters in January 1981, and whether they will detail the involvement of the British police, Coroner's Office, and any other authorities concerned.

Lord Gilbert: MoD has no information concerning the alleged suicide. Investigations into such occurrences are carried out by the US Forces.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What information they have on the medical problems experienced by various United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge, which stemmed from their involvement in the so-called Rendlesham Forest incident, in December 1980.

Lord Gilbert: Information on medical matters relating to US personnel is a matter for the US authorities.

HILL-NORTON PQ

Collision Warning System for Fast Jet Aircraft

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

What progress is being made with development and production of a Collision Warning System for RAF fast jet aircraft.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): A Technology Demonstration Programme (TDP) was completed at DTEO Boscombe Down last year. The TDP concluded that a Collision Warning System based on aircraft Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) systems would be technically feasible in the low-level fast-jet environment. MoD is now considering the way forward. No decisions have yet been taken.

Helicopters and Military Aircraft: Collision Risks

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

What action is being taken to minimise the risk of collision between helicopters conducting pipe and powerline surveys and low flying military aircraft; and

Whether consideration has been given to affording protected airspace to helicopters operating under the Pipeline Inspection Notification System.

Lord Gilbert: On 18 August measures were introduced to improve the accuracy of Pipeline Inspection Notification System (PINS) information available to military aircrew. These will include the issue of a revised map which refines the areas notified on the PINS chart to depict daily activity more accurately. Given these changes, we currently see no requirement to afford protected airspace to helicopters operating under PINS. We have a wide range of measures in place, which are kept under continuous review, to minimise the risk of confliction between civil and military aircraft, including those conducting power and pipeline inspections.

Commercial Helicopter Air Proximity Reports

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many air proximity reports were filed by commercial helicopter operators in areas for which a CANP notification had been submitted between September 1996 and April 1997.

Lord Gilbert: None.

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many air proximity reports were filed by commercial helicopter operators engaged on pipe and powerline survey inspections between September 1996 and April 1997.

Lord Gilbert: Four.

Civil Aircraft Notification: Infringements by Military Aircraft

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many notifications under the Civil Aircraft Notification procedure (CANP) from commercial helicopter operators in the United Kingdom were received by the Tactical Booking Cell at RAF West Drayton in the first six months of 1997; and

How many infringements of the CANP were reported in the first six months of 1997 and how many of these infringements were confirmed as breaches of the procedure by low flying military aircraft.

Lord Gilbert: Six hundred and sixty-three Civil Aircraft Notification Procedure (CANP) notifications were received by the MoD from commercial helicopter operators between 1 January and 30 June 1997. Twenty-five alleged infringements of CANP notification by low flying military aircraft were reported over this period, 19 of which were confirmed by RAF Police investigations. One alleged infringement was withdrawn and one was not substantiated. Four cases are still under investigation.

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

What consideration has been given to upgrading airspace covered by Civil Aircraft Notification procedure (CANP) to "prohibited" status.

Lord Gilbert: Entry into airspace surrounding commercial activity notified under CANP is already prohibited to all fixed wing military aircraft flying at low level at speeds faster than 140 knots. We believe that existing flight safety measures adequately minimise the risk of confliction between commercial flights and other categories of military aircraft activity (specifically those flying slower than 140 knots, those operating in a Military Air Traffic Zone and all helicopters); and between military low level flights and other non-commercial civil activities notified under CANP.

Mid-Air Explosion, Isle of Lewis

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What was the military involvement in the search for the unidentified object that witnesses believe exploded in mid air, before crashing into the sea off the Isle of Lewis on 26 October 1996, and what liaison took place with the US authorities with regard to this incident.

Lord Gilbert: Following media reports of an explosion, 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. HQ US 3rd Air Force were also approached at the time. They confirmed that there had been no US military activity in the area.

HILL-NORTON PQ

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt: Memorandum

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

(1) Whether the Ministry of Defence replied to the 1981 memorandum from Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt, which reported the presence of an unidentified craft that had landed in close proximity to RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge, witnessed by United States Air Force personnel; and if not, why not; and

(2) How the radiation readings reported to the Ministry of Defence by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt in his memorandum dated 13 January 1981 compare to the normal levels of background radiation in Rendelsham Forest.

Lord Gilbert: The memorandum, which reported observations of unusual lights in the sky, was assessed by staff in the MoD responsible for air defence matters. Since the judgment was that it contained nothing of defence significance, no further action was taken.

There is no record of any official assessment of the radiation readings reported by Lieutenant Colonel Halt. From a Defence perspective some 16½ years after the alleged events, there is no requirement to carry out such an assessment now.

Joint Services Command and Staff College

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the site at Camberley, in favour of which the Greenwich site was rejected for the JSCSC, is to be cleared of asbestos, and, if so, at what cost; why was the presence of asbestos not ascertained before plans to move the JSCSC there were finalised and then changed; and what plans do the Ministry of Defence have for the Camberley site once it has been cleared of asbestos; and

Why, given that the consultation document on the future location of the JSCSC that was issued in January 1995 did not address the possibility of setting the college up on a greenfield site, there has been no consultation on the Shrivenham option; and

What is the anticipated total cost of the interim accommodation for the JSCSC until the work on Shrivenham is completed, and what date is being required for completion; and

Whether the anticipated overall cost to the taxpayer of the PFI scheme currently being considered for the new site of the JSCSC will be declared to Parliament; and

Further to the Written Answers by Lord Gilbert on 21 July *(WA 147–148)* on the future of the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), whether apart from the provision of married accommodation, the Greenwich site would be at least £200 million cheaper than accommodation at the proposed greenfield site at Shrivenham; and whether the cost of the Shrivenham site is expected to be around £500 million.

Lord Gilbert: I am advised that the asbestos identified at the Camberley site presents no threat to health if left undisturbed. Its removal would be required if buildings were to be demolished, which was the case when the JSCSC was to have been based at Camberley. At that stage it was estimated that survey and removal together would cost no more than £87K. The presence of asbestos was not the reason for exploring a PFI solution for the JSCSC. Until a decision is reached on the future use of the Camberley site, it is not clear whether action will be needed to deal with the asbestos. It remains our intention to identify a fitting and appropriate military use for the historic Staff College building at Camberley and work is currently under way to this end.

Although the January 1995 Consultative Document did not consider greenfield sites for the permanent JSCSC, for the reasons given in paragraph 9 of the Document, the two further Consultative Documents of March 1996 and July 1996 indicated, inter alia, that interim arrangements would last for two years, that proposals for the permanent site would be dealt with separately, and that work in hand "to determine the best way of providing (a permanent JSCSC), on a site yet to be identified, includes a development under Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements". Since then, the trades unions have been informed of the choice of a PFI Preferred Bidder and provided with extracts from the Invitation To Negotiate which are currently under discussion. In accordance with normal procedures, staff will be consulted again, after a contract has been placed, about the possible transfer arrangements for civilian staff working at interim sites.

The anticipated total cost of the JSCSC in its interim accommodation is approximately £70 million over the period 1996–97 to 1999–2000. The required completion date for the permanent JSCSC, as given in the published Statement of Requirement, is September 1999.

The estimated total, undiscounted and VAT inclusive, cost of the PFI contract over a 30-year period is approximately £500 million at current prices. This information was widely reported at the time of the announcement of the Preferred Bidder, and given out in another place on 26 February in response to a specific question. This estimate excludes the ongoing costs of MoD-provided teaching and directing staff of around £10 million per annum.

The last time that Greenwich costs were subjected to formal assessment was around the end of 1994. The results of this assessment were published in the Consultative Document of January 1995. These showed the Greenwich option, leaving aside the cost of providing the necessary married accommodation, to be more than 25 per cent. more expensive than the Camberley option. There is no evidence to suggest that, if the costs of the Greenwich option were revisited, they would prove anything other than significantly more expensive than both the Camberley option and the Preferred Shrivenham Bid submitted in the course of the PFI competition.

RELATES TO PQ 3295

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Burma

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Burma regarding abuses of human rights; and if he will make a statement. [3178]

The Prime Minister: We have recently issued several statements about violations of human rights in Burma, and did so again yesterday.

In addition, our Ambassador in Rangoon has expressed our grave concern at recent events in Burma on several occasions.

The EU presidency and troika Foreign Ministers also raised these concerns at meetings with the Burmese Foreign Minister on 22 July and 26 September.

Land Mines

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from UNICEF concerning land mines in *(a)* Cambodia and *(b)* Thailand; and if he will make a statement. [3175]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, none.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what assistance *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* non-governmental organisations have given to *(a)* Cambodia, *(b)* Laos and *(c)* Thailand in respect of the clearance of land mines; and if he will make a statement. [3176]

The Prime Minister: Since 1 April 1993, the British Government have committed over £5.1 million for humanitarian mine clearance activities in Cambodia, £543,000 in Laos and £5,000 in Thailand, concentrating on specific clearance projects addressing urgent humanitarian needs. Some of these projects are managed by British non-governmental organisations.

We do not have details of all non-governmental organisations' commitments to mine clearance in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.

DEFENCE

Unidentified Flying Objects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what factors underlay his Department's decision that the reported sightings of unidentified flying objects on 5 November 1990 and 31 March 1993 were not of defence significance; [2898]

(2) for what reasons his Department assessed the sightings of an unidentified flying object over RAF Shawbury, referred to in his answer of 24 July, *Official Report*, column *424*, as having no defence significance. [2928]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 8 July 1996, *Official Report*, column *26*.

Gulf War

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if supplies of vaccine 10HO3A supplied to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment were used in circumstances relating to the Gulf war. [1674]

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Dale Campbell-Savours, dated 12 November 1996:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about whether the Vaccine 10HO3A supplied to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment were used in circumstances relating to the Gulf War. I have been asked to reply since The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBD) is now part of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency of which I am Chief Executive.

I regret that it is not our policy to provide details of the particular vaccines required for the research programme at CBD Porton Down.

I am sorry I could not be more helpful.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date vaccine 10HO3A was received by United Kingdom military personnel in the gulf; [1675]

(2) if named patient requirements as required by the manufacturer were used in the case of vaccine number 10HO3A while used in circumstances relating to the Gulf war; [1673]

(3) on what date Her Majesty's Government purchased from the Miles Drug Company, Miles Pharmaceuticals or Bayer UK vaccine 10HO3A; and which was used in the Gulf war; [1672]

(4) how many British Aerospace personnel *(a)* did and *(b)* did not receive doses of vaccine 10HO3A during the course of the Gulf war; [1671]

(5) if he will make a statement on the use of vaccine 10HO3A during the course of the Gulf war. [1670]

Mr. Soames: At present, details relating to biological warfare medical counter measures remain classified for operational reasons.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what time on the 20 and 21 January 1991 United Kingdom personnel were brought into contact with chemical or biological agents near Dhahran. [1677]

Mr. Soames: No chemical or biological agents were detected at Dhahran on 20 and 21 January 1991.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what time on the 20 and 21 January 1992 chemical agent monitors indicated sarin in the air in the vicinity of United Kingdom personnel at Dhahran. [1676]

Mr. Soames: There is no evidence of sarin being detected at Dhahran on 20 and 21 January 1991.

Gurkha Troops

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gurkha troops will be stationed in Britain as a result of the handover of Hong Kong; where

RELATES TO PQ3295

DEFENCE

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States Government have since 1966 requested the United Kingdom to provide reactor grade plutonium for the purpose of conducting a nuclear test explosion under the provisions of the US–UK mutual defence agreement on atomic energy co-operation. [38500]

Mr. Arbuthnot: No such requests have been made by the United States.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the impact of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* the work of his Department in helping small businesses in the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors the impact and the statistical results of such monitoring. [39141]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the UK economy and aim to help them by providing sound economic conditions—keeping inflation and interest rates low; reducing legislative administrative and taxation burdens; and where appropriate provide direct assistance in the form of specialist advice and support and easing access to finance.

My Department supports the DTI's small business measures and initiatives. I am the Minister within this Department for small businesses and I attend or am represented at the DTI's regular meetings.

The Defence Suppliers Service assists companies, including small businesses, in making contact with appropriate contracts branches. It also arranges for details of many forthcoming tenders to be published in the fortnightly MOD *Contracts Bulletin* which is available to any interested party on subscription. This enables small businesses either to seek to tender directly for specific requirements or, more commonly, to become sub-contractors to larger companies.

Since the Procurement Executive of the Ministry of Defence moved to the new procurement headquarters at Abbey Wood near Bristol earlier this year, the Defence Suppliers Service is in contact with the Bristol chamber of commerce and DTI's business links, whose South-west regional supply network office has become their national focal point for the defence industry. Other areas of the country can reach my Department, and be reached by us, through the business links network.

As much of the assistance provided by my Department to small businesses tends to be in the sub-contractor sector, it is not possible to establish suitable performance parameters and therefore no statistics are available.

Rendlesham Forest (Incident)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what response his Department made to the report submitted by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt relating to events in Rendlesham forest in December 1980; what interviews were held; and if he will make a statement; [39247]

(2) who assessed that the events around RAF Woodbridge and RAF Bentwaters in December 1980, which were reported to his Department by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt were of no defence significance; on what evidence the assessment was made; what analysis of events was carried out; and if he will make a statement. [39249]

Mr. Soames: The report was assessed by the staff in my Department responsible for air defence matters. Since the judgment was that it contained nothing of defence significance no further action was taken.

Uncorrelated Radar Tracks (Investigations)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions RAF aircraft have been *(a)* scrambled and *(b)* diverted from task to investigate uncorrelated targets picked up on radar; and if he will make a statement. [39218]

Mr. Soames: In the past five years RAF aircraft have been scrambled or diverted from task on two occasions to intercept and identify uncorrelated radar tracks entering the United Kingdom air defence region.

Unidentified Craft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's assessment of the incident that occurred on 5 November 1990 when a patrol of RAF Tornado aircraft flying over the North sea were overtaken at high speed by an unidentified craft; and if he will make a statement; [39245]

(2) if he will make a statement on the unidentified flying object sighting reported to his Department by the meteorological officer at RAF Shawbury in the early hours of 31 March 1993. [39246]

Mr. Soames: Reports of sightings on these dates are recorded on file and were examined by staff responsible for air defence matters. No firm conclusions were drawn about the nature of the phenomena reported but the events were not judged to be of defence significance.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department made of the photograph of an unidentified craft at Calvine on 4 August 1990; who removed it from an office in secretariat (air staff) 2a; for what reasons; and if he will make a statement. [39248]

Mr. Soames: A number of negatives associated with the sighting were examined by staff responsible for air defence matters. Since it was judged that they contained nothing of defence significance the negatives were not retained and we have no record of any photographs having been taken from them.

Publicity

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's budget in 1996–97 for consultants to assist with information, publicity, press and media. [39353]

Section 40

ENCLOSURE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONI
Telephone 0171-21.....(Direct Diallin
0171-21 89000 (Switchboard)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

D/US of S/FH/PQ2100H/2101H/2105H/2106H/
2109H/2111H/2112H/2114H/2118H/2123H/
2124H/2127H/2130H/2131H/2136H/96/M

28th October 1996

Dear Mr. Redmond,

Nicholas Soames undertook to write to you in his reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about UFOs. (Official Report, cols 1092-1093 and 1095, copies attached). I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility.

The MOD's interest in 'unexplained' aerial phenomena (Question 1) is limited to whether the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised. Unless there is any evidence that this is the case, and to date no sighting has provided such evidence, we do not investigate further or seek to provide an explanation for what might have been observed. We have no expertise or role with respect to 'UFO/flying saucer' matters and, so far as the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms is concerned, we remain open minded but know of nothing that proves they exist. Our policy in this respect has not changed during the last thirty years.

RAF Standing Instructions (Question 2) require all RAF Station Commanders to forward reports of all 'UFO' sightings whether made by members of the public or on-duty Service personnel to the Secretariat (Air Staff), Branch 2a. Sec(AS)2a look at all 'UFO' sighting reports (Question 3) whether military or civilian reported. Reports are assessed in consultation with other MOD branches as required to determine whether there is any defence interest in what has been reported. Over the last twelve months there has been one instance of an on-duty member of the Services reporting an 'unexplained' aerial sighting, and this was not judged to be of any significance.

Martin Redmond Esq MP

FILE 644

We have no evidence (Question 4) that any structured craft of unknown origin has penetrated the UK's Air Defence Region. I am unable to provide the information you seek about reports of alleged landings (Question 5) since records are maintained only of 'UFO' sighting reports which are not broken down further into specific categories.

You ask at Questions 2a, 2b and 6-12 about collaboration and consultation with a number of foreign governments. My Department has regular discussions with a number of countries on a wide range of topics of mutual interest but such discussions have not extended to 'UFO/flying saucer' issues or the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial life forms.

I can confirm (Question 13) that my Department's Scientific Intelligence Branch holds no records under extended closure for any period in excess of 30 years. So far as the information sought at Question 14 is concerned, the PRO has confirmed that the class list giving details of preserved records is available to researchers at Kew.

Finally, I can also confirm (Question 15) that there is no unit within the Flying Complaints Flight (FCF) based at RAF Rudloe Manor (or anywhere else) specialising in investigations into unidentified flying objects. I should add that despite continuing misunderstandings about the role of RAF Rudloe Manor in alleged 'UFO' investigations, the Station is not and never has been involved in this way.

I shall arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40 [redacted]

THE EARL HOWE

Unidentified Flying Objects

10. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consultation has taken place in each of the last five years by his Department with the French Ministry of Defence Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales in respect of unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [41048]

5. (2) if a lodger unit housed within his Department's Flying Complaints Flight specialises in unidentified flying object investigations: and if he will make a statement: [41036]

3. (3) how many records currently held by his Department's Scientific Intelligence Branch are under extended closure for *(a)* 50 years, *(b)* 75 years and *(c)* 100 years: how many of these records refer to unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [40911]

11. (4) what consultation has taken place in each of the last five years by his Department with the Royal Australian air force in respect of unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [41042]

7. (5) what consultation has taken place in each of the last five years by his Department with the Spanish Ministry of Defence's intelligence section of the Spanish air forces air operations command in respect of unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [41050]

1. (6) if he will make statement on his Department's policy towards unidentified flying objects and on how this has developed during the past 30 years; [40913]

6. (7) what co-operation there is between the Royal Air Force and the United States air force in respect of establishing the facts relating to unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [40918]

5. (8) how many alleged landings by unidentified flying objects have been recorded in each year since 1980 and this year to date: how many have been investigated by his Department's personnel: which of these had been traced by radar and with what result: and if he will make a statement: [40921]

8. (9) what consultation has taken place in each of the last five years by his Department with the Italian Ministry of Defence air force general staff (2. Department) in respect of unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [41049]

2. (10) what instructions have been sent to the commanders of Royal Air Force stations to collect reports from air crews having allegedly sighted unidentified flying objects: what inquiries have been held following such sightings: to what extent there has been collaboration between his Department and departments in *(a)* Canada and *(b)* the United States of America on this problem: and if he will make a statement: [40917]

12. (11) what consultation has taken place in each of the last five years by his Department with New Zealand's Ministry of Defence in respect of unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [41043]

9. (12) what consultation has taken place in each of the last five years by his Department with the Portuguese Ministry of Defence's joint staff of the armed forces intelligence division in respect of unidentified flying objects: and if he will make a statement: [41051]

3. (13) how many instances of unidentified flying objects have been reported on by the defence services of the United Kingdom during the last 12 months: what steps are taken to co-ordinate such observations: and if he will make a statement: [40910]

4. (14) if he will list by year for the last 30 years how many structured craft of unknown origin have penetrated the United Kingdom's air defence region: and if he will make a statement. [40919]

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Redfern

14. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the titles of the records of the Ministry of Defence's scientific intelligence branch in respect of correspondence sent to Mr. Nicholas Redfern by the Public Record Office, Kew on 21 September 1990. [40889]

Mr. Soames: I will write to hon. Member and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library in the House.

Copy to: [illegible]

UNCLASSIFIED

covering ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON TUESDAY 11 AUGUST 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3732i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

QUESTION PQ 3732i

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the role of RAF Feltwell in relation to the tracking of unidentified objects in space ; how many objects detected by the Deep Space Tracking System at RAF Feltwell remain unidentified; and how many of these were transmitting a signal (HL3238)

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

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covering ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ UNCLASSIFIED

DRAFTED BY : Section 43 [redacted]
AUTHORISED BY :
GRADE/RANK : 7

TEL: Section 43 [redacted]
TEL: Section 43 [redacted]

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER TO PQ 3732i

RAF Feltwell is reponsible for tracking man-made objects in deep space. I am withholding the further information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

covering ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ UNCLASSIFIED

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. Lord Hill-Norton, ex Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971 to 1973, has a long standing interest in Unidentified Flying Objects ("UFOs") and this question, which is one of three connected questions, appears to follow on from one tabled in July this year concerning RAF Feltwell's involvement in evaluating reports of UFOs. A copy of the appropriate Hansard extract is attached for ease of reference.

[redacted]

3. Information has been withheld from the answer under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information to ensure that information relating to the capability of the site is not disclosed.

4. This response has been cleared at Grade 7 level in the absence on leave of a senior civil servant associated with this area of work.

NATO: New Members and Command Structure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

Lord Gilbert: It is planned that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will fill posts in the new NATO command structure. The exact number, seniority and location of these has not yet been determined.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

When arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up-to-date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence; and [HL2607]

What follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when it receives a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. [HL2609]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of unidentified flying objects is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity and whether reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MoD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of unidentified flying objects are examined with the assistance of relevant MoD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

Lord Gilbert: The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996: 609

1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorised foreign military activity, we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

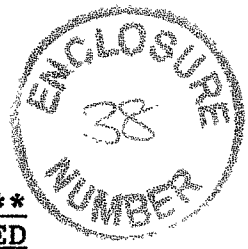
Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;



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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN 1998	:	12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3732i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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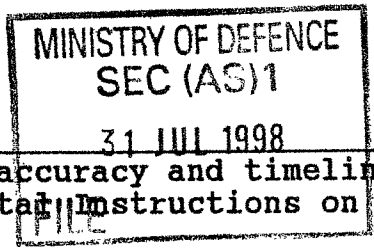
QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the role of RAF Feltwell in relation to the tracking of unidentified objects in space ; how many objects detected by the Deep Space Tracking System at RAF Feltwell remain unidentified; and how many of these were transmitting a signal (HL3238)



REMEMBER you are accountable for the accuracy and timeliness of the advice you provide. Departmental Instructions on

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN 1998	:	12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3730i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS)1
31 JUL 1998
FILE

QUESTION

LIST THOSE

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will ~~those~~ units based at RAF Feltwell, and what functions each of these units carries out. (HL3237)

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

Copy to: SEC(AS) 2a

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN 1998	:	**12:00 ON TUESDAY 11 AUGUST**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3730i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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covering ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DRAFTED BY : Section 43 [redacted] TEL: Section 43 [redacted]
AUTHORISED BY : [redacted] TEL: Section 43 [redacted]
GRADE/RANK : 7

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The units based at RAF Feltwell and their roles are:

UNIT: USAF 5th Space Surveillance Squadron

ROLE: Tracking of man-made objects in space

UNIT: US Department of Defence Schools

ROLE: Educational establishments for dependants of USVF personnel

UNIT: US Mathes Airmen's Leadership School

ROLE: Training for Junior NCOs

UNIT: US Contracting Squadron

ROLE: US Visiting Forces contracting authority

UNIT: US Army Veterinary Detachment

ROLE: Provision of veterinary services

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UNIT: US Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES)

ROLE: Furniture and retail warehouse

UNIT: US Defence Audit Agency

ROLE: Provision of audit services.

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BACKGROUND NOTE

1. Lord Hill-Norton, ex Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971 to 1973, has a long standing interest in Unidentified Flying Objects ("UFOs") and this question, which is one of three connected questions, appears to follow on from one tabled in July this year concerning RAF Feltwell's involvement in evaluating reports of UFOs. A copy of the appropriate Hansard extract is attached for ease of reference.

[redacted]

3. This response has been cleared at Grade 7 level in the absence on leave of a senior civil servant associated with this area work.

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Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

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Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

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1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

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Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

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Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;

[TO WIN PAGE]

64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 36

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

DATE FOR RETURN 1998	:	**12:00 ON TUESDAY 4 AUGUST** Tuesday 11 August.
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3733i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

QUESTION

The Lord Hill-Norton- To ask Her Majesty's Government, Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Gilbert on 15th July(WA25), what changes in procedures were implemented following the April 1997 review of the system to disseminate reports of unidentified flying objects; and whether airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations receiving reports of UFOs are required to send them to the Ministry of Defence. (HL 3239)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 1
31 JUL 1998
FILE

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

PQ CHECKLIST

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

* YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

* MEET THE DEADLINE & CONSULT EARLY IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS

* YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE

* IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE FROM A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT WITH EXPERTISE IN ANSWERING PQs

PQ ANSWER

* DO USE PLAIN AND PRECISE LANGUAGE
  - is the answer unambiguous and free from jargon?

* DO BE OPEN, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND HONEST
  - have you included all the facts necessary for a full and unambiguous answer?
  - do you fully understand the policy governing the answering of PQs? See attached note on Government Policy
  - if you have excluded anything can it be justified under the Open Govt Code (see DCI GEN 54/98)

* DO CHECK SOURCES AND ENSURE EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE TO BACK UP ANSWERS
  - is sufficient documentary evidence available to back up the answer if challenged?
  - does anybody outside your management area need to be involved? Have you consulted them?

* DO CHECK PREVIOUS ANSWERS ON THE SAME SUBJECT

* DO MAKE CLEAR THE BASIS ON WHICH YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION
  - if you have gone beyond a literal interpretation of the question have you made it clear?

* DON'T RELY ON HEARSAY OR GUESSWORK
  - are you confident that the information provided will stand up to detailed scrutiny?

* DON'T BE ABSOLUTE UNLESS YOU HAVE THE PROOF
  - think very carefully before you say "all" or "never" or "not possible"
  - does it differ from the views of outside experts, if so why?

BACKGROUND NOTE

* DO KEEP IT RELEVANT
  - does it explain the answer?

* DO EXPLAIN JUDGEMENTS MADE, AND ANY DOUBTS OR CAVEATS

* DO MAKE IT CLEAR IF INFORMATION IS BEING RELEASED FOR THE FIRST TIME OR IF IT IS DIFFERENT FROM INFORMATION RELEASED PREVIOUSLY
  - have you sought and included advice on the wider implications (including PR)?

* DO GIVE A CLEAR EXPLANATION FOR WITHOLDING INFORMATION
  - details of disproportionate cost included?
  - have you explained your justification for exclusion under the Open Govt Code?

* DO RECORD THE SOURCES RELIED ON IN PREPARING YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER

- have you included details of those who have provided you with information?

Doc:

LordsWrite

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWER IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

ALL DRAFT REPLIES MUST BE CLEARED AT SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE (GRADE 5) OR ONE STAR LEVEL OR ABOVE

THE CHECKLIST IS TO HELP YOU DRAFT THE ANSWER PROPERLY
YOU MUST USE IT

REPLIES SHOULD BE SENT BY CHOTS E-MAIL (URGENT & VIEW ACKNOWLEDGE) TO "**Parliamentary Questions**". DIVISIONS NOT ON CHOTS SHOULD SEND THEIR DRAFTS BY FAX TO THE PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH (x Section 40.

ALWAYS QUOTE THE QUESTION (PQ) NUMBER, AND THE NAMES AND CONTACT NUMBERS OF THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAFTING THE REPLY AND THE SENIOR OFFICIAL WHO APPROVED IT.

IF YOU REQUIRE ANY ADVICE, PLEASE CALL (MB x Section 40 [redacted])

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1. WRITTEN PQS

All written PQs **must** be answered within 14 days of being tabled, even if the House is by then in recess.

2. DEADLINE FOR REPLY

a. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline, you should contact this Branch to see if an extension to the deadline can be given. **You should do this before 12.00 on the day on which you are due to return the PQ answer.**

b. You must provide a full explanation of why you cannot meet the deadline.

c. If it is impossible to answer the question within 14 days the Minister has to write to the Lord concerned explaining the circumstances and undertaking to provide a full answer as soon as possible. You must provide the draft letter.

3. OPEN GOVERNMENT

a. A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 54/98.

b. Replies must be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exemption in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am witholding the information requested under exemption 1 of

4. DRAFTING THE ANSWER

- USE THE CHECKLIST -

a. The draft reply should be concise, clear and meticulously accurate. It should have a positive tone where possible.

b. Use clear and direct language to avoid any ambiguity. Short everyday words and short sentences are best. Avoid cliches and MOD/Service jargon. Use abbreviations only after using the words or name in full.

c. The answer must be unclassified.

d. If you refer to a previous PQ answer or document, send a copy.

5. BACKGROUND NOTE

a. Ministers need a short note explaining the facts and thinking behind the suggested reply if it is not completely obvious from the reply itself.

b. If the answer varies from a previous answer or statement explain fully why this is so.

c. If new information comes to light in your research which might affect this or previous answers or statements you must ring the Minister's Private Office **AT ONCE** as well as stating this clearly in the background note.

the Code of Practice on Access to
Government Information." It is **NOT**
acceptable to rely on past practice.

6. GROUPED PQS

Related PQs, tabled by an individual Lord for answer on the same day may be grouped together and given a single answer. This Branch can give advice on grouping.

7. PARTIAL REPLIES

If a full reply is not possible you should give what information is available and make it clear in the answer what you are doing.

8. COST OF GIVING A REPLY

If the cost of giving a reply will exceed £500 you can recommend to Ministers that the reply should be along the lines of "This information [is not held centrally] and could only be provided at disproportionate cost". You must explain in the background note how these costs - usually staff costs - would arise. The decision whether or not then to give an answer depends on the merits of the case.
As a rough guide use these hourly rates: AO-£8, EO-£13, HEO-£15, SEO-£18, G7-£22, G5-£31.
Capitation rates can be increased by 50% forfor Service equivalents.

9. LONG REPLIES

If the reply is long (ie will fill more than a page of Hansard) it may, exceptionally, be better to give the information in a letter to the Lord or put information in the Library of the House. In these cases the reply is "I will write to the noble Lord (or "my noble Friend") and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House" or "I am placing the information requested in the Library of the House". This Branch is responsible for placing material in the Library. We need **6** copies of any document placed in the Library.

10. INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE FROM PUBLIC SOURCES

PQs are expensive in terms of Ministers' and officials' time. Lords should be encouraged to get information from published sources where it is already available in the Library of the House. In such cases the reply is along these lines "The information requested is contained in para X of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1996 (Cm 3223), a copy of which is in the Library of the House".

11. PQS ASKING FOR STATISTICAL INFORMATION

a. PQs which ask for statistical information will be sent normally to the Chief Executive of DASA and copied to the relevant policy branch.

b. If such a question has not been sent to DASA please let us know. In any event you should liaise with DASA about the reply in case there are policy implications of which they are unaware.

12. TRANSFER OF PQS

a. To another Government Department
If you think this PQ is not primarily a matter for MOD tell this Branch **AT ONCE**.
We will need the name and Branch of an official in the more appropriate Department who has agreed to take the PQ.
Parliamentary Branches in other Government Departments will usually only agree to transfers on this basis.

b. To another Branch
If a PQ has been sent to you incorrectly, please let this Branch know **AT ONCE.** If you know who is responsible for the subject please pass it to them as well.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ANSWERING PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. Never forget Ministers' obligations to Parliament which are set out in the Cabinet Office publication "Ministerial Code: A code of conduct and guidance on procedure for Ministers". It states that:

"It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister. Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest, which should be decided in accordance with relevant statute and the Government's Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Second Edition, Jan 1997)

2. It is a civil servant's responsibility to Ministers to help them fulfil those obligations. It is the Minister's right and responsibility to decide how to do so. Ministers want to explain and present Government policy and actions in a positive light. They will rightly expect a draft answer that does full justice to the Government's position.

3. Approach every question predisposed to give relevant information fully, as concisely as possible and in accordance with guidance on disproportionate cost. If there appears to be a conflict between the requirement to be as open as possible and the requirement to protect information whose disclosure would not be in the public interest, you should check to see whether it should be omitted in accordance with statute (which takes precedence) or the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, about which you should consult your departmental openness liaison officer if necessary.

5. Do not omit information sought merely because disclosure could lead to political embarrassment or administrative inconvenience.

6. Where there is a particularly fine balance between openness and non-disclosure, and when the draft answer takes the latter course, this should be explicitly drawn to the Minister's attention. Similarly, if it is proposed to reveal information of a sort which is not normally disclosed, this should be explicitly drawn to Ministers' attention.

7. If you conclude that material information must be withheld and the PQ cannot be fully answered as a result, draft an answer which **makes this clear and which explains the reasons in equivalent terms to those in the Code of Practice, or because of disproportionate cost or the information not being available.** Take care to avoid draft answers which are literally true but likely to give rise to misleading inferences.

Section 40 [redacted]

Head of Sec(AS)

You will recall queried amendment to the attached PQ.

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 35/1

MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

D/MIN(DP)/JWG/6/1

29 July 1998

Section 40 [redacted]

64/4

Sec(AS)2

Copy to:

Parliamentary Clerk

PQs 3291I and 3335I : LORD HILL NORTON

Thank you for your minute D/Sec(AS)/64/4 of 24 July concerning the text of the answer given to PQs 3291I/3335I. The amendment was made by Minister(DP) in order to clarify the ambiguity in the draft text provided. I apologise for not clearing this amendment with you but I had also interpreted the original text in this way.

2. I do not agree that the answer given is in any way unhelpful to the Department. It implies that we are interested in monitoring the reporting procedures we currently have in place to ensure that they are adequate to encompass all possible military threats to the UK's airspace. A blanket statement that reporting procedures <u>are</u> adequate would have presented the MOD in a far less helpful light. Consequently, there is no need to amend the answer tabled on 15 July.

Section 40 [redacted] 10/8

It's a pity that Private Offices are often more concerned to ensure that the answer sounds plausible than that it is strictly accurate. However, as Minister has now elevated our monitoring of reporting procedures to the same importance as establishing whether airspace has been compromised we shall have to respect that.

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40 [redacted]

APS/Minister(DP)

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40 [redacted]

to note Hd of Sec(AS)'s comments

Section 40 [redacted] 10/8

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SEC (AS) 2 30 JUL 1998 FILE

mipsMB39/lm/norton/if/cs

Section 40 [redacted]

Recycled Paper

NATO: New Members and Command Structure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

Lord Gilbert: It is planned that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will fill posts in the new NATO command structure. The exact number, seniority and location of these has not yet been determined.

* Unidentified Flying Objects *

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

When arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up-to-date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence; and [HL2607]

What follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when it receives a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. [HL2609]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of unidentified flying objects is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity and [whether] reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MoD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of unidentified flying objects are examined with the assistance of relevant MoD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

Lord Gilbert: The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996: 609

1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorised foreign military activity, we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;

ENCLOSURE 354 MINISTER

[Dr. Howells]

There is another agenda: the agenda of training expert technicians. It could be described as the other end of the further education spectrum. In this country, we have not been very good at teaching intermediate skills. We were good at it once, but we stopped being somewhere along the line.

The hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Green) spoke of the benefits of incorporation, and there is no doubt that that has brought benefits, but it has also caused terrible disruption to the relationship between companies and further education colleges. I hope that the bridges can be rebuilt. If we can rebuild them, and use imagination in returning to further education its automatic sense of dignity and self-esteem, I think that we shall succeed.

7.28 pm

Ms Hodge: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We ought to congratulate all who work in further education—not just on surviving, but on prospering over the past 18 difficult years, particularly the most recent. They have provided extended opportunity and improved training and qualifications for the many, and have begun to provide access for more people.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Green), the only Conservative Member who has been present throughout the debate. I do not suggest that that is because he is on the Opposition payroll, but one Conservative Back Bencher and nine Labour Back Benchers have been present throughout. That says it all: that is why further education has been ignored for too long by Members of Parliament.

The challenges facing the Minister are immense, and I have full confidence that he will rise to the occasion. FE is rich in its diversity, and it faces many difficult problems in the future. We have raised capital and revenue funding, and the funding of institutions and people. We have also made some controversial and challenging recommendations—we wanted deliberately to put them on the political agenda.

I thank the members of my Committee—we all worked extremely hard to put together a comprehensive report. I also thank our advisers, those who gave written and verbal evidence to the Committee, and those who work and study in further education for ensuring that it is a sector in which we can have confidence. The matter passes over to the Minister. We wish him luck, and think that we have timed the debate appropriately. We look forward to a welcome outcome from the comprehensive spending review.

Question deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 54 (Consideration of estimates).

Class XVII, Vote 1

Freedom of Information

[Relevant documents: The Third report from the Select Committee on Public Administration of Session 1997–98, on "Your Right to Know: the Government's Proposals for a Freedom of Information Act", HC 398, and the fourth report from the Select Committee on Public Administration of Session 1997–98, on "Ministerial Accountability and Parliamentary Questions", HC 820.]

Motion made, and Question proposed

That a further sum not exceeding £55,642,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1999 for expenditure by the Office of the Minister for Public Service on the central management of, and delivery of services to, the civil service including the delivery of cross-departmental IT systems; expenditure resulting from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's chairmanship of the Ministerial Committee on Food and Safety; and certain other services.—*[Dr. David Clark.]*

7.30 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): As Chairman of the Public Administration Committee, it is a privilege to commence the debate on the White Paper and the Select Committee's response to it. We published our report in May, and although it would have been beneficial to hear the Government's response to it today, we must bear it in mind that it was published only six or seven weeks ago. The Government are usually given two months to respond, and we hope that they will manage to do so within that time.

Tonight, we need to emphasise how important it is to pass freedom of information legislation along the lines of the excellent White Paper produced just before Christmas by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Draft legislation should be produced as soon as possible so that the Select Committee can go through it and listen to witnesses. A freedom of information Bill should also be in the Queen's speech as part of the legislative programme for the 1998-99 Session, and I hope that we shall be enlightened on that subject.

From the Labour point of view, it is important to remember that freedom of information legislation was in the 1974 election manifesto, as well as the 1992 and 1997 manifestos. We formed the Government in 1974, so it is legitimate to ask why people lost interest in the matter. Unfortunately, part of the history of freedom of information legislation to which all commentators refer is that opposition parties always commit themselves to it, but that, funnily, that commitment always falls by the wayside when they come into government.

I was told earlier today that, towards the end of their term in office from 1974 to 1979—just before they fell and when the Liberal party was committed to voting against them on a confidence motion—the Labour Government suddenly took an interest in Clement Freud's Back-Bench freedom of information Bill. By the time the Labour Government were buying, the Liberals were not selling, so the Bill fell and did not get through. We have an opportunity, 24 years later, to put that right.

The issue is always the same. People come into government with a flush of enthusiasm for freedom of information, but that needs to be driven forward to get the legislation on to the statute book before the iron of Administration enters the soul. We are at that exact point: the manifesto commitment has been made, the White Paper has been published, the Select Committee reported on it in May and we are waiting for the Government's response. We have been promised the draft Bill, although it will probably be published in the summer recess, and the expectation is that there will be a commitment to legislate in the next Session in the Queen's Speech later this year.

The events of yesterday, and the revelations in *The Observer*, serve only to emphasise how important it is to state the principle that was at the heart of Labour's

manifesto: I cannot say too emphatically that information should be for the many, not the few. Restricting information to the few would provide those interstices into which lobbyists would insert themselves, and boast about how they could obtain information that was not available to the general public. Absurd though such boasts may be, in a climate of denial of information to the many, the few would seek to profit from that denial. Perhaps yesterday's events were providential in the light of the timing of the debate and the messages that we hope to hear from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

When they come into office for the first time, Governments want to open up government, but there is also the perception that, from time to time, the availability of information will undoubtedly be inconvenient to the operation of government. All Governments have a control freak tendency and a liberationist tendency, and this Government are no different. The Select Committee's report could not be clearer in welcoming the White Paper, but the litmus test of a Government is not what they put in their manifesto or in a White Paper, but what they enact in legislation.

We hope, therefore, that the draft Bill at least will be available before the 18-month period between last May's Queen's speech and the next one, in November, has ended. We also hope for a commitment to legislate, although I do not expect my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to give such a commitment tonight, because the content of the Queen's speech has not yet been determined. It is important that we repeat the welcome that the Select Committee gave to the strength of the White Paper, and I hope that the House will back that.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster produced an excellent document, "Your Right to Know: the Background Material". The Government suggested how freedom of information legislation would work in practice by implementing the principle in respect of the White Paper—they published the document. It commits the Government to practising what they preach—what the Americans call walking the walk as well as talking the talk. This useful document states at paragraph 11:

"The manifesto commitment implies that the Government intends the Act to go beyond the terms of the code of practice on access to Government information, quite apart from the obvious enhanced status of primary legislation over a non-statutory document. In keeping with this, the Government rejected within a few days of taking office options which would have involved simply translating the existing code into statutory form."

We expect that the legislation will be stronger than the previous Government's code of practice. Having gone back 24 years to the previous Labour Government's commitment, I can go back four years to what the previous Government did and the presumed reasons why they did it. The previous Government introduced a non-statutory code because they believed that a freedom of information Act would cut across the relationship between hon. Members and Ministers. Parliamentary questions could have been asked and not answered, but the Bill of Rights would have been cut across if that had been overridden by an information commissioner. Members of the public would have been put over and above Members of Parliament in their ability to gain access to information from Government Departments.

A Minister may decide not to provide information through an answer to a parliamentary question, and there is little that we can do about that. We can ask another question in six months' time or whatever. A member of the public, on being denied similar information, could go to an information commissioner and that would disadvantage hon. Members, so the previous Government said, "Let us have just a non-statutory code."

Unfortunately, as I think all hon. Members would accept, that code has not worked. It has not established rights clearly. The public are cynical about it. They do not use it much. When they do use it, they find the response is full of delays: Departments can always find reasons to fob off the ombudsman because there is no statutory backing.

Let me cite a recent case. I had submitted a request for information on behalf of Friends of the Earth, Cymru about the Gwent wetland reserve and the mitigating measure for the Cardiff Bay development corporation. I shall not bore the House with the whole thing, but I made a complaint around about Christmas 1996 and it took until a couple of weeks ago—18 months—for the ombudsman to reach a verdict, simply because of the development corporation's dilatory tactics, which the ombudsman could do nothing about. That is the problem with a non-statutory code. The ombudsman, however hard he works, does not have enough stick to penetrate the defences of Departments, next steps agencies or quangos—whichever is seeking to hold the information back.

That brings me to the most important point about the code. It is not merely the fact that it changes the relationship between Ministers, or could make us have to go to members of the public. One of the curiosities is that, if we do not do something about the House as well, by making freedom of information provisions apply much more effectively to information obtained by the traditional route of parliamentary questions, that route could fall into disrepute, and Members of Parliament could be asking members of the public to get information for them, rather than members of the public trying to get information via their Member of Parliament tabling parliamentary questions. What nonsense that would be. It would badly affect the reputation of the House if we did not sort that question out.

I refer to the Committee's biggest difference with the Government's White Paper. I have already read out paragraph 11 of the background document that the Government produced, in which they said that they wanted the legislation to go beyond the content of the code. In one respect—law enforcement—the White Paper retreats from what is in the code. We thought that that was a regrettable step. We believe that law enforcement should be subject to an exemption, as it is in the code, and not an exclusion, as it is in the White Paper.

Why is that difference between two Latin words, which appear to mean the same, significant? With an exclusion, there is no appeal to the information commissioner. With an exemption, there is an appeal to the information commissioner, so there is a possible override from the information commissioner. That is a critical difference. It seemed to the Committee that, if that was good enough to be in the previous Government's code of practice, it should be good enough to be in the legislation, and should have been in the White Paper.

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

We still recommend strongly that it should be in the draft Bill and in the eventual legislation. Otherwise, that area is untestable. Governments can abuse it if it is untestable and that will undermine the spirit of the freedom of information Bill, if and when we get it. Such a provision is not present in any overseas freedom of information legislation. That area is always testable, in the courts under the American system, or through a commissioner or a third party—an appeal body, if you like—under all the other systems, which do not use the courts as their ultimate court of appeal.

That was the one big difference: we felt that the Government should not have withdrawn that provision. We still need a change of culture in Whitehall. All the arguments that we read in the press over the weekend—about the meetings last week, about cost and about the need to consider what the impact might be in changing the balance between the criminal community and those attempting to detect its members through law enforcement and so on—seem to tell us only one thing: the culture of Whitehall has not yet changed. We believe that that culture needs to change and to be retrained, so that civil servants will participate, in a proactive way, in the passing out of information and will not seek to find every reason either to delay or to deny information to the public.

We also made points in the report about the need to co-ordinate the Data Protection Bill, which was working against the deadline of October this year, and therefore had to be finished in a great hurry, and the Human Rights Bill, which is another major Labour constitutional reform commitment. We said that they should be co-ordinated and linked.

We said that hesitantly, because we do not want any of our recommendations to be used as excuses for delaying the freedom of information Bill. We fear that, almost every time we refer to the need to strengthen or improve the Bill, that can be used by the Sir Humphreys in Whitehall as a reason for deferring it and saying, "Even the Select Committee says that more work should be done on it, so do not put it in next year's Queen's Speech."

That is the last thing that we want. Obviously, we want the Bill in next year's Queen's speech, but we do not want it to be watered down. We want it strengthened and we want a commitment to it, but we believe that it should be closely co-ordinated with two other Bills that impinge on it—the Data Protection Bill and Human Rights Bill, which are still before the House.

The new Government's constitutional reform agenda—parts of which are already nearing the statute book—over the past 14 months has been massive. The legislative programme has been jam-packed generally and jam-packed with constitutional matters in particular—the Human Rights Bill, devolution to Scotland and Wales, the setting up of an executive mayor and council for London and other matters. Many matters have had to be taken on the Floor of the House because they are constitutional, but this Government's constitutional reform agenda cannot be considered complete without a freedom of information Bill because that is the Bill that will do most to change the culture of Whitehall and, therefore, the relationship between the people and the Government.

For a Government to earn their corn as a great constitutional reforming Government, they need to implement freedom of information. Only then can they really say that they have completed the unfinished business of constitutional reform, modernising this country's constitution and joining the community of civilised nations, such as the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and, most recently, Ireland, that have freedom of information legislation—let alone Sweden, which has had freedom of information legislation for more than 200 years. We cannot join that community unless we take that step of having freedom of information legislation.

From everything that we have read in the newspapers over the past few days, the permanent secretaries and some Ministers have now drawn the covered wagons of Whitehall into a circle and are fighting back. They did not mind the White Paper—after all, what is a White Paper in the end? However, now that it looks as though there could be a Bill in the Queen's Speech in only three or four months' time, they have drawn the covered wagons into a circle.

It is much worse than anything that ever appeared in any script in "Yes Minister" because this is not a television soap about top civil servants and Ministers in Whitehall. This is the reality of a struggle at the heart of Whitehall and Westminster about what we are going to have in the Queen's Speech and whether, over the next few years, we shall get the culture change and shift in the relationship between the governed and the governing that we want, so that this Government can be seen to be truly a great reforming Government.

The plea of the whole Committee, therefore, is that we want to make an honest woman out of the mother of Parliaments; that is why this issue is so important to the whole House.

7.48 pm

Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire): I thank the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) for the manner in which he has introduced this debate, and I congratulate him and his Committee on some thorough work and an excellent report. I know that he will understand if I also say how good it is to see in the Chamber the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock), who has taken a part in the Committee, and, most particularly, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who has been in the House for almost 20 years and who has campaigned tirelessly, often to his discomfort, on this issue. No one could begin to doubt his impeccable credentials in this regard. I hope that we shall have the benefit of hearing him later in the debate if he has the good fortune to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is one of the quainter ironies of parliamentary life that we should debate the Government's policy on freedom of information the day after *The Observer* suggested that some Government information is freer than others—the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) also referred to that—and the day before we debate the Government's practice on supplying information to one of Parliament's most important Select Committees.

However, sufficient unto the day is the confusion thereof, and in spite of everything that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has said about the support he enjoys, it is fairly clear from articles written by normally well-informed commentators that the Government's policy on freedom of information is far from the seamless

robe that he tries to wear. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West referred to that, and I hope that the Chancellor will tonight give us the latest insight into where the Government stand.

It would seem that the Chancellor, backed by another Chancellor in the other place, is fighting off assaults on his territory by sundry ministerial colleagues who have rallied under the Home Secretary's banner. What Labour leaders were happy to proclaim as the ark of their covenant in opposition, they now see as a rather different, storm-tossed ark. A new freedom of inquiry and other intrusions would, some Ministers believe, threaten their ministerial freedom to act.

We do not have to rely merely on press comment to know that there is anxiety in and around Whitehall. We just need to read the memos sent by the Ministry of Defence to the Select Committee on Public Administration. We are told that the Ministry anticipates

"an increase in applications for information, which could impose a heavy administrative load. . . . The change to a requirement to provide copies of documents, rather than providing information, will require time and effort to identify specific documents and"—

these are the really important words—

"to decide whether all or part are suitable for disclosure".

It seems more than a few months since the Chancellor made his December statement. Although it was subject to one of the major leaks for which the Government have become notorious, it earned the Chancellor more plaudits than most of his colleagues have received for their statements to the House. I very much appreciated, as did many hon. Members, the thoroughness with which the Lord Chancellor sought to investigate that leak, having denounced it very roundly, and apologised to the House for it.

This is the first occasion on which the House has had a chance to debate the White Paper. I make no particular complaint about that, but I do complain a little about the fact that we have yet to see the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee of which the hon. Member for Cardiff, West is chairman. I appreciate what he said about the deadline of eight weeks, but the Government have chosen tonight for this debate, and it is a pity that they did not publish their response so that hon. Members could read it in time for the debate.

The Chancellor of the Duchy will tell us, I am sure, that he is consulting widely in Whitehall. All I ask is that he tries to get his ministerial colleagues to speed up their replies, because it would be scandalous if we did not get the Government's response before the House rises for the summer recess.

I confess to being a little disappointed with the Chancellor. He is an old friend, and I hold him in high personal regard. In what he welcomed as a constructive response to his statement on 11 December, I said that the Opposition would be very glad to take part in talks with him. I pointed out that, although we did not share his zeal for constitutional reform—he knows that only too well—we would be more than willing to participate in a constructive spirit, not least because we are proud of our achievements in government.

Unfortunately, the Chancellor has not yet responded to those overtures. I express the hope that tonight he will pledge himself to seeking to engage all parties, including the official Opposition, in substantive talks when the draft Bill is published, if not before.

As I said on 11 December, if ever there were a subject on which consensus is desirable, this is it. It is a pity not only that the Chancellor has not responded to my offer, but, more importantly, that the White Paper is almost overtly political in the tone of its criticisms of the previous Government. Specifically, it makes light of the code of practice, which was a substantial step forward. It falls back on that code towards the end: in paragraph 7.3 it says:

"Existing mechanisms for openness—including the *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information*—will remain in place . . . to smooth the transition to the fully-implemented legislation."

The simple fact of the matter is that the previous Government, under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), made very significant strides in opening up government. They established the code of practice and introduced the citizens charter, which the present Government have rightly retained, although with scant recognition of the man responsible for it.

Where precisely do the Government stand now? I have to ask that question not only because of the recent press speculation and the concerns expressed by the Campaign for Freedom of Information, which, under Maurice Frankel, has done so much to advance this cause, but because we have not had the opportunity to discuss these issues in the Chamber. We need to know how the Bill will be handled and when it will be introduced.

What about the Chancellor's comments about the White Paper having green edges? How much notice has been taken of the many representations that have been made to him direct—not just those made by the Select Committee—and of the often critical comments contained in the Select Committee report and in the detailed response by the Campaign for Freedom of Information? The campaign's document is substantial: it is even longer than the White Paper.

I shall touch on some of the issues that exercise the Opposition, and that need clear, definitive comment from the Chancellor of the Duchy. How is reasonableness to be tested? After all, sometimes those with the greatest need for information are campaigning individuals or organisations that few would call reasonable. One wonders how a Wilberforce or a Shaftesbury would have fared if he had applied under these rules for information for fighting their, at the time, unpopular and unfashionable causes. What about "substantial harm"? Adjectives are notoriously difficult to define accurately or objectively. Why should the test be reduced to one of mere harm when it comes to Government Departments?

The White Paper tells us:

"Experience from overseas suggests that the essential governmental functions of planning ahead, delivering solutions to issues of national importance and determining options on which to base policy decisions while still maintaining collective responsibility, can be damaged by random and premature disclosure of its deliberations under Freedom of Information legislation."

One is tempted to say, "Quite so." Perhaps I can be forgiven a wry smile when I suggest that the Chancellor has had little success in persuading his ministerial colleagues, many of whom seem ready, for the sake of a soundbite headline, to proclaim to the "Today" programme what they have presumably agreed to keep confidential. There is little point in the White Paper

[Sir Patrick Cormack]

defending rules which are so regularly broken unless there is to be a new determination to enforce them. Is there to be such a determination? We have a right to know.

There is a powerful argument to be advanced against the White Paper here, and it has been so advanced with remarkable and persuasive lucidity by Professor Vernon Bogdanor in his memorandum to the Select Committee, published in volume II of the report. I warmly commend the memorandum to any hon. Member who has not read it. He argues:

"To give Parliament the right to information, which may include official advice, is the only way in which Parliament can be enabled to fulfil its task of pinning responsibility on Ministers."

In support of his case, Professor Bogdanor cites this fact:

"Between 1994 and 1997, the minutes of discussions between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England were released six weeks after these discussions took place. On a number of occasions, the minutes revealed serious differences of opinion between the Chancellor and the Governor."

Why, I ask the Chancellor of the Duchy, does the White Paper not refer to that considerable advance in open government, which was quite revolutionary, and which has not continued?

Professor Bogdanor also refers to New Zealand, which is cited in the White Paper on a number of occasions and has constitutional conventions rather similar to ours. In New Zealand,

"It is now customary to release policy advice relating to decisions once they have been made. A New Zealand citizen can, for 20 dollars, purchase the official advice given to an incoming Government."

I would have been happy to pay rather more than that on 2 May last year. I suspect that some of the gentlemen referred to in *The Observer* yesterday would doubtless have been happy to fill the Government's coffers a little more.

Professor Bogdanor seeks to categorise those who take opposing sides on the issue as either embracing the Whig-Liberal view of the constitution—whose most prominent recent spokesman he cites as Sir Richard Scott—or the view

"given elegant expression in recent years by two ex Foreign Secretaries, Lord Howe and Lord Hurd. This view starts from the requirements of Government rather than Parliament."

At this point, I should ask who it was who appointed Scott, and gave directions that his report should be published. Again, there is a churlish refusal to acknowledge what the previous Government often did.

Professor Bogdanor also argues that we might have escaped the poll tax fiasco had policy advice been readily available. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for North-West Hampshire (Sir G. Young) and I—who steadfastly opposed that item of Conservative legislation—would read that passage in the good professor's case with particular interest.

Professor Bogdanor rests his case by saying that, in the last resort, the fundamental argument for freedom of information derives from the principle that, in a democracy,

"the people have a right to know what Government is doing in their name."

If the Chancellor intends to preserve his White Paper position unchanged, he will have to come up with convincing answers to the Bogdanor thesis.

Central to the policy as advanced in the White Paper is the proposal to appoint an information commissioner. It is a pity that, in his enthusiasm for this new appointment, the Chancellor has—perhaps inadvertently— downgraded the role of the ombudsman. The Committee is rather tough on the Chancellor on that, recommending that he should,

"in his response to this report, correct the statement on paragraph 5.7 of the White Paper relating to the independence of the ombudsman—and cease to draw the wrong inferences from it."

I am bound to say that I am not persuaded that we need a wholly separate information commissioner. Much could be said for giving the extra responsibilities to the ombudsman, even though that would inevitably mean extending not only the scope, but the size, of his office. Such a move would certainly avoid the possibility of clash and confusion, which could arise if two similar but separate high officials exist side by side.

Certainly, if an independent commissioner is appointed, there will have to be a clear understanding of where his responsibilities begin and end and where they are different from those of the ombudsman—who, after all, has a specific role under the code, which will, as we have seen, remain important during the transitional period. Combining both roles would have the added advantage of giving all the responsibilities under the Act to an officer accountable to Parliament. That is not something that should be lightly dismissed.

Other points in the Select Committee report deserve the most careful answers. The Committee has serious doubts that the regime proposed by the White Paper strikes the right balance between privacy and openness, or whether it will be workable. It is important that the Chancellor takes on board the strong arguments advanced by the Committee in that context. The Committee goes further than the Opposition would wish with its comments on the excluded areas, but, again, the cogent case that it advances must be debated fully during discussion of the draft stage of the Bill.

I can sum up the Opposition's position simply, as one of wishing to play a constructive part in all the discussions, but only on the basis of genuine consultation. There has been little enough over the Government's other constitutional policies. They are referred to by the Prime Minister in the preface to the White Paper:

"We are committed to a comprehensive programme of constitutional reform. We believe it is right to decentralise power; to guarantee individual rights; to open up Government; and to reform Parliament."

In response, I would say that we have seen little of a coherent strategy, but rather haphazard, piecemeal reforms based on inadequate consultation, and often no attempt to think things out or to establish any consensus. When I think of the Government lurching from policy to policy in this field, I am reminded of the famous story of Winston Churchill dismissing the pudding at the Savoy because it had "no theme". Where is the Government's theme?

On this policy, Mr. Hugo Young—writing in *The Guardian* last week—said that the answer to those specific questions is being decided in the secret places. He added that that answer

"will be definitive for the entire life and meaning of the Blair Government."

The opening sentence of the White Paper is particularly prescient:

"Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in governance and defective decision-making."

I rather suspect that that is a sentence that will come to haunt Ministers. I hope that we shall not see a particularly troubling visitation of the spectre tomorrow night.

8.6 pm

Mr. Peter Bradley (The Wrekin): It seems from the attendance in the House tonight that freedom of information is the best-kept secret in Westminster. That is a great shame, but I very much welcome the debate.

I listened attentively to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and to the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack). I find it strange that the hon. Member for South Staffordshire cannot find the theme in the White Paper, or in the Committee's response. His speech was elegant, but he lost the thread. He should return to "Your Right to Know" and the Committee's response to it.

Sir Patrick Cormack: I was not accusing the Chancellor in the White Paper—still less the Committee—of not having a theme; I was referring to the Government's policies as a whole.

Mr. Bradley: Those who have read the White Paper attentively and with less cynicism will have found that it is proposing one of the most radical and irreversible departures from the culture to which we have become accustomed over the centuries—particularly in the past couple of decades; an obsession with secrecy by which, in the name of democratic accountability, previous Governments have limited rather than extended the freedoms enjoyed by citizens in this country.

The well-known sociologist and political commentator, Noam Chomsky, said some decades ago that freedom of speech, valuable though it is, depends on those who have the power to define language. The same is true of information. Freedom of information depends very much on those who control the flow of that information, and the White Paper—and the legislation that we hope and expect will follow it—will do much to redress the balance between the governed and the governors.

Until now, freedom of information has been curtailed by interests that are more concerned to limit participative democracy than to allow it to flourish. Ministers, civil servants and those with commercial interests understand that their authority, influence and power over our daily lives would be reduced if we had an automatic right to know and to question the way in which we are regulated and controlled. Now, I believe, we have a right to demand access, accountability and transparency in the conduct of national and local government.

Information is the oxygen of democracy; without it, our democratic system and our institutions cannot flourish. That is why I support what has recently become known as control freakery. I believe that it is important for Government to express messages that are clear, cogent and coherent. People want to know that their Government are under control. They want information to which they can respond and react. Without clear information, there can be no real dialogue or partnership between those who govern and those who are governed; there can be no real bond of trust, and there can be no real opportunity for people to react, to express their views and to participate in the management of their daily lives.

The White Paper is truly radical. It proposes one of the most important constitutional changes that the Government will pursue—indeed, that any Government for many years have pursued. That change will enfranchise and empower every citizen in the country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West said, it should be seen in the context of a wide-ranging programme of reform that, as a whole, constitutes a new and mature contract between the Government and the citizen. That is what is known as stakeholding, an expression that was current a couple of years ago but has fallen out of fashion—sadly, I believe, as it is an important concept.

The Government have been criticised for control freakery, but they are pursuing a wide-ranging programme of reform. That programme includes Scots and Welsh devolution, the return of democratically elected government to London, the introduction of regional development agencies and the modernisation of local government—as expressed in, I think, six recent consultation documents. There have been experiments with proportional representation, and Liberal Democrats have been put on to Cabinet Committees—I do not think that anyone could argue that that is entirely necessary, given the majority that the Labour party enjoys in the House, but it is welcome none the less.

Moreover, the European convention on human rights will be incorporated into our legislation and a White Paper on better government will, I hope, be published in the autumn. I should also mention the reform of the House of Lords and the whistleblowers Bill, which was introduced by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to his part in bringing forward legislation on both freedom of information and on whistleblowers.

Freedom of information is the flagship of the programme but, as I said, it is a well-kept secret, which is a pity. That is partly because the press's obsession with personalities overwhelms its interest in policies. For example, when, a couple of months ago, the Lord Chancellor gave evidence for two and a half hours to the Select Committee on Public Administration on the Government's programme of constitutional change, he discussed the most far-reaching changes that citizens in this country will enjoy for a generation—indeed, for many generations to come. The press, however, were interested in one thing only. Those who recall that Select Committee meeting will remember that, the following day, the radio, the television and the newspapers were consumed by one issue—the Lord Chancellor's wallpaper. The story was not even new; it was a reheated version of a story that had kept the newspapers going for a couple of days in the previous week. The media's failure to discuss important issues seriously and to involve people in a proper debate represents a great disservice to the citizens of this country.

Mr. Mike Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, on that occasion, the Lord Chancellor seemed to be grateful for the distraction provided by the cost of his wallpaper, as he did not want to talk about hon. Members' criticisms of the way in

[Mr. Mike Hancock]

which judges are appointed? As the record of that meeting shows, the Lord Chancellor instigated most of the dialogue on the choice and the cost of his wallpaper.

Mr. Bradley: My recollection is not the same; suffice it to say we discussed constitutional change for two of the two and a half hours, whereas for half an hour two members of the Committee—the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) was not one of them—pursued Lord Irvine on what can only be described as trivia. I put it to the House that the Lord Chancellor's home furnishings are far less important than those constitutional issues.

This time last year there was much speculation about the delay in publication of the White Paper. When it was published, it was welcomed for its thoroughness; the delay had been caused by the pains the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Lord Chancellor and others involved in the drafting had taken to ensure that it was right. Indeed, the White Paper is exceedingly good.

It is important that the Bill preserves and builds on the key principles identified in the White Paper. I am relaxed about whether the Bill will form part of this year's Queen's Speech; I hope that it will, but it is far more important to ensure that the Bill is right than to have it quickly. So long as it is worth waiting for, we should, having waited for centuries, wait a little longer. The key issue is that there should be no retreat from the principles set out in the White Paper.

The Select Committee's report makes clear our disappointment at the relatively few examples of temerity in the White Paper. I hope that the lobbying done by and for the utilities—which is the subject of press speculation—so that they can escape public scrutiny will not be tolerated. When my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave evidence to the Select Committee, I found his reasoning unpersuasive that all police operations should be excluded from public scrutiny. If the public had had proper opportunities to know what happened in the tragic Lawrence case, for example, I doubt that we would be where we are now or that the Lawrence family would have suffered so much and for so long.

I find it inexplicable that the public should not have the right of access to information about police operations, particularly failed police operations. I have in mind fairly humdrum examples, such as were discussed by the Select Committee, relating to the management of disorder or of football grounds and football crowds. Police plans to control public events should be confidential but, after the event, especially when something has gone wrong, the public have an absolute right to know the police's dispositions, what instructions were issued and what accounted for the failure. That is a weakness in the Home Secretary's argument and the Select Committee stated its case plainly in the report. I hope that those who draft the Bill will resist any temptation to retreat from the report's recommendations on this important issue.

The conflict between the right to privacy and freedom of information is a problem. I believe that the right to privacy is very important; I also accept that freedom of information, while important, is not an absolute right. It is crucial that the Bill, and consultation on its drafting, strikes the right balance.

Once we have freedom of information legislation, the world will not be the same. It is doubtful whether the BSE crisis could have deepened as it did had the public had proper access to information. It is also doubtful that the arms to Iraq affair could have taken the course that it did had there been proper scrutiny through access to information. Quangos and utilities will not be able to operate under the cloak of secrecy as they do today.

The role of the press will undoubtedly change, not least because there will be fewer leaks and less of a market for leaking information that ought to be in the public domain. One would hope that there will be less scandal because the people in control of information will be much more careful to ensure that they are beyond reproach and those whose job it is to scrutinise their activities will have more access to information about the way in which they are governing us and the country.

Freedom of information will also come as something of a shock to Members of Parliament. As a new Member I frequently hear older Members in particular telling us about the sovereignty of the House and how important that is. In principle, in our parliamentary democracy, that sovereignty is important, but if it means a barrier being set up between Members of Parliament, Ministers and the people we serve, it is not a good thing. Freedom of information will do a great deal to lower the barrier between the people who sit up in the Strangers Gallery and the people who sit down here in the Chamber. Freedom of information will make truly participative democracy possible. In future, there will be a presumption to disclose information, instead of the culture of secrecy and denial.

For 10 years I was a member of Westminster city council, which was the subject of possibly the greatest political scandal of the century. When I and other members of the opposition elected by our constituents to serve them as well as we could asked for information from council officers because we suspected that something was going on that should not have been, we were consistently denied access to the information. We were asked to demonstrate why we needed it—to demonstrate our need to know. Frankly, one can demonstrate one's need to know only when one has the information and can justify the request. That is simply unacceptable.

One of the strongest features of the proposed legislation is that no one should be required to demonstrate why he or she wants certain information. There should be no denial of an individual's right to information on the ground that it is a fishing expedition. If my friends and colleagues on Westminster city council and I had had access to the information when we asked for it and had been given the right to scrutinise the administration as we were elected to do, many of the scandals with which everyone is so familiar about Westminster would not have happened. That would have been far better for local democracy there and it would have saved thousands of our constituents a great deal of suffering.

Freedom of information will make our democracy truly participative. When people have access to information, they can react and play their own role in decision making. It will no longer be possible for the great and the good, that small coterie of those elected and otherwise who dominate public affairs, to do so to the exclusion of our constituents. I enter a plea that, when we have an information commissioner, he or she should not merely

have the common touch but common sense so that they can be truly representative of the people they are appointed to serve.

One of the most pernicious features of social exclusion is the exclusion of individuals and communities from decision making. Freedom of information and the technology that is making information so much more accessible will bring a radical cultural change to the way in which our affairs are managed. The onus is on the Government to ensure that freedom of information is truly liberating—not merely a subject for Hampstead and Islington dinner parties, but something that will be meaningful to every man and woman in the country.

In welcoming the White Paper, may I enter a plea to the Government? May it come soon, but above all may it certainly not be diluted. I hope that the White Paper is not diluted by those who are paranoid or retentive—by civil servants who feel that they will lose influence and control or by sectional interests who would rather cloak their activities in secrecy. The Government should keep up their courage and stick to the principles of the White Paper. If they do, it will be one of the enduring achievements of this reforming Government.

8.24 pm

Mr. Mike Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Like all hon. Members present tonight, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this subject. Like the Chairman of the Select Committee on Public Administration, I and other hon. Members are disappointed that we are debating the matter when we have not yet had the Government's response to the report that the Committee worked so hard to achieve. I must pay tribute to our chairman, the hon. Member for Cardiff. West (Mr. Morgan) for all his work. I also compliment the hon. Member for Aldridge–Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who is the most experienced member of the Committee and who held the line on more than one occasion, preventing some of us from being misdirected. I am grateful for his help and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Baker), who I am sure will want to make some observations, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about information that he has tried desperately hard to get out of Ministers in the past 12 months and the frustrations that have caused him to ask close on 1,000 parliamentary questions,

Sir Patrick Cormack: An expensive fellow.

Mr. Hancock: Yes, very expensive. I am glad to say that not all his questions were directed at the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Committee's deliberations could have been entitled, "The tale of the two Chancellors" because we had a different approach from both of them. The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Bradley) was right to remind us of the fun morning when we questioned the Lord Chancellor. Some of us expected a little more than we got and some were disappointed that he seemed to want to rush quickly on to discuss the quality of wallpaper, where he should buy it and his domestic activities, rather than the serious questions that we wanted to put to him. How different it was when we questioned the Chancellor of the Duchy and how right he was to take the issues so seriously and to spend some considerable time going into detail with Committee members on the rights and wrongs of the White Paper and his ambitions for how it would develop.

I also hope that the White Paper will develop into a Bill in the Queen's speech, and will become an Act. That will give us a terrific trinity of good new legislation, with major breakthroughs—data protection, human rights and freedom of information—a trinity of usefulness for the population as a whole to use. Hon. Members stressed to the Chancellor of the Duchy that we hoped that this aspect would not develop into legislation that is available only to the rich and powerful, to big business and the media. We hope that the people whom we represent will have access to it.

In one of my contributions to the Select Committee, I reflected on the problems of my constituents. I considered five different areas. One was the nuclear test veterans—many of whom were national service men in the Army, the Air Force and the Royal Navy—who went to the Pacific 30 or 40 years ago and took part in the tests, which affected their lives. Sadly, many of them are now dead, but there are still unanswered questions relating to the activities of some 40 years ago. Those involved have been stonewalled decade after decade and there is widespread frustration that the Ministry of Defence is still cloaking in secrecy what happened and the position of those men.

Many Gulf war veterans live in the Portsmouth area. Once again, they are frustrated by their inability to get answers to questions. Service personnel in general are frustrated by what they come up against, particularly when they have recently left the service and want to query issues relating to their activities.

Immigrants are often frustrated by the fact that they cannot get answers when relatives are refused entry or they are denied citizenship. Portsmouth prides itself on being a cosmopolitan city, and we have a large immigrant population. The most notorious citizenship case outstanding is that of Mr. Fayed. Under the legislation, he would still not be able to find out who said what about him to frustrate his application. That cannot be right.

Only this morning, I had a conversation with a constituent who was a party to the arrest of two people who had robbed and assaulted him. He identified them to the police on not one but three occasions, including at an identification parade. When the case went to court, he was not even informed of the court date, and he subsequently received a letter saying that the police had dropped the case. There was no explanation from the Crown Prosecution Service or the police. He could get no answers and came to me in frustration. Under the current proposals, we shall never be told why that blatant crime went unpunished. The frustration will continue, and that cannot be right. Even at this late hour in the consultation on the legislation, we should consider those points carefully.

On 14 September 1996, the right hon. Gentleman who is now the Prime Minister said:

"The case for a freedom of information act and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law is now generally agreed outside the Conservative Party and even by some within it. The onus must always be on public authorities to explain why citizens should not have access to information and not vice versa."

In the *Tribune* of 29 September 1995, the right hon. Gentleman who is now the Home Secretary wrote:

"Labour wants to see far greater openness in government. That is why we will introduce a Freedom of Information Act to give people clear rights of access to information collected by public authorities.

[Mr. Hancock]

The balance of the presumption must be reversed so that in most cases information will be made available to the public unless there is a good case for secrecy."

I hope that both right hon. Gentlemen, who now hold high office, will remember their words and act accordingly. I was somewhat frustrated when the Home Secretary expressed to the Select Committee the view that we should still close the door on information from the police.

The conflict between civil servants and the ballot box should be won by the ballot box every time. The House and the will of the people should not be subverted by powerful Whitehall mandarins who might feel that their past life style and the ease—the deft touch of the unaccountable—with which they have governed the nation are being interfered with. We cannot allow this opportunity to slip away, because the nation would not forgive us.

The main purpose of the legislation is to allow people access to information that is pertinent to their personal lives. The balance has to be drawn carefully between the right to know and the privacy of the individual, but I believe that we can find the right blend when the Bill is drafted.

Some of the most intimidating agencies have been wholly excluded. At present, the police, the security services, social security and immigration are all excluded, except for administrative records. We want that to change. It cannot be too late for that.

Hon. Members have asked about the role of the commissioner, which is limited to a judicial review, concerning procedure rather than substance, so a Department has only to act "properly or reasonably", and if the statutes are drafted to give wide scope for what is proper and reasonable, the commissioner will have almost no opportunity to intervene. The hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) made the same point when he said that the use of words could provide an easy route to stop information being made available. We should not allow ourselves to be frustrated by words. We must explore the situation positively.

Committee members were frustrated when we could not further examine the position of the public utilities. The monopoly companies appear to have lobbied successfully to escape the provisions, except where their activities are directly accountable to the public. Southern Water, which serves my area, is an offshoot of a much bigger company, and the larger implications of that multinational company's activities have a bearing on what happens with water in the area that I represent.

We need the right to question the parent company about its activities, and not only about its responsibility to provide clean water and decent sewerage. We need to explore the motivation that leads to investment being contracted or expanded and the pressures that exist on the board. Companies working in the public interest must be open to public scrutiny. Anything short of that would be a travesty of what most reasonable people would expect from the legislation.

We need time to scrutinise the legislation. I hope that the Select Committee will have that opportunity and that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will give us a timetable that will allow us to invite back previous witnesses and question new ones. Many groups would welcome that, and we would relish the opportunity of developing the draft legislation into the reality of a Bill to be introduced in Parliament.

We must ensure that the legislation on data protection and that on freedom of information interface correctly and do not become a means of foiling one another. They should work in tandem to develop freedom, transparency and openness. We must insist that those points are taken on board. Anything short of that will leave people sadly frustrated.

We must take careful note of the points made by the Campaign for Freedom of Information, whose submission to the Select Committee spoke of the harm test and how it is to be applied. In its report of March this year, it listed the factors that needed to be demonstrated to give real authority to that test. Those factors included which parts of the requested information would cause harm; the nature of the harm; the mechanism by which it was believed that the harm could be caused; why it was believed that it would be substantial; and the measures that had been considered for excluding part of the data or seeking the consent of a third party to make information disclosable.

All those factors need to be a fundamental part of the legislation. The harm test—the protection test—should be there. It should go both ways. It cannot be good enough for a Department simply to say that information would be harmful. The Department should need to demonstrate publicly what the harm would be.

Liberals have campaigned for the best part of five decades for freedom of information legislation. The White Paper goes a long way to delivering on our expectations of the incoming Labour Government. I am particularly grateful to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for his leadership and commitment in getting us this far. It would be a great disservice to the House to suggest anything other than that he is the right person to take freedom of information through its next stages, and I wish him well in his endeavours to do so. I congratulate him on what he has done so far, but ask him to take note of what hon. Members on both sides have said. Not one of us here—few though we are—wants anything but good from the White Paper, and 55 million people see it as a stepping stone to greater freedom to live better lives and to understand a little more about our country's government.

8.40 pm

Dr. Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test): I apologise for any unintentional discourtesy to the chairman of the Select Committee on Public Administration or to other hon. Members arising from my absence at the start of the debate. I received a late invitation to meet a Minister, whom I had asked to see, and I felt it best to accept. Unfortunately, that made me a little late.

From what I have heard, I realise how united is the House's welcome for the White Paper and the Government's clear-sighted commitment to freedom of information. I join the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) and my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Bradley) in commending the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on his drive to ensure that the proposals are wide-ranging enough to create a climate in which open information is normal. I hope that the legacy of the legislation to arise from the White Paper will be that people will ask in future what all the fuss was about.

People should find it normal to have access to information about what Governments, public bodies and elected representatives do, and there should be no question that it could be otherwise.

We should not underestimate the revolution in public affairs that that will require. It is good to hear the official Opposition being generally supportive of proposed legislation. That is a revolution in itself. It has not always been that way, although some on the Opposition Benches have always been conspicuously courageous in their tireless advocacy of freedom of information. Indeed, a full 33 per cent. of those now sitting on the Conservative Benches fall into that category. It took a careful mathematical calculation to reach that figure.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin said that the Opposition's new attitude towards legislation might create a climate in which we may receive, from someone, an apology for what happened in Westminster. No apology has been forthcoming from the Opposition leadership, but that case exemplified what can happen when there is a climate of secrecy in local government and when councillors and officers make sure that people do not have the information on which to make proper judgments. Things go dreadfully awry when that happens, and we do not want those circumstances to recur in local government.

Nor do we want to see again in national Government the disgraceful circumstances of the arms-to-Iraq scandal. There was clear evidence in the Scott report of dissimulation by Ministers and civil servants, and that was engendered by the assumption that information was the property of those who had initial access to it, and was a privilege to be handed out in teaspoonfuls to anyone else.

Some people dismiss freedom of information as a problem merely for the chattering classes. However, the problem for freedom of information—or, in our case, lack of it—is that change must come about in public perceptions of what politicians and public administrators are up to. We must demonstrate our good will, our good intentions, our probity and our willingness to engage in proper debate about the issues on which we legislate. Public trust has been lost because of what the public have seen of many people engaged in public administration in recent years. It will take a lot of hard work to restore trust. We cannot do it overnight, or by a single stroke of policy. It will require consistent application over many years. That is why freedom of information is so important.

As the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South said, an Act such as the one that I believe that the Government will introduce will rank as one of the Labour Government's seminal achievements. It will create a climate in which the contract between the politicians and civil servants and the public can perhaps be built anew. Partnership and participation is essential to democratic government in any country, and especially so in ours.

I am pleased that the Select Committee's report broadly supports the Government's initiative. However, a thread—best described as fear of the implementation of legislation—runs through the report's examination of the White Paper and the evidence of witnesses. There were suggestions in the press and among those who gave evidence to the Select Committee that Ministers might seek to restrict the flow of information. It was suggested that Ministers might push for tight definitions of harm, or might argue for an extensive definition of commercial confidentiality.

It also appears from the White Paper that such bodies as the police and the security services might be given a blanket exclusion, perhaps because of fears of the effects that freedom of information would have on them. I can well understand that substantial parts of the operations of the police and the security services must remain operationally confidential. The reports coming out about the history of the troubles in Northern Ireland tell us that there are matters of which the public cannot be made aware for national security reasons.

However, we need not necessarily jump from those facts to the introduction of a class exclusion. The tremendous difficulty in making a distinction between policy and operations has systematically bedevilled implementation of freedom of information in local government. It also came to the fore in recent discussions between the Prison Service and the previous Home Secretary. A host of other examples exists. To put administration within freedom of information legislation, while other activities fall outside, could cause difficulties. The matter should be clarified, because the public must have confidence that the Government are conducting their business in an open, fair and even-handed manner. When it comes to the police, public confidence is vital at all times.

I shall tell the House about the fears that many people justifiably—in some cases, less justifiably—have about implementing the legislation by relating my experience of attempting to introduce a freedom of information platform when I was leader of Southampton city council. When my party took control of the council in 1984, there was a very tight regime in place. It was generally presumed that information was the property of officers, and sometimes of councillors, and items that came before the council for discussion were coded on paper of different colours—hon. Members who have served on local authorities will be familiar with the colour-coding obsession in which those authorities have historically indulged.

In the case of Southampton, an item coded on white paper could be talked about to anyone. If business came before the local authority on yellow paper, it meant, curiously, that one could not talk about it until the afternoon of the council meeting and subsequent to that. If it came before the council on pink paper, one could not talk to anyone about the matter before or after the council meeting—although most of the business on pink paper was systematically leaked to the press by persons unknown. Most importantly, that regime was put in place by officers who effectively had carte blanche in deciding what coloured papers went before the council for discussion. A catch-all definition allowed officers to grade the confidentiality concerns of the local authority.

As soon as my party came to power and I became council leader, I decided that the system should be reversed and that papers would be regarded as confidential only if the reasons for their confidentiality were written upon them. There were seven such reasons—including commercial confidentiality and the personal disclosure of details about a council employee—but no general catch-all clause that allowed someone to declare that a paper should be confidential. Every paper had to bear the reason for its confidentiality. That order completely turned around the atmosphere in the council. I am delighted that the White Paper says that Ministers or any other public servant who wishes to persuade the public that a matter should be confidential must make a

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case as to why that is so. The onus must be upon them to make that case, which is the right and proper way to proceed.

At the time, I received advice both nationally, and particularly locally, from several local authority officers that I was a foolish council leader—many others have told me that since then, but, on this occasion, it related to the confidentiality issue.

Mr. Hancock: You never heeded it.

Dr. Whitehead: I seem to recall that the hon. Gentleman was particularly complimentary some years ago about the wonderful way in which Southampton city council was run. I am grateful for that historical compliment.

It was suggested that my order would lead to a rash of inquiries and that the council would come to a standstill. The phrase "nutters' charter" was used—not an expression that I would choose—and I was accused of stirring up trouble. People said that, within a few months, I would regret my foolish actions and we would have to put the genie back into the bottle. However, there were no such complaints. The method of operation was not unmanageable and the system worked well. I believe that the public had much greater confidence in the city council as a result of the changes. The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, in which the hon. Member for Aldridge–Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) had a substantial hand, installed the regime across local government—although in a slightly different form from Southampton.

There has been considerable resentment subsequently in local government circles about the difference between what local government is required to disclose, and how the House requires it to conduct its business, and the way in which central Government operates. There are startling differences in the level of disclosure required in the civil service and in local government service. Among other things, it is vital that freedom of information legislation rights that wrong: the same rules must apply across all public service. The public service generally must be required to give an account of what it does and the public should have access to that account in order to judge whether the public service is doing a good job on their behalf.

In that context, it is also important to consider carefully the disclosure of parliamentary information. The Select Committee's background paper refers to

"an implied repeal of the Bill of Rights, which declares that the freedom of speech in debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament."

I do not see how what we do in Parliament fits that description. I think that Parliament should take a lead in this area. We must restore our good name through our deliberations with the general public. In my short time as a Member of Parliament, I have observed that hon. Members overwhelmingly deliberate in good faith: they examine the details and think carefully about their actions. The Government take great pains to get their consultation right so that everything is in order and the public are protected properly by the legislation that we pass in the House. The more the public know about the process in this place, the more they will understand that, despite occasional press comments about us, the House is an effective guardian of probity in public life. If that is made apparent, public confidence in public life will be restored.

My small contribution in this area was to publish in my annual report a full financial breakdown of my income and expenditure as a Member of Parliament. The lucky citizens of Southampton will receive about 20,000 copies of that document in the near future—whether they like it or not. That financial information may come as a surprise to people in the first year. However, if I publish that information every year, it will be assumed that that is a natural occurrence. As soon as it becomes the norm, no one will worry about the new regime and the new climate. If the legislation can bring about that new climate and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster can ensure that it permeates the conduct of public life in this country, he will have done our country a great service.

8.58 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Dr. Whitehead) spoke about the difficulties of this process. Twenty years ago, the then Home Secretary, now Lord Merlyn-Rees, used to sit in a little room behind the Speaker's Chair with the representatives of the Liberal party to thrash out the details of freedom of information legislation. The splendid Lord Merlyn-Rees told us during various debates on official secrets legislation that he often used to nod off in those long dark nights as the Liberal party made a vigorous case.

Lord Merlyn-Rees nodded off because he recognised three features. First, there was no will among his colleagues for freedom of information legislation. Secondly, he could not necessarily command a majority on it. Thirdly, the life of the then Labour Government was coming to an end and it was unlikely that the legislative programme would have allowed the legislation. Those were the conditions of 20 years ago and it has been a long haul since.

There was Clement Freud's Official Information Bill. I notice that two great men are within the precincts of this building: a former chairman of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, who is now an adviser to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the director of that organisation, Maurice Frankel, who is sitting under the Gallery. It is due to the efforts of extraordinary private citizens for little or no return that a society—a great society, I would argue—advances. It is undoubtedly the assiduity of such people in pushing, cajoling and helping Members of Parliament introduce a raft of important legislation that has given citizens rights of access to personal information and a range of other details.

We are debating the Government's White Paper and the observations and comments of the Select Committee on Public Administration, on which I have the honour to serve under the distinguished chairmanship of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I hope that I can look forward to a positive Government response to some of our comments. The White Paper has introductions by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. They are the most positive advertisements and arguments for freedom of information. They forced to me to think of the arguments that I had adduced over the years in the House. Why do I believe that freedom of

information is important? I do not have the eloquence of the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, or of the Cabinet Committees that brought this together.

First, I had always argued that we want freedom of information because of who we are as a people. It is our sense of ourselves and our responsibilities, the nature of a public society, the relationship of the citizen to the Government. We are the elected representatives of the people, ours is a democratically elected Government. Freedom of information affects the relationship between the two. It is in our language. In his "Areopagitica", Milton says:

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely".

Those are the essences of our society and who we are as a people.

Secondly, I have always argued that freedom of information is central to accountable government. Again, we can invoke our literature, poetry, language and constitutional development. Remember Pope's "Essay on Man":

"What can we reason, but from what we know."

It is the knowledge of what Government are doing, the knowledge and arguments that form public policy, for which Governments are responsible to us in this House as elected representatives, that gives equality of argument. Governments in Britain have never feared the expression of public opinion. They fear the ability to argue on an equal basis about facts.

That gives me my third reason for arguing for freedom of information. If we have open government with free access to the information that is available to Government, public policy is more likely to be better. We are likely to make better decisions and judgments. What the Government have done is not only important and purposeful but important in a very specific respect.

In the first edition of his "Freedom of Information" Professor Birkinshaw notes:

"Information is inherently a feature of power. So too is its control, use and regulation. Take away a government's preserve on information, and its preserve of when and what to release, then you take away a fundamental bulwark of its power".

What the Government are going to do is remarkable, which is why we watch with anxiety the translation of a White Paper into a draft Bill. I would draw attention to certain causes of that anxiety: for example, the dark clouds that have gathered in the past week, whereby journalists were so much better informed than Back Benchers, seem to show some resiling as Ministers come to reflect on the burden of what the measure may mean. British government has always been deemed to be traditionally a secretive thing and I have tried to argue that that is a product of war, the Defence of the Realm Acts and "Careless talk costs lives".

I noticed that my hon. Friend the Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack), in his excellent speech from the Dispatch Box, referred to the distinction between types. I think that I must be a Whig Liberal—whatever that means—in terms of constitutional development, so I give a cheer to what the Government have put down in the White Paper. That is not just my view, that of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, or that of Members of Parliament; it is the view expressed in an extraordinary report from the information commissioner in Canada, Mr. John Grace—a man for whom many of us have great affection and regard for his advancing of freedom of information in Canada. In his last report, a section reads, "Left in Britain's dust". He praises the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Minister responsible and observes of the Chancellor of the Duchy:

"What he has drafted, represents nothing other than a breathtaking transformation in the relationship between the government and the governed."

He quotes the Chancellor's words, that the legislation

"would transform this country from one of the most closed democracies to one of the most open."

That is a profound compliment, paid across the waters, for we should never forget that Canada is also a parliamentary democracy.

All the arguments that have been adduced in the past—ministerial accountability, responsibility to the House of Commons—have been used to shore up secrecy, not to open up government, but, as I have argued, how can we have accountable government if we, as Members of Parliament, and informed public opinion cannot participate in understanding the balance of the argument? When I look back on the only period from which I can draw examples, I see that most of the major difficulties that previous Governments got into were a consequence of the extraordinary holding on to secrecy—the when and why and where to release information.

Some of the most shaming and difficult episodes for our Government have lain in that culture of secrecy. We had a distinguished former Foreign Secretary defend the secrecy surrounding the change to the arms guidelines on the grounds that, had the British public and the House of Commons known that they had been changed, they would have been outraged because they had been influenced by Saddam Hussein's bombing of the Kurds. He was defending the culture of secrecy on the highest grounds of grand bureaucracy, in the belief that only experts can know best. Ours is a public society: that is what the White Paper recognises and that is what my party now profoundly believes.

I cannot give such an open-handed compliment to the major players in all this without also saying a few words about the exclusions, in respect of which hon. Members on both sides have made valid points. We are concerned about the role of the commissioner: I do not want to see any rowing back from the extraordinarily strong position identified by the Lord Chancellor, the Chancellor of the Duchy and the Cabinet Committee that issued the White Paper, but newspaper reports give one cause for pause. Another important issue is the nature of the damage test—"where it is necessary". Both the Select Committee and the Campaign for Freedom of Information have expressed concern about the proposal to exclude a number of bodies and functions from the scope of the legislation. The most serious of the proposed exclusions relate to the law enforcement functions of the police, police authorities and Government Departments such as the immigration service. Others include security services, prosecution functions of the Crown Prosecution Service, personnel records and legal advice.

I am particularly concerned about the police. There is, as far as I know, no other freedom of information Act, in the advanced democracies and parliamentary democracies that follow our model, that excludes the police wholesale. I must express some disappointment

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with the Home Secretary's evidence. The right hon. Gentleman was rather like the Queen in "Alice in Wonderland"—"off with their heads". There was no reasoned argument. Instead, we had the assertions that we have heard under previous Governments—for example, that it is quite improper, that somehow by aggregation, by putting together little pieces of information, the entire law enforcement edifice of the United Kingdom would crumble.

I do not think that anyone could take the argument at that level very seriously. It was so totalitarian and absolutist. No one has suggested that the operations of our police forces should be under the scrutiny of freedom of information legislation. However, every other society has enabled certain questions to be asked.

The Home Secretary instigated—it was by his fiat, no one else's—the Lawrence inquiry, an inquiry into the murder of a fellow citizen. None of that information was available. As the evidence has come out in front of the Lawrence inquiry, we understand why some of the police want to be so secretive. It is the most appalling outlaying of information. It must be deeply damaging to many people's perception of the most important service for the protection and well-being of us all as a civic society. It is extremely important, so of course they say, "Keep it closed." In fact, it is only by opening it up that we can see where faults lie, that we can insist on improvements, that we can encourage and we can get it right.

I represent, as does the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Bradley), a constituency in the west midlands. The serious crime squad there had to be disbanded. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has told us that a high proportion of police officers are inadequate, dishonest and not suitable. These are drips of information which do not enable us to give a balanced view of what matters. That is a real argument for including certain aspects of the police in the legislation.

I shall push that point to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, as has the Select Committee on Public Administration and other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate. I know that these battles are not easy and I know that, instinctively, the Home Office is anxious about anything that could undermine the police and the integrity of law enforcement. I am suggesting that, on the periphery, inclusion can reinforce and elevate the esteem in which the police are held by their fellow citizens.

The difficulty about exclusion is that no information about a body or its function would be available, even if disclosure would cause no harm. As I have said, no overseas freedom of information law adopts such an approach. Information should be available unless disclosure is shown to be potentially harmful. That is the test set out in the White Paper. I hope very much that, in managing the Committee with the continuing help of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Lord Chancellor will ensure that the Bill features in the Queen's Speech for the next legislative programme; that is all-important. I am disappointed to note that it will not be published until the summer recess, although the Committee on which I serve can meet in September to review it. I am concerned, as I said, when the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis talks of his minority of officers who are corrupt, dishonest and unethical. However grave the misconduct, it should not be excluded.

There was an important development in the years before the White Paper—the code of practice introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). That seems so small a step now only because we are offered such a great prize, but it is still the governing principle of freedom of information. We should not forget that the code is more liberal than the White Paper in one important respect: access to information on immigration matters. That that should be a matter of difficulty in the White Paper disappoints me, but I commend my right hon. Friend the former Prime Minister on his action. Each time we take a step, it is forward, and the White Paper is also a step forward.

9.15 pm

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough): I want to reflect on why the right of freedom of information is so important and to focus not only on the big issues, as many hon. Members have done, but on some of the smaller issues. Freedom of information legislation is crucial, first, because the Government make mistakes. Unless we know what action they have taken, what they think and what information they have, we are unable to correct them. For many people, and in much decision making, that is one of the crucial reasons why we need a legislative guarantee of freedom of information.

Secrets can have devastating effects on people's lives. It was, after all, only when a Minister went to court and admitted that he had lied that people who risked going to gaol because of arms exports were freed from that risk. It is essential that we have a robust mechanism that ensures that information about the truth is available.

That is why I share the disappointment that many hon. Members have expressed about some of the exclusions in the White Paper. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), whose record on freedom of information is second to none, referred to the information about policing that has come out as a result of the Lawrence inquiry. I cannot believe that the basic inadequacy of police officers' knowledge of the law and appropriate procedures has expressed itself only in that single case. Yet we know about that case only because of the inquiry. There should be a general presumption of the right to know about policing, and it should be subject to a harm test only on the grounds of prevention of crime, public order and so on.

As many hon. Members know, I am particularly concerned about immigration issues. I praise the Government for showing greater openness than any of their predecessors on one important point: for the first time, the instructions to immigration officers and entry clearance officers overseas on how to interpret the immigration rules have been made publicly available. They are available in the House of Commons Library and will one day, I hope, be available on the Home Office website.

Many of us who have been worried about the rights of people subject to immigration control have campaigned for that step for many years. It is a huge step forward on openness. I am really depressed that a Government who have the courage to do that—unlike their predecessors, who consistently refused to do so—do not have the

courage to say that the operation of the immigration service should be subject to freedom of information measures, provided that it does not harm the proper administration of immigration control.

The effects on people's lives of what is done by the immigration service are devastating. It determines whether they can live with their families or whether they can ever see their grannies again. Such matters are the day-to-day concern of my constituents, and are not sufficiently subject to public scrutiny because of the inadequacies of parts of the appeal system.

The other crucial issue is that, unless we have freedom of information, the relationship between the Government and the governed is one of feudalism—those who hold the information are the masters and the people are the servants. That is upside down. We are in government to serve the people of Britain. We cannot do that adequately unless they know, and can use that knowledge to hold us to account.

In an information age, when information is power, when people are used to greater openness and trust in their dealings with others, the lack of that information, openness and trust between Government and the people is a key factor in creating disaffection and alienation from the political process. That can be overcome by stripping away secrecy and being open.

I believe that many hon. Members share my horror at the behaviour of some young oiks who have been selling information, and have been ticked off by our newspapers for doing so. That reminds us all how valuable this information is, and reminds us that sometimes it is available only to people who can pay for it. There is a very simple way of changing that: give it to the many, not the few. The Government can give it away or, at least, allow such information to be made available without excessive charge. When the Bill is introduced, we must ensure that, as far as possible, information is given away, so that it can be the people's information. I urge the Minister to ensure that.

Dr. Julian Lewis (New Forest, East): I point out, for the record, that the type of information that *The Observer* managed to get, as it were, ahead of time, is not really that with which the Bill is concerned. The hon. Lady plays it down rather, but did not *The Observer* find that people from new Labour who were in the know, in the right pressure groups and lobbies, could get information of commercial value out to clients, perhaps 24 or 48 hours before it would have been released anyway?

Fiona Mactaggart: I believe that the hon. Gentleman suffers from an excess of credulity. My reading of the piece in *The Observer* is that the charge was that these people claimed that they could provide such information. I did not see that any of them had actually done so. I called them oiks earlier; it is not very wise for anyone to trust oiks' claims.

In the historical debate, since I have been a Member of the House, I have pooh-poohed those cynics who said that the strategy that the Government chose to use—to start with a White Paper, to have a debate and then to introduce legislation—would lead to the failure of the possibility of legislation because, once we had tasted power, we would fall into the nasty habits that every other Government had shown, and would want to keep our secrets to ourselves and under our jumpers. I have always said that that is not true. I hope that I shall be proved right by what happens next.

I believe that the evidence shows that I am right. The Government's record of giving away power and opening up the process of government shows that they have done that more dynamically than have any other Government this century. They have given power to the Welsh assembly and the Scottish Parliament. They have given the people rights through a "Bill of Rights"—the Human Rights Bill—and, let us make no mistake about it, that is how the incorporation of the European convention on human rights will work. That is one of the tools for fundamentally changing the constitutional relationship between the Government and the people. I believe that we will do that, but it is easy to be frightened, and there is ample evidence that the civil service is frit. Successive reports from ombudsmen show Departments scuttling around trying to find reasons why they do not need to provide information under the code—in the words of one of the ombudsmen, "haggling about issuing information". My message is that Departments should not be scared and Ministers should not listen to them.

We have a chance to end the popular vision of government in this country as a bunch of Sir Humphreys pushing Ministers around intellectually. The Sir Humphreys must be put back into the cupboard and the secrets taken out of the cupboard. If we do that, we have a great opportunity to change Britain's democracy radically. We should ignore the fearful, be bold and implement the words that the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) quoted, predicting that they might prove to be our downfall. Those words were not only in the introduction to the White Paper, but in Labour's manifesto.

We know what the truth is. Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in government and ineffective policy decisions. We have a chance to show definitively that this Government will end the arrogance of government and improve the quality of policy. We will do that by introducing an effective freedom of information Bill. The White Paper is a step on the road. Let us take the next leap.

9.26 pm

Mr. Norman Baker (Lewes): It is wonderful to be in the Chamber to speak on the subject of freedom of information and the Government's radical proposals. One of the reasons why I entered politics was my commitment to the freedom of information. It is a building block on which so much else rests, and if it is not right, so much else suffers.

I agree with the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) in his analysis. Bad government follows from secrecy; better government follows from freedom of information. For that reason alone, every Member of Parliament should embrace proposals to open up government. Moreover, it is people's right to know what is going on. When Government get it wrong, people at large gain the information and pull Government back on track. For those two reasons, freedom of information is essential.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and his Committee for keeping their eye on the ball and not being deflected; to hon. Members such

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as the hon. Member for Aldridge–Brownhills who have campaigned so hard on the issue; and especially to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has been unswerving in his commitment since my election in May last year and, no doubt, before that as well. It is disgraceful that attempts are continually made through the national media to disparage the Minister, probably by people who are after his job, and I hope that, under the freedom of information proposals, we will find out who is responsible.

Mr. Hancock: We should be so lucky.

Mr. Baker: I hope so.

The White Paper was very good indeed. I have only two main comments. The first relates to the total exclusion from the proposals of the security services and the police. Why is not the test of substantial harm applied to the security services, as it is in the rest of the paper? I accept that that means that a great amount of material relating to the security services would not be released, but if the substantial harm test were applied, some information would come out.

Why are we not even allowed to know, for example, how the money allocated to the security services is split among MI5, MI6 and GCHQ? Why do we not know how many telephone lines are tapped, as opposed to warrants issued? There is much information that could be given out without in any way endangering national security. That will not be taken forward by the proposals in the White Paper.

Secondly, I am disappointed that the 30-year rule is not to be reduced to 20 years. I note for the record that, last Friday, the Government Whip blocked my Bill to achieve that. I would be grateful if the Chancellor would explain whether the objection is on principle, or is on the basis of the cost or the practicality of reducing the limit.

I do not wish to strike a note of discord, but there seem to be two sorts of Labour Member, at least in the Cabinet and possibly outside. That is one way of looking at it, anyway. Let me simplify what I am saying: some members of the Cabinet are good guys, and some are not. At present, a battle seems to be in progress for the soul of where the Government are going in regard to freedom of information. Members of the Cabinet have woken up to the fact that the issue may embarrass them, that it will produce difficulties for them and that it will mean matters they would prefer to remain secret becoming public. As hon. Members have said, a rearguard action is in progress in an attempt to stop the Bill—not overtly, because that would be too unpopular; to delay it for a Session, and then another Session. Then it will be a question of "It is too near the election, Minister. You cannot do it now."

We have had that sort of thing before. In 1979 the Conservatives came to power having promised such an Act, no doubt in good will; that was put off and put off, and never materialised. I do not underestimate the forces of darkness, if I may call them that, which will conspire to stop such legislation.

Sir Patrick Cormack: The Prince of Darkness.

Mr. Baker: Perhaps.

I ask for a clear commitment from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that the Queen's Speech will include legislation, and that legislation will not be delayed for a further 12 months—and possibly 12 months after that, when everyone else has lost interest.

I have spoken of the dichotomy between members of the Cabinet who wish to pursue matters openly and those who wish to keep them secret. Let me now say something about the other report, which has not been dealt with at much length. I refer to parliamentary questions—a subject that the Chancellor might be disappointed if I did not mention tonight. Contrary to what was said earlier, tabling written questions costs nothing; it merely means that civil service time is redirected towards answering questions from Back Benchers rather than matters raised by Ministers.

It is clear from answers given that not everyone in the Government shares the commitment of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to freedom of information. The report from the Public Administration Committee recognises that written questions are crucial: that is the wording that it uses, and I am grateful for that endorsement. The Chancellor himself has said:

"Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest".—[*Official Report*, 16 Dec 1997; Vol. 303, c. *78*.]

I asked the Minister Without Portfolio, in a parliamentary question, whether he would list

"persons within his office who have complained to the media about the reporting of the Government's activities."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1997; Vol. 300, c. *452*.]

The answer was

"No."

I asked him whether he would

"estimate the percentage of his working time spent on . . . Ministerial duties",

and was told:

"I devote whatever time I judge necessary for the fulfilment of my ministerial and other duties."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1997; Vol. 299, c.25.]

That is not a blocked answer—I refer to a point made in the report—but an answer that, although not blocked, tells us nothing.

I asked the Prime Minister to

"list the meetings and events since 2 May at which the Minister Without Portfolio has represented the Government."

The answer was

"Since 2 May my hon. Friend has had a wide range of meetings with ministerial colleagues and others."—[*Official Report*, 29 July 1997; Vol. 299, c. *114*.]

I knew that before I asked the question, but I was not told much more than I knew before I asked it. Such answers are designed to give no information. They are designed to cock a snook at Members of Parliament who want a freedom of information Act.

Only recently, I asked the Prime Minister—I think this was very germane—whether he would list

labour party events which have taken place since 14 May . . . at . . . 10 Downing Street . . . 11 Downing Street . . . Carlton House Terrace and . . . Chequers."

We know that such events are taking place, because they are in the papers. The Prime Minister said:

"Any private receptions have been held in accordance with the Ministerial Code."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1998; Vol. 314, c. 597.]

In other words, he will not tell the House something that we ought to know.

There are good guys and bad guys. My money is on the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is doing a splendid job. I hope that every hon. Member will support him in his attempt to bring about a freedom of information Act.

9.34 pm

Miss Melanie Johnson (Welwyn Hatfield): I thank the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Baker) for curtailing his remarks so that I can contribute, although I wonder how many written questions he could have tabled in the time that he was on his feet. Perhaps we should have detained him a little longer.

I was a little bemused by some contributions from Opposition Members. Do they see the vessel as largely full, half empty, or more than half empty? There is no doubt in my mind that a massive step forward is being made with the White Paper and the draft Bill, which I hope will be published later this year—that is the thrust of the report of the Select Committee, of which I am a member.

We are on the brink of a revolution in information. That is being brought about not only by the White Paper and legislation, but by the advent of greater access to information via the internet and all the implications that that has for our society, for neighbouring societies and for the whole globe. That revolution will have a great impact on how much progress we make with the legislation and how we make that progress—although it is interesting that few hon. Members felt the need to refer to that.

The hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) commented on the code of practice and complained that we have not given it sufficient credit it the debate, but much larger steps forward will be taken through the White Paper. The Select Committee report refers to crucial differences between the code and the White Paper. For example, the scope of the code is much more limited in general; documents can be withheld under the code, whereas people will not be able to do that under the proposals in the White Paper; the test under the code has been one of harm, but we propose a test of substantial harm in many cases; and there is no means of enforcement under the code—the ombudsman only has powers of persuasion to bring to bear. All that makes a marked difference, which is one reason why the code, which was introduced four years ago, has not been given the place that it could have occupied in opening things.

As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, there is no doubt that freedom of information will change things for the vast majority of people: we have to introduce it for the many, and it will be a meaningful step forward for the general public. It is easy to forget that, although some hon. Members may be exercised by the burning issue of how many receptions have been held at No. 10 Downing street, for many members of the public freedom of information will mean that they can get from the Intervention Board, the Inland Revenue, the Milton Keynes development corporation, the Commission for the New Towns, the Child Support Agency, the Benefits Agency or the Marine Safety Agency answers to the various questions and problems that they have had as individuals.

Such matters—information on the fees paid to lawyers, for example—sometimes go beyond the individual, but are often confined to an individual's difficulties with gaining access or recourse to something to which, under the current system, he cannot gain access. Although hon. Members worry about access to information in the corridors of power, those other issues matter to many people—they affect their lives.

As a society, we have developed many anxieties about the presumption that information should be accessible, and we have a secretive culture. It is interesting to look through the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration on what has happened with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of contracts for the disposal of cattle infected with BSE. We have already commented in the report and again this evening on the fact that the course of the BSE saga might have been different, and the cost to the public purse and to farming might have been much less, if a freedom of information regime had been in place. It is clear from the commissioner's report that, in response to a question, the MAFF people would not release details about the contracts because they did not refer to the code of practice at all. The report shows that MAFF and many other Government Departments are only just—there is a list of the improvements that are being made by Government Departments in that document—beginning to take steps, with the civil service, to become much more open and that the anxieties to which I have referred are still to the fore.

We need to have legal backing to the right to information, as the Government propose. That is crucial. When we went to Sweden and Ireland, we found that the improvements that need to be made in the civil service are important. Much time has been spent, particularly in Ireland, where this is a new issue, looking at the changes that need to to be made in the civil service, in civil service training and in codifying practice and manuals.

We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) about the improvements that have been made in the openness of immigration procedures and manuals, although she made other comments about that as well. However, there are other areas where we need to codify practice and make it more readily available to people. We need to explain what information is kept, how it is kept and why. Those are not the sexy parts of freedom of information, but they may make a big difference to people's lives.

The confidence and competence of a Government are to be tested against the extent to which they will open information and against the belief that they represent the interests of many people, so that their interests will not differ from those of many people. A Government who are confident about their competence will be prepared to share with people, and to take the step towards freedom of information. Once that step is taken, I believe that we will not go back on it; we will only make progress. The prospective legislation is part of a major constitutional change towards more open and accountable government. It brings about the presumption of openness. For that reason, it is a major improvement.

[Miss Melanie Johnson]

We have heard much about striking the right balance on privacy. That will be difficult. When we went to Sweden, we heard how, if an under-age pregnant girl wrote a letter to Sweden's Prime Minister, that letter could, because of that country's freedom of information regime, become public property, which would be highly undesirable. If, however, the same girl wrote to Sweden's Ministry of Health about those matters, the letter would be protected and the privacy of the individual would be rightly preserved. We need to strike the right balance. It will be difficult, but we need to include safeguards to ensure that people in this country do not run into such problems.

I endorse what we say in the Select Committee report: this is a

"radical advance in open and accountable government",

of which this Government should be justly proud.

9.44 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Dr. David Clark): This has been an excellent debate. The House is indebted to the Chairman and members of the Select Committee for examining the White Paper and for persuading the Liaison Committee to recommend to the House that this item should be debated. I welcome the debate and I have listened carefully to the almost unanimous views of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It is interesting that the House appreciates how critical freedom of information is to our democracy. We have been through a difficult time and, because we are all aware of the breakdown of trust between Governments and citizens, we are beginning to realise, as we move into the next millennium, that democracy is more than casting a vote every five years, important though that may be. I am enthused by the mood of the House, which showed that hon. Members recognise that freedom of information and the right of our citizens to know information that affects them is a critical part of our democratic institutions. They also appreciate the fact that open government is good government. I have believed in that thesis for many years and I am delighted that others now share that view.

I shall try, in the time at my disposal, to deal with as many as possible of the points that have been raised. I apologise to the Select Committee for not giving it a formal reply, but work on the Government's response is well advanced and I hope that we will meet the two-month deadline. We shall give the Committee a detailed and considered response.

This is a well-produced and well-thought-out report. It has raised a number of issues that we are considering. We take the Select Committee's point that this is a particularly difficult concept to understand and get right. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Miss Johnson) made the point forcefully that there is a fine balance between openness and privacy and that we should learn from the experience of other countries. In preparing the White Paper, we spent a long time studying the experience, often over many years, of other countries.

The Government take on board the Select Committee's 44 detailed recommendations. We may not agree with all of them, but we shall examine and test them. The Select Committee recognises how fine the balance is, and accepts that this is

"an ambitious and highly complex piece of legislation".

It is conscious of the fact that it has taken us a long time—rightly, in my view—to ensure that we attained the correct solution. It says:

"we have some serious doubts . . . about whether the Government has been able to give sufficient attention to the relationship between the Freedom of Information Bill and the Data Protection Bill."

As we have followed the debate and weighed up the results of the consultation, we have shifted our position slightly on the relationship between freedom of information and data protection and have looked anew at some of the concepts.

No one should doubt our commitment to freedom of information. It is clear in our manifesto. My hon. Friends and hon. Members on the Liberal Democrat Benches have acknowledged that the Government intend to push ahead with a radical programme of constitutional change. Freedom of information is a key part—I would argue, a central part—of the programme to modernise British politics. As the Prime Minister said, freedom of information is not some isolated constitutional reform, but a change that is absolutely fundamental to how we see politics developing in this country. He is absolutely right and the overwhelming majority of hon. Members share that view.

In our 1997 manifesto, we said that we would introduce

"a Freedom of Information Act, leading to more open government"

and we will. Both parts of that statement are correct. They are related, but not dependent on each other. Governments can, should and will be open in providing information to citizens and to Members of Parliament.

Mr. Baker: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I shortened my speech to allow everyone to get in and I do not want to exclude anyone, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will excuse me if I do not give way. I want to try to answer points raised by the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members.

We have to be more open. That is why we published the background papers leading to the White Paper and why we have published much more information on the internet.

The hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Sir P. Cormack) criticised me for not acknowledging the code of practice, but we do acknowledge it in the White Paper. We have not laid great emphasis on the code because we intend to surpass it, but it has had a part to play. It has been the yardstick against which we have tried to measure our progress but, by and large, all hon. Members—including the hon. Gentleman—believe that the time has come to move on.

I should point out that the annual monitoring report for the code—which I announced only last month—states that the Government recognise the continuing value of the code. In planning the transition to a statutory regime, the Government will therefore seek to build on the experience gained and the lessons learnt from operating the code. We acknowledge the importance of the code in taking forward the White Paper.

We have made progress in the White Paper. As has been pointed out this evening, we are extending the coverage to almost the whole of the public sector. We are widening and deepening the information available. It is no longer just information that people will have access to, but the original document. We are reducing the exemptions from 14 to seven. We are creating an information commissioner. Some hon. Members may not have quite understood the full powers of the information commissioner.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) was a little critical—I put it no higher than that—because he felt that all the commissioner could judge was the reasonableness of the decision of the civil servant. That is not the case. Under our proposals, the commissioner will examine and rule on the merits of the refusal to disclose information. The point of reasonableness comes in when we have a final appeal—if there is one—under the judicial review. The hon. Gentleman can be reassured by that point.

We have, for the most part, imposed harm tests that are much more stringent than any of the existing mechanisms. I think that the House will accept that we are moving forward from the code and that we are making a quantum leap.

I am encouraged by the response of hon. Members on both sides of the House, particularly by that of the official Opposition, who are now prepared to change their stance and to support a statutory freedom of information regime. That is welcomed by Labour Members and by Liberal Democrats, who spent many years trying to persuade the previous Government that they were wrong on this matter.

Hon. Members have also raised the issue of process, which is a difficult matter to get right. I assure the House that the process remains on course and that progress is good. I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and other members of the Select Committee who have expressed concern that the Government have an agreed timetable to publish a draft Bill by the end of September for pre-legislative consideration. Indeed, nothing whatever has happened to affect the Bill's candidature for inclusion in the Queen's Speech later this year; I cannot be more open or definitive than that.

The Government's declared intention is that there will be further consultation. That is why we are publishing the draft Bill and why the Select Committee will have the opportunity to consider it before the legislation is finalised and brought before the House after, I hope, the next Queen's Speech. The Opposition will have the opportunity to feed in their views on the draft Bill, but the issues are so difficult that, unless the Government give a lead after consultation—as is their duty—we shall have no framework within which to work. The White Paper "Your Right to Know" is a declaration of the Government's intent. It contains the principles on which the Government will build and from which they will derive their draft Bill.

As has been acknowledged, we are going much further than other countries. That is right and proper, given that we have been so far behind. However, I want to correct one or two of the points that were raised today. It is important that hon. Members understand that we intendto exclude only the security services; we shall not exclude the police or the immigration service per se. Paragraph 2.21 of the White Paper states that

"the Act will exclude information relating to the investigation and prosecution functions of the police, prosecutors and other bodies carrying out law enforcement work such as the Department of Social Security or the Immigration Service."

We do not intend to exclude administrative functions of the immigration service or the police.

Deciding what constitutes administration and what constitutes investigation has taken up much of our time and attention; finding the right definition is a difficult task, but we are trying to do it. Once we decide that a matter is not excluded, we shall have to determine whether it belongs to one of the seven specified interests and, finally, whether disclosure is against the public interest.

We are trying to bring forward a Bill that strikes the right balance between privacy and freedom of information.

We have taken on board the fact that the Select Committee pointed out that we should integrate data protection and freedom of information. When the Lord Chancellor appeared before the Select Committee he pointed out that the two pieces of legislation must be dovetailed. We are very much persuaded by the Select Committee's argument that we need to get that absolutely right. Probably, most of the applications on subject matter will be under the data protection legislation, but we are also aware that it does not go as far as we would like and does not cover as much as the freedom of information legislation.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the deferred Question which she was directed by paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 54 (Consideration of estimates) to put at that hour.*

ESTIMATES 1998–99

Class IX, Vote 1

Question,

That a further, revised sum not exceeding £6,019,940,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1999 for expenditure by the Department for Education and Employment on voluntary and special schools; the Assisted Places Scheme; the provision of education for under-fives; city colleges and other specialist schools; grant-maintained schools and schools conducted by education associations; music and ballet schools; the school curriculum and its assessment; the youth service and other educational services and initiatives; careers guidance and services; payments for or in connection with teacher training; higher and further education provision and initiatives; loans to students, student awards and other student grants and their administration; the payment of access funds; reimbursement of fees for qualifying European Union students; compensation payments to teachers and staff of certain institutions; expenditure on other central government grants to local authorities; the provision of training and assessment programmes for young people and adults; initiatives to improve training and qualifications arrangements and access to these; the promotion of enterprise and the encouragement of self employment; payments for education, training and employment projects assisted by the European Community and refunds to the European Community; events associated with the UK presidency of the EU; the UK subscription to the ILO; help for unemployed people; the promotion of equal

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**PQ 3291i 12:00 ON FRI 10 JULY** **PQ 3335i 12:00 ON MON 13 JULY**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3291i, PQ 3335i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

PQ 3291i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government when arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place, and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up to date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence. (HL2607)

PQ 3335i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government what follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when they receive a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. (HL2609)

DRAFTED BY:	Section 40 [redacted]	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Section 40 [redacted] Grade 7	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Mr M J D Fuller: SCS	TEL:	Section 40

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of 'unidentified flying objects' is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity and reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MOD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of 'unidentified flying objects' are examined with the assistance of relevant MOD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

Loose Minute

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

24th July 1998

Parliamentary Clerk

Copy to:

APS/Minister(DP)

POs 3291i and 3335i: LORD HILL NORTON

1. We recently dealt with a raft of Hill Norton PQs on the subject of UFOs. It is clear from the Official Report (15 July col WA25) that the answer which linked PQs 3291i and 3335i (copy attached for ease of reference) is different from that provided.

2. Our draft reply was couched in terms to make it quite clear to Hill Norton (and other interested parties) that insofar as the Department's interest in this subject is concerned, reporting procedures **are** adequate. However, this positive statement has been diluted by the addition of 'whether' to the text and is far less helpful to the Department. Do you know why this amendment was made? What might, perhaps, seem a minor change does have some consequences when dealing with the subject on a daily basis and it would have been helpful to have had an opportunity to discuss the revised form of words before the PQ was answered.

3. To clarify the position with Hill Norton either by a further PQ answer or in a letter will only draw more attention to the problem. Is there anyway the bound volume can be amended without reference to him?

Section 40 [redacted]

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2
FAX : Section 40

NATO: New Members and Command Structure

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the new members of NATO will fill senior NATO commands; and, if so, which. [HL2479]

Lord Gilbert: It is planned that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will fill posts in the new NATO command structure. The exact number, seniority and location of these has not yet been determined.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

When arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up-to-date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence; and [HL2607]

What follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when it receives a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. [HL2609]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of unidentified flying objects is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity and whether reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MoD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of unidentified flying objects are examined with the assistance of relevant MoD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. [HL2608]

Lord Gilbert: The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996: 609

1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorised foreign military activity, we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords: Comparative Costs

Viscount Tenby asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the costs of maintaining the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, including:

(a) salaries, pensions, travelling allowances, secretarial expenses and other expenses for Members;

64/4

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* Word inserted by Lord Gilbert which changes the meaning of the answer.

64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 32

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1997: 425

1998: 88 (January–June)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that [illegible] Kingdom's airspace has been compr[illegible] unauthorised foreign military activity, we d[illegible] provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MoD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

Lord Gilbert: These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

Lord Gilbert: An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of unidentified flying objects. The machine carries a message that sets out the MoD's limited interest in the subject and explains that, in the case of reported sightings, callers will be contacted only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31 March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

Lord Gilbert: The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen, but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MoD has no reason to doubt the judgments made at the time.

Section 40 [redacted] Please take this up with Paul's branch. They must not change draft answers without consulting the branch concerned. What may seem a drafting change to them may affect the substance. Ask for an explanation.

Section 40 [redacted]

* Word inse[illegible] changes t[illegible]

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 31

Mr. Spellar: WE177 was manufactured between 1966 and 1977. Regular servicing was carried out as necessary to ensure continued safety and reliability whilst in service. I am withholding information as to the number of weapons manufactured under Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Government Information relating to Defence, Security and International Relations.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which contractors and Ministry of Defence organisations designed each variant of the WE177 weapon; and when this work was carried out. [46825]

Mr. Spellar: Design work for WE177 was started over 30 years ago with the design for the first variant completed in 1963, the second in 1965, and the last in 1972.

The co-ordinating design authority for all WE177 variants was Hunting Engineering, with the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment as design authority for the warhead element. The Royal Ordnance Factories at Burghfield, Cardiff and Chorley, RAF Farnborough, and RARDE Fort Halstead assisted in the work, as did a number of other contractors. Given the age of the programme it has not been possible to compile a full and accurate list.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 12 November 1997, *Official Report*, column *581*, if the weights, sizes and yields of each type of the WE177 weapon are now declassified information. [47804]

Mr. Spellar: Information on the size and weight of all three variants of the WE177 bomb is unclassified and is listed. Technical details relating to the performance of the weapons, including yield, which would reveal information about our design capabilities, or aspects of current operational systems, or be of assistance to proliferators, continues to be covered by exemption 1 of the code of practice on access to Government information relating to defence security and international relations.

Variant	*Weight*	*Size*
Type A	600lb	112 inches long
Type B	950lb	133 inches long
Type C	950lb	133 inches long

All variants had a diameter of 16.5 inches and a fin span of 24.5 inches.

Commachio Group Royal Marines

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the Commachio Group Royal Marines is based; how many companies it comprises; what is the function of each company; and what plans he has for their relocation. [46820]

Dr. Reid: Commachio Group is based at RM Condor, Arbroath, and comprises an HQ Company and 3 Rifle Companies. The latter rotate in protecting the UK's strategic deterrent assets at HMS Neptune, Faslane, the RN Armament Depot Coulport, and during related road movements. Following public consultation, I approved earlier this year the Group's permanent relocation to HMS Neptune by April 2001.

HMS Ocean

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 June 1998, *Official Report*, column *638*, when he expects to receive details of the costs and the liability in respect of the damage to the tail shaft bearings of HMS 'Ocean'; and if the *(a)* costs and *(b)* inquiry conclusions will be made public. [47074]

Mr. Spellar: The Formal Inquiry currently underway into the cause of the damage to HMS Ocean's port shaft "A" bracket bearing is expected to conclude in the autumn of this year. The Inquiry is being conducted by the prime contractor, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited. The costs of, and liability for, the damage will be the subject of negotiation between MOD and the company following the Inquiry and is not expected to be resolved before the end of the year.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 June 1998, *Official Report*, column *638*, what assessment his Department has made of the cause of the damage to HMS Ocean on her launch in October 1995; and what changes to operating arrangements have been made as a result. [47063]

Mr. Spellar: The hull damage sustained by HMS Ocean during her launch on 11 October 1995 was attributable to the accidental collapse of a forward launch cradle. It is the responsibility of the prime contractor Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited to ensure that launch arrangements are safe and acceptable and, where necessary, adapted to reflect lessons learnt from previous experience. The damage will not require any change to the proposed operating arrangements of HMS Ocean once she enters service.

SA80 and M16 Rifles

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the bullets used by British forces using *(a)* SA80 and *(b)* M16 rifles have tumbling action. [47044]

Dr. Reid: The large majority of bullets used by British Forces in SA80 and M16 rifles are known as ball or tracer rounds. Armour-piercing rounds are also used. These bullets are categorised as spin-stabilised, non-deforming bullets. All spin-stabilised bullets will tumble to some degree when they hit a human target.

UFOs

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire in the investigation of sightings of unidentified flying objects. [47318]

Mr. Spellar: Brawdy ceased to be an RAF station on 31 March 1996 when the establishment was transferred to the Army.

Generally, my Department examines reports of unidentified flying objects only to establish whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's Air Defence Region has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity. Unless a report reveals evidence of a potential threat from an external military source, no attempt is made to determine the precise nature of what might have been seen.

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

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3290i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 Section 40 10/7/98 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS 10-7-98

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**PQ 3291i 12:00 ON FRI 10 JULY** **PQ 3335i 12:00 ON MON 13 JULY**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3291i, PQ 3335i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

PQ 3291i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government when arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place, and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up to date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence. (HL2607)

PQ 3335i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government what follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when they receive a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. (HL2609)

DRAFTED BY:	Section 40 [redacted] Section 40 [redacted] 9/7/98	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Section 40 [redacted] Grade 7	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Mr M J D Fuller: Section 40 [redacted] SCS 10.7.98	TEL:	Section 40

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of 'unidentified flying objects' is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity and reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MOD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of 'unidentified flying objects' are examined with the assistance of relevant MOD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3292i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government how many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. (HL2608)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 10/7/98 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fulle Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS 10.7.98

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

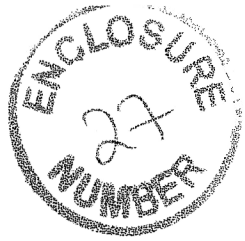
ANSWER:

The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996	609	
1997	425	
1998	88	(Jan - Jun)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorized foreign military activity we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MOD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335



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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3293i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 : Section 40 10/7/98 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 : TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS 10-7-98

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of 'unidentified flying objects'. The machine carries a message that sets out the MOD's limited interest in the subject and explains that in the case of reported sightings callers will be contacted further only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 26

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3295i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government how many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31st March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 : Section 40 10/7/98 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS Section 40 10.7.98

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MOD has no reason to doubt the judgements made at the time.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

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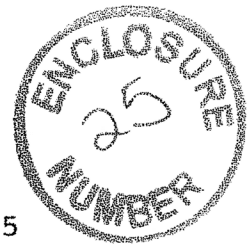

POLICY & STAFF

BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

1. Lord Hill-Norton, aged 83, and Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971-1973, has tabled six 'UFO'-related PQs (3290/1/2/3/5 and 3335). He has a long-standing interest in 'UFOs', was a member of the (long defunct) House of Lords All-Party 'UFO' Study Group and has written the forewords for a least two books on the subject. Over the years Hill-Norton has supported individual 'ufologists'' causes and, in the last nine months, we have answered seven further PQs (Hansard Extracts attached).

2. In April he wrote asking for all 'UFO' files held in MOD archives to be released to the Public Record Office (ie. in advance of the 30 year rule). DOMD, the MOD focal point for Access to Government Information, is currently seeking legal advice on third party confidentiality issues in respect of this request.

PQ 3291, 3292, 3335

3. MOD examines 'UFO' sighting reports, with the assistance of MOD experts as necessary, solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely whether there is any evidence that UK airspace might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. The integrity of the UK's airspace is maintained by a continuous recognised air picture and an air policing capability. There is no evidence to suggest that our Air Defence system does not fully meet the currently perceived threat from foreign military activity.

4. Media interest in the 'UFO' phenomenon gathered pace during 1996/97 (see para 7 below) necessitating an internal review in April 1997 to assess the level of staffing appropriate for the limited interest the Department has in this subject. It was agreed with Air Defence and Defence Intelligence staff that for the future it would be appropriate to staff only those reports in the following categories for further, defence-related advice:

- **Credible Witness Reports:** Reports received from service personnel, civil pilots, staff working in air traffic control centres and the emergency services, or those complete with documented evidence such as photographs, video footage etc.

- **Corroborated Sightings:** A series of reports apparently describing the same phenomenon and provided by separate and independent sources where these could not be readily explained.

- **Timely sightings:** Reports of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection

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by Air Defence or other assets such as military aircraft or radar observers.

5. Sec(AS), the MOD focal point, generally receives 'UFO' reports from RAF stations, police stations, air traffic control centres and directly from members of the public. It is a well-known and well-established point of contact for these reports and we do not consider there is any need for the Department to publicize the details further. We firmly believe that to do so would suggest greater credibility for the subject and invite yet more reporting of what is a very minor defence-related issue and, in the main, attracts only a small, but single-minded group of people to respond.

PO 3290

6. Advice is sought from Air Defence and Defence Intelligence experts on any reports received from the specific categories listed above; very occasionally, establishments such as the Royal Observatory or RAF Fylingdales will also be consulted. However, the majority of 'UFO' reports received are vague and lack substance.

PO 3293

7. A significant amount of media interest in 1996 in 'UFOs' coincided with the publication of Nicholas Pope's book '*Open Skies Closed Minds*'. Pope, who had previously worked in Sec(AS) and is still employed within the MOD, set out his personal views supporting the existence of 'UFOs' and was critical of the way MOD deals with this subject. The number of 'UFO' reports made to the Department increased by over 50% to 609 in 1996, and continued at this level for much of 1997 whilst the media covered the events associated with the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. The number of 'UFO'-related letters and telephone calls to Sec(AS) also rose significantly. It was the case that the public had direct telephone access to Sec(AS)2 desk officers to report 'UFO' sightings. However, callers became more frequent in their efforts to discuss MOD's policy in respect of this subject and pass on details of their personal concerns outwith the Department's remit (alien abductions, crops circles, extraterrestrial lifeforms, ghosts, animal mutilations etc). As a consequence, staff effort became increasingly diverted from core tasks. The outgoing answerphone message (ANNEX A) makes clear the Department's limited interest in the subject and that further contact will be made by Sec(AS) only if it is appropriate within the terms of our remit in respect of this activity.

PO 3295

8. This alleged sighting has been the subject of previous PQs (Hansard extracts attached). The lights in the sky witnessed in the early hours of 31 March 1993 were seen by a number of people in the West Country and South Wales area. Witnesses included two

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members of a mobile RAF police patrol on duty at RAF Cosford, a Meteorological Officer at RAF Shawbury and several police officers. All reports were examined at the time but nothing conclusive was established and it must therefore be assumed that officials at the time did not view the alleged incident of defence concern. Pope, who was the Sec(AS)2 desk officer involved at the time made much of this alleged incident in his book. It is not clear from the papers held on file whether the Met Officer was a serviceman or civilian and we have not therefore speculated on this point in the answer.

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ANNEX A

OUTGOING MESSAGE ON THE SECRETARIAT (AIR STAFF) PUBLIC ENQUIRY LINE FOR LEAVING REPORTS OF 'UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS'

"You have reached the Ministry of Defence Air Staff Secretariat. You may use this voicemail facility to make reports of unusual aerial observations which you wish to draw to the attention of the MOD. However, the Department's interest is confined only to establishing whether there is evidence of unauthorized military activity in UK airspace.

On this basis if you wish to register a report please leave your name, address and telephone number after the tone giving brief details of what you have seen. Please remember to include the date, time and precise location. You will be contacted further only in the event that we consider any follow-up is required.

If your enquiry concerns the MOD's policy on the so-called "UFO" phenomenon, you will need to write to us at the:

Ministry of Defence
Secretariat (Air Staff)2.
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
SW1A 2HB.

Press Enquiries should be directed through the MOD Press Office."

HILL-NORTON PQs

Written Answers

Tuesday, 28th October 1997.

Mr. Reginald Buckland: Court Documents

Lord Burton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of the judgment delivered at Cambridge Crown Court on 11 September 1997, and all other papers and documents submitted to the court, in case A970014, the appeal of *Reginald Buckland* v. *The Chief Constable of Cambridge* before His Honour Judge Haworth heard on 15 August 1997 against the refusal of the Chief Constable to vary the conditions of a firearms certificate, and in particular all other papers, documents, disclosures and submissions which Mr. Robert Gardiner, Clerk to the Court, has failed to provide upon request by Lord Burton.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Irvine of Lairg): The Question concerns a matter which has been assigned to the Court Service under the terms of its Framework Document. I have therefore asked the Chief Executive to respond.

Letter to Lord Burton from the Chief Executive of the Court Service, Mr. M. D. Huebner, dated 28 October 1997.

RELEASE OF COURT DOCUMENTS

The Lord Chancellor has asked me to reply to your Question about the release of papers and documents submitted to the court in the case of *Reginald Buckland* v. *The Chief Constable of Cambridge*.

A copy of the judgment was placed in the Library of the House on 7 October. As the remaining documents are the property of the party who filed them, there is no obligation or authority for the court to disclose them. With Mr. Buckland's consent, copies of correspondence between himself and the respondent were provided to you on 15 October, and will today be placed in the Library.

Central and Eastern Europe: Military Training Assistance

The Earl of Carlisle asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many individual service personnel and military training teams from the United Kingdom Armed Forces will be deployed throughout 1998, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which were formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, to assist with the training of their Armed Forces.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): The Ministry of Defence currently expects to deploy six individual Service personnel and 10 military Short Term Training Teams to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1998. All are deployed at the specific request of the countries concerned, who seek to benefit from the expertise of the United Kingdom's Armed Forces. The aim of the training teams is to advise on the conduct of either officer or non-commissioned officer training. The individual Service personnel, all officers, are deployed to provide expertise in specific areas of defence management.

RAF Bentwaters and Woodbridge: Nuclear Weapons Allegations

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the allegations contained in the recently published book *Left at East Gate*, to the effect that nuclear weapons were stored at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in violation of UK/US treaty obligations are true.

Lord Gilbert: It has always been the policy of this and previous governments neither to confirm nor to deny where nuclear weapons are located either in the UK or elsewhere, in the past or at the present time. Such information would be withheld under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they are aware of reports from the United States Air Force personnel that nuclear weapons stored in the Weapons Storage Area at RAF Woodbridge were struck by light beams fired from an unidentified craft seen over the base in the period 25–30 December 1980, and if so, what action was subsequently taken.

Lord Gilbert: There is no evidence to suggest that the Ministry of Defence received any such reports.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What information they have on the suicide of the United States security policeman from the 81st Security Police Squadron who took his life at RAF Bentwaters in January 1981, and whether they will detail the involvement of the British police, Coroner's Office, and any other authorities concerned.

Lord Gilbert: MoD has no information concerning the alleged suicide. Investigations into such occurrences are carried out by the US Forces.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What information they have on the medical problems experienced by various United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge, which stemmed from their involvement in the so-called Rendlesham Forest incident, in December 1980.

Lord Gilbert: Information on medical matters relating to US personnel is a matter for the US authorities.

HILL-NORTON PQ

Collision Warning System for Fast Jet Aircraft

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

What progress is being made with development and production of a Collision Warning System for RAF fast jet aircraft.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): A Technology Demonstration Programme (TDP) was completed at DTEO Boscombe Down last year. The TDP concluded that a Collision Warning System based on aircraft Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) systems would be technically feasible in the low-level fast-jet environment. MoD is now considering the way forward. No decisions have yet been taken.

Helicopters and Military Aircraft: Collision Risks

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

What action is being taken to minimise the risk of collision between helicopters conducting pipe and powerline surveys and low flying military aircraft; and

Whether consideration has been given to affording protected airspace to helicopters operating under the Pipeline Inspection Notification System.

Lord Gilbert: On 18 August measures were introduced to improve the accuracy of Pipeline Inspection Notification System (PINS) information available to military aircrew. These will include the issue of a revised map which refines the areas notified on the PINS chart to depict daily activity more accurately. Given these changes, we currently see no requirement to afford protected airspace to helicopters operating under PINS. We have a wide range of measures in place, which are kept under continuous review, to minimise the risk of confliction between civil and military aircraft, including those conducting power and pipeline inspections.

Commercial Helicopter Air Proximity Reports

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many air proximity reports were filed by commercial helicopter operators in areas for which a CANP notification had been submitted between September 1996 and April 1997.

Lord Gilbert: None.

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many air proximity reports were filed by commercial helicopter operators engaged on pipe and powerline survey inspections between September 1996 and April 1997.

Lord Gilbert: Four.

Civil Aircraft Notification: Infringements by Military Aircraft

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many notifications under the Civil Aircraft Notification procedure (CANP) from commercial helicopter operators in the United Kingdom were received by the Tactical Booking Cell at RAF West Drayton in the first six months of 1997; and

How many infringements of the CANP were reported in the first six months of 1997 and how many of these infringements were confirmed as breaches of the procedure by low flying military aircraft.

Lord Gilbert: Six hundred and sixty-three Civil Aircraft Notification Procedure (CANP) notifications were received by the MoD from commercial helicopter operators between 1 January and 30 June 1997. Twenty-five alleged infringements of CANP notification by low flying military aircraft were reported over this period, 19 of which were confirmed by RAF Police investigations. One alleged infringement was withdrawn and one was not substantiated. Four cases are still under investigation.

Lord Glenarthur asked Her Majesty's Government:

What consideration has been given to upgrading airspace covered by Civil Aircraft Notification procedure (CANP) to "prohibited" status.

Lord Gilbert: Entry into airspace surrounding commercial activity notified under CANP is already prohibited to all fixed wing military aircraft flying at low level at speeds faster than 140 knots. We believe that existing flight safety measures adequately minimise the risk of confliction between commercial flights and other categories of military aircraft activity (specifically those flying slower than 140 knots, those operating in a Military Air Traffic Zone and all helicopters); and between military low level flights and other non-commercial civil activities notified under CANP.

Mid-Air Explosion, Isle of Lewis

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What was the military involvement in the search for the unidentified object that witnesses believe exploded in mid air, before crashing into the sea off the Isle of Lewis on 26 October 1996, and what liaison took place with the US authorities with regard to this incident.

Lord Gilbert: Following media reports of an explosion, 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. HQ US 3rd Air Force were also approached at the time. They confirmed that there had been no US military activity in the area.

HILL-NORTON PQ

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt: Memorandum

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

(1) Whether the Ministry of Defence replied to the 1981 memorandum from Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt, which reported the presence of an unidentified craft that had landed in close proximity to RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge, witnessed by United States Air Force personnel; and if not, why not; and

(2) How the radiation readings reported to the Ministry of Defence by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt in his memorandum dated 13 January 1981 compare to the normal levels of background radiation in Rendelsham Forest.

Lord Gilbert: The memorandum, which reported observations of unusual lights in the sky, was assessed by staff in the MoD responsible for air defence matters. Since the judgment was that it contained nothing of defence significance, no further action was taken.

There is no record of any official assessment of the radiation readings reported by Lieutenant Colonel Halt. From a Defence perspective some 16½ years after the alleged events, there is no requirement to carry out such an assessment now.

Joint Services Command and Staff College

Lord Kennet asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the site at Camberley, in favour of which the Greenwich site was rejected for the JSCSC, is to be cleared of asbestos, and, if so, at what cost; why was the presence of asbestos not ascertained before plans to move the JSCSC there were finalised and then changed; and what plans do the Ministry of Defence have for the Camberley site once it has been cleared of asbestos; and

Why, given that the consultation document on the future location of the JSCSC that was issued in January 1995 did not address the possibility of setting the college up on a greenfield site, there has been no consultation on the Shrivenham option; and

What is the anticipated total cost of the interim accommodation for the JSCSC until the work on Shrivenham is completed, and what date is being required for completion; and

Whether the anticipated overall cost to the taxpayer of the PFI scheme currently being considered for the new site of the JSCSC will be declared to Parliament; and

Further to the Written Answers by Lord Gilbert on 21 July *(WA 147–148)* on the future of the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), whether apart from the provision of married accommodation, the Greenwich site would be at least £200 million cheaper than accommodation at the proposed greenfield site at Shrivenham; and whether the cost of the Shrivenham site is expected to be around £500 million.

Lord Gilbert: I am advised that the asbestos identified at the Camberley site presents no threat to health if left undisturbed. Its removal would be required if buildings were to be demolished, which was the case when the JSCSC was to have been based at Camberley. At that stage it was estimated that survey and removal together would cost no more than £87K. The presence of asbestos was not the reason for exploring a PFI solution for the JSCSC. Until a decision is reached on the future use of the Camberley site, it is not clear whether action will be needed to deal with the asbestos. It remains our intention to identify a fitting and appropriate military use for the historic Staff College building at Camberley and work is currently under way to this end.

Although the January 1995 Consultative Document did not consider greenfield sites for the permanent JSCSC, for the reasons given in paragraph 9 of the Document, the two further Consultative Documents of March 1996 and July 1996 indicated, inter alia, that interim arrangements would last for two years, that proposals for the permanent site would be dealt with separately, and that work in hand "to determine the best way of providing (a permanent JSCSC), on a site yet to be identified, includes a development under Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements". Since then, the trades unions have been informed of the choice of a PFI Preferred Bidder and provided with extracts from the Invitation To Negotiate which are currently under discussion. In accordance with normal procedures, staff will be consulted again, after a contract has been placed, about the possible transfer arrangements for civilian staff working at interim sites.

The anticipated total cost of the JSCSC in its interim accommodation is approximately £70 million over the period 1996–97 to 1999–2000. The required completion date for the permanent JSCSC, as given in the published Statement of Requirement, is September 1999.

The estimated total, undiscounted and VAT inclusive, cost of the PFI contract over a 30-year period is approximately £500 million at current prices. This information was widely reported at the time of the announcement of the Preferred Bidder, and given out in another place on 26 February in response to a specific question. This estimate excludes the ongoing costs of MoD-provided teaching and directing staff of around £10 million per annum.

The last time that Greenwich costs were subjected to formal assessment was around the end of 1994. The results of this assessment were published in the Consultative Document of January 1995. These showed the Greenwich option, leaving aside the cost of providing the necessary married accommodation, to be more than 25 per cent. more expensive than the Camberley option. There is no evidence to suggest that, if the costs of the Greenwich option were revisited, they would prove anything other than significantly more expensive than both the Camberley option and the Preferred Shrivenham Bid submitted in the course of the PFI competition.

RELATES TO PQ 3295

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Burma

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Burma regarding abuses of human rights; and if he will make a statement. [3178]

The Prime Minister: We have recently issued several statements about violations of human rights in Burma, and did so again yesterday.

In addition, our Ambassador in Rangoon has expressed our grave concern at recent events in Burma on several occasions.

The EU presidency and troika Foreign Ministers also raised these concerns at meetings with the Burmese Foreign Minister on 22 July and 26 September.

Land Mines

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from UNICEF concerning land mines in *(a)* Cambodia and *(b)* Thailand; and if he will make a statement. [3175]

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, none.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what assistance *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* non-governmental organisations have given to *(a)* Cambodia, *(b)* Laos and *(c)* Thailand in respect of the clearance of land mines; and if he will make a statement. [3176]

The Prime Minister: Since 1 April 1993, the British Government have committed over £5.1 million for humanitarian mine clearance activities in Cambodia, £543,000 in Laos and £5,000 in Thailand, concentrating on specific clearance projects addressing urgent humanitarian needs. Some of these projects are managed by British non-governmental organisations.

We do not have details of all non-governmental organisations' commitments to mine clearance in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.

DEFENCE

Unidentified Flying Objects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what factors underlay his Department's decision that the reported sightings of unidentified flying objects on 5 November 1990 and 31 March 1993 were not of defence significance; [2898]

(2) for what reasons his Department assessed the sightings of an unidentified flying object over RAF Shawbury, referred to in his answer of 24 July, *Official Report*, column *424*, as having no defence significance. [2928]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 8 July 1996, *Official Report*, column 26.

Gulf War

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if supplies of vaccine 10HO3A supplied to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment were used in circumstances relating to the Gulf war. [1674]

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Dale Campbell-Savours, dated 12 November 1996:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about whether the Vaccine 10HO3A supplied to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment were used in circumstances relating to the Gulf War. I have been asked to reply since The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBD) is now part of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency of which I am Chief Executive.

I regret that it is not our policy to provide details of the particular vaccines required for the research programme at CBD Porton Down.

I am sorry I could not be more helpful.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date vaccine 10HO3A was received by United Kingdom military personnel in the gulf; [1675]

(2) if named patient requirements as required by the manufacturer were used in the case of vaccine number 10HO3A while used in circumstances relating to the Gulf war; [1673]

(3) on what date Her Majesty's Government purchased from the Miles Drug Company, Miles Pharmaceuticals or Bayer UK vaccine 10HO3A; and which was used in the Gulf war; [1672]

(4) how many British Aerospace personnel *(a)* did and *(b)* did not receive doses of vaccine 10HO3A during the course of the Gulf war; [1671]

(5) if he will make a statement on the use of vaccine 10HO3A during the course of the Gulf war. [1670]

Mr. Soames: At present, details relating to biological warfare medical counter measures remain classified for operational reasons.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what time on the 20 and 21 January 1991 United Kingdom personnel were brought into contact with chemical or biological agents near Dhahran. [1677]

Mr. Soames: No chemical or biological agents were detected at Dhahran on 20 and 21 January 1991.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what time on the 20 and 21 January 1992 chemical agent monitors indicated sarin in the air in the vicinity of United Kingdom personnel at Dhahran. [1676]

Mr. Soames: There is no evidence of sarin being detected at Dhahran on 20 and 21 January 1991.

Gurkha Troops

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gurkha troops will be stationed in Britain as a result of the handover of Hong Kong; where

RELATES TO PQ3295

DEFENCE

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States Government have since 1966 requested the United Kingdom to provide reactor grade plutonium for the purpose of conducting a nuclear test explosion under the provisions of the US–UK mutual defence agreement on atomic energy co-operation. [38500]

Mr. Arbuthnot: No such requests have been made by the United States.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the impact of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* the work of his Department in helping small businesses in the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors the impact and the statistical results of such monitoring. [39141]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the UK economy and aim to help them by providing sound economic conditions—keeping inflation and interest rates low; reducing legislative administrative and taxation burdens; and where appropriate provide direct assistance in the form of specialist advice and support and easing access to finance.

My Department supports the DTI's small business measures and initiatives. I am the Minister within this Department for small businesses and I attend or am represented at the DTI's regular meetings.

The Defence Suppliers Service assists companies, including small businesses, in making contact with appropriate contracts branches. It also arranges for details of many forthcoming tenders to be published in the fortnightly MOD *Contracts Bulletin* which is available to any interested party on subscription. This enables small businesses either to seek to tender directly for specific requirements or, more commonly, to become sub-contractors to larger companies.

Since the Procurement Executive of the Ministry of Defence moved to the new procurement headquarters at Abbey Wood near Bristol earlier this year, the Defence Suppliers Service is in contact with the Bristol chamber of commerce and DTI's business links, whose South-west regional supply network office has become their national focal point for the defence industry. Other areas of the country can reach my Department, and be reached by us, through the business links network.

As much of the assistance provided by my Department to small businesses tends to be in the sub-contractor sector, it is not possible to establish suitable performance parameters and therefore no statistics are available.

Rendlesham Forest (Incident)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what response his Department made to the report submitted by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt relating to events in Rendlesham forest in December 1980; what interviews were held; and if he will make a statement; [39247]

(2) who assessed that the events around RAF Woodbridge and RAF Bentwaters in December 1980, which were reported to his Department by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt were of no defence significance; on what evidence the assessment was made; what analysis of events was carried out; and if he will make a statement. [39249]

Mr. Soames: The report was assessed by the staff in my Department responsible for air defence matters. Since the judgment was that it contained nothing of defence significance no further action was taken.

Uncorrelated Radar Tracks (Investigations)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions RAF aircraft have been *(a)* scrambled and *(b)* diverted from task to investigate uncorrelated targets picked up on radar; and if he will make a statement. [39218]

Mr. Soames: In the past five years RAF aircraft have been scrambled or diverted from task on two occasions to intercept and identify uncorrelated radar tracks entering the United Kingdom air defence region.

Unidentified Craft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's assessment of the incident that occurred on 5 November 1990 when a patrol of RAF Tornado aircraft flying over the North sea were overtaken at high speed by an unidentified craft; and if he will make a statement; [39245]

(2) if he will make a statement on the unidentified flying object sighting reported to his Department by the meteorological officer at RAF Shawbury in the early hours of 31 March 1993. [39246]

Mr. Soames: Reports of sightings on these dates are recorded on file and were examined by staff responsible for air defence matters. No firm conclusions were drawn about the nature of the phenomena reported but the events were not judged to be of defence significance.

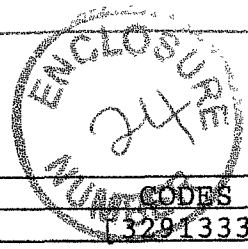
Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department made of the photograph of an unidentified craft at Calvine on 4 August 1990; who removed it from an office in secretariat (air staff) 2a; for what reasons: and if he will make a statement. [39248]

Mr. Soames: A number of negatives associated with the sighting were examined by staff responsible for air defence matters. Since it was judged that they contained nothing of defence significance the negatives were not retained and we have no record of any photographs having been taken from them.

Publicity

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's budget in 1996–97 for consultants to assist with information, publicity, press and media. [39353]

All E-Mailed to P1 Branch



DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
10/07/98	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 3291 & PQ 3335	[32913335]

Sent: 10/07/98 at 11:49
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC:

Ref: 1883
Subject: PQ 3291 & PQ 3335

Text: The attached has been seen and signed off by Martin Fuller. The linked background note which is RESTRICTED/POLICY/STAFF will be walked down separately.

NB It is appropriate to LINK these two PQs despite the fact that PQ 3335 is due for answer by midday MONDAY.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]
View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]
Attachments [1]
Codes [32913335]

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**PQ 3291i 12:00 ON FRI 10 JULY** **PQ 3335i 12:00 ON MON 13 JULY**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3291i, PQ 3335i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

PQ 3291i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government when arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place, and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up to date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence. (HL2607)

PQ 3335i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government what follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when they receive a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. (HL2609)

DRAFTED BY:	Section 40	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Section 40 Grade 7	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Mr M J D Fuller: SCS	TEL:	Section 40

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of 'unidentified flying objects' is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity and reporting procedures are adequate for this purpose. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MOD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of 'unidentified flying objects' are examined with the assistance of relevant MOD experts, and this may include radar correlation.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
10/07/98	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 3292	[PQ 3292]

Sent: 10/07/98 at 11:50
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC:

Ref: 1884
Subject: PQ 3292

Text: The attached has been seen and signed off by Martin Fuller. The linked background note which is RESTRICTED/POLICY/STAFF will be walked down separately.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]

View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]

Attachments [1]
Codes [PQ 3292]

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

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3292i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government how many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. (HL2608)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996	609	
1997	425	
1998	88	(Jan - Jun)

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised by unauthorized foreign military activity we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MOD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
10/07/98	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 3293	[PQ 3293]

Sent: 10/07/98 at 11:52
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC:

Ref: 1885
Subject: PQ 3293

Text: The attached has been seen and signed off by Martin Fuller.

The linked background note which is RESTRICTED/POLICY/STAFF will be walked down separately.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]

View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]

Attachments [1]
Codes [PQ 3293]

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3293i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

DRAFTED BY:	Section 40	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Section 40 Grade 7	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Mr M J D Fuller: SCS	TEL:	Section 40

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

An answering machine enables members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of 'unidentified flying objects'. The machine carries a message that sets out the MOD's limited interest in the subject and explains that in the case of reported sightings callers will be contacted further only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
10/07/98	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 3295	[PQ 3295]

Sent: 10/07/98 at 11:53
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC:

Ref: 1886
Subject: PQ 3295

Text: The attached has been seen and signed off by Martin Fuller. The linked background note which is RESTRICTED/POLICY/STAFF will be walked down separately.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]

View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]

Attachments [1]
Codes [PQ 3295]

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3295i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government how many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31st March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

DRAFTED BY:	Section 40	TEL: Section 40
AUTHORISED BY:	Section 40	TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK:	Grade 7	
AUTHORISED BY:	Mr M J D Fuller:	TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK:	SCS	

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MOD has no reason to doubt the judgements made at the time.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
10/07/98	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 3290	[PQ 3290]

Sent: 10/07/98 at 11:47
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC:

Ref: 1882
Subject: PQ 3290

Text: The attached has been seen and signed off by Martin Fuller.

The linked background note which is RESTRICTED/POLICY/STAFF will be walked down separately.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]

View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]

Attachments [1]
Codes [PQ 3290]

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3290i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

LINKED BACKGROUND NOTE: PQs: 3290/3291/3292/3293/3295/3335

Working Paper

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 23

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

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3290i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in evaluating reports of unidentified flying objects, the Ministry of Defence will routinely consult staff at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Centre at RAF Fylindales and the Deep Space Tracing Facility at RAF Feltwell. [HL2610]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 : TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 : TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

These or other staff may be consulted, depending on the circumstances.

ANSWER:

Ministry of Defence experts as necessary are consulted on receipt of an 'unidentified flying object' report but MOD does not have a need to consult as a matter of routine the establishments mentioned.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**PQ 3291i 12:00 ON FRI 10 JULY** **PQ 3335i 12:00 ON MON 13 JULY**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3291i, PQ 3335i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

QUESTION

PQ 3291i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government when arrangements for disseminating reports of unidentified flying objects within the Ministry of Defence were put in place, and last reviewed; and whether they will ensure that all airports, observatories, RAF bases and police stations have accurate and up to date instructions about how to record details of unidentified aerial phenomena reported to them, together with instructions to pass them to the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Defence. (HL2607)

PQ 3335i: Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government what follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when they receive a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be correlated by radar. (HL2609)

DRAFTED BY:	Section 40	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Section 40 Grade 7	TEL:	Section 40
AUTHORISED BY: GRADE/RANK:	Mr M J D Fuller: SCS	TEL:	Section 40

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

and reporting arrangements are adequate for this purpose

The Ministry of Defence's interest in reports of 'unidentified flying objects' is limited to establishing whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of a potential threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of each reported incident. Arrangements within the MOD have been in place for a number of years for disseminating reports; they were last reviewed in April 1997. Where necessary, reports of 'unidentified flying objects' are examined with the assistance of relevant MOD experts, and this may include radar correlation. ~~Defence technology, including the effectiveness~~ of our Air Defence system, is constantly evolving and the MOD is confident that present Air Defence capabilities fully meet the Air Defence threat and protect the integrity of the United ~~Kingdom's airspace. The MOD is satisfied, in view of its limited interest in the subject, that external reporting procedures are satisactory.~~

BACKGROUND NOTE:

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

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3293i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Ministry of Defence has installed an answering machine on the line used by members of the public to report unidentified flying objects; and whether those people who leave contact details on the machine receive a formal reply. [HL2611]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

An answering machine enabler was installed in Secretariat (Air Staff) in the Ministry of Defence Head Office in February 1997 to facilitate better management of the wide range of tasks carried out by the Branch. It enabled members of the public to leave details about aerial activity or seek further information about our policy in respect of 'unidentified flying objects'. The machine answerphone message sets out the MOD's limited interest in the subject and explains that in the case of reported sightings callers will be contacted further only in the event that follow-up action is deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

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

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3292i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government how many reports of unidentified flying objects were notified to the Ministry of Defence in 1996, 1997 and the first six months of 1998; and how many of these sightings remain unexplained. (HL2608)

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40 TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The number of reports received by the Ministry of Defence of aerial activity not identifiable to the witness is as follows:

1996	609	
1997	425	
1998	88	(Jan - Jun)

The figures should not, however, be taken to reflect sightings of 'UFO/flying saucers'.

BACKGROUND NOTE: Few of these reports contained sufficient information for any conclusions to be drawn. There are likely to be down to earth explanations for [most] of these observations, but the MOD is not resourced to provide an identification service

by

Unless there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom's airspace has been compromised unauthorized foreign military activity we do not seek to provide an explanation for what might have been seen as the MOD is not resourced to provide an identification service.

My suggested amendment with which Martin agreed.

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

DATE FOR RETURN : **12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3295i
PQ TYPE : Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government how many military personnel witnessed the unidentified craft that overflew RAF Cosford and RAF Shawbury on 31st March 1993; and whether, when the craft has not been identified, such an event ought to be classified as being of no defence significance. [HL2612]

DRAFTED BY: Section 40 : TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: Grade 7 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY: Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK: SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

The Ministry of Defence is aware of a single report from two military personnel of an alleged sighting in the West Midlands on 31 March 1993. The facts reported were fully examined at the time. No firm conclusions were drawn then about the nature of what had been seen but the events were not judged to be of defence significance. The MOD has no reason to doubt the judgements made at the time.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

UNCLASSIFIED

Section 40

The background note and PQ answers have been run past ADGE 1 – DAO who had no problem with them. Section 40 9/7

POLICY & STAFF

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. Lord Hill-Norton, aged 83, and Chief of the Defence Staff from 1971-1973, has tabled six 'UFO'-related PQs (3290/1/2/3/5 and 3335). He has a long-standing interest in 'UFOs', was a member of the (long defunct) House of Lords All-Party 'UFO' Study Group and has written the forewords for a least two books on the subject. Over the years Hill-Norton has supported individual 'ufologists'' causes and, in the last nine months, we have answered seven further PQs (Hansard Extracts attached).

2. In April he wrote asking for all 'UFO' files held in MOD archives to be released to the Public Record Office (ie. in advance of the 30 year rule). DOMD, the MOD focal point for Access to Government Information, is currently seeking legal advice on third party confidentiality issues in respect of this request.

PQ 3291, 3292, 3335

3. MOD examines 'UFO' sighting reports, with the assistance of MOD experts as necessary, solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely whether there is any evidence that UK airspace might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, no attempt is made to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. The integrity of the UK's airspace is maintained by a continuous

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recognised air picture and an air policing capability. There is no evidence to suggest that our Air Defence system does not fully meet the currently perceived threat from foreign military activity.

4. Media interest in the 'UFO' phenomenon gathered pace during 1996/97 (see para 7 below) necessitating an internal review in April 1997 to assess the level of staffing appropriate for the limited interest the Department has in this subject. It was agreed with Air Defence and Defence Intelligence staff that for the future it would be appropriate to staff only those reports in the following categories for further, defence-related advice:

- **Credible Witness Reports:** Reports received from service personnel, civil pilots, staff working in air traffic control centres and the emergency services, or those complete with documented evidence such as photographs, video footage etc.

- **Corroborated Sightings:** A series of reports apparently describing the same phenomenon and provided by separate and independent sources where these could not be readily explained.

- **Timely sightings:** Reports of a phenomenon currently being observed and might, therefore, be capable of detection by Air Defence or other assets such as military aircraft or radar observers.

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5. Sec(AS), the MOD focal point, generally receives 'UFO' reports from RAF stations, police stations, air traffic control centres and directly from members of the public. It is a well-known and well-established point of contact for these reports and we do not consider there is any need for the Department to publicize the details further. We firmly believe that to do so would suggest greater credibility for the subject and invite yet more reporting of what is a very minor defence-related issue and, in the main, attracts only a small, but single-minded group of people to respond.

PO 3290

6. Advice is sought from Air Defence and Defence Intelligence experts on any reports received from the specific categories listed above; very occasionally, establishments such as the Royal Observatory or RAF Fylingdales will also be consulted. However, the majority of 'UFO' reports received are vague and lack substance.

PO 3293

7. A significant amount of media interest in 1996 in 'UFOs' coincided with the publication of Nicholas Pope's book '*Open Skies Closed Minds*'. Pope, who had previously worked in Sec(AS) and is still employed within the MOD, set out his personal views supporting the existence of 'UFOs' and was critical of the way MOD

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deals with this subject. The number of 'UFO' reports made to the Department increased by over 50% to 609 in 1996, and continued at this level for much of 1997 whilst the media covered the events associated with the 50th anniversary of the first alleged 'UFO' sighting in Roswell, USA. The number of 'UFO'-related letters and telephone calls to Sec(AS) also rose significantly. It was the case that the public had direct telephone access to Sec(AS)2 desk officers to report 'UFO' sightings. However, callers became more frequent in their efforts to discuss MOD's policy in respect of this subject and pass on details of their personal concerns outwith the Department's remit (alien abductions, crops circles, extraterrestrial lifeforms, ghosts, animal mutilations etc). As a consequence, staff effort became increasingly diverted from core tasks to deal with the public. The outgoing answerphone message (ANNEX A) makes clear the Department's limited interest in the subject and that further contact will be made by Sec(AS) only if it is appropriate within the terms of our remit in respect of this activity.

PQ 3295

8. This alleged sighting has been the subject of previous PQs (Hansard extracts attached). The lights in the sky witnessed in the early hours of 31 March 1993 were seen by a number of people in the West Country and South Wales area. Witnesses included two members of a mobile RAF police patrol on duty at RAF Cosford, a Meteorological Officer at RAF Shawbury and several police

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officers. All reports were examined at the time but nothing conclusive was established and it must therefore be assumed that officials at the time did not view the alleged incident of defence concern. Pope, who was the Sec(AS)2 desk officer involved at the time made much of this alleged incident in his book. It is not clear from the papers held on file whether the Met Officer was a serviceman or civilian and we have not therefore speculated on this point in the answer.

UNCLASSIFIED

64/4.

ENCLOSURE 22 NUMBER

File Note

Hill-Norton PQs on UFOs

Section 40 (AD/OND) rang in response to my request, yesterday, that he provide a CTT on the legal position re release of files before the 30 year point – an outstanding issue from the Hill-Norton PQ request.

Section 40 said he had spoken with Section 40 (CS Records) and agreed the following "Still seeking legal advice on third party confidentiality issues"

This is a reference to our concerns, articulated at the meeting chaired by Hd of Sec (AS) and attended by DDUD, AD/OND & CS Records, about personal privacy of those submitting UFO sighting reports.

Section 40

8 July 1998.

Section 40 Section 40 [redacted]

advised us to Cancell - this one + answer PQ 3335i instead.

Section 40 [redacted] 9/7

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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON FRIDAY 10 JULY 1998**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3294i
PQ TYPE	:	Lord's Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

Lord Hill-Norton - To ask Her Majesty's Government what follow-up action is taken by the Ministry of Defence when they receive a report of an unidentified flying object; and whether checks are routinely made to see whether such reports can be corroborated by radar. (HL2609)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS)1
-7 JUL 1998

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

DRAFTED BY : * TEL: *
AUTHORISED BY : * TEL: *
GRADE/RANK : *

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER:

BACKGROUND NOTE:

PQ CHECKLIST

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

* YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

* MEET THE DEADLINE & CONSULT EARLY IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS

* YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE

* IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE FROM A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT WITH EXPERTISE IN ANSWERING PQs

PQ ANSWER

* DO USE PLAIN AND PRECISE LANGUAGE
  - is the answer unambiguous and free from jargon?

* DO BE OPEN, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND HONEST
  - have you included all the facts necessary for a full and unambiguous answer?
  - do you fully understand the policy governing the answering of PQs? See attached note on Government Policy
  - if you have excluded anything can it be justified under the Open Govt Code (see DCI GEN 54/98)

* DO CHECK SOURCES AND ENSURE EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE TO BACK UP ANSWERS
  - is sufficient documentary evidence available to back up the answer if challenged?
  - does anybody outside your management area need to be involved? Have you consulted them?

* DO CHECK PREVIOUS ANSWERS ON THE SAME SUBJECT

* DO MAKE CLEAR THE BASIS ON WHICH YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION
  - if you have gone beyond a literal interpretation of the question have you made it clear?

* DON'T RELY ON HEARSAY OR GUESSWORK
  - are you confident that the information provided will stand up to detailed scrutiny?

* DON'T BE ABSOLUTE UNLESS YOU HAVE THE PROOF
  - think very carefully before you say "all" or "never" or "not possible"
  - does it differ from the views of outside experts, if so why?

BACKGROUND NOTE

* DO KEEP IT RELEVANT
  - does it explain the answer?

* DO EXPLAIN JUDGEMENTS MADE, AND ANY DOUBTS OR CAVEATS

* DO MAKE IT CLEAR IF INFORMATION IS BEING RELEASED FOR THE FIRST TIME OR IF IT IS DIFFERENT FROM INFORMATION RELEASED PREVIOUSLY
  - have you sought and included advice on the wider implications (including PR)?

* DO GIVE A CLEAR EXPLANATION FOR WITHOLDING INFORMATION
  - details of disproportionate cost included?
  - have you explained your justification for exclusion under the Open Govt Code?

* DO RECORD THE SOURCES RELIED ON IN PREPARING YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER

- have you included details of those who have provided you with information?

Doc:

LordsWrite

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWER IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

ALL DRAFT REPLIES MUST BE CLEARED AT SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE (GRADE 5) OR ONE STAR LEVEL OR ABOVE

THE CHECKLIST IS TO HELP YOU DRAFT THE ANSWER PROPERLY YOU MUST USE IT

REPLIES SHOULD BE SENT BY CHOTS E-MAIL (URGENT & VIEW ACKNOWLEDGE) TO "**Parliamentary Questions**". DIVISIONS NOT ON CHOTS SHOULD SEND THEIR DRAFTS BY FAX TO THE PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH (x Section 40.

ALWAYS QUOTE THE QUESTION (PQ) NUMBER, AND THE NAMES AND CONTACT NUMBERS OF THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAFTING THE REPLY AND THE SENIOR OFFICIAL WHO APPROVED IT.

IF YOU REQUIRE ANY ADVICE, PLEASE CALL (MB x Section 40 [redacted]

---

1. WRITTEN PQS

All written PQs **must** be answered within 14 days of being tabled, even if the House is by then in recess.

2. DEADLINE FOR REPLY

a. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline, you should contact this Branch to see if an extension to the deadline can be given. **You should do this before 12.00 on the day on which you are due to return the PQ answer.**

b. You must provide a full explanation of why you cannot meet the deadline.

c. If it is impossible to answer the question within 14 days the Minister has to write to the Lord concerned explaining the circumstances and undertaking to provide a full answer as soon as possible. You must provide the draft letter.

3. OPEN GOVERNMENT

a. A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 54/98.

b. Replies must be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exemption in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am witholding the information requested under exemption 1 of

4. DRAFTING THE ANSWER

- USE THE CHECKLIST -

a. The draft reply should be concise, clear and meticulously accurate. It should have a positive tone where possible.

b. Use clear and direct language to avoid any ambiguity. Short everyday words and short sentences are best. Avoid cliches and MOD/Service jargon. Use abbreviations only after using the words or name in full.

c. The answer must be unclassified.

d. If you refer to a previous PQ answer or document, send a copy.

5. BACKGROUND NOTE

a. Ministers need a short note explaining the facts and thinking behind the suggested reply if it is not completely obvious from the reply itself.

b. If the answer varies from a previous answer or statement explain fully why this is so.

c. If new information comes to light in your research which might affect this or previous answers or statements you must ring the Minister's Private Office **AT ONCE** as well as stating this clearly in the background note.

the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is **NOT** acceptable to rely on past practice.

GROUPED PQS

Related PQs, tabled by an individual Lord for answer on the same day may be grouped together and given a single answer. This Branch can give advice on grouping.

7. PARTIAL REPLIES

If a full reply is not possible you should give what information is available and make it clear in the answer what you are doing.

8. COST OF GIVING A REPLY

If the cost of giving a reply will exceed £500 you can recommend to Ministers that the reply should be along the lines of "This information [is not held centrally] and could only be provided at disproportionate cost". You must explain in the background note how these costs - usually staff costs - would arise. The decision whether or not then to give an answer depends on the merits of the case.
As a rough guide use these hourly rates: AO-£8, EO-£13, HEO-£15, SEO-£18, G7-£22, G5-£31.
Capitation rates can be increased by 50% forfor Service equivalents.

9. LONG REPLIES

If the reply is long (ie will fill more than a page of Hansard) it may, exceptionally, be better to give the information in a letter to the Lord or put information in the Library of the House. In these cases the reply is "I will write to the noble Lord (or "my noble Friend") and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House" or "I am placing the information requested in the Library of the House". This Branch is responsible for placing material in the Library. We need **6** copies of any document placed in the Library.

10. INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE FROM PUBLIC SOURCES

PQs are expensive in terms of Ministers' and officials' time. Lords should be encouraged to get information from published sources where it is already available in the Library of the House. In such cases the reply is along these lines "The information requested is contained in para X of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1996 (Cm 3223), a copy of which is in the Library of the House".

11. PQS ASKING FOR STATISTICAL INFORMATION

a. PQs which ask for statistical information will be sent normally to the Chief Executive of DASA and copied to the relevant policy branch.

b. If such a question has not been sent to DASA please let us know. In any event you should liaise with DASA about the reply in case there are policy implications of which they are unaware.

12. TRANSFER OF PQS

a. To another Government Department
If you think this PQ is not primarily a matter for MOD tell this Branch **AT ONCE**.
We will need the name and Branch of an official in the more appropriate Department who has agreed to take the PQ.
Parliamentary Branches in other Government Departments will usually only agree to transfers on this basis.

b. To another Branch
If a PQ has been sent to you incorrectly, please let this Branch know **AT ONCE.** If you know who is responsible for the subject please pass it to them as well.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ANSWERING PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. Never forget Ministers' obligations to Parliament which are set out in the Cabinet Office publication "Ministerial Code: A code of conduct and guidance on procedure for Ministers". It states that:

"It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister. Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest, which should be decided in accordance with relevant statute and the Government's Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Second Edition, Jan 1997)

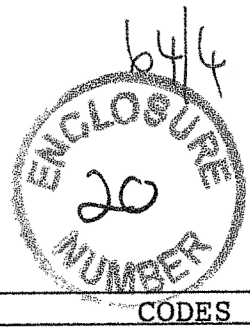
2. It is a civil servant's responsibility to Ministers to help them fulfil those obligations. It is the Minister's right and responsibility to decide how to do so. Ministers want to explain and present Government policy and actions in a positive light. They will rightly expect a draft answer that does full justice to the Government's position.

3. Approach every question predisposed to give relevant information fully, as concisely as possible and in accordance with guidance on disproportionate cost. If there appears to be a conflict between the requirement to be as open as possible and the requirement to protect information whose disclosure would not be in the public interest, you should check to see whether it should be omitted in accordance with statute (which takes precedence) or the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, about which you should consult your departmental openness liaison officer if necessary.

5. Do not omit information sought merely because disclosure could lead to political embarrassment or administrative inconvenience.

6. Where there is a particularly fine balance between openness and non-disclosure, and when the draft answer takes the latter course, this should be explicitly drawn to the Minister's attention. Similarly, if it is proposed to reveal information of a sort which is not normally disclosed, this should be explicitly drawn to Ministers' attention.

7. If you conclude that material information must be withheld and the PQ cannot be fully answered as a result, draft an answer which **makes this clear and which explains the reasons in equivalent terms to those in the Code of Practice, or because of disproportionate cost or the information not being available.** Take care to avoid draft answers which are literally true but likely to give rise to misleading inferences.



DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
24/06/98	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 3162	[ ]

Sent: 24/06/98 at 11:25
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC: ADGE1

Ref: 1841
Subject: PQ 3162

Text: The attached has been seen and signed off by Section 40 and Martin Fuller.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]

View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]

Attachments [1]
Codes [ ]

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3162i
PQ TYPE : Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

MP's DETAIL: MR MARTIN CATON (LABOUR) (GOWER)

QUESTION

1|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement on the role of RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire in the investigation of sightings of unidentified flying objects. [47318]

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 : **Signed** TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY : Section 40 : **Signed** TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY : Mr M J D Fuller: **Signed** TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : SCS

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER

Brawdy ceased to be an RAF station on 31 March 1996 when the establishment was transferred to the Army. It has no role with regard to investigations into unidentified flying objects.

More generally, my Department examines reports of unidentified flying objects only to establish whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's Air Defence Region has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless a report reveals evidence of a potential threat from an external military source, no attempt is made to determine the precise nature of what might have been seen.

BACKGROUND NOTE:

The MP, Martin Caton, was elected on 1 May 97. He has shown no interest in the subject of 'unidentified flying objects' before.

'RAF Brawdy' as such no longer exists. It was formally transferred to the Army on 31 March 1996, is now known as Brawdy or Cawdor Barracks, and is the home of 14 Signals Regiment.

The site is actually located in Jackie Lawrence's constituency of Preseli Pembrokeshire and we can find no reason why Martin Caton should ask the question. The Regiment Operations Officer at Brawdy has confirmed that there has been nothing recently which might have prompted it. It may be that the MP has been lobbied by a constituent.

In answering the question, we have taken this opportunity to set out quite clearly the Department's policy in respect of reports of 'unidentified flying objects'.

Copy to:

DAO - ADGE1
STC - Plans

6414

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 19

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 3162i
PQ TYPE : Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) :

MP's DETAIL: MR MARTIN CATON (LABOUR) (GOWER)

QUESTION

1|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement on the role of RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire in the investigation of sightings of unidentified flying objects. [47318]

Section 40

24/6

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY : 24/6. TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : Grade 7

Section 40

AUTHORISED BY : Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : SCS

as amended

DECLARATION: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER

More generally,
My Department examines reports of unidentified flying objects only ~~for one reason~~ to establish whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's Air Defence Region has been penetrated by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless a report reveals evidence of a potential threat from an external military source, no attempt is made to determine the precise nature of what might have been seen.

Brawdy ceased to be an RAF station on 31 March 1996 when the establishment was transferred to the Army. It has no role with regard to investigations into unidentified flying objects.

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In answering the question, we have taken this opportunity to set out quite clearly the Department's policy in respect of reports of 'unidentified flying objects'.

Copy to:
DAO - ADGE1
STC - Plans

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RESTRICTED

RECEIVED 83
16 FEB 1995

Headquarters Strike Command
Royal Air Force High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP14 4UE
Tel: High Wycombe Section 40 Section 40
Fax:High Wycombe

Your Reference

Our Reference STC/3109/2/Plans

Date 3 Feb 95

See Distribution

OUTLINE PLAN FOR THE HANDOVER OF RAF BRAWDY TO THE ARMY

1. Since the withdrawal of RAF Brawdy's Flying Training task in Aug 92, the station's residual tasks have been limited to support for B Flt 202 Sqn and the United States Naval Facility (USNAVFAC).

2. Following the transfer of the SAR flt to RAF Chivenor in Jul 94, and with the USNAVFAC due to close on 30 Sep 95, the RAF have no further tasks on the base. Min(AF) announced on 23 Jun 94 that 14 Sigs Regt(EW) would transfer permanently to Brawdy from Dec 95.

3. An Outline Plan (OP) for the handover of RAF Brawdy to the Army is at Enclosure 1. SOA HQ 18 Gp is to be responsible for detailed planning of the handover. We do not propose to issue any formal amendments to the plan, but if tasks have been omitted they should be staffed through normal channels and copied to the Plans Branch, HQ STC. Section 40.

Section 40 Section 40

(* the date RAF Brawdy was Plans STC confirmed handed over to the Army was 31 March 1996.

Section 40

Section 40 23/6

Gp Capt
for AOCinC

Enclosure:

1. Outline Plan for the Handover of RAF Brawdy to the Army.

ALA .....
A(M) .....
A(S) .....

Telefax
To: Section 40
Fax:
From: C THOMAS DEO Brecon
Pages: 1
Date: 23 June 98

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS)1
23 JUN 1998

1 RWF were due leave Hong Kong September 94. They moved temporarily into Brawdy. 23/6.

UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED

Section 40

PTC 2
PEO

DATE	FROM	SUBJECT	CODES
23/06/98	ADGE1	PO 3162 - BRAWDY	[ ]

Intended:
Sent: 23/06/98 at 10:12 Delivered: 23/06/98 at 10:15
To: SEC(AS)2A1
CC:
Ref: 574
From: ADGE1 Auth by:
Subject: PQ 3162 - BRAWDY

Text: Psa

Section 40 [redacted]

Priority: Normal SEE PAGE Attachments [1]
Reply Request [ ] View Acknowledge [ ] Codes [ ]

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DAO/9/3

23 Jun 98

Sec(AS)2a1a

PQ 3162 `RAF' BRAWDY - UFO INTEREST

Reference:

A. D/Sec(AS)/64/4 dated 22 Jun 98.

1. At Reference A you asked whether `RAF' Brawdy had been involved in any recent UFO reports etc.

2. Sadly, **RAF** Brawdy no longer exists. It is now known as Brawdy or Cawdor Barracks, the home of 14 Signals Regiment.

3. Having contacted the Regiment Operations Officer, there has been no event or report in recent memory which might have provoked this PQ. For future reference, the number is Section 40 .

Section 40
Wg Cdr
ADGE 1
MB4227 Section 40
CHOTS: ADGE1

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
22/06/98	ADGE1	PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION 3162 - FOR	[ ]

Sent: 22/06/98 at 11:01
To: ADGE1
CC: AOAD1

Ref: 1836
Subject: PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION 3162 - FOR ANSWER BY MIDDAY WEDNESDAY 24TH JUNE
Text: Please See Attached.

Priority: Urgent
Reply Request [ ]
View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]
Attachments [1]
Codes [ ]

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

22 Jun 98

ADGE1

PQ 3162: RAF BRAWDY - "UFO" INTEREST

1. We have received the following PQ for answer by midday Wednesday.

> **"To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement on the role of RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire in the investigation of sightings of unidentified flying objects."**

2. The question has been tabled by the Labour MP for Gower, Martin Caton. Are you aware of any incident in the area which might account for this interest? Would it be possible for you to have a discrete word with someone suitable there to establish if Brawdy know why they have been singled out?

3. Nothing obvious springs to mind up here but we will continue to mull it over before responding - I'll let you see our draft response.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A1

Covering CONFIDENTIAL.

UNCLASSIFIED

64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 18

LC/356805/1/F&S

23 June 98

Parliamentary Branch©

Copy to:

CE/DVA©
DCSA©
(Sec)SS©
PSO/AOCSS©
Sec(Parliamentary & Plans)2a* - less background note
Sec(AS)2a©

© By CHOtS
* By fax

PQ 3140i: MATTHEW TAYLOR MP - RAF RUDLOE MANOR

1. Attached is the answer to the subject PQ, which has been compiled from information supplied by the copy addressees.

2. Because of the sensitivity of some of the information provided, the background note is being sent separately, with the classified information shown in bold typeface. This has an implication for the nature of the answer, and should be explicitly drawn to the Minister's attention. Please advise if anything further is required.

[CHOTS signed]

Section 43

CS(FinSec)1

Section 43

Section 43

Fax 2o

Section 43

Downgraded to UNCLASSIFIED
23/3/10
by originator DEAS ISS

PQ 3104i

MR MATTHEW TAYLOR MP

QUESTION

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what functions are carried out at RAF Rudloe Manor; and which organisations are based there.

DRAFTED BY: Section 43 [redacted] Ext Section 43 [redacted]
AUTHORISED BY: SCS/ML2 Ext [redacted]

Declaration: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental Instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

ANSWER

RAF Rudloe Manor is an administrative unit providing support for a number of independent organisations. The following units are located there:

Unit	**Function**
RAF Provost and Security Services	Security support, criminal investigations and provost operations assistance to the RAF.
Provost and Security Services (Western Region)	Specialist police and security support to all RAF establishments within the West Midlands, the West Country and Mid Wales.
Defence Vetting Agency (RAF)	Security clearances for RAF's military and civilian personnel, and defence industry employees.
Defence Communication Services Agency	The Services Management Centre of the Agency, including the Primary Network Control Centre of the Defence Fixed Telecommunications Service.
Detachment of 1001 Signals Unit, RAF	Participation in the operation of the UK military communications satellite system.

UNCLASSIFIED

PQ 3104i: BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The only difficulty with questions of this nature about RAF Rudloe Manor is that we do not refer to the existence of an underground facility. This is a defence installation for use in peace and war, and includes both civil and military communications facilities and stores depots. We seek to preserve the details of the facility under the security provision of the Open Government Code. In not referring to it, the answer is arguably incomplete; nonetheless reference to it is not recommended. Should the Minister want further information, Sec(HSF)1 can brief separately. A number of correspondents have over time indicated broad knowledge of the facility, and its role, but we have declined to confirm any of their suppositions.

2. This apart, it is not obvious why Mr Taylor has asked this question, although the Minister will be aware that Mr Taylor is a well known and persistent questioner on nuclear matters. In this connection, it should be noted that, although the Corsham Computer Centre (CCC) is close to RAF Rudloe Manor, it is not connected with it physically or functionally. It occupies a chamber of an old quarry working and is the responsibility of the MOD Procurement Executive (PE), whose role is to obtain the equipment required by the Armed Forces. The facility houses a suite of PE computers which are sited underground so that (like those of London Transport) they are insulated from environmental effects.

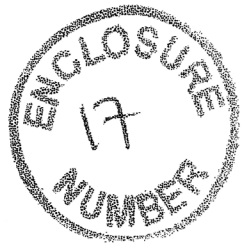
3. RAF Rudloe Manor attracts much interest and speculation from the UFO fraternity, and it may be that a constituent of Mr Taylor has prompted his question.

4. RAF Rudloe Manor is situated in Wiltshire between Bath and Corsham and is spread over 4 separate sites. Some 607 Service and 233 civilian personnel are currently employed there. Minister will recall that No 1 Site of RAF Rudloe Manor is to close by 31 March 1999, with the exception of an element of the Defence Vetting Agency, which will be enclaved on site for a further period. The announcement was made on 20 April following a period of consultation. The closure involves the relocation of the P&SS units, which will be followed by a similar, as yet undetermined, move for DVA(RAF). There will be some 70 civilian job losses, including some redundancies.

UNCLASSIFIED

DOWNGRADED TO UNCLASSIFIED 23/3/10 by Originator DEFS IISS

UNCLASSIFIED



C/356805/1/1/F&S

18 Jun 98

PSO/AOCSS
Sec (HSF)1
(Sec)SS
HQ PTC (Hd of AMP Sec)
DVA
DCSA
} By Fax

Copy to:

PSO/COS
Cmd Sec
Sec(AS)2 ——— by Fax

PQ 3104I: MATTHEW TAYLOR MP (LIB DEM) - RAF RUDLOE MANOR

1. I attach the above PQ together with an outline draft reply. I would be grateful for contributions as follows:

- PSO/AOCSS. To confirm that the list of resident units is correct, fill out the site description and the details on the closure of No 1 site.

- PTC, DCSA and DVA. To contribute as indicated in the draft answer.

- (Sec)SS and Sec (HSF)1. To contribute to the classified annex. I would also much appreciate your advice on whether or not to include a reference in the answer to withholding information under the security provision of the Open Government Code. To do so might well cause our regular correspondents to renew their interest in the site, but to do otherwise could be construed as misleading Parliament. Or is it enough to rely on the fact that the area of concern is not an "organisation"?

2. If anyone has any idea as to why Mr Taylor might have asked this question, please let me know as we have no details of any former interest in Rudloe Manor.

3. May I please have responses no later than 1500 on Mon 22 Jun.

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40 [redacted]
ACS(F&S) HQ LC
Ext Section 40

UNCLASSIFIED

Telefax
To: Sec (AS) 2
Fax: Section 40
From: Section 40
Date: 19 June Pages: 5

UNCLASSIFIED

6984

PQ 3140i Written

MR MATTHEW TAYLOR (LIB DEM) (TRURO & ST AUSTELL)

QUESTION

38| To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what functions are carried out at RAF Rudloe Manor; and which organisations are based there.

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 Gde 6, Ext Section 40
AUTHORISED BY :

Declaration: I have satisfied myself that the following answer and background note are in accordance with the Government's policy on answering PQs, Departmental instructions (DCI GEN 150/97), and the Open Government Code (DCI GEN 54/98).

Answer:

RAF Rudloe Manor is an administrative unit providing parenting support for a number of independent organisations. The following units are located there:

Unit	Function
Headquarters, Provost and Security Services (United Kingdom)	*PTC to describe function*
Provost and Security Services (Western Region)	*PTC to describe function*
Defence Vetting Agency	*DVA to describe function*
Controller, Defence Communications Network	*DCSA to confirm title and describe function*
Headquarters Defence Telecommunications Services	*DCSA to confirm title and describe function*
A Detachment of 1001 Signals Unit, RAF	*PSO/AOCSS to describe function*
Corsham Computer Centre	*(Sec)SS to provide description of function*

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. [It is not known why Mr Taylor has asked this question.]

2. RAF Rudloe Manor is situated [ ] and comprises 3 sites. It also comprises an underground tunnel complex.

3. Ministers will be recall that No 1 site will close in [ ]; this was announced on [ ]. The closure involves the relocation of the P&SS units and the DVA. Some [ ] civilian job losses will result and there is the likelihood of [ ] redundancies.

4. Attached is a classified Annex to the background note.

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

UNCLASSIFIED

Annex

1. *See (SS) to provide fuller details on CCC.*

2. *See (HSF) to provide input on the dormant facility.*

UNCLASSIFIED

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

DATE FOR RETURN	:	12:00 ON TUESDAY 23 JUNE 1998
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 3140i
PQ TYPE	:	Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	NO
MINISTER REPLYING	:	MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES
LEAD BRANCH:	:	AMP SEC
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

MP's DETAIL: MR MATTHEW TAYLOR (LIB DEM)(TRURO & ST AUSTELL)

QUESTION

38|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what functions are carried out at RAF Rudloe Manor; and which organisations are based there. [46840]

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

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

MOD Form 174D

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 16

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS)6414

Enclosure Jacket No. 7

DATE OPENED 27.3.98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT:

PE: US 0959/98

MP: IEUAN WYN JONES

CONST: [redacted] Section 40

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on ..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer .....

Date ..... Appointment and Branch .....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SEC(AS)29

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

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

D/US of S/JS 0959/98/M

2 April 1998

Dear Ieuan,

Thank you for your letter of 13 March (reference: IWJ/2/96/137) to George Robertson enclosing one from your constituent, Section 40 [redacted] of Section 40 [redacted] about my Department's policy on reports of 'unidentified flying objects'. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility. Section 40 has written in similar terms to my officials and they will not be replying separately.

As you know, my Department examines any reports of 'UFO sightings' sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there was any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. 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 reported incident. 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.

My Department has no plans for the foreseeable future to expand its interest in these matters. I can however assure Section 40 [redacted] that the integrity of the UK's airspace in peacetime is Section 40

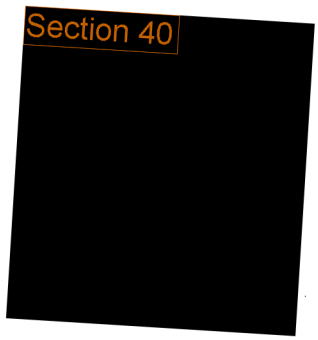
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS)1
03 APR 1998
5

Ieuan Wyn Jones Esq MP

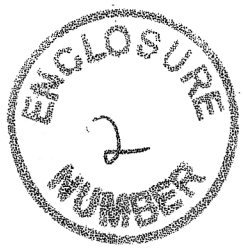
Ref

maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which remains vigilant for any potential external military threat. We are confident that our current air defence capabilities fully meet any perceived threat.

I hope this explains the position.



JOHN SPELLAR MP



LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

27 Mar 98

PE Unit
(thro [redacted])

LETTER FROM IEUAN WYN JONES MP - US 0959/98

1. Ieuan Wyn Jones' constituent, [redacted], has recently written directly to us; the letter to his MP is a copy.

2. Mr Jones' constituent is looking for greater MOD involvement in 'UFOs'. There are no plans to change the Department's very limited interest in this subject and the draft reply therefore sets out in full the Department's position.

3. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 54/98).

[redacted]

[redacted]
Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 [redacted]
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A1

Enc.

D/US/0959/98 March 1998

Thank you for your letter of 13 March (ref: IWJ/2/96/137) addressed to George Robertson enclosing one from Section 40 [redacted] of Section 40 [redacted] about my Department's policy on reports of 'unidentified flying objects'. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility. Section 40 [redacted] has written in similar terms to my officials and they will not be replying separately.

As you know, my Department examines any reports of 'UFO sightings' sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there was any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. 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 reported incident. 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.

My Department has no plans for the foreseeable future to expand its interest in these matters. I can however assure Section 40 [redacted] Section 40 [redacted] that the integrity of the UK's airspace in peacetime is

maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which remains vigilant for any potential external military threat. We are confident that our current air defence capabilities fully meet any perceived threat.

I hope this explains the position.

JOHN SPELLAR

Ieuan Wyn Jones MP

ENCLOSURE 1

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

TO: Sec(AS)2a PE REF NUMBER: US09859 /98

MINISTER REPLYING: USofS DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 27/3 /98

DATE: 17/3/98 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

****** *IMPORTANT UPDATES* ******

1. Ministerial responsibilities changed.

2. Opening and Closing All Ministers prefer to start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... to George Robertson/John Reid/John Gilbert/John Spellar on behalf etc"
Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

3. Open Government A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1998. It is set out in DCI GEN 54/98.

Replies MUST be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exception in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am withholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within **15 working days** to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

Departmental action Action on the same case should be held until the Minister has sent a full reply. Please discuss any questions about the substance of the drafts or other policy aspects direct with the relevant private office.

Ministers place great importance on the content style and speed of the replies. Letters should be polite, informal, to the point and in clear, simple language. Avoid acronyms and MOD jargon. Always emphasise the positive aspects of Government policy. No background note is required unless essential to explain the line taken in the draft reply.

Layout Draft replies should be double spaced. **Always** include the full PE reference number at the top left of the draft.

Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: **PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to** Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE 17 MAR 1998 FILE

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Our ref: IWJ/2/96/137

13 March 1998

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

Dear Secretary of State

I enclose a copy of a letter sent to the Ministry of Defence by my constituent, Section 40 Section 40 regarding unidentified aerial phenomena.

It would be helpful if you could let me have a copy of the response you send to Section 40 Section 40 in respect of his letter.

Yours sincerely

Section 40

IEUAN WYN JONES
MP for Ynys Môn

Section 40
Section 40
Holyhead
Anglesey
Section 40

21 February 1998

Section 40
Secretariat (Air Staff) 2a1
MOD
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2HB

Dear Section 40

I would like to add my voice to the groundswell of public opinion concerning an open policy on unidentified aerial phenomena.

I am aware of your Department's official policy that "To date, the MOD remains unaware of any evidence which proves that "UFO/flying saucers" or extraterrestrial lifeforms exist". However, if you read my attached article on the Operation Mainbrace Incident, I am sure you will agree, this policy is now obsolescent. Nor is this the only incident on record to have come out of the Public Record Office.

I would be grateful if the Ministry of Defence would reword its official policy to the more updated.-

"It is a matter of Public Record that intelligently controlled unidentified craft with design and performance parameters that far exceed current state of the art aircraft design have on occasion being witnessed by military/civilian aircrew/personnel. These unidentified craft are also on occasion penetrating the UK air defence region."

Under the Code of Practice on access to Government Information, I sense it would also be constructive if, in future, when military units witness unidentified aerial phenomena that full details of the sighting be made public in the form of a televised press conference. This type of openess would also be an excellent demonstration of the Government's commitment to a Freedom of Information Bill.

I am grateful for your kind consideration of my requests for open Government. I believe by working in partnership with the people in this way, our Government would be recognised by people at home and abroad as pioneers in the progressive development of modern democracy.

Kind Regards,

Section 40

64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 15

****

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

****

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

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

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

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

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

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

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 TEL: Section 40

APPROVED BY : Section 40 original signed Section 40
G7/Sec(AS)2

AUTHORISED BY : Martin Fuller original signed Section 40
SCS/Head of Sec(AS)

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

ANSWER:

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

BACKGROUND NOTE:

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

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

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

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

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

Copy to:

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

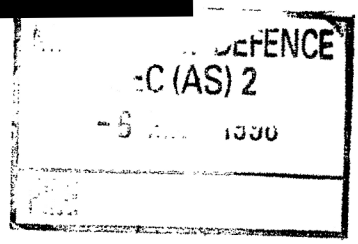
Date:

26 Mar 98

Files:

D/Sec(AS)/64/3

Section 40 [redacted]
Sheffield Section 40
Tel: Section 40 [redacted]
Section 40 [redacted]



2 March, 1998

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours Faithfully,

Section 40 [redacted]

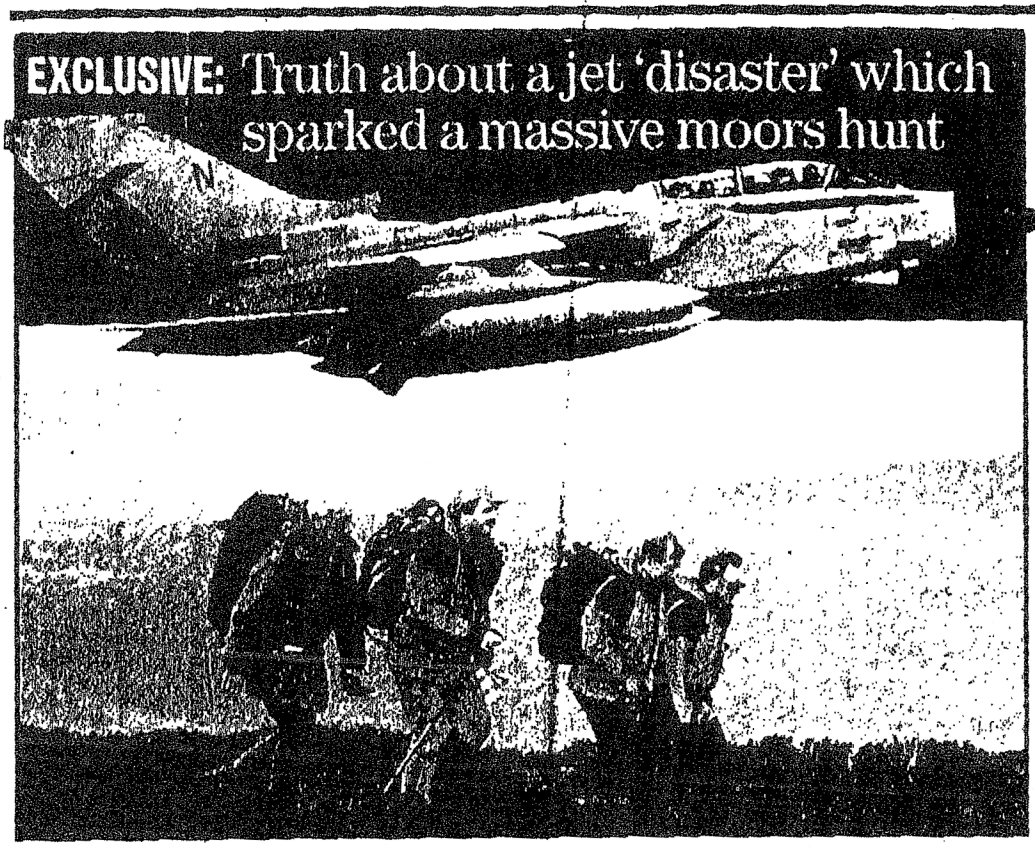
D. Clarke

F.A.O. Squadron leader Section 40

Section 40

From Section 40 Section 40 Sheffield Star

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



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

Crash that never was

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emergency services became involved in the operation which lasted over 16 hours.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BY DAVID CLARKE

No flying rules for military aircraft

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

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority said private pilots would face prosecution if they fly below 1,000 feet over a built up area.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTION

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

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

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

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

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

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 TEL: Section 40

APPROVED BY : Section 40 Section 40
G7/Sec(AS)2 24/3/98

AUTHORISED BY : Martin Fuller Section 40
SCS/Head of Sec(AS) 26.3.98

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

ANSWER:

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

BACKGROUND NOTE:

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

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

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

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

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

Copy to:

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

Date:

26 Mar 98

Files:

D/Sec(AS)/64/3

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

DATE FOR RETURN : 12:00 ON THURSDAY 26 MARCH 1998

PQ REFERENCE : PQ 2440i
PQ TYPE : Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED? : No

MINISTER REPLYING : PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS

LEAD BRANCH: : SEC(AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S) : DIO, PJHQ

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

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

QUESTION

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

REMEMBER you are accountable for the accuracy and timeliness of the advice you provide. Departmental Instructions on answering PQs are set out in DCI GEN 150/97 and can be viewed

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

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

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

QUESTION

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

Ops(LF)1

We spoke; grateful if you would co-ordinate with ACFENS and let me have an answer to this question as early as possible tomorrow morning Section 40

24/3

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC(AS)1
24 MAR 1998
FILE

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

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

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

QUESTION

13|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what complaints were received by the RAF concerning low flying aircraft relating to 24th March 1997. [36407]

SEC(AS)1
24 MAR 1998

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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
****

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

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

QUESTION

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

No 'UFO' reports received for anywhere in the UK on 22 MAR 97 - 26 MAR 97 (INCLUSIVE)

Section 40
24/3/98

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 1
2 + MAR 1998
FILE

-03-97 15:01 FROM:COMMCEN KINLOSS Section 40 ...AF... KINLOSS PAGE:01

(3)

VZCZCVTA083 UU
RR RBDBVT
DE RBDBQL 0002 0841355
ZNR UUUUU
RBDBVT T ARCC KINLOSS
[redacted]
FM 202 SQNDET LECONFIELD
TO AIG 1391
RBLBAD/78 SQN FALKLANDS
RBDKAM/NAS PRESTWICK
RBDBCU/HUMBER COAST GUARD 527351
BT
UNCLAS
SIC ICJ/KPJ
A. [redacted]02E SQN DET/SEAKING/LECONFIELD/TUES 25 MAR 97
B. S. YORKS POLICE 2250/ARCCK 2255/LECONFIELD 0815
C. CIV/LAND/AERO/NIL/ /SK272968/47 NMS/0845
D. CAVOK/NIL/NIL/240-5/NIL
E. NOTHING FOUND/ / /NIL/ /
F. SEARCH/NIL/NIL/NIL
G. SK272968 1140/NIL/LECONFIELD 1210/3 HRS 55 MINS DAY
H [redacted] R128 TASKED TO CONTINUE SEARCH FOR CAUSE OF EXPLOSIONS R128 SEARCHED AREA AS DETAILED BY S YORKS POLICE. NOTHING FOUND R128 STOOD DOWN BY INCIDENT CONTROL AND RETURNED TO BASE.

PAGE 2 RBDBQL 0002 UNCLAS
7. ARCCK FORM R190 COMPLETE
BT

NNNN

COMMCEN
25 MAR 1997
RAF KINLOSS

9A?

TACTICAL BOOKING CELL

NIGHT SECTOR SHEET

ALL TIMES ZULU

NIGHT SECTOR 3B

DATE: 24 MAR 1997

	16 00	17 00	18 00	30	19 00	30	20 00	16	21 00	50	22 00	30
ALLOCATION												
RESERVATION												
PICK UP												
PICK UP												
PICK UP												

20/1016

WARNINGS

BKG No	STN	TYPE & No	HT	DUR
N103	48 FW	2xF15	500	2x10
N102	48 FW	2xF15	500	2x7
N208	MR	TORN	500	11
N107	48FW	2xF15	500	2x12
N211	(2) MR	TORN	500	13
N320	MR	TORN	500	11
N423	COLT	JAS	250	45
N424	COLT	JAS	250	37
N425	(2) MR	TORN	500	13

VALIDATORY CHECK

1st - 1130 DX

2nd - 1530

SAVED AS: C:\FORMS-XL\NITESECT\NITESEC.XLS (VERSION 4)

Penc

TACTICAL BOOKING CELL

NIGHT SECTOR SHEET

ALL TIMES ZULU

NIGHT SECTOR 3A

DATE: 24 MAR 1997

	16 00	17 00	18 00	30	19 00	30	20 00	21 00	30	22 00	30
ALLOCATION											
RESERVATION											
PICK UP											
PICK UP											
PICK UP											

WARNINGS

BKG No	STN	TYPE & No	HT	DUR
N208	MR	TORN	500	13
N211	MR	TORN	500	14
N320	MR	TORN	500	13
N425	(2) MR	TORN	500	14

	17 00	18 00	19 00	20 00	21 00	22 00

VALIDATORY CHECK

1st - 1130 | NX

2nd - 1530 |

SAVED AS: C:\FORMS-XL\NITESECT\NITESEC.XLS (VERSION 4)

4 MAR '98 13:33 FROM HQP-SS-UK-FCF TO SEC-AS PAGE.004/005

TACTICAL BOOKING CELL

NIGHT SECTOR SHEET

ALL TIMES ZULU

NIGHT SECTOR 4B

DATE: 24 MAR 1997

	16 00	17 00	18 00	19 00	20 00	21 00	22 00
ALLOCATION				30 48FW 20 COLT	10 WIT	MAR	50 COLT 30
RESERVATION				30 48FW 20 COLT		MAR	COLT
PICK UP							
PICK UP					MR		
PICK UP							

20/01/6 JA/EC

WARNINGS

BKG No	STN	TYPE & No	HT	DUR	17 00	18 00	19 00	20 00	21 00	22 00
H222	LEC	SKING	GL	90			00	30		
N102	48 FW	2x F15	500	2x 23			37	00		
N103	48 FW	2x F15	500	2x 15			40-55			
N104	48FW	2x F15	500	2x 6			36-42			
N107	48FW	4x F15	500	4x 23			52	15		
R216	DISH	LYNX	GL				00	30		
R217	"	GAZ	"				10	40		
R218	"	"	"				30	00		
R219	"	LYNX	"					45	15	
R220	"	GAZ	"					55	25	
N208	MR 2	TORN	500	2				45		
N320	MR	TORN	500	2				45		
N321	MR	2x TORN	550	2x 14				45		

VALIDATORY CHECK

1st - 1130		2nd - 1530	

SAVED AS: C:\FORMS-XL\NITESECT\NITESEC.XLS (VERSION 4)

Section 40 – this is the draft letter I told you about

Section 40

DRAFT

David Clarke
Section 40
SHEFFIELD Section 40

Dear Mr Clarke

Your letter of March 2 about an incident near Sheffield on March 24 1997 has been passed to me by colleagues at RAF Strike command HQ at RAF High Wycombe with a request to see what I can do to help you.

I have looked out the log of the incident - which I am not able to send you - and the general details are as follows: the RAF Search and Rescue system became involved at 2250 hours Z on March 24 when the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre here at RAF Kinloss was asked for assistance by South Yorkshire Police for what was believed to be a possible aircraft crash. The controllers scrambled an RAF Sea King, call-sign Rescue 128, and it was airborne at 2328Z with an estimated time of arrival in the search area of around midnight. A police helicopter was also operating in the area. The search of the Pike Low region was completed around 0050Z. Shortly after 0100Z the police helicopter was tasked to search from Ladybower Reservoir to outskirts of Sheffield, and R128 to search from Boltsterstone to Pike Low: other areas of interest were Margery Hill, Black Clough, Round Hill and another Pike Lowe. Nothing was found. At 0230Z Rescue 128 was released to return to base and landed back at Leconfield at 0255Z.

Rescue 128 returned to the area at around 0900Z on March 25 to continue the search, which they did until released at 1145Z to return to base. Between these times the ARCC log details calls to the British Geological Survey to ask them to check their remote sensors and their replies that what might have been a sonic boom was recorded around the time witnesses saw and heard the activity which started the search: also in the log is a call from military air traffic controllers that no complaints or reports of sonic booms had been received by them from anyone in the search area during the night. The log ends at 1216Z following a stand-down by the police of all assets at 1148Z. The RAF helicopter was in the air for 3.5 hours on March 24, and for just under 4 hours on March 25.

I understand from my colleagues that they have informed you there was no RAF exercise activity on the night of March 24.

This is all the information I have available here. All I have omitted is general calls between the RAF ARCC controllers and the police discussing the areas to the investigated and by which aircraft and/or mountain rescue team. As there is a similarity, except for the final conclusion, between this incident and one in which I was closely involved in September last year I enclose a copy of our newly published PR book RAF 98 in which you will find an account of what went on that day. I hope this helps you at least a little.

Yours sincerely

Section 40
PRO Scotland

March 23 1998

RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE INCIDENT LOG

INITIAL CALL

FORM R	190
DATE / TIME	24 2250 Z
AGENCY	LD+D
WHO	
PHONE NO	S YORKS POLICE -INSP Section 40
MESSAGE	POSS A/C CRASH
LOCATION	110/272968
ROUTE	
INJURIES	
DESCRIPTION	
SEARCH AREA	
OTHER ASSETS	
HOSPITAL/ AMBULANCE	POLICE HELO
WEATHER	LEEDS/BRAD-290/11 CAVOK +4/ E MIDS-270/10 CAVOK +5
OTHER INFO	

INCIDENT LOG

24 2250 Z	LD+D// REPORT OF AN EXPLOSION/POSSIBLE A/C CRASH NW SHEFFIELD.
24 2253 Z	LD+D// POLICE INCIDENT NO. 1081(SOUTH YORKS POLICE) REQST ANY HELP AVAILABLE IN SRCH. APPROX POSN 110/272968 BOLSTERSTONE
24 2254 Z	TO LEC//REPORT OF EXPLOSION, POSS A/C CX 110/272968 NW SHEFFIELD , PEAK DISTRICT. POLICE HELO ALSO INVOLVED. LAUNCH TO INVESTIGATE. //WX FM LD+D PASSED TO LEC
24 2305 Z	TO S YORKS POLICE//RQST FURTHER INFO/ AREA OF INTEREST BASED ON LINE BOLSTERSTONE TO MIDHOPESTONES FURTHER SIGHTING REOPRTS FM STRINES 110/220900 TIES IN SIGHTINGS TO POSN NEAR MIDHOPE RESEVOIR 4NM NW OF BOLSTERSTONE.STILL A RED GLOW SIGHTED AT 2258Z.
24 2312 Z	TO LEC// INFO PASSED
24 2313 Z	LD+D//CONFIRM POLICE HELO WILL BE WORKING IN AREA AT APPROX 2000FT WILL GET C/S AND CONTACT FREQ AND CALL BACK.
24 2316 Z	LD+D// C/S POLICE 42 FREQ 121.5
24 2327 Z	LIKELY POSN BASED ON SIGHTINGS IS LAT 5329N LONG 00139W/PASSED TO D+D

24 2328 Z	LEC// R128 !
24 2330 Z	TO SYP// UNDERSTAND POLICE 42 IN AREA/ C/S X99, AND CARRIES INFRA RED AND HEAT SEEKING EQUIP
24 2331 Z	HF//R128 ETA 2359Z.
24 2334 Z	TO HF // PASS TO R128 POLICE 42 ALSO KNOWN AS X99. HELO CARRIES IR AND HEAT SEEKING EQUIP./
24 2335 Z	D+D// CONFIRM POSN/ POSN IS AREA OF LIKELIEST IMPACT BUT ACCURACY CANNOT BE CONFIRMED. /X99 AND R128 ARE IN 2WAY COMMS.
24 2341 Z	D+D//ALL INFO PASSED TO BOTH HELOS WHO ORGANISING THERE OWN SEPARATION.
24 2343 Z	DERBYSHIRE POLICE// INSP Section 40 - RQST INFO/ SITREP PASSED.
24 2358 Z	D+D//POLICE 42 HAS TO REFUEL BUT WILL RETURN ASAP
25 0005 Z	D+D//110/210970 PIKE LOWE DATUM FOR R128.
25 0016 Z	D+D// R128 INVESTIGATED PIKE LOW
25 0023 Z	TO SYP//DO YOU HAVE COMMS WITH R128?/ NEG
25 0024 Z	TO D+D// PASS TO R128 FREQ NOW 2396MZ
25 0025 Z	D+D// R128 FLOWN TO N OF STOCKBRIDGE ,STEEL WORKS IN AREA. POLICE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO CHK S/WORKS WAS NOT FLARING. POLICE 42 BACK ON SCENE WITH FLIR SET ON WIDE SCAN.DO YOU HAVE R128 ENDURANCE?/ EASIER IF YOU ASK R128 DIRECT AS WE ARE HAVING HF PROBS./R
25 0029 Z	D+D// R128 COMPLETED SPECIFIED AREAS - WHAT NEXT?
25 0030 Z	TO SYP//WHAT DO YOU WANT R128 TO DO NEXT?/ WITNESS AT 110/265963 WAS LOOKING UP VALLEY TO PIKE LOW FM EWDEN VILLAGE, RQST LINE 1KM EITHER SIDE FM VILLAGE TO PIKE LOW. WILL REINTERVIEW FIRST INFORMANT IN THE MEAN TIME.
25 0036 Z	D+D//PASS TO R128 ABOVE SRCH AREA.
25 0041 Z	TO SYP// SRCH AREA PASSED. WAS FLARING STEELWORKS A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE?/NO. GAMEKEEPER HEARD RATHER THAN SAW EXPLOSION.
25 0043 Z	D+D// X99 COMPLETED SRCH OF LADYBOWER RESVR. NOW GOING TO JOIN R128.
25 0045 Z	D+D//R128 COMPLETED SRCH RQST FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. X99 REPORTS CLOUD COMING IN FM WEST AND MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REMAIN MUCH LONGER, R128 SAYS ITWILL NOT AFFECT HIM JUS T YET.
25 0048 Z	TO SYP// RQST FURTHER TASKING FOR R128/ TASKING BEING CONSIDERED WILL ADVISE IN APPROX 10-15MINS
25 0048 Z	TO D+D// FOR R128 RQST PLE
25 0051 Z	D+D// PLE 2HRS. R128 IN COY WITH X99 SRCH GRID GIVEN BY POLICE/RQST COORDS OF AREAS COVERED
25 0053 Z	SYP// DERBYSHIRE FIRE BRIGADE MOBILE IN SRINES 110/230902 REPORTS SMOKE VISIBLE/RQST DIRECTION

25 0055 Z	SYP// GRID GIVEN IS FB MOBILE/RQST HE SHINE HEADLIGHTS IN DIRECTION OF SMOKE. INFO X99 THAT FB MOBILE IS DOING SO.
25 0102 Z	D+D//LADYBOWER RESVR TO SOUTHERN DAM EAST TO BUILTUP AREA OF SHEFFIELD HI LEVEL SRCH BY X99. R128 SRCH'D AREA1 - BOLSTERSTONE TO PIKE LOW TO 3KM EACH SIDE
25 0109 Z	TO SYP// WE HAVE AREAS SRCH'D, REQUIRE NEW TASKING./WILL CALL BACK
25 0112 Z	SYP//SRCH AREA POINT OF INTEREST MARGERY HILL 110/1996 INFO FM FIRST INFORMANT. SRCH AREA 110/1494 BLACK CLOUGH 110/1499 ROUND HILL 110/2199 THRU PIKE LOWE 110/2194 ROUND HILL(ANOTHER ONE). POLICE NOW CONSIDERING NEXT MOVE
25 0128 Z	SYP// ON COMPLETION OF THIS SRCH AREA, IF UNSUCCESSFUL R128 IS TO STAND DOWN.
25 0130 Z	TO D+D// ABOVE PASSED./ FM R128 SOME CLOUD IN AREA MAY PREVENT 100% COVER. X99 NOW LEFT TO REFUEL AND MAY NOT BE RECALLED.
25 0144 Z	RQST FM Section 40 PEAK DISTRICT MRT FOR FACE TO FACE DEBRIEF.
25 0152 Z	TO D+D// R128 TO LAND IF POSS AT MRT RV 110/176051 TO DEBRIEF. C/S WOODHEAD BASE 86.3125FM
25 0156 Z	D+D//R128 WILL ATTEMPT TO GET INTO RV.
25 0156 Z	TO SYP// ABOVE INFO PASSED. R128 WILL THEN RTB.
25 0204 Z	TO LEC//SITREP PASSED
25 0230 Z	D+D//R128! ETA LEC 0255Z
25 0256 Z	LEC//R128! AT 0255Z
25 0432 Z	Section 40 ,CTRLER,PEAK DIST MRT// 0468 535915 (VODAFON) LOKING FOR DAYLIGHT SEARCH AT FIST LIGHT FOR "MISSING a/c" NEED SYP APPROVAL
25 0442 Z	SYP// REQUEST HELICOPTER FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE IN CONTINUED SEARCH
25 0445 Z	FROM MET// WX IN AREA POSS MIST AND FOG AT FIRST SHOULD BURN OFF BY 0900
25 0455 Z	ESTABLISHED THAT RECTANGULAR SEARCH AREA REQUIRED BY PEAK DIST MRT AS FOLLOWS,SH110/ EASTINGS ARE 12 AND 19;NORTHINGS 93 AND 00 WITH EXTENSION SOUTH TO CHECK THE NORTHERN RESERVOIR OF THE DERWENT RESERVOIR COMBINATION. RV TO PICK UP FAST MRT TEAM AT PEAK DIST MRT HQ AT GRID SH110/176051 POC Section 40 , TEAM LDR. WE WILL CONTACT AGAIN AT 0730 TO ASSESS WX ON SCENE. HELICOPTER WILL REMAIN AT LEC UNTIL WX SUITABLE. OTHER UNITS: SARDA WILL BE ON SCENE FIRST. MAIN MRT WILL BE HELD IN RESERVE INITIALLY AT MRT HQ LOCN.
25 0520 Z	SET UP TDA 399 DETAILS ATTD.
25 0531 Z	LDD//MANCHESTER AIRPT WANT CONTROL OF TDA TO COORDINATE THEIR TRAFFIC - AGREED, FREQUENCY TBD

25 1128 Z	L D&D// THERE ARE NO COMPLAINTS OR REPORTS OF SONIC BOOMS IN THE AREA FROM LAST NIGHT - IF ANY TURN UP, WILL LET YOU KNOW
25 1131 Z	GEOL SOC INFO'D - ANY DIRECTIONAL INFO OR RANGES?// NEG, ONLY THAT THE SIGNAL LOOKS LIKE A TYPICAL SONIC BOOM FROM SOUTH AT 2206Z// ANY OTHER INFO, WILL GET BACK
25 1131 Z	HF// R128 COMPLETED SEARCH PLUS ONE OTHER AREA, LANDING ON AT RV
25 1145 Z	HF// R128 STOOD DOWN, ETA 25 MIN
25 1146 Z	LEC FLT INFO'D
25 1148 Z	Section 40 / ALL ASSETS STOOD DOWN
25 1208 Z	HF/R128 LAND 3MINS CLOSING DOWN
25 1212 Z	FM LEC FLT/R128 ↓
25 1214 Z	SCOT INFOD
25 1215 Z	TDA 399 CANX MW
25 1216 Z	SCOT AND LON INFOD REF TDA CANX
	**********SECURE**********
25 1239 Z *AFTER NOTE*	Section 40 // EXHAUSTED ALL SENSORS, NOTHING MORE THAN THE SONIC BOOM READING, WHICH AS FAR AS WE CAN SEE WAS FROM A SOUTHERLY DIRECTION// ALL ASSETS NOW STOOD DOWN, IF ANYTHING FURTHER COMES IN WE'LL INFO YOU

(2)

Message 004
2509322 MAR-VZCZCZEA036 UU
RR RBDBVT
DE RBDBQL 0001 0840920
ZNR UUUUU
R 2508402 MAR 97
FM 202 SQNDET LECONFIELD
TO AIG 1391
TO RBLBAD/78 SQN FALKLANDS
RBDKAM/NAS PRESTWICK
BT
UNCLAS
SIC ICJ/KPJ
A. [redacted]202E SQN DET/SEA KING/LECONFIELD/MON 24 MAR 97
B. S.YORKS POLICE 2250/ARCCK 2255/LECONFIELD 2325
C. CIV/LAND/EXPLOSION/NIL/NIL/SK 272968/47 NM/2359
D. CAVOK/NIL/NIL/300-10/NIL
E. NOTHING FOUND
F. SEARCH/VDB 0/NIL
G. SK 272 968 0230/NIL/LECONFIELD 0255/3 HRS 30 MINS NIGHT
H. Section 40 [redacted] R128 SCRAMBLED TO SIGHTINGS OF FLASHES AND SOUNDS OF EXPLOSIONS IN THE PEAK DISTRICT. VARIOUS AREAS SEARCHED USING NVGS AND NOTHING FOUND. POLICE 42 ALSO ON SCENE. SEARCHING WITH FLIR. ALSO NOTHING FOUND. AFTER FACE TO FACE BRIEF WITH LOCAL MRT. R128 RTB. EXCELLENT COOP FROM POLICE 42.

PAGE . RBDBQL 0001 UNCLAS
HF COMMS UNWORKABLE
J. ARCCK FORM R190 COMPLETE
BT
#0001

NNNN

COMMCEN
25 MAR 1997
HAF KINLOSS

Arcc

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED Section 40

MOD Form 174D

ENCLOSURE 14 NUMBER

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS)64/4

Enclosure Jacket No. 6

DATE OPENED 24.3.98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT:

PE: US [redacted]0642/98

MP: NICHOLAS WINTERTON

CONST: [redacted] Section 40

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer.....

Date..... Appointment and Branch.....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC(AS)2
16 MAR 1998
FILE

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

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

D/US of S/JS 0642/98/P

12 March 1998

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter of 20 February enclosing one from Section 40 [redacted] of Section 40 [redacted] Bollington, about reports of 'unidentified flying objects'.

I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'unidentified flying object' sightings sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of an external military threat, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each report. 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.

My Department 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 we remain open-minded. To date my Department knows of nothing which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

Nicholas R Winterton Esq MP

Recycled Paper

I should wish to assure Section 40 that the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace in peacetime is maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which remains vigilant for any potential external military threat.

I hope this explains the position.

Section 40

JOHN SPELLAR MP

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

4 Mar 98 [redacted]

PE Unit

(thro [redacted])

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 2

LETTER FROM NICHOLAS WINTERTON MP - US 0642/98

1. I attach a draft reply for USofS to send to Nicholas Winterton MP. We last heard from the MP on this subject in Nov 94 and, given the change of Administration since then, now would seem an ideal time to spell out the Department's position once more.

2. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).

[redacted]

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 [redacted]
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A1

Enc.

D/US/0642/98 March 1998

Thank you for your letter of 20 February enclosing one from Section 40 of Section 40 Bollingham, about reports of 'unidentified flying objects'.

By way of background I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'unidentified flying object' sightings sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of an external military threat, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each report. 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.

My Department 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 we remain open-minded. To date my Department knows of nothing which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

I should wish to assure Section 40 that the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace in peacetime is maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which remains vigilant for any potential external military threat.

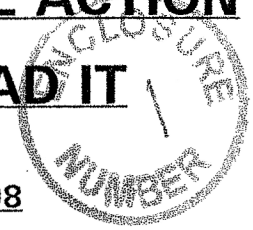
I hope this clarifies the position.

JOHN SPELLAR

Nicholas Winterton MP

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT



TO: SEC(AS)2 PE REF NUMBER: US 0642/98

MINISTER REPLYING: USofS DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 6/3/98

DATE: 24/2/98 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

****** *IMPORTANT UPDATES* ******

1. Ministerial responsibilities changed.

2. Opening and Closing All Ministers prefer to start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... to George Robertson/John Reid/John Gilbert/John Spellar on behalf etc"
Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

3. Open Government A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 48/1997.

Replies MUST be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exception in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am withholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within **15 working days** to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

Departmental action Action on the same case should be held until the Minister has sent a full reply. Please discuss any questions about the substance of the drafts or other policy aspects direct with the relevant private office.

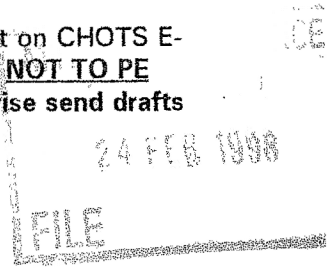
Ministers place great importance on the content style and speed of the replies. Letters should be polite, informal, to the point and in clear, simple language. Avoid acronyms and MOD jargon. Always emphasise the positive aspects of Government policy. No background note is required unless essential to explain the line taken in the draft reply.

Layout Draft replies should be double spaced. **Always** include the full PE reference number at the top left of the draft.

Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: **PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to** Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD



PE

NICHOLAS R. WINTERTON, M.P.
(Macclesfield)

23 FEB 1998

Private office: Section 40
Secretary: Section 40
Assistant: Section 40

UFOs
Sec (AS) 2
UFO's

John Spellar Esq MP.,
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2HB.

Check
Section 40
N° 10 letter to
Section 40
Signed
& to.

20th February, 1998

Dear John,

Section 40 MACCLESFIELD UFO RESEARCH GROUP

I enclose, for your attention, a letter which I have received and upon which I shall be most grateful to have your comments.

Your acknowledgment of receipt of this correspondence would be appreciated.

Section 40

[redacted]

PARLIAMENTARY
BRANCH
23 FEB 1998
ROOM 6134 MAIN BLDG

Macclesfield U.F.O. Research Group.

Dir. of Research: [redacted] SENM, Dip HE STAEM
Dir. of Investigations: [redacted]

[redacted]
Bollington
Nr. Macclesfield
Cheshire
[redacted]
Tel: [redacted]

Mr. Nicholas Winterton MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

(Date 18/02/1998)

Your ref : Hansard/Aerial phenomena (UFO's?)

Dear Sir,

I was very interested to learn of a number of questions that were recently tabled in the House of Commons. The references are Hansard, 24 July 1996, 423-4; 17 October 1996, 1082, 1091-1094; 18 December 1996, 626, 628-629. All questions apart from those of 18th December were asked by the late Martin Redmond, formerly the MP for Don Valley, the latter ones were asked by Ieuan Wyn Jones, the MP for Anglesey. The subject of ufology is one that interests me greatly, and although I remain open-minded as to whether these UFO's are actually extraterrestrial craft, all available evidence as presented would seem to indicate that they are. Given the number of sightings on a truly international scale, but more pertinently, on a national scale, involving witnesses from the military, civilian, and scientific communities, plus the frank admissions of Mr. Nick Pope,- a higher executive officer in the Ministry of Defence, I feel that a properly funded scientific study of the phenomenon needs to be undertaken and that more questions need to be asked in Parliament.

The official line seems to be that these anomalous craft are of "....no defence significance", but I believe that any incursions into British airspace by vehicles of questionable or unknown origin are *very much* of defence significance, and are certainly in the public interest. With this in mind, I would be very grateful if you would consider raising a series of questions (see enclosed) on my behalf.

I have also taken the liberty of enclosing a letter from [redacted] of CSETI to several members of US Congressional Committees in the hope that it might highlight the seriousness with which our American allies also take the subject.

(Cont...)

As a director of the Macclesfield UFO Research Group, and as the northwest area representative of "Project Concern" (the latter being a national body representing individuals who have voiced concerns regarding the UFO phenomenon, and set up initially with the backing of the Admiral of the Fleet, the Lord Hill-Norton GCB, Chief of Defence Staff 1971 - 73), I would be more than happy to furnish you with further details or advice as appropriate to this and related issues.

Many thanks for your time and consideration in this matter, and please do not hesitate to contact me further should it be deemed appropriate.

Yours Faithfully,

Section 40 [redacted]

Section 40 [redacted] SENM., Dip HE STAEM.

Parliamentary Questions # 1

" To ask the Shadow Secretary of State for Defence to explain why his Department felt it unnecessary to adopt a policy referred to in his answer of 18 December (*Hansard*, Col 628) to Mr Ieuan Wyn Jones, MP for Ynys Môn, on the reporting of unidentified craft and releasing to the Press details of (i) shape, flight-pattern, colour and size of craft, (ii) where and when the craft was seen, (iii) what action his Department took and (iv) the radar profile of the craft when such details were clearly in the public interest and his Department consistently took the view that such incidents were of no defence significance; and if he will make a statement."

" To ask the Prime Minister if he will act on the Petition from the Residents of Anglesey and elsewhere presented on 17 March 1997 requesting legislation to facilitate the setting up of an independent civilian commission to investigate and establish the full relevance of the unidentified flying object phenomenon in the UK"

" To ask The Secretary of State for Defence will he agree that the UK Airspace has been penetrated by craft whose design and performance far exceed current state of the art aircraft design when taken in the context of such reports as (i) submitted by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt relating to events in Rendlesham forest in December 1980 (ii) correspondence from Air Secretariat 2a1 relating to the incidents of 30/31 March 1993 (iii)Joint Airmiss (P) 2/95 relating to The Manchester Ringways Incident of January 1995 (iv) AIR 20/9321, DDI (Tech)/c.290/3/ referring to an object at 50000ft that gave a radar return consistent with a ship's echo (v)AIR 20/9320, DDI (Tech)/S290 referring to an anomalous radar return with hovering and unusual acceleration capability, (vi) AIR 16/1199 relating to the testimony of Flight Lieutenant Kilburn of No 269 Squadron, RAF in September 1952 and (vii) numerous mandatory occurrence reports; and if he will make a statement"

" To ask The Secretary of State for Transport will he agree that the UK Airspace has been penetrated by craft whose design and performance far exceed current state of the art aircraft design when taken in the context of such reports as (i) submitted by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt relating to events in Rendlesham forest in December 1980 (ii) correspondence from Air Secretariat 2a1 relating to the incidents of 30/31 March 1993 (iii)Joint Airmiss (P) 2/95 relating to The Manchester Ringways Incident of January 1995 (iv) AIR 20/9321, DDI (Tech)/c.290/3/ referring to an object at 50000ft that gave a radar return consistent with a ship's echo (v)AIR 20/9320, DDI (Tech)/S290 referring to an anomalous radar return with hovering and unusual acceleration capability, (vi) AIR 16/1199 relating to the testimony of Flight Lieutenant Kilburn of No 269 Squadron, RAF in September 1952 and (vii) numerous mandatory occurrence reports; and if he will make a statement"

"To ask the Prime Minister in the spirit of his commitment to a Freedom of Information act, if he will arrange for all UFO-related material held under (i) 30 year extended, (ii) 50 year extended, and (iii) 100 year extended disclosure to be released to the public.

"To ask the Prime Minister if he will arrange for all material relating to the incident at Rendlesham Forest in December 1980 to be released to the public"

Key Chairmen of Congressional Committees put on Notice

PUBLIC REQUESTED TO CALL THESE COMMITTEES
Today, 24 December1997, the following letter was sent to key Chairmen of Congressional Committees by registered mail, return receipt requested.

December 22, 1997

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator/Congressman,

For the past seven years, CSETI (The Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence) has been collecting scientific evidence on the matter of extraterrestrial intelligence and so-called UFOs.

We have identified a substantial amount of irrefutable evidence as well as the testimony of over 100 military, intelligence agency and civilian government witnesses who have held Top Secret (TS) clearances, many of whom were additionally cleared for access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI). These people have personally witnessed or been involved in covert operations related to this subject or events of an unambiguous extraterrestrial nature (see enclosures).

The implications of this matter transcend the interests of any given branch or agency of the US government, and impact numerous interrelated areas, all of which affect national security, governmental function and finances and government accountability.

In general, the US government and its legal representatives are excluded from briefings and developments impacting this important area -- a situation which we feel is unconstitutional, dangerously avoids Congressional oversight, and which must be corrected as soon as possible.

In meetings which I have had with a sitting CIA Director, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, the Executive Branch and senior military representatives in the

Pentagon, I have found that, while there is interest in the subject and general support for a disclosure regarding the existence of extraterrestrial life forms, there is an almost universal absence of information available to these leaders.

The implications of excessive and undue secrecy surrounding this issue should concern every member of Congress who is charged with upholding the integrity of the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law. The subject itself has vast implications for world peace, science and new technologies, the environment, the economy and geo-politics (see enclosed paper "Implications of an Extraterrestrial Disclosure").

CSETI is hereby formally asking your committee to convene open hearings on the subject of extraterrestrial intelligence beginning with the next term of Congress. We are prepared to provide you with a substantial body of detailed briefing materials in addition to those enclosed, as well as the names of bona-fide first hand military and intelligence witnesses who wish to testify under oath before Congress. These heros of our country are eager to inform the Congress and the American people of what they know first-hand regarding this matter.

We respectfully ask that you reply to this request and answer the following questions:

- Is your committee willing to receive a preliminary briefing on this subject?
- If not, why?
- Is your committee willing to allow open, publicly accessed hearings on this subject?
- If not, why?

CSETI and its worldwide network of military witnesses, scientists and researchers are ready to provide you with a full briefing on this subject at your earliest convenience. We feel the American people, and the people of the world, deserve to know the truth of this matter.

We request that our elected representatives assert their constitutional rights on behalf of the American citizen to be provided a full, reasonable disclosure on this matter in the next term of Congress.

Sincerely,

Steven M. Greer M.D.
International Director of CSETI

enclosures:

1. CSETI Briefing Document - CSETI Assessment and Position Papers and U.S. Government Documents related to UFOs.

2. Videotape of Military Witnesses' Testimony from 9April, 1997 Washington DC CSETI Briefings for Congressmen and others - Confidential.

3. Videotape of Images of UFOs/Extraterrestrial Vehicles.

4. Audiotape and Transcript of Edwards Air Force Base pursuit of UFOs, 1965.

5. Report on the CSETI Washington DC Briefings of 9 April, 1997.

Overview | **Programs** | >**Position Papers**< | **Field Reports** | **Membership** | **Contact Us** | **E-Mail CSETI**

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MOD Form 174D

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 13

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS)64/4

Enclosure Jacket No. 5

DATE OPENED 29.1.98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: PE: US 0218/98
MP: ANDREW LOVE
CONST: [redacted] Section 40

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

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DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer.....

Date..... Appointment and Branch.....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 2

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

28 Jan 98

PE Unit Section 40
(thro Section 40

LETTER FROM ANDREW LOVE MP - US 0218/98

1. I attach a draft reply for USofS to send to Andrew Love MP. The 'Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence' is an American organisation. Mr Section 40 seems to have obtained information on 'Project Starlight' from The Internet. Section 40 is not known to us. As a newly elected MP, Mr Love may not be familiar with the Department's limited interest in this subject.

2. Opinion polls are often quoted as evidence of a high level of public interest in this subject. Such polls are usually run by "UFO" or "strange phenomena" magazines or as phone-ins during "UFO" television programmes. Not surprisingly, the majority of those responding to what are, usually carefully crafted questions, provide a distorted impression of the actual level of interest amongst the population as a whole.

3. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).

Section 40

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A (2)

Enc.

D/US/5075/97 January 1998

Thank you for your letter to George Robertson of 16 January enclosing one from Section 40 [redacted] of Section 40 [redacted] Edmonton, London concerning 'unidentified flying objects' and extraterrestrial lifeforms. I am replying in view of my responsibility for correspondence of this nature.

By way of background I should explain that my Department does not have any expertise or role in respect of 'UFO/flying saucer' matters or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms, about which we remain open-minded. I should add that to date the Ministry of Defence knows of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

My Department does examine any reports of 'unidentified flying object' sightings sent to us, but this is solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each report. 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.

In the light of my Department's limited interest in these matters I am unable to support Section 40 [redacted] request concerning 'Project Starlight'.

JOHN SPELLAR

Andrew Love MP

11 FEB 1998

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

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

D/US of S/JS 0218/98/M

10 February 1998

Dear Andy,

Their mistake — of 16 January

Thank you for your letter of 16 January to George Robertson enclosing one from your constituent, Section 40, of Section 40 Edmonton, about 'unidentified flying objects' and extraterrestrial lifeforms. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility.

By way of background I should explain that my Department does not have any expertise or role in respect of 'UFO/flying saucer' matters or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms, about which we remain open-minded. I should add that to date the Ministry of Defence knows of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 2
11 FEB 1998
FILE

Andrew Love Esq MP

Recycled Paper

In the light of my Department's limited interest in these matters I am unable to support Section 40 request concerning 'Project Starlight'.

Section 40

JOHN SPELLAR MP

Recycled Paper

5 pages to follow

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 1

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

TO: SSC (AB)

PE REF NUMBER: US 0218 /98

MINISTER REPLYING: US of S

DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 03 / 02 /98

DATE: 22 / 01 /98 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

******* IMPORTANT UPDATES *******

1. Ministerial responsibilities changed.

2. Opening and Closing All Ministers prefer to start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... to George Robertson/John Reid/John Gilbert/John Spellar on behalf etc"
Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

3. Open Government A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 48/1997.

Replies MUST be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exception in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am withholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within 15 working days to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

Departmental action Action on the same case should be held until the Minister has sent a full reply. Please discuss any questions about the substance of the drafts or other policy aspects direct with the relevant private office.

Ministers place great importance on the content style and speed of the replies. Letters should be polite, informal, to the point and in clear, simple language. Avoid acronyms and MOD jargon. Always emphasise the positive aspects of Government policy. No background note is required unless essential to explain the line taken in the draft reply.

Layout Draft replies should be double spaced. Always include the full PE reference number at the top left of the draft.

Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us IMMEDIATELY by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SECRETARIAT 22 JAN 1998 FILE

2A

From: ANDREW LOVE MP
Member of Parliament for Edmonton

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 0171 - 219 5497
Fax: 0171 - 219 6623

George Robertson MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

16 January 1998

Dear George

re : Section 40 **Edmonton, London,** Section 40

Please find attached a letter that I have received from my Constituent.

I would be grateful for your comments on the points raised in this letter.

Thank you for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Section 40

ANDREW LOVE MP

PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH
ROOM 610 [illegible] BLDG

Please sent your reply to the address below

Constituency Office: Broad House, 205 Fore Street, Edmonton, London N18 2LE
Tel: 0181 - 803 0574 Fax: 0181 - 807 5332

Section 40 [redacted]
Edmonton
London
Section 40

3rd October 1997

Mr. A. Love
Broad House
205 Fore Street
Edmonton
London
N18 2TZ

Dear Section 40

Please find enclosed a press briefing from the Centre for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence.

The enclosed refers to an event which took place in April of this year, where CSETI briefed various offices within the American government, with the objective of instigating open hearings similar to those held in 1966 and 1968. The difference now being that CSETI has identified over 100 firsthand government witnesses that during the course of their duties have examined either material, reports, or bodies or had knowledge there of, that confirms the presence of extraterrestrials, spacecraft's and such technology. These witnesses are prepared to testify their evidence under oath to the US Congress, thus briefing the world about what they know on this subject.

This call for briefings is in the interest of all nations not just the Americans. I am therefore requesting that you gain support from the British Government and back CSETI's request for open hearings. It is understood via recent polls that over 50% of the population believe that UFO's and ET's have, and are visiting this planet, this is more people than voted for The Labour Party in the election this year. Therefore, The Labour Party has a duty to represent its nation and push for open hearings so that a full disclosure on this subject can take place.

I trust that you will take the time to digest the information enclosed and give your support to Project Starlight.

Yours sincerely

Section 40 [redacted]

Media Notice/Newsgroups

Contact:

Dr. Steven Greer, CSETI
(704)-274-5671
email: Dr_ET@compuserve.com
http://www.cseti.org
or
Martin Keller, Media
(612) 729-8585
email: kelmart@aol.com

SELECT CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES, NEWS MEDIA & OTHERS BRIEFED DURING WASHINGTON, DC PROJECT STARLIGHT EVENTS APRIL 9 & 10 BY THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE

PUSH IS ON NOW FOR OPEN CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS & PUBLIC DISCLOSURE
GIVEN HIGH CALIBER OF WITNESSES & OTHER EVIDENCE

APRIL 15, 1997 -- ASHEVILLE, NO. CAROLINA -- The Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CSETI), successfully inaugurated its Project Starlight briefing of more than two dozen congressional offices with several VIPs from the Executive branch, The Pentagon, representatives of the Dutch Embassy, The National Academy of Sciences, two state Governor's offices and others on April 9. The following evening April 10 news media were given a similar briefing, which included reporters from The Washington Post Writer's Group, US News & World Report, The Boston Globe, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), WTNH-TV, an ABC affiliate in New Haven, Ct., United Press International, Strange Universe TV and other invited guests. A producer from CBS' "60 Minutes" and USA Today were briefed prior to the event.

Using a Best Available Evidence (BAE) package that contained numerous government and military documents, a video and photographic summary tape and 15 first-hand witnesses to UFO events and/or projects, Dr. Steven Greer urged attending members of congress and the news media respectively "to move forward on this subject through open hearings leading to a full public disclosure" and

"through responsible news and programming coverage given the weight of evidence presented here this week. If news media devoted even a fourth as much time to finding out the facts on this subject as it did in the O.J. Simpson trial, the public would be well served."

Greer, the International Founder and Director of CSETI, was joined by Dr. Ed Mitchell, the former Apollo 14 Astronaut who walked on the moon, and echoed Greer's assessment about the evidence by noting that "initially I was skeptical about this reality but I believe today that the force of evidence commands an honest, scientific look at the facts."

Among the witnesses who provided testimony were Donna Hare, a former subcontractor in the photo labs of the Johnson Space Center in Houston. Hare said she saw one NASA technician air brush a UFO out of a space satellite photo and "that it was done routinely," according to her colleague. Stephen Lovekin, a lawyer from North Carolina who worked with a Top Secret security clearance in the Pentagon during President Eisenhower's White House term during the '50s as a trained cryptologist, says he saw material from a downed ET craft and saw apparent ET writing on the material. Lovekin says the President was regularly briefed about the UFO issue.

Other military witnesses gave dramatic testimony about more recent UFO/ET events in the Atlantic Command under an admiral "that had the place in chaos for several hours," while others described events at numerous Air Force bases, including one report of "an alien being shot at the end of the runway at McGuire AFB and later removed by a C-41 Transport plane flown in from Wright Patterson AFB to retrieve the body."

According to Greer, "there are more than 100 other witnesses -- some who would need protection to testify under oath to Congress and some who are best described as 'hostile' witnesses who need a subpena to appear -- most of whom are ready to tell their stories before they die. Many are service men and women who are heroes of our country and willing to make one last courageous act in order for this important subject to come to light." Project Starlight will move forward with another round of briefings in the nation's capitol if necessary, or until someone from the first briefing decides to sponsor hearings on this matter. Several offices expressed such an interest.

Project Starlight is an international coalition effort that includes current and former government personnel, aerospace executives, military officials, intelligence operatives, American astronauts, Russian cosmonauts, UFO/ET researchers, civilians, and others.

For more information or to interview Dr. Greer, please contact Martin Keller or Greer at the numbers listed above.

MOD Form 174D

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 12

REGISTERED FILE No. D | SEC(AS) 644

Enclosure Jacket No. 4

DATE OPENED 9.1.98

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: RE: US 5075/98

MP: DAFYDD WIGLEY

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on ..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer .....

Date ..... Appointment and Branch .....

22 JAN 1998

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

D/US of S/JS 5075/97/M

21 January 1998

Dear Dafydd,

Thank you for your letters of 12 June and 2 October to George Robertson concerning reports of 'unidentified flying objects'. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility. I am sorry for the delay in responding, however, your earlier letter was not received by my Department.

By way of background I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'unidentified flying object' sightings sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each report. 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.

Members of the public who are concerned that they have seen something that might represent a military threat to the United Kingdom can report the details of the incident to the nearest RAF station, police station, air traffic control centre or similar. The information is then passed on to my officials in Secretariat (Air Staff)2 who will examine the details, consulting Air Defence experts and others as necessary, to the extent of our specific interests only. Where there is no evidence to suggest a potential military threat, no further action is taken. Members of the public can also leave details of 'UFO' sightings on the Secretariat (Air Staff) public enquiry line (0171 218 2140) and

Dafydd Wigley Esq MP

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC(AS)2
22 JAN 1998
FILE

these are handled in a similar way. My Department does not routinely provide acknowledgements or contact witnesses who submit reports of 'UFO' sightings and will only take further action if there is corroborating evidence of a matter of defence significance.

It is sometimes the case that my Department's specific interest in a particular issue does not correspond with the wider-ranging interests of some members of the public. This is particularly the case with regard to 'UFO' matters. My Department 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 we remain open-minded. To date my Department knows of nothing which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

I should wish to assure you that the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace in peacetime is maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which remains vigilant for any potential military threat.

With regard to any concerns held by your constituents, my Department would, of course, be happy to examine any evidence they might have. The address to which this should be forwarded is:

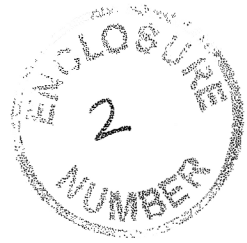
Ministry of Defence
Secretariat(Air Staff)2
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

I hope this clarifies the position.

Section 40 [redacted]

JOHN SPELLAR MP

Recycled Paper



LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

7 Jan 98

PE Unit
(thro Section 40)

LETTER FROM DAFYDD WIGLEY MP - US 5075/97

1. I attach a draft reply for USofS to send to Dafydd Wigley MP who seeks clarification on the MOD's 'UFO' reporting procedures and asserts that the MOD's current 'UFO' reporting procedures do not work. Mr Wigley's original letter of 12 June was not received by the Department and, following his hastening letter of 2 October, we have only now had sight of it.

2. As USofS will know, it is sometimes the case that the Department's limited interest in these matters does not correspond with the much wider-ranging interests of some members of the public. Occasionally this leads to comments that the system does not work.

3. It is not the Department's policy to write to each witness to acknowledge receipt of all 'UFO' reports made to the MOD (several hundred are received by the Department annually). Follow-up action would only be taken if it was considered that a sighting might represent something of defence concern and required further investigation. The draft reply makes this clear. Furthermore, we are not aware of any phenomena in the North Wales area which warrants further investigation.

4. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).

Section 40

Section 40
Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A (2)

Enc.

D/US/5075/97 January 1998

Thank you for your letters to George Robertson of 12 June and 2 October concerning reports of 'unidentified flying objects' I am replying in view of my responsibility for this matter. I am sorry for the delay in responding but the earlier letter was not received by my Department.

By way of background I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'unidentified flying object' sightings sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each report. 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.

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It is sometimes the case that my Department's specific interest in a particular issue does not correspond with the wider-ranging interests of some members of the public. This is particularly the case with regard to 'UFO' matters. My Department 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 we remain open-minded. To date my Department knows of nothing which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

I should wish to assure you that the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace in peacetime is maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which remains vigilant for any potential military threat.

With regard to any concerns held by your constituents, my Department would of course be happy to examine any evidence they might have. The address to which this should be forwarded is:

Ministry of Defence
Secretariat(Air Staff)2
Room 8245
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

I hope this clarifies the position.

JOHN SPELLAR

Dafydd Wigley MP

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

TO: Sec(AS)2 PE REF NUMBER: 055075 /97

MINISTER REPLYING: US of S DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 09 /01 /98

DATE: 23 /12/97 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

****** *IMPORTANT UPDATES* ******

1. Ministerial responsibilities changed.

2. Opening and Closing All Ministers prefer to start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... to George Robertson/John Reid/John Gilbert/John Spellar on behalf etc"
Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

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Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within 15 working days to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

Departmental action Action on the same case should be held until the Minister has sent a full reply. Please discuss any questions about the substance of the drafts or other policy aspects direct with the relevant private office.

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Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us IMMEDIATELY by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

12 06 97.

Rt Hon George Robertson MP
Secretary of State for Defence,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
LONDON SW1A 2HB

Section 40 [redacted]

Dear George,

I write to you to ask for some clarification on the reporting procedures which exist within the Ministry of Defence for following up reports of unidentified flying objects around Britain. I am aware that Nick Pope (a former employee in the Air Staff Secretariat) in his book "Open Skies Closed Minds" states: "In theory any member of the public can simply pick up the phone and report an UFO siting to the UFO Desk Officer in Whitehall. In practice what happens is that instead, those people will invariably contact their local Police Station, civil airport or nearest RAF base. Each of these institutions has written procedure. There is a pro-forma document on which date and time of the particular siting is recorded as well as a description of what is seen. The papers are then bundled up and sent to the Secretariat (Air Staff) at the MOD."

There is considerable evidence that the system does not in fact work properly. I have had constituents who have reported UFO type incidents, and have been unable to get any sensible response from the local RAF station at RAF Valley on Anglesey; and that the local Police have, until recently at least, been equipped with the wrong number for transferring telephone calls through to RAF West Drayton in Middlesex where I believe the information is monitored.

I would be glad to know what are the reporting procedures that should be followed up by the public who see UFOs and wish to bring them to the attention of the authorities? There has been a spate of such incidents in my constituency over recent months and I have little doubt that there has been some phenomenon there, although I realise that this may be experimental and on a restricted list with regard to publicity.

I shall be glad to have details from you so that I can advise my constituent who raised these issues with me.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Dafydd Wigley MP
(Caernarfon)

Ateber i/Reply to: 8 Stryd y Castell, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1SE

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

NEGES FFACS ☐ FAX MESSAGE

Swyddfa Etholaeth Caernarfon, 8 Stryd y Castell, Caernarfon,
Gwynedd LL55 1SE

At/To: Section 40 Ministry of Defence.

Oddi wrth/From: Section 40

Dyddiad/Date: 5/12/97.

Nifer y tudalennau/No of pages: 2

Re our conversation yesterday afternoon.

Rhifau cyswllt: **Ffôn:** Section 40 **Ffacs:** Section 40

USofS Sec (A2) UFOs

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

02.10.97

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

PC/A/871

Dear George,

I wrote to you on the 12 June 1997 concerning reports of unidentified flying objects around Britain.

It does not appear from my file that I have received a reply to this letter. I wonder if you are now in a position to reply?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dafydd

Dafydd Wigley MP
(Caernarfon)

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

MOD Form 174D

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 11

REGISTERED FILE No. D | SEC(AS)64/4

Enclosure Jacket No. 3

DATE OPENED 5.12.97

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: PE: US 4718/97

MP: PADDY ASHDOWN

CONST: Section 40 [redacted]

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on ..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer .....

Date ..... Appointment and Branch .....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

6414

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

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 5

D/US of S/JS 4718/97/M

17 December 1997

Dear Paddy,

Thank you for your letter of 18 November (reference: VF/Misc Corres C) to Jack Straw enclosing one from your constituent, Section 40 [redacted] Yeovil, about D Notices passed to the Ministry of Defence. I am replying in view of my responsibility for correspondence in respect of "unidentified flying objects".

First, I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'UFO sightings' sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. I should add that my Department has no expertise or role with respect to "UFO/flying saucer" matters or to the question of the existence or other of extraterrestrial lifeforms, about which we remain open-minded. To date, however, we know of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

Turning now to Section 40 [redacted] question concerning the Defence Advisory Notice (formerly known as D Notice) system. He may wish to be aware that the DA Notices are issued by the Defence, Press & Broacasting Advisory Committee (DPBAC) which is made up of senior civil servants from the departments which are responsible for UK national security and representatives of the press and broadcasting sectors of the media. The DA Notice system is a means of providing advice and guidance to the media about defence and counter-terrorist information the publication of which would be damaging to national security.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 2
22 DEC 1997
FILE

The Rt Hon Paddy Ashdown MP

Recycled Paper

The DPBAC Secretary has confirmed that DA Notices have not been applied to extraterrestrial occurrences; nor would it be appropriate to do so.

I hope this explains the position.

Section 40 [redacted]

JOHN SPELLAR MP

Recycled Paper

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

5 Dec 97 [redacted]

PE Unit
(thro [redacted]

Copy to:

Sec DPBAC

LETTER FROM THE RT HON PADDY ASHDOWN MP - US 4718/97

1. I attach a draft response for USofS to send to Paddy Ashdown MP. His constituent is seeking clarification on whether a "D Notice" (now known as Defence Advisory Notices) exists covering media restriction on the reporting of "flying triangular objects".

2. There are currently six DA Notices in force which give guidance to editors, publishers and programme makers on those aspects of national security which the Committee has agreed deserve to be safeguarded. Their titles are:

No 1. Operations, Plans and Capabilities.
No 2. Non-Nuclear Weapons and Operational Equipment.
No 3. Nuclear Weapons and Equipment.
No 4. Ciphers and Secure Communications.
No 5. Identification of Specific Installations.
No 6. United Kingdom Security and Intelligence Services.

None of these have been applied to flying triangular objects and the DA Notice system simply does not cover extraterrestrial occurrences.

3. The information contained in the draft reply concerning the DA Notice system has been cleared with the Secretary to the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee - Rear Admiral David Pulvertaft - who applies the general notices to particular circumstances on behalf of the Committee.

4. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).

[redacted]

[redacted]
Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 [redacted]
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A (2)

Enc.

D/USofS/4718/97 December 1997

D R A F T

Your letter to Jack Straw (ref: VF/Misc Corres C) of 18 November enclosing one from your constituent Section 40 [redacted] Section 40 [redacted], Yeovil, about D Notices has been passed to the Ministry of Defence. I am replying in view of my responsibility for correspondence in respect of "unidentified flying objects".

First I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'UFO sightings' sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. I should add that my Department has no expertise or role with respect to "UFO/flying saucer" matters or to the question of the existence or other of extraterrestrial lifeforms, about which we remain open-minded. To date, however, we know of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

Turning now to Mr Greenway's question concerning the Defence Advisory Notice (formerly known as D Notice) system. He may wish to be aware that the DA Notices are issued by the Defence, Press &

Broacasting Advisory Committee (DPBAC) which is made up of senior civil servants from the departments which are responsible for UK national security and representatives of the press and broadcasting sectors of the media. The DA Notice system is a means of providing advice and guidance to the media about defence and counter-terrorist information the publication of which would be damaging to national security.

The DPBAC Secretary has confirmed that DA Notices have not been applied to extraterrestrial occurrences; nor would it be appropriate to do so.

I hope this explains the position.

The Rt Hon Paddy Ashdown, MP JOHN SPELLAR

Very helpful — Amendments accepted. 3

Section 40 [redacted]

Rear Admiral D M Pulvertaft CB

Secretary

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Room 2235, Ministry of Defence, Main Building, LONDON, SW1A 2HB

Telephone: (Office) Section 40 [redacted] (Home) Section 40 [redacted] & Section 40 [redacted]
Fax: (Office) [redacted] (Home)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 2
-4 DEC 1997
FILE

Ref: D/DPBAC/1/1/1

Section 40 [redacted]
Sec(AS)2a1
Room 8245
MOD MAIN BUILDING

4 December 1997

Dear Section 40 [redacted]

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft reply to the Rt Hon Paddy Ashdown MP concerning a "D Notice" about triangular flying objects. I congratulate you on the description of the DA Notice system which you drew from the Open Government Document which Section 40 [redacted] passed to you in January this year but, nonetheless, I have some additions which I feel we should make to the Minister's reply and the covering minute to him.

2. My caution is prompted by the fact that, if the UK was developing a highly classified aviation project and there was a danger of it being compromised by publicity, I would be happy to use DA Notice No 2 to persuade editors not to disclose the damaging details. In such circumstances, I would not deny my involvement to a third party but would resort to the more general response that my dealings with the particular application of DA Notices are conducted in strict confidence and not discussed with third parties. Mr Ashdown's constituent is somewhat ambiguous in his question but, suffice to say, "triangular flying objects" could be subject to DA Notice No 2 while objects "not from this world" could not.

3. To overcome this, I have attached as an annex to this letter some proposed changes which I hope will be self-explanatory. Should they cause you any difficulty, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Yours sincerely

Section 40 [redacted]

ANNEX TO D/DPBAC/1/1/1 DATED 4 DEC 97

PROPOSED CHANGES TO DRAFT MINUTE AND LETTER

a. LM Para 2, line 1. Amend this introduction to read:

"There are currently six DA Notices in force which give guidance to editors, publishers and programme makers on those aspects of national security which the Committee has agreed deserve to be safeguarded. Their titles are:"

b. LM Para 2, last two lines. Amend to read:

"None of these have been applied to flying triangular objects and the DA Notice system simply does not cover extraterrestrial occurrences".

c. LM Para 3, lines 2 & 3. Remove square brackets and amend to read:

"..... cleared with the Secretary to the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee - Rear Admiral David Pulvertaft - who applies the general notices to particular circumstances on behalf of the Committee".

d. Draft Letter, para 3, lines 3 et seq. Amend to read:

"to be aware that the DA Notices are issued by the Defence, Press & Broadcasting Advisory Committee (DPBAC) which is made up of senior civil servants from the departments which are responsible for UK national security and representatives of the press and broadcasting sectors of the media. The DA Notice system ....."

e. Draft Letter, para 4. Amend to read:

"The DPBAC Secretary has confirmed that DA Notices have not been applied to extraterrestrial occurrences; nor would it be appropriate to do so".

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 2

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

1 Dec 97

DPBAC Secretary

PE 4718/97: DA NOTICES

1. We have received the attached Parliamentary Enquiry for draft reply.

2. One of the responsibilities of Sec(AS)2 is handling public correspondence relating to the so called "UFO" phenomenon and we occasionally receive letters enquiring about the existence of media restrictions on the reporting of matters relating to "UFOs". We wrote to you earlier this year with a similar enquiry and your response (B/3/7/DPBAC of 6 Jan 97) provided us with very useful background information and confirmed that there were no extant DA Notices covering these matters.

3. Attached is our proposed draft reply to this latest enquiry. I should be most grateful if you would let me know if the information on the DA Notice system is correct and that you are content with the draft. In order to meet the PE Unit's deadline may I ask for a response please by **COP FRI 5 December**.

4. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to call me.

Section 40

Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A (2)

Enc.

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

Dec 97

PE Unit

D R A F T

LETTER FROM THE RT HON PADDY ASHDOWN MP - US 4718/97

1. I attach a draft response for USofS to send to Paddy Ashdown MP. His constituent is seeking clarification on whether a "D Notice" (now known as Defence Advisory Notices) exists covering media restriction on the reporting of "flying triangular objects".

2. There are currently six DA Notices in force, covering:

No 1. Operations, Plans and Capabilities.

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No 3. Nuclear Weapons and Equipment.

No 4. Ciphers and Secure Communications.

No 5. Identification of Specific Installations.

No 6. United Kingdom Security and Intelligence Services.

None of these are relevant to the issue raised by Mr Ashdown's constituent.

[3. The information contained in the draft reply concerning the DA Notice system has been cleared with the Defence Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee.]

4. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).

D/USofS/4718/97 December 1997

D R A F T

Your letter to Jack Straw (ref: VF/Misc Corres C) of 18 November enclosing one from your constituent Section 40 of Section 40 Yeovil, about D Notices has been passed to the Ministry of Defence. I am replying in view of my responsibility for correspondence in respect of "unidentified flying objects".

First I should explain that my Department examines any reports of 'UFO sightings' sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there was any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no 'UFO sighting' reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each report. I should add that my Department has no expertise or role with respect to "UFO/flying saucer" matters or to the question of the existence or other of extraterrestrial lifeforms, about which we remain open-minded. To date, however, we know of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

Turning now to Section 40 question concerning the Defence Advisory Notice (formerly known as D Notice) system. He may wish to be aware that the Defence Press and Broadcasting Advisory

Committee (DPBAC), which is made up of senior civil servants, editors from national and regional newspapers, periodicals, news agencies, television and radio companies, issues DA Notices. The DA Notice system is a means of providing advice and guidance to the media about defence and counter-terrorist information the publication of which would be damaging to national security.

The DPBAC Secretary has confirmed that there is no DA Notice in respect of "flying triangle objects".

I hope this explains the position.

The Rt Hon Paddy Ashdown, MP

JOHN SPELLAR

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

CLOSED
NUMBER

TO: Sec(As)2 PE REF NUMBER: US4718 /97

MINISTER REPLYING: US of S DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 09/12/97

DATE: 27/11/97 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

********* IMPORTANT UPDATES *********

1. *Ministerial responsibilities changed.*

2. *Opening and Closing* *All Ministers prefer to start:*
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... to George Robertson/John Reid/John Gilbert/John Spellar on behalf etc"
Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

3. *Open Government* *A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 48/1997.*

Replies MUST be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exception in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am withholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within 15 working days to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

Departmental action Action on the same case should be held until the Minister has sent a full reply. Please discuss any questions about the substance of the drafts or other policy aspects direct with the relevant private office.

Ministers place great importance on the content style and speed of the replies. Letters should be polite, informal, to the point and in clear, simple language. Avoid acronyms and MOD jargon. Always emphasise the positive aspects of Government policy. No background note is required unless essential to explain the line taken in the draft reply.

Layout Draft replies should be double spaced. **Always** include the full PE reference number at the top left of the draft.

Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us IMMEDIATELY by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 1
28 NOV 1997
FILE

US4718/97

US of S
Sec (As) 2
UFOs

HOME OFFICE

Communication Directorate
50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT
Switchboard: Section 40 Fax: Section 40 Direct Line: Section 40

FAX SHEET

To: MOD

From: Section 40

Date: 26 November 1997 Time:

Fax Nº: Company Fax Nº:

Number of pages (including this one) 3

Short Message

IS THIS FOR YOUR DEPARTMENT TO DEAL WITH ?

IF THIS, OR ANY OTHER PART WITHIN THIS TRANSMISSION ARE UNCLEAR PLEASE TELEPHONE: Section 40

The Rt Hon Paddy Ashdown MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

21361/97

Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary Of State
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

RECEIVED BY
24 NOV 1997
PRIVATE SECRETARY

Please Quote: VF/Misc Corres C
Date: 18 November 1997

Dear Jack,

Subject: D notices

Please see the attached letter I have received from my constituen Section 40

I would be grateful if you could ask one of your officials to drop me a line giving any information they can on this matter, if this is appropriate.

Yours

Enc

Section 40 [redacted]

RECEIVED BY
20 NOV 1997
PRIVATE OFFICE

Telephone: 0171 219 6226 Fax: 0171 219 6889
E-mail: paddyashdown@cix.compulink.co.uk
Constituency Office: 94 Middle Street, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1LT. Tel: 01935 423284 Fax: 01935 433652

Section 40

Yeovil,
Somerset
Section 40

9th November 97

Paddy Ashdown MP.
House of commons
Westminster.
London

Dear Paddy.
Can you make enquires into the rumour that the government has issued a D notice to the broadcasting authorities about triangular flying objects and if so if they are not from this world should we not be told
Yours faithfully

Section 40

UNCLASSIFIED

MOD Form 174D

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 10

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS)6414

Enclosure Jacket No. 2

DATE OPENED 5.12.97

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: PE: SS 4682/97

MP: GEORGE ROBERTSON

CONST: Section 40

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer.....

Date..... Appointment and Branch.....

UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone Section 40

SECRETARY OF STATE

D/S of S/GR 4682/97/M

10 December 1997

Dear Mr Graham,

Thank you for your letter of 20 November to John Reid about reports of "unidentified flying objects".

I think it would be helpful if I explained that my Department examines any reports of "UFO sightings" sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no "UFO sighting" reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. 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 I am afraid it would be inappropriate to do so for this kind of aerial identification service.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC (AS) 2
10 DEC 1997
FILE

Section 40

Hamilton
Section 40

My Department 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 we remain open-minded. I must add however that to date my Department knows of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

You ask about the release of "UFO" reports into the public domain. As is the case with other government files, my Department's files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967. This Act of Parliament states that official files generally remain closed from public viewing for 30 years after the last action has been taken. The files selected for preservation are then transferred to the Public Record Office for release into the public domain:

You may wish to note that it was generally the case that before 1967 all "UFO" files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient public interest in the subject to merit their permanent retention. Since 1967 when public interest in this subject increased, however, "UFO" report files are now routinely preserved. A few files from the 1950s and early 1960s did survive and can be examined by members of the public at the Public Record Office, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU. The references of the files are as follows:

AIR 16/1199	AIR 2/16918
AIR 20/7390	AIR 2/17318
AIR 20/9320	AIR 2/17526
AIR 20/9321	AIR 2/17527
AIR 20/9322	AIR 2/17982
AIR 20/9994	AIR 2/17983
PREM 11/855	

Finally, I should wish to reassure you that the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace in peacetime is maintained through continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which does remain vigilant for any potential military threat.

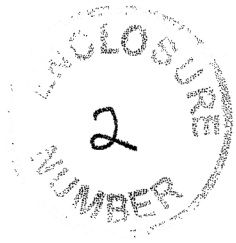
I hope this helps to explain the position.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40

[redacted]

GEORGE ROBERTSON MP



LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

4 Dec 97 Section 40 [redacted]

PE Unit
(thro Section 40 [redacted])

LETTER FROM Section 40 [redacted] - SS 4682/97

1. The Department receives a number of letters from members of the public who believe "unidentified flying objects" to be craft of extraterrestrial origin. The Department keeps an open-mind about the possibility that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, but to date knows of no evidence which proves that they do.

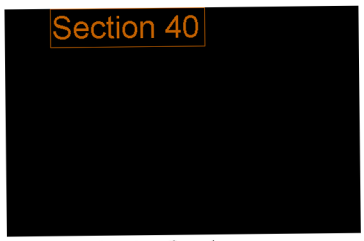
2. Attached to Section 40 [redacted] letter are speculative articles from popular "UFO" Magazines. Such magazines regularly regurgitate these dated incidents and provide no new information or evidence to substantiate the claims made. An example of the way such magazines use this sort of material is demonstrated by the article entitled *"The Wash Incident"*. The facts are that two separate phenomena were reported in the early hours of Sat 5 Oct 96 in the area of The Wash: an unexplained radar plot and lights in the sky. Although there was no evidence of an unauthorized incursion of the UK Air Defence Region, and as such no further investigation would usually have been conducted, media interest and a letter from the late Martin Redmond MP who, at the time, made serious allegations about the effectiveness of the UK Air Defence System (D/USofS/FH/4198/96/M dated 21 November 1996 - copy attached) prompted a very thorough check of events.

3. Detailed research at the time (a report is available should SofS wish to have sight of it) did not reveal any evidence or admissions that alarming or extraordinary events were witnessed. The radar plot observed in a position at Boston was assessed by experts to be a permanent radar echo, only appearing in certain weather conditions and was, most likely, the 273ft Spire of St Botolph's Church, Boston (known locally as the 'Boston Stump'). Although there was little reliable or accurate bearing or elevation information in connection with the bright lights, the Royal Greenwich Observatory assessment was that the planet Venus, which was exceptionally bright in the early morning sky on 5 Oct 96, was responsible. No subsequent information has come to light about these events to suggest the assessments made at the time were wrong.

4. The incidents cited in the attachments to Section 40 [redacted] letter are numerous. Specific factual details for each case could be provided but would require a trawl of files over several years and take some time to compile. We would, of course, be prepared to

provide such detail should SofS require. We have assumed that a fully detailed response is not required. The draft attached sets out the MOD's policy relating to the so-called "UFO" phenomenon and provides information on the Public Records Act in respect of the law governing release of Government files into the public domain.

5. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).



Sec(AS)2a1
MB8245 Section 40
CHOTS: SEC(AS)2A (2)

Enc.

D/SS/4682/97 December 1997

Thank you for your letter of 20 November to John Reid about reports of "unidentified flying objects".

I think it would be helpful if I explained that my Department examines any reports of "UFO sightings" sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there are defence implications, and to date no "UFO sighting" reported to us has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of what might have been seen. 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 I am afraid it would be inappropriate to do so for this kind of aerial identification service.

My Department 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 we remain open-minded. I must add however that to date my Department knows of no evidence which substantiates the existence of these alleged phenomena.

You ask about the release of "UFO" reports into the public domain. As is the case with other government files, my Department's files are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967. This Act of Parliament states that official files generally remain closed from public viewing for 30 years after the last action has been taken. The files selected for preservation are then transferred to the Public Record Office for release into the public domain.

You may wish to note that it was generally the case that before 1967 all "UFO" files were destroyed after five years as there was insufficient public interest in the subject to merit their permanent retention. However, since 1967 when public interest in this subject increased, "UFO" report files are now routinely preserved. A few files from the 1950s and early 1960s did survive and can be examined by members of the public at the Public Record Office, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU. The references of the files are as follows:

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PREM 11/855	

Finally, I should wish to reassure you that the integrity of the United Kingdom's airspace in peacetime is maintained through

continuous policing of the UK Air Defence Region by the Royal Air Force which does remain vigilant for any potential military threat.

I hope this explains the position.

Section 40 [redacted]

Hamilton Section 40

GEORGE ROBERTSON

01 NOV 1996

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

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE

D/US of S/FH 4168/96/M

28th November 1996

Dear Mr. Redmond,

Thank you for your letter of 24 October to Michael Portillo expressing concern about the effectiveness of the UK air defence system. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility.

I must say at the outset that much of the content of the press reports enclosed with your letter is incorrect, ill-informed and speculative. Much of what you say in your letter is also incorrect.

The facts are that our air defence system found no evidence of unidentified flying craft throughout the period in question. The only radar plot observed, which was identified on the National Air Traffic Services Claxby radar in the position of Boston, was judged by experienced operators at two separate locations to be a permanent echo, caused by a natural phenomena (something that does occur in certain weather conditions), not suspicious in nature nor of any significance to air or maritime safety, and of no air defence or air concern. The characteristics of the radar plot confirm beyond reasonable doubt that this judgement was sound.

There is very little reliable or accurate bearing or elevation information in connection with any of the sightings of lights observed in the area of The Wash. From that provided, including the video which was not fowarded to us by the Lincolnshire Police HQ until 5 November, the Greenwich Observatory view is that the lights were of celestial origin and likely to be Venus which had been exceptionally bright during the week in question.

Martin Redmond Esq MP

I am confident that there is no evidence that the UK Air Defence Region was compromised. There was, of course, no reason whatsoever, in the light of the above for any further military action.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40 [redacted]

THE EARL HOWE

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

ENCLOSURE NUMBER

TO: SEC(AS)2a PE REF NUMBER: SS 4682/97

MINISTER REPLYING: SofS DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 9/12/97

DATE: 27/11/97 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

ALL DRAFTS MUST BE CLEARED BY A NAMED OFFICIAL AT GRADE 7 LEVEL OR ABOVE.

******** IMPORTANT UPDATES ********

1. Ministerial responsibilities changed.

2. Opening and Closing All Ministers prefer to start:
"Thank you for your letter of ... (MP's ref if given) on behalf of/enclosing one from your constituent, Mr ... of ... Toytown about..."
If a Minister is replying on behalf of another Minister start:
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Mr Spellar add "I am replying in view of my responsibility for ... "
Do not end "I hope this is helpful" when the reply is obviously disappointing. Alternatives are:
"I hope this explains the position"
"I am sorry I cannot be more helpful"
"I am sorry to send what I know will be a disappointing reply."

3. Open Government A revised Code of Practice on Access to Government Information came into effect in 1997. It is set out in DCI GEN 48/1997.

Replies MUST be drafted in accordance with this policy. If you are recommending to Ministers that some or all information is withheld, the answer must specify the law or exception in the Code under which it is being withheld. eg "I am withholding the information requested under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information." It is NOT acceptable to rely on past practice.

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Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

MINISTERIAL ENQUIRIES
SEC (AS)1
27 NOV 1997
FILE

US of S
Sec (AF) 2
UFOs

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dr John Reid MP
Member of Parliament for Hamilton North and Bellshill Constituency
Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Montrose House, 154 Montrose Crescent, Hamilton ML3 6LL.
Telephone: 01698 454672 · Facsimile: 01698 424732
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25th November, 1997

Section 40

Hamilton, Section 40

Dear Section 40

Just a brief note to thank you very much indeed for the correspondence which you handed over to Dr. John Reid M.P. on Thursday night when you attended the meeting of Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

I note from your home address that you are actually a constituent of George Robertson M.P. and in accordance with Parliamentary protocol, I have had to pass your correspondence direct to George who is your own M.P. I have sent your file to him today.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40
Personal Assistant.

copy to Rt. Hon. George Robertson PC, MP

PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH
26 NOV 1997
ROOM 6134 MAIN BLDG

The Right Honourable
ctor John Reid MP
Armed Forces Minister
House of Commons
London.

Section 40
Hamilton
Section 40
20/11/97

Dear Dr Reid,

Apologies for the rather unprofessional approach. I hope you don't mind. We have met before. In Hamilton Town Centre last year when we discussed this subject matter photocopied within the enclosed folder. I realise that you are a busy man. However, this is a matter which cannot and should not be swept continually under the carpet of 'political expediency'. There are countless cover ups being perpetrated by the Governments of the World for reasons only they see fit to administer. All I want like so many other like minded people is for the truth to be told. Not for it to be continually swept under the umbrella of the Official Secrets act. If UFO's are no threat to our airspace then why are many reports covered under the act.

I hope you can spend the time to read these photocopies Please phone me on Section 40 Email Section 40
Section 40

I appreciate your response may be guarded somewhat but we have a right to know.

recid by hand
20/11/97.

Sincerely, Section 40

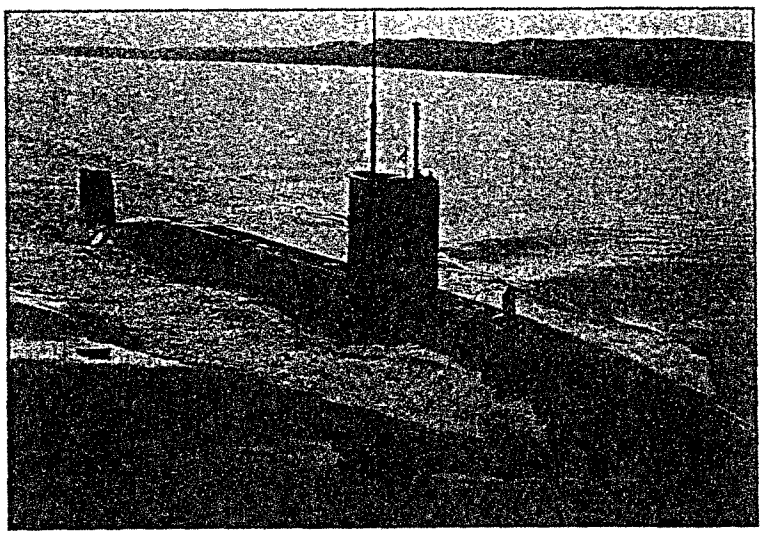
CONFRONTATIONS IN

lany years have passed since the North Atlantic Ocean became ıe focus of military attention relating to Unidentified Airborne nd Seaborn Intruders. As the Second World War drew to a lose, a new threat emerged in the form of the Soviet Union. It ignalled the arrival of what became known as the Cold War.

For decades, NATO forces flexed their muscles against the Warsaw Pact, each nation conducting a dangerous at and mouse game of testing defences, ɔoth in the air and at sea. At the height of he Cold War, Soviet aircraft flew many ntrusive flights into the north Atlantic :nowing they would be tracked by the nany NATO radar/listening facilities ;tretching from Iceland down to Britain via neans of ground, sea and airborne means. NATO's response was (and still is) swift and efficient in challenging the intruders.

The 'game' was also enacted at sea as Soviet submarines regularly left their bases in the Barents Sea in an attempt to enter the north Atlantic undetected, but their movements were closely monitored by NATO and the appropriate action taken.

Although the Cold War is now a thing of the past and Russian air incursions are few and far between, NATO remains watchful and ready to react at a moment's notice.



It was during 1970 and 1971 that the Western Alliance became increasingly concerned at a speight of incidents involving UFOs over the north Atlantic Ocean and the eastern coastline of Britain. As a result, a highly secret operation was instigated to try to get to the bottom of the mystery once and for all.

Operation Aeneid was a combined operation involving the RAF, the USAF and members of the Royal Observer Corps.

It involved the establishment of secret observation centres around Great Britain, including at least four in Lincolnshire, that were constantly manned throughout the Autumn and Winter of 1970 and the Spring of 1971.

A number of UFO sightings were made, including one in broad daylight off the Lincolnshire coast. The latter involved an appearance by a huge UFO, reportedly 180 feet long and accompanied by numerous ball-shaped objects that had a glass-like appearance. These spent several hours hovering over the RAF bombing range at Donna Nook and was witnessed by at least half-a-dozen airmen. During the course of the operation, UFOs were tracked on many occasions and fighter aircraft were scrambled to intercept. During one incident, two aircraft ordered to intercept a UFO over the North Sea suddenly found themselves confronted by strange unknown craft. In a separate incident, a General Electric Lightning fighter was scrambled from RAF Binbrook to intercept a UFO.

Ground Radar monitors had both the UFO and fighter on screen when suddenly the two 'targets' merged into one before separating again. Although voice transmission was lost and later regained, the aircraft crashed into the sea and the pilot was lost.

Wreckage was later recovered at sea by the crew of HMS Kiddleston, but the pilot's body was never found. What remained of the aircraft was later transported to RAF Binbrook - which was unusual. Normally, all wreckage from air accidents is taken to Farnborough for thorough investigation, but on this occasion the rules were changed. Air accident investigators from Farnborough had to travel to RAF Binbrook to undertake their examination.

On their arrival at Binbrook, they found the wreckage hidden behind a tarpaulin in a hangar; their usual access to such wreckage was restricted; they were only permitted to perform a cursory examin-ation. They were amazed to discover that many of the aircraft's flight instruments were missing. Their removal had been a serious breach of regulations and although told the instruments would be returned, they never were. The investigating team were constantly supervised by five civilians, two of whom were Americans.

After only a few hours, the team were told their job was over, to pack up their bags and go. The following day, members of the team were summoned to the main office at Farnborough and told in no uncertain terms not to discuss any aspect of the crash with anyone, not even members of their own families. The reason? National Security.

Since then, UFO activity has continued apace in the North Atlantic and North Sea. In recent times, that activity has been reported off the coasts of Lincolnshire, Scotland, Belgium, Denmark and the south coast of Iceland. 'Confrontations' have occurred between elements of the NATO fleet and huge triangular objects seen emerging into and from the sea.

the pulsing object. They had immediately assumed they were military, but in hindsight realised that it wasn't possible for them to have arrived on the scene so fast. It would have taken over two hours to get to the location on foot. The nurse said that when they turned round to drive back home they were met by a military patrol coming the other way who instructed them to leave the area.

There are no houses or buildings in this vicinity, consequently it was very dark and quiet. Suddenly, the family became aware of a loud 'purring' noise, which brought them to a halt.

Then a typical 'Adamski-type' craft with cobalt-blue lights glided slowly over the tree tops and hovered in the road ahead of the two vehicles.

The lights diffused the same coloured beams downwards, making the object look very attractive, so much so that the watching family were not afraid. Two cars, on a lonely narrow mountain tract, facing a UFO which was spanning the road just yards in front of them...

Some got out of the cars to watch as the UFO glided away very slowly, touching tree tops before dipping down the valley ahead and apparently landing in a spot that the witnesses knew contained a clearing. By the time it had gone from view, the two carloads of witnesses had continued their journey home.

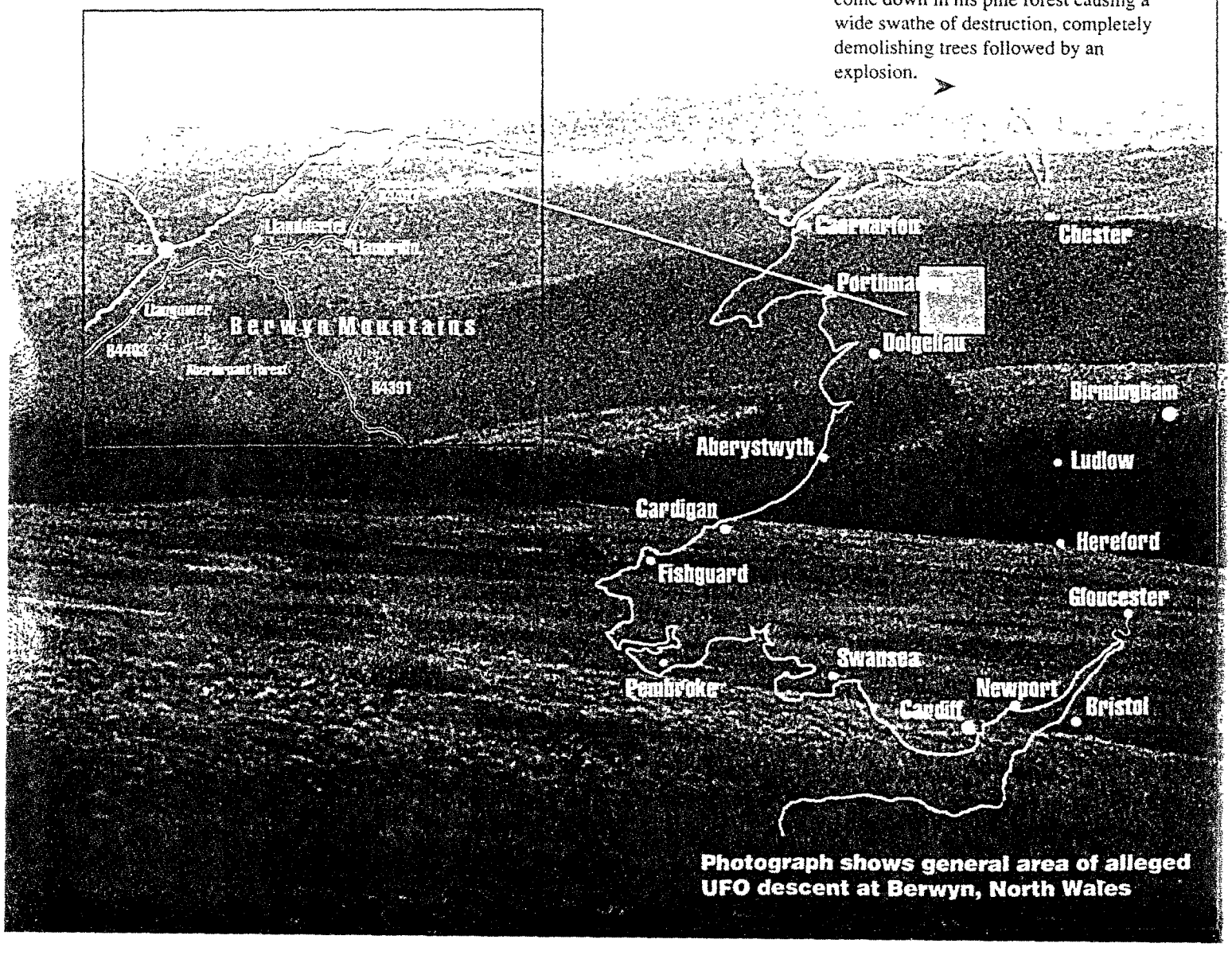
Another case which occurred around the same time in mid- January 1974, involved two long-distance lorry drivers who had been travelling from Lincoln to their homes in Meanwrog, on the other side of Bala. They'd been hoping to reach their local hotel in time for a drink after a long journey.

When they reached a point about one hours drive from Bala, they suddenly saw an enormous black cigar-shaped object, with lights down one side. They carried on driving and then saw the object fly away into the night.

The men carried on driving in silence, and it wasn't until they had reached the outskirts of Bala that they began questioning each other about the object's arrival and departure. When they finally arrived at the hotel, they were puzzled that everything was quiet and closed down for the night. They should have arrived at 10.00pm, but when they checked their watches, they discovered it was past 1.00am in the morning. They had both lost three hours of time which neither man could account for.

A very similar incident to the Berwyn Mountain case occurred on a farm just outside Aberstwyth. This was investigated at the time by Gary Rowe and his group. A small article had appeared in local newspapers about an unexplained explosion on a farm in the Aberstwyth area. Gary and his team located the farmer and he became very friendly with them. The information they gleaned proved that here were circumstances almost identical to the Berwyn Mountain case.

The farmer told them that something had come down in his pine forest causing a wide swathe of destruction, completely demolishing trees followed by an explosion.



Photograph shows general area of alleged UFO descent at Berwyn, North Wales

ie military had quickly arrived on the ..ene and cordoned off the area and he was not permitted to enter the area for over a week, during which time the military brought in JCBs (mechanical earth diggers) which removed top soil in the swathe.

Gary later said that only small pieces were recovered by the military and that no craft had been recovered. Like so many UFO crash incidents, the information was very fragmented at the time and to get a clearer picture of the full circumstances was difficult, if not impossible.

CONFIRMATION?

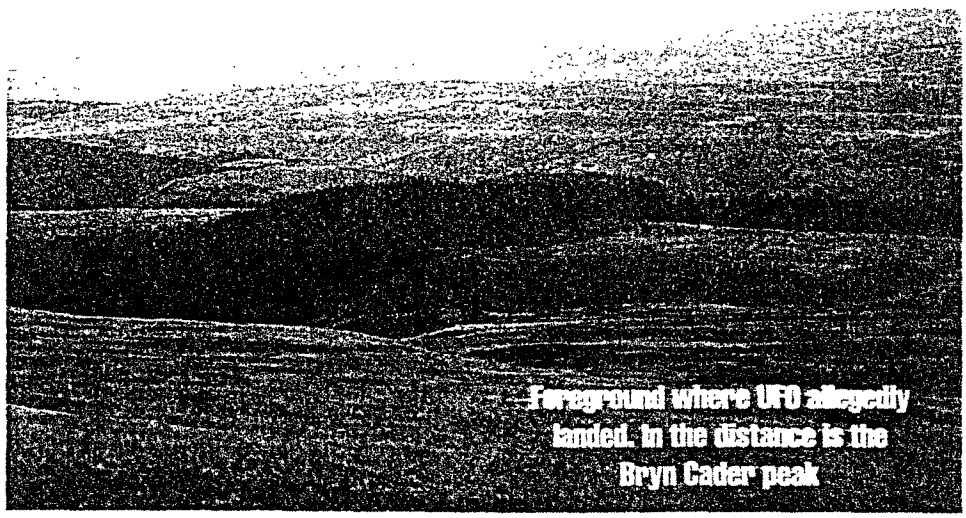
We are now able to establish the sequence of events prior to the military's arrival at the scene, and where the whole situation changed to one of quarantine and 'no-go areas'. We can definitely establish that an object did come to earth in the Berwyn Mountain case. Dozens of witnesses were affected by the explosion and aftershocks. These were recorded on the *Richter Scale*, [now called the *Moment-Magnitude Scale*] and 3.5 magnitude indicates a powerful force.

Dozens of people did drive along that narrow mountain road to see the huge round object, described as glowing and pulsing in a pinky-orange colour. The same witnesses did accurately describe how the military quickly arrived on the scene and cleared the area of onlookers. The area was cordoned off from civilian and farm use for over a week after the incident. But what really happened that night?

The first witness on the scene described seeing an object 'pulsating' on the mountain side and then a number of small lights moving up the mountain towards the grounded UFO. All agree that the military could not possibly have arrived so quickly. So what were those small lights? Many witnesses still claim they saw the object lift off the ground, and shoot off across the sky.

From information recently received, it now transpires that alien bodies were recovered from the scene. Recently we have been in touch with a retired Army officer who was directly involved in the recovery of alien bodies (both dead and alive) from the UFO crash in North Wales.

He said that the incident involving the UFO crash on the Berwyn mountains was well known, and had been witnessed by many residents in the area. What they couldn't possibly have known or suspected was that alien bodies and a "live alien" were recovered at the scene of the crash and quickly transported to the top secret military establishment of Porton Down.



Foreground where UFO allegedly landed. In the distance is the Bryn Cader peak

Taking into account numerous civilian eye-witness testimony, that a glowing object was not only seen to have landed on the mountain side, but later seen to lift off the ground and depart at great speed, were two craft involved in this incident? The similarities between this event and Roswell is uncanny. Is it conceivably possible that one craft came down, hit the ground, causing a massive explosion? And that a second craft came down to render assistance? Could this explain the small lights described by the first witness which were seen moving up the mountain side shortly after the explosion?

A REAL WITNESS TO REAL EVENTS

We are unable to name the military officer who imparted the information regarding the recovery for obvious reasons. He retired from the military several years ago. He assures us that his statement is a true account of his involvement in the incident, but has refused to allow us to publicly name the Army unit he was part of.

This is because it is still an operational unit. He has shown among other things, photographic evidence of his career within the Army and made the following signed statement printed below.

STATEMENT OF 'JAMES PRESCOTT'

"On the 18th January 1974, I was stationed at a barracks in the South of England. I cannot name my unit or barracks as they are still operational. We, that is my unit, were put on stand-by to move north at short notice. On the night of the 19th January 1974, we had moved up towards Birmingham.

"We then received orders to proceed with speed towards North Wales. We were halted in Chester in readiness for a military exercise we believed was about to take place. On the 20th January, the communications to us was 'hot'. At approximately 20.13hrs we received orders to proceed to Llangollen in North Wales and to wait at that point.

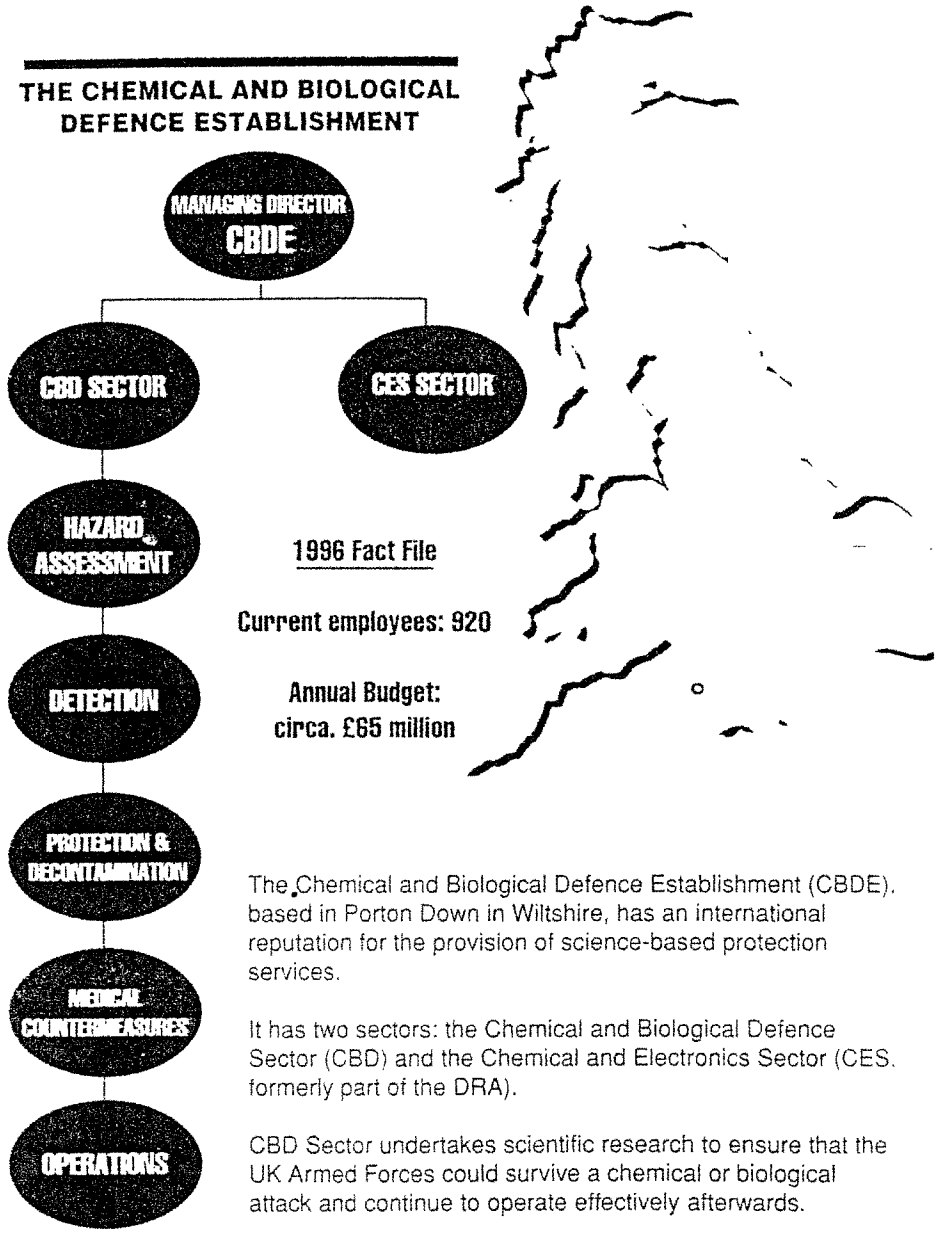
"On arrival, our unit was split into four groups and at that time we noticed a great deal of ground and aircraft activity.

"At approximately 11.36hrs we, that is myself and four others, were ordered to go to Llandderfel and were under strict orders not to stop for any civilians. When we reached our objective we were ordered to load some cargo into our vehicles. The cargo comprised of two large oblong boxes. We were at this time warned not to open the boxes, but to proceed to Porton Down facility and deliver the boxes.

"We set off south with our cargo and during the journey we stopped to get a drink. We were immediately approached by a man in civilian clothes who produced an I.D. card and ordered to keep moving, and not to stop until we reached our destination.

"We eventually reached Porton Down and moved the boxes inside the facility.

THE CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENT



The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBDE), based in Porton Down in Wiltshire, has an international reputation for the provision of science-based protection services.

It has two sectors: the Chemical and Biological Defence Sector (CBD) and the Chemical and Electronics Sector (CES, formerly part of the DRA).

CBD Sector undertakes scientific research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces could survive a chemical or biological attack and continue to operate effectively afterwards.

Once inside, the boxes were opened by staff at the facility in our presence. We were shocked to see two creatures which had been placed inside decontamination suits.

"When the suits were fully opened it was obvious the creatures were clearly not of this world and when examined, were found to be dead. What I saw in the boxes that day, made me change my whole concept of life.

"The bodies were about five to six feet tall, humanoid in shape, but so thin they looked almost skeletal with covered skin. Although I did not see a craft at the scene of the recovery, I was informed that a large craft had crashed and was recovered by other military units.

"Sometime later we joined up with the other elements of our unit, who informed us that they had also transported bodies of 'alien beings' to Porton Down, but said that their cargo was still alive.

"This was the only time I was ever involved in anything of this nature. This event took place many years ago and I am now retired from the Armed Forces.

"This is a true account of those events which occurred in January 1974. I am not certain of the accuracy of the times at night."

Signed 'James Prescott'.

UFO

My grateful thanks to Margaret Fry of North Wales, who was one of the original investigators into the Berwyn Mountain incident all those years ago. Her background information and location photographs have been a great asset in putting this story together. Margaret can be contacted on 01745-860537.

UFO MAGAZINE

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The Wash incident

UFO Sighting Prompts Full Scale Defence Alert

by Jon King & Justin Miles-Bray

CONTROVERSY

Already famous for being the home of the RAF Woodbridge/Bentwaters UFO incident, East Anglia has once again become the centre of a major UFO controversy.

Reports of strange lights and objects in the skies over East Anglia have been pouring in since the latter part of last year. But perhaps the most credible - and certainly the most well-documented - report was filed by the crew of the Conocoast oil tanker, who tracked two sets of "strange coloured lights" hovering in the sky off the East Anglia coast in the early hours of Saturday October 5th, 1996.

This same phenomenon was also witnessed and reported by a civilian pilot, the Great Yarmouth coastguard and officers at nearby Boston and Skegness police stations.

But what is unique about this case is this. Following an immediate investigation by the MoD, and a subsequent request from RAF Kinloss via the Great Yarmouth coastguard, the Skegness police managed to videotape the craft from the roof of their police station.

The footage, which shows beyond question that the sightings reported were of some or other unidentified aircraft, is now being analyzed as evidence in what has become one of the most discussed and controversial UFO incidents of the past few years.

SMOKE SCREEN

As we reported in last issue's Newsbytes, the MoD tried initially to play down this incident by claiming that the sighting was nothing more than a combination of lights from the 200ft high Boston Stump church tower and an electrical storm over the North Sea. However, our own investigations into this case have led us to a somewhat different conclusion.

Reliable sources, in possession of information gleaned from within the Defence Ministry, have told us that the 'Boston Stump/electrical storm' story was a smoke screen from the outset.

According to one source, the Boston Stump fabrication was precisely the cover story hurriedly agreed on by high-ranking civil servants and military officials on the night in question (October 4th/5th 1996) when they were called from their beds to deal with what they were told was a 'high alert' situation. At the same time MoD spokespersons received a directive from a "high level within the Ministry" to disseminate the Boston Stump story as a cover for what had really happened.

And what had really happened was that Britain's airspace/defence region had been penetrated by at least one aircraft which remains unidentified to this day.

Witness statements, plus the camcorder footage shot by Skegness police, together with subsequent statements made by the MoD and further testimonies given in confidence by 'official sources', suggest an altogether different explanation to the official MoD cover story.

Namely: that the object(s) seen was indeed a UFO, and that a covert defence initiative was immediately launched in response to a positive radar echo traced at RAF Kinloss in Scotland. The echo was also traced by RAF Northwood and RAF Neatishead in Norfolk.

The question that comes to mind is: Why would the combination of a church tower and an electrical storm provoke a full-scale defence alert across Britain?

INVESTIGATIONS

Since the sightings occurred, David Dane, a UFO researcher and artist from East Anglia has been investigating the incident. David has talked to all of the witnesses concerned, including the crew of the Conocoast oil tanker whose report prompted the initial investigation by the MoD. In their own way, all of the witnesses told the same story.

To add to this, Flight Lft Keith Sweatman at RAF Neatishead informed David Dane that an anomalous radar echo had indeed been recorded, but that no quick response aircraft had been scrambled to intercept the signal.

David told us: "Having admitted there was an echo on the radar at RAF Neatishead, and considering the quality of the witnesses, it seems extraordinary that the RAF did not intercept. Apparently RAF Neatishead did put in a request for an intercept, but this was turned down at a higher level. So you are left with the problem - either they knew what it was or they didn't consider it a threat."

David went on: "When I spoke to Flight Lft Keith Sweatman, he explained to me that they felt it was not an obvious threat because the radar at RAF Neatishead was for tracking possible hostile planes coming in from the North Sea. As these objects had appeared out of nowhere, close to the coast and stationary, they did not fit the same parameters as hostile aircraft. And yet the objects sat there for over

no means of interrogation. It is obvious that whatever it is, it does not want anyone to know that it is there. Also Neatishead report its position as directly above Boston."

*(**Note:** In this context a 'transponder' is basically a receiver/transmitter which gives out a signal identifying itself as either civilian or military. As there was no transponder on the craft, 'interrogation' - contact and identification - was not possible. Under any other circumstances this situation would have demanded immediate interception by the RAF, but the official line is that no such action was taken. It is anomalies like this one which suggest that some backstairs cover-up is indeed underway at a very high level within the MoD.)*

4.17am - Coastguard: "Skegness, can you get video footage, as the RAF are very interested and may require it later?"

5.17am - Boston police: "We can still see the light. It is towards the southeast and seems about forty to forty-five degrees up in the sky. It is just a bright light to us."

5.21am - RAF Kinloss: "Neatishead are running a trace on this and cannot explain it. If they are helicopters they are fast approaching the end of their endurance as it is well over two hours since the first report, let alone how long they were up there before they were actually sighted."

7.08am - Flight Lft McFarlane, RAF Neatishead: "We had a report from Northwood that a civil flight had also reported strange lights in the area. They fit exactly what was seen from the ground - multicoloured, flashing, stationary lights."

7.31am - Flight Lft George, RAF Northwood: "This echo is still on our screens, and we cannot explain this at all, apart from it being a meteorological phenomenon. But then again, we have visual sightings as well. The civilian flight that reported these lights as a 'flare' was six miles away at the time. All very strange."

11.09am - RAF Neatishead: "The object has not moved. London radar and Waddington can also see it."

19.20pm - Anglia radar: "There is nothing there now. We are of the opinion that it was Boston Stump."

ANONYMOUS PRIORITY RESTRICTED

It should be said at this point that information sent to us by a source who must remain anonymous paints a slightly different picture of events.

Contrary to the official MoD line, our source claims that, in response to the anomalous radar echo, a signal classified 'PRIORITY RESTRICTED' was distributed throughout all RAF strike units on the night in question.

In brief, the signal stated that two jets, probably Tornadoes, had indeed been scrambled, and that their flight mission was to intercept the radar-tracked object(s). Witnesses have since revealed that the roar of military jets was heard in the vicinity, and that at least one military jet was seen heading up the Norfolk coast towards the sighting location at 9am on Saturday, October 5th.

Further to this, our informant claims that although one of the pilots "saw something", the jets were unable to "catch" the unidentified craft, and so returned to their base - probably RAF Marham. The probability that the jets were scrambled from RAF Marham is based on the fact that Marham houses the closest RAF quick response strike unit to where the sighting occurred.

But whatever the precise details of these sightings, the fact remains that in the early hours of October 5th, 1996, a major defence operation was initiated as a result of a multiple-witness UFO sighting and an unexplained radar echo traced at RAF Kinloss in Scotland, as well as at RAF Northwood and RAF Neatishead in Norfolk. And by hook or by crook, the MoD seems hellbent on keeping the details of said operation 'hazy', to say the least.

So the question remains: If the RAF did indeed record a radar echo of an unknown aircraft in our skies, a fact they openly admit to, then what made them decide not to intercept? Do they know what the craft was and who it belonged to, and simply won't tell us? Or are they really able to distinguish between a 'hostile' aircraft and a 'non-hostile' one, purely from a radar echo and without being able to 'interrogate' by means of the craft's on-board transponder, as claimed by Flight Lft Keith Sweatman of RAF Neatishead?

On the other hand, if in fact the RAF did intercept - as claimed by at least one inside source - then what's all the bull**** about a church tower and an electrical storm? Indeed, what's all the bull**** about a church tower and an electrical storm anyway?

I'll tell you ... this secrecy thing is really beginning to bug me!

PARLIAMENT AND THE SECURITY THREAT

In response to questions arising from the incident, the MoD has remained ambiguous, to say the least. MoD

spokesperson Nigel Sergeant, for instance, commented: "We are trying to prove that it does not represent any sort of security threat, and that it was not an aggressive intrusion into our airspace." Have you noticed how robots always seem to say the same thing?

Further to this, an article in The Daily Post (Liverpool: November 29, 1996) entitled Britain's X-Files Team In A Secret Whitehall Office quoted an MoD spokesperson as saying: "We need to keep records because sometimes MPs want to ask Parliament about sightings." How reassuring to learn that the MoD keeps records of UFO sightings purely to aid in the process of democracy - sterling stuff, boys!

Which brings us to the actions taken in Parliament by the late Martin Redmond, former MP for Don Valley, who by this time was expressing his own concern over the incident.

Mr Redmond openly accused the government of covering up information on this and other UFO incidents, and said that if there was no defence threat, then there was no excuse for secrecy, either. Before his untimely death in January this year, Mr Redmond had become the leading political figure in the struggle to overturn what is now being seen, even in political circles, as a flagrant and unacceptable government cover-up with regard to the UFO phenomenon.

On 5th November last year Mr Redmond tabled a formal question in the House of Commons to then Secretary of State for Defence, Nicholas Soames. The question read:

"If he will list the reports of encounters by Royal Air Force pilots with unidentified flying craft since 1966 which have not been released to the public; on what grounds they have been retained and if he will make a statement?"

In reply, Mr Soames said: "The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost."

Which basically means that the government is not prepared to allocate the minimal funds necessary to inform the public about matters it doesn't want said public to know about.

Mr Redmond then asked: "What is the Royal Air Force's practice as regards investigating sightings of unidentified flying craft which correlate with radar information; if there is a requirement to investigate such phenomena by scrambling aircraft; and if he will make a statement?"

Mr Soames replied: "Unidentified contacts penetrating UK airspace or the UK air defence region are identified by all means, including interception."

Whoops! Megaton political bloomer number one! Here Mr Soames is stating quite unequivocally that military (RAF) interception of UFOs is indeed part and parcel of official Defence policy, despite consistent denials by the MoD's Airstaff 2a1 office in this respect.

So either Mr Soames is lying, or the Airstaff 2a1 office is lying. And either way, neither of these official voices will ever be expected to account for deliberately misrepresenting the truth. That's the system.

OPEN-MINDED

In support of Mr Soames' unexpected revelation, Defence Minister Earl Frederick Howe confessed in a letter to Mr Soames that all RAF base commanders are indeed under orders to report UFO sightings. "So far as the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms is concerned," Earl Howe concluded, "we remain open-minded."

It's a shame the same cannot be said of other prominent Defence spokespersons, like former Secretary of State for Defence Nicholas Soames MP, for instance.

Mr Redmond concluded: "The answers I've been given lead me to think there is something more to this." And further: "The only thing I know for sure is this whole issue is shrouded in secrecy."

And it is - but why, when according to MoD spokesperson, Nigel Sergeant, the Ministry collates information regarding UFOs purely so that questions can be asked in the House?

In this respect, I would say it's about time a concerted move was made to revolutionize the politics of UFOs, from the inside (I would urge you here to read Dr Colin Ridyard's article The Politics Of UFOs in our last issue, and/or his letter in our Readers' Letters section of this current issue, Pages 64-67, and to support his efforts to bring about the necessary changes at government level viz-a-viz the UFO phenomenon and government secrecy).

One further snippet. We have just received some very interesting information from a very reliable source about a civilian pilot who flew his light aircraft from South Norfolk to Yorkshire on the weekend of October 5th/6th in order to attend a wedding. He flew through Lincolnshire en route. On arrival in Yorkshire he was asked how he had managed to fly through Lincolnshire, as air traffic control had been advising all civilian pilots to steer clear of the area. When he asked why, he was told: "Because of reported UFO activity."

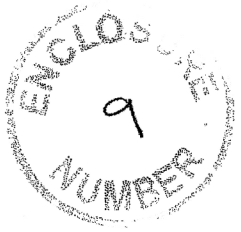
Having no radio on board, the pilot had been unaware of the broadcasts.

A further testimony, then, that the MoD knew damned well about the UFO activity taking place in this particular area of Britain on the weekend of October 5th/6th 1996, and that measures had been taken to warn pilots of same. The only question is: Was the 'UFO activity' extraterrestrial or military? And no one at the Ministry is about to answer that one!

In conclusion I have to say that, in my opinion, it is fundamentally wrong that this elite few we call the Defence Ministry should be the ones who decide what we are and what we are not permitted to know concerning the UFO phenomenon - a phenomenon which, after all, may just hold the key to our future, and our children's future.

On the other hand, of course, if we are kept in the dark long enough, it might just prove the undoing of us all.

Special thanks to David Dane and Simon Harris for their invaluable input.



DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
07/11/97	PE CLERK1	DAVID WIGLEY LETTER OF 12 JUNE	[ ]

Sent: 07/11/97 at 16:44
To: PE CLERK1
CC:

Ref: 1447
Subject: DAVID WIGLEY LETTER OF 12 JUNE

Text: Please see attached.

Section 40

Priority: Normal
Reply Request [ ]
View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]
Attachments [1]
Codes [ ]

Spoke to Section 40, Parliamentary Branch on 5/12/97. She has been in touch with Defydd Wigley's office + they will shortly be sending through the copy of the original letter. This PE (attached) should be disregarded + when the letter is received it will be sent to SEC(AS) under a new number.

Section 40

Dear Section 40,

PE US 3947/97

I know Section 40 has been checking with you regularly about this PE.

About a month ago Section 40 spoke to Section 40 about this PE and Section 40 said that someone would contact Dafydd Wigley's office to get them to send another copy of Mr Wigley's letter of 12 June through as you did not receive it.

If you still have not received it could someone contact Mr Wigley's office again and get them to fax a copy through. As he's sent a hastener he is unlikely to let it drop and the sooner we can action it the better.

Ta very much,

Section 40

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

TO: Sec(As)2 PE REF NUMBER: US3947 /97

MINISTER REPLYING: US of S DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 17 / 10 /97

DATE: 07 /10/97 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

YOU WILL BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DRAFT ANSWER AND ADVICE. THEY MUST BE ACCURATE AND NOT MISLEADING IN ANY WAY

ENSURE THE DEADLINE IS MET. IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE.

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Deadlines To concur with the Citizens Charter, we have agreed to send a written reply within 15 working days to this enquiry. It is very important that your draft is with us by the date quoted at the top of this notice. If, exceptionally, you cannot meet the deadline let me know at once, an interim reply might be needed.

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Layout Draft replies should be double spaced. **Always** include the full PE reference number at the top left of the draft.

Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: **PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts** by fax to Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Sec (AS)
07 OCT 1997
FILE

C539-7-1997

US6/S
Sec (A2)
UFOs

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

02.10.97

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

PC/A/871

Dear George,

I wrote to you on the 12 June 1997 concerning reports of unidentified flying objects around Britain.

It does not appear from my file that I have received a reply to this letter. I wonder if you are now in a position to reply?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40 [redacted]

Dafydd Wigley MP
(Caernarfon)

2 Section 40 [redacted] spoke to Section 40 [redacted]. She is getting one of her staff to phone Mr Wigley's office up and send a further copy of his letter to US. Section 40 [redacted] 7/10.

1. PE Unit girls confirmed to Section 40 [redacted] we didn't receive original letter.

DEFENCE

Racism

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to combat racism in the armed forces. [14699]

Dr. Reid: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have made clear on a number of occasions, it is our aim fully to embrace diversity in the Armed Forces and that they should better reflect the society they defend. We are determined both to provide a working environment that is free from any form of racial harassment or discrimination and to encourage more people from the ethnic minorities to join the Armed Forces. It has been made absolutely clear to all personnel, from all three Services, that we will not tolerate racism in the Armed forces and will be unremitting in our efforts to remove any racist attitudes, racially discriminatory practice, behaviour or language.

Changes in attitudes within the Services and perceptions outside will, of course, take time, but we are determined to make real progress in this area. The recent public launch by the Chief of the General Staff of the Army's revised Equal Opportunities Directive gave an unequivocal commitment to upholding the principle of Equality of Opportunity for all Army personnel.

Examples of the initiatives being pursued by the Army include:

- a booklet setting out a revised, and greatly simplified, complaints procedure designed to assist those exposed to harassment/discrimination, which will be issued to every soldier. The Naval Service and RAF plan to have similar booklets.
- a confidential support helpline service, effective from 1 December, which will be outside the chain of command;
- an independent Investigation Team to investigate complaints of harassment/discrimination;
- a new Ethnic Minorities Recruiting Team to help increase proportions of ethnic minorities serving.

The Chiefs of Staff in the Naval Service and the RAF are equally committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in their respective Services, a commitment exemplified by the success of The Royal Navy in being shortlisted by the British Diversity panel in recognition of its efforts to improve equal opportunities.

All three Services have introduced many initiatives to help combat and eliminate all forms of racism in, and to improve ethnic recruiting to the Armed Forces. Each Service has issued Equal Opportunities Directives and leaflets, which are issued to all servicing and new personnel, spelling out clearly what equal opportunities means, harassment and complaints procedures and their rights and responsibilities. These are supported by individual Service Equal Opportunities Action Plans which allow us to monitor our policies and practice to ensure there is no discrimination. They will also ensure that awareness of both ethnic origin and gender issues are considered when forming new policy and initiatives.

Each of the Services provide equal opportunities training for all new entrants, officers and NCOs promotion and management courses, Commanding Officers, recruiters and equal opportunities advisers. We are looking at what more might be done on a tri-Service basis.

The Chief of Defence Staff, and the individual Service Chiefs have accepted the CRE's Leadership Challenge and have given their personal commitment to promote racial equality, together with taking practical steps to promote change within their own Services. In addition, each of the Services is a member of the Race for Opportunity scheme.

UFOs

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's investigations into alleged sightings of unidentified flying objects intruding into British air space. [14907]

Mr. Spellar: My Department examines any reports of "unexplained" aerial sightings that are sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there was any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorised foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, and to date no "unidentified flying object" sighting has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each reported incident.

RAF Menwith Hill

Mr. Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the information collected at RAF Menwith Hill is available to the British Security Services. [14513]

Dr. Reid: I am withholding information on the operations of the intelligence and security agencies under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information on the grounds of national security.

Trident

Mr. Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons consideration of the Trident system has been excluded from the defence review. [15026]

Mr. George Robertson: The retention of Trident was a specific commitment in the Government's election manifesto. The review is however examining all aspects of our deterrence requirements to ensure they reflect changing strategic circumstances. The Government will also press for multi-lateral negotiations towards mutual, balanced and verifiable reductions in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what strategic factors underlay his decisions to spend an extra £100 million on the Trident system. [15002]

Mr. George Robertson: The recent decision on a long standing element of the nearly completed Trident procurement programme is in line with the Government's manifesto commitment to retain Trident to provide a minimum credible nuclear deterrent.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 28th October 1997.

Mr. Reginald Buckland: Court Documents

Lord Burton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of the judgment delivered at Cambridge Crown Court on 11 September 1997, and all other papers and documents submitted to the court, in case A970014, the appeal of *Reginald Buckland* v. *The Chief Constable of Cambridge* before His Honour Judge Haworth heard on 15 August 1997 against the refusal of the Chief Constable to vary the conditions of a firearms certificate, and in particular all other papers, documents, disclosures and submissions which Mr. Robert Gardiner, Clerk to the Court, has failed to provide upon request by Lord Burton.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Irvine of Lairg): The Question concerns a matter which has been assigned to the Court Service under the terms of its Framework Document. I have therefore asked the Chief Executive to respond.

Letter to Lord Burton from the Chief Executive of the Court Service, Mr. M. D. Huebner, dated 28 October 1997.

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Central and Eastern Europe: Military Training Assistance

The Earl of Carlisle asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many individual service personnel and military training teams from the United Kingdom Armed Forces will be deployed throughout 1998, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which were formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, to assist with the training of their Armed Forces.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Gilbert): The Ministry of Defence currently expects to deploy six individual Service personnel and 10 military Short Term Training Teams to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1998. All are deployed at the specific request of the countries concerned, who seek to benefit from the expertise of the United Kingdom's Armed Forces. The aim of the training teams is to advise on the conduct of either officer or non-commissioned officer training. The individual Service personnel, all officers, are deployed to provide expertise in specific areas of defence management.

ENCLO... NUMBER 7

RAF Bentwaters and Woodbridge: Nuclear Weapons Allegations

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the allegations contained in the recently published book *Left at East Gate*, to the effect that nuclear weapons were stored at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in violation of UK/US treaty obligations are true.

Lord Gilbert: It has always been the policy of this and previous governments neither to confirm nor to deny where nuclear weapons are located either in the UK or elsewhere, in the past or at the present time. Such information would be withheld under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they are aware of reports from the United States Air Force personnel that nuclear weapons stored in the Weapons Storage Area at RAF Woodbridge were struck by light beams fired from an unidentified craft seen over the base in the period 25–30 December 1980, and if so, what action was subsequently taken.

Lord Gilbert: There is no evidence to suggest that the Ministry of Defence received any such reports.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What information they have on the suicide of the United States security policeman from the 81st Security Police Squadron who took his life at RAF Bentwaters in January 1981, and whether they will detail the involvement of the British police, Coroner's Office, and any other authorities concerned.

Lord Gilbert: MoD has no information concerning the alleged suicide. Investigations into such occurrences are carried out by the US Forces.

Lord Hill-Norton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What information they have on the medical problems experienced by various United States Air Force personnel based at RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge, which stemmed from their involvement in the so-called Rendlesham Forest incident, in December 1980.

Lord Gilbert: Information on medical matters relating to US personnel is a matter for the US authorities.

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

MOD Form 174D

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

TEMPORARY ENCLOSURE JACKET

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 6

REGISTERED FILE No. D/SEC(AS)64/4

Enclosure Jacket No. 1

DATE OPENED 11 NOV 97

DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH:

SEC(AS)2A

SUBJECT: PE: DP 4290/97

LORD HILL-NORTON

RENDLESHAM FOREST/RAF WOODBRIDGE.

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date

NOTES

1. A Temporary Jacket will only be used when the Registered File is not available.
2. The contents of a Temporary Jacket must be incorporated in the Registered File at the earliest opportunity, and this incorporation recorded on a transit slip or file record sheet.
3. The movements of Temporary Jackets are recorded by the Registry. Transit is to be recorded on transit slips as for Registered Files.

DOWNGRADING

(to be completed when the jacket is incorporated in the Registered File)

This jacket may be downgraded to:— RESTRICTED / UNCLASSIFIED on..... (insert date)

Certifying Officer.....

Date..... Appointment and Branch.....

RESTRICTED/UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Section 40 [redacted]

18/11

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone Section 40 (Direct Dialling)
071-21 89000 (Switchboard)

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 3

Minister of State
for Defence Procurement

From: THE RT HON DR THE LORD GILBERT

D/Min(DP)/JWG/MP/4290/97/M

14 November 1997

Dear Lord Hill-Norton,

Thank you for your further letter of 22 October about the alleged events at Rendlesham Forest of the nights of 27-29 December 1980.

Officials here had previously drawn my attention to the memo written by Colonel Halt. I am afraid, however, that there is nothing further I can add. From surviving Departmental records we remain satisfied that nothing of defence significance occurred on the nights in question.

Yours sincerely,

Section 40 [redacted]

Private Secretary
approved by Lord Gilbert and signed in his absence on duty

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SEC(AS)2
17 NOV 1997
FILE

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 2

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Sec(AS)/64/4

11 Nov 97

PE Unit

DP 4290/97: LORD HILL-NORTON

1. I attach a draft reply for Minister (DP) to send to Lord Hill-Norton who again asks about the alleged events at Rendlesham Forest/RAF Woodbridge of the nights of 27-29 Dec 80 (copies of Minister (DP)'s letter of 16 October and the Official Report 28 October Col 232 attached refer). Also attached (for ease of reference) is a further copy of the actual memo sent to the RAF Liaison Officer of RAF Bentwaters by Lt Col Charles Halt USAF (the Deputy Base Commander).

2. Lord Hill-Norton asserts that either the UK Air Defence Region was breached by "unidentified craft" at the time in question or that USAF personnel, including the Deputy Base Commander, were hallucinating or lying but there is no evidence to suggest this. It is clear that the USAF personnel observed something they were unable to explain at the time, but Lt Col Halt was not sufficiently concerned to report the matter the next morning and waited nearly two weeks before informing the RAF Liaison Officer at Bentwaters. His memo simply recorded the events as he saw them and made no recommendation for follow-up action.

3. We have assumed that Lord Hill-Norton's comments about "the ubiquitous Section 40 " refer to the Sec(AS)2 desk officer, Section 40 Section 40, whose duties include handling queries and correspondence from the public about "UFOs". It is, of course, entirely proper that she sets out the Department's position on this issue, which has remained unaltered over the years, whenever her duties require her to do.

4. I am satisfied that the draft is in accordance with the Government's policy on answering Parliamentary Enquiries and the Open Government Code (DCI Gen 48/97).

Section 40

Sec(AS)2
MB8247 Section 40

Enc.

DP 4290/97 November 1997

D R A F T

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LORD GILBERT

Admiral of The Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

→ 64/4 TE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone Section 40 (Direct Dialling)
071-21 89000 (Switchboard)

ENCLO 5 NUMBER

Minister of State
for Defence Procurement

From: THE RT HON DR THE LORD GILBERT

D/Min(DP)/JWG/MP/3842/97/M

16 October 1997

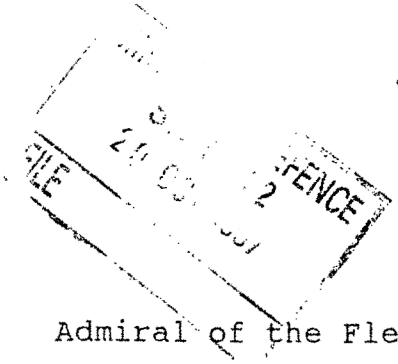
Dear Lord Hill-Norton,

Thank you for your letter of 22 September concerning the alleged events at Rendlesham Forest of December 1980.

From Departmental records available from that period we have found no evidence to suggest that this Department contacted Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt following receipt of his memo of January 1981 recording "Unexplained Lights" in the area in December 1980. Some 16 years after the event we can only conclude, therefore, that it was not considered necessary to make further enquiries in the light of the lack of any evidence to suggest that the UK's Air Defence Region had been compromised by unauthorized foreign military activity.

It was then, and is still, the case, that MOD does not routinely contact witnesses who submit reports of "unexplained" aerial sightings. Follow-up action is only deemed necessary if there is corroborating evidence to suggest an unauthorized incursion of the UK Air Defence Region or other evidence of a matter of defence concern.

I hope this clarifies the position.



Section 40

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dppsMb39/pe/3842hillno/an/cs

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 81ST COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP (USAFE)
APO NEW YORK 09755

REPLY TO ATTN OF: CD

13 Jan 81

SUBJECT: Unexplained Lights

TO: RAF/CC

1. Early in the morning of 27 Dec 80 (approximately 0300L), two USAF security police patrolmen saw unusual lights outside the back gate at RAF Woodbridge. Thinking an aircraft might have crashed or been forced down, they called for permission to go outside the gate to investigate. The on-duty flight chief responded and allowed three patrolmen to proceed on foot. The individuals reported seeing a strange glowing object in the forest. The object was described as being metalic in appearance and triangular in shape, approximately two to three meters across the base and approximately two meters high. It illuminated the entire forest with a white light. The object itself had a pulsing red light on top and a bank(s) of blue lights underneath. The object was hovering or on legs. As the patrolmen approached the object, it maneuvered through the trees and disappeared. At this time the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy. The object was briefly sighted approximately an hour later near the back gate.

2. The next day, three depressions 1 1/2" deep and 7" in diameter were found where the object had been sighted on the ground. The following night (29 Dec 80) the area was checked for radiation. Beta/gamma readings of 0.1 milliroentgens were recorded with peak readings in the three depressions and near the center of the triangle formed by the depressions. A nearby tree had moderate (.05-.07) readings on the side of the tree toward the depressions.

3. Later in the night a red sun-like light was seen through the trees. It moved about and pulsed. At one point it appeared to throw off glowing particles and then broke into five separate white objects and then disappeared. Immediately thereafter, three star-like objects were noticed in the sky, two objects to the north and one to the south, all of which were about 10^{0} off the horizon. The objects moved rapidly in sharp angular movements and displayed red, green and blue lights. The objects to the north appeared to be elliptical through an 8-12 power lens. They then turned to full circles. The objects to the north remained in the sky for an hour or more. The object to the south was visible for two or three hours and beamed down a stream of light from time to time. Numerous individuals, including the undersigned, witnessed the activities in paragraphs 2 and 3.

CHARLES I. HALT, Lt Col, USAF
Deputy Base Commander

PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY - FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

THE GUIDANCE IS NEW : YOU MUST READ IT

TO: Sec(AS)2a PE REF NUMBER: DP 4290/97

MINISTER REPLYING: min(DP) DRAFT REQUIRED BY: 11 / 11 /97

DATE: 30 / 10 /97 FROM: Section 40 PE Unit TEL: Section 40

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Put the MP's full title at the bottom left of the first page. Only add the address if the letter is from the Minister direct to a constituent.

Should this not be for your branch, please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** by telephone.

Wherever possible drafts should be sent on CHOTS E-Mail to: PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRIES, NOT TO PE CLERKS OR PRIVATE OFFICES, otherwise send drafts by fax to Section 40
PLEASE USE ONLY ONE METHOD

MINUTE
PE for Sec(AS) UFOS
→ Sec(AS)
(L)-3842/

Section 40
[redacted]

HOUSE OF LORDS

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton GCB

The Lord Gilbert
Minister of State
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

RECEIVED IN
OCT 1997
MINISTER OF STATE FOR
DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

22 October, 1997

Dear Lord Gilbert,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October (it took five days to get here!) about my Question and Colonel Halt's Memo. It was good of you to take the trouble to reply.

I do not want to go on and on, but because you are new to this particular matter I would like to put you more fully in the picture. Your officials, and those (perhaps the same individuals) of the previous Administration, have sought to pretend that Col. Halt's report was only about "unexplained lights in the sky", but as I said in my letter of 22 September it was about a good deal more than that.

So that there is no possibility of further misunderstanding I attach a copy of the Memo in full, and I beg you to read it yourself. From this you will see that he reported that an unidentified object breached UK Air Space and landed in close proximity to the US/RAF Air Base. He gives considerable detail about what happened at the time, and subsequently, together with physical evidence of an intrusion.

My position both privately and publicly expressed over the last dozen years or more, is that there are only two possibilities, either:

a. An intrusion into our Air Space and a landing by unidentified craft took place at Rendlesham, as described.

or

b. The Deputy Commander of an operational, nuclear armed, US Air Force Base in England, and a large number of his enlisted men, were either hallucinating or lying.

Continued:

Either of these simply must be "of interest to the Ministry of Defence", which has been repeatedly denied , in precisely those terms. They, or words very like them, are used again in your letter and I believe, in the light of the above, you would not feel inclined to sign your name to them again.

I could give you a great deal more evidence in similar vein, not only about this incident but about many others, but on this occasion I will spare you. I ought, however, in all fairness let you know that the routine denials by the Ministry - usually the ubiquitous Section 40 [redacted] - will very soon become extremely damaging to its general credibility in this field.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Hunt.

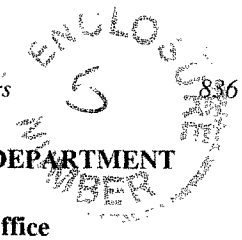
Copy of Memorandum by Lt. Col. Halt USAF
Sent to the Ministry of Defence on 13.1.81"

Subject: Unexplained Lights
To: RAF/CC

1. Early in the morning of 27 Dec 80 (approximately 0300L), two USAF security police patrolmen saw unusual lights outside the back gate at RAF Woodbridge. Thinking an aircraft might have crashed or been forced down, they called for permission to go outside the gate to investigate. The on-duty flight chief responded and allowed three patrolmen to proceed on foot. The individuals reported seeing a strange glowing object in the forest. The object was described as being metallic in appearance and triangular in shape, approximately two to three meters across the base and approximately two meters high. It illuminated the entire forest with a white light. The object itself had a pulsing red light on top and a bank(s) of blue lights underneath. The object was hovering or on legs. As the patrolmen approached the object, it maneuvered through the trees and disappeared. At this time the animals on a nearby farm went into a frenzy. The object was briefly sighted approximately an hour later near the back gate.

2. The next day, three depressions 1.5" deep and 7" in diameter were found where the object had been sighted on the ground. The following night (29 Dec 80) the area was checked for radiation. Beta/Gamma readings of 0.1 milliroentgens were recorded with peak readings in the three depressions and near the center of the triangle formed by the depressions. A nearby tree had moderate (.05 -.07) readings at the side of the tree toward the depressions.

3. Later in the night a red sun-like light was seen through the trees. It moved about and pulsed. At one point it appeared to throw off glowing particles and then broke into five separate white objects and then disappeared. Immediately thereafter, three star-like objects were noticed in the sky, two objects to the north and one to the south, all of which were about 10° off the horizon. The objects moved rapidly in sharp angular movements and displayed red, green and blue lights. The objects to the north appeared to be elliptical through an 8-12 power lens. They then turned to full circles. The objects to the north remained in the sky for an hour or more. The object to the south was visible for two or three hours and beamed down a stream of light from time to time. Numerous individuals, including the undersigned, witnessed the activities in paragraphs 2 and 3.



Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 30 October 1997

DEFENCE

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions during October *(a)* Greek and *(b)* Greek Cypriot military aircraft flew over United Kingdom sovereign base territory on the island of Cyprus; what representations were made; and if he will make a statement. [12872]

Dr. Reid: Two Hellenic Air Force F-16 fighter aircraft which were participating in a joint military exercise with the Republic of Cyprus overflew the Akrotiri sovereign base area at low altitude on Tuesday 14 October. The British high commission in Nicosia wrote to the Government of the Republic on 16 October reminding them of the existence of sovereign airspace over the SBAs and of the safety requirements.

Security Clearances

Dr. Naysmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the procedures whereby individuals with dual nationality, with security clearance to access MOD and NATO protectively marked material, are precluded from access to internal caveat information. [12800]

Mr. Spellar: The Ministry of Defence recently revised policy on access by dual nationals to national caveat information. Under the new policy there is no general ban on access by dual nationals to national caveat information. Decisions on access are made on a case-by-case basis. In the case of contractors' employees, the Department is required to seek the permission of the originator of the material before granting access.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Works of Art (Exports)

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when the 1996–97 annual report of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art will be published. [14159]

Mr. Chris Smith: The reviewing committee's annual report for 1996–97 has been published today and copies have been laid before Parliament.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Record Office

Mr. Baker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what factors he takes into account when considering appeals against the non-release of documents from the Public Record Office. [13214]

Mr. Hoon: Neither the Lord Chancellor nor I have considered any such appeals. The Advisory Council on Public Records advises on requests for the release of records made by historians and other members of the public which Departments reject, but the final responsibility for the release or otherwise of withheld records rests with the Ministers of the Departments concerned.

Magistrates (Warrington)

Helen Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many women magistrates were appointed to the Warrington bench in the past year; and what proportion of women applicants for that year this figure represents. [13193]

Mr. Hoon: One woman was appointed to the Warrington bench in 1997 out of 13 women applicants. One man was also appointed out of a total of 18 male applicants. Following the appointments, there were 55 women and 56 men on the Warrington bench.

Helen Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates currently serving on the Warrington bench are resident in Warrington, North constituency; and what proportion of serving magistrates in Warrington this represents. [13194]

Mr. Hoon: Forty magistrates on the Warrington bench are resident in the Warrington, North constituency—36 per cent. of the Warrington bench.

Late Payments

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the suppliers to his Department who are owed outstanding amounts, indicating the amounts and the due date on which the account should have been settled. [13549]

Mr. Hoon: All Departments are required to pay all their bills within agreed contract terms, or 30 days from receipt of the goods or service or a valid invoice, whichever is later, where no such terms exist. Such detailed information on payment performance for the current financial year could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The Treasury will shortly be publishing a league table of departmental payment performance for 1996–97.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Malins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many appeals in immigration cases, excluding asylum cases, are currently outstanding. [13345]

Mr. Hoon: At the end of September 1997, there were 9,410 non-asylum appeals outstanding.

64/4

ENCLOSURE NUMBER 4

DATE	TO	SUBJECT	CODES
06/11/97	Parliamentary Ques	PQ 1082i	[ ]

Sent: 06/11/97 at 14:53
To: Parliamentary Questions
CC: ADGE1

Ref: 1444
Subject: PQ 1082i

Text: The attached response has been seen and signed off by Mr Fuller and Section 40 [redacted]

Priority: Normal
Reply Request [ ]
View Acknowledge [*]
Delivery Acknowledge [*]
Attachments [1]
Codes [ ]

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

DATE FOR RETURN 1997	:	**12:00 ON friday 7 november**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 1082i
PQ TYPE	:	Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	DAO

MP's DETAIL: MR NIGEL JONES (LIB DEM)(CHELTENHAM)

QUESTION

16|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement on his Department's investigations into alleged sightings of unidentified flying objects intruding into British air space. [14907]

ANSWER

My Department examines any reports of "unexplained" aerial sightings that are sent to us solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance, namely, whether there was any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been breached by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity. Unless there is evidence of a potential military threat, and to date no "unidentified flying object" sighting has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each reported incident.

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY : Section 40 : TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY : Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : SCS

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

BACKGROUND

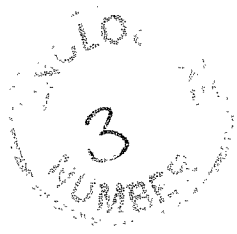
1. Nigel Jones is not known to us as an MP with an interest in "UFOs". It is possible that he has been lobbied by a constituent with such an interest.

2. The question provides us with a useful opportunity to reiterate the MOD's policy in this area.

64/4

HOUSE OF LORDS DEFENCE DEBATE - 6 NOVEMBER 1997

LOW FLYING AND UFO BRIEFING



UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS (UFOs)

My Department evaluates reports of "unexplained" aerial phenomena solely in order to establish whether they may have any defence significance. That is, whether there is any evidence that the UK Air Defence Region might have been compromised by a hostile foreign military air activity.

Unless there is evidence to indicate that this is the case, and to date no sighting has provided such evidence, my Department does not investigate or seek to provide an explanation for what was observed.

My Department has no interest or role with respect to "UFO/ flying saucer" matters or to the question of the existence or otherwise of extraterrestrial lifeforms.

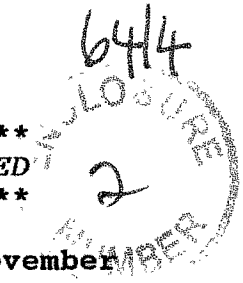
Alleged incidents at Rendlesham Forest/RAF Woodbridge 27-29 Dec 1980

From the records available there is no evidence to suggest that the UK Air Defence Region was breached on the nights in question.

Section 40 Office Section 40 (until 19.00)
Section 40 Home Section 40 (after 19.00)

6414

2



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

DATE FOR RETURN	:	**12:00 ON friday 7 november 1997**
PQ REFERENCE	:	PQ 1082i
PQ TYPE	:	Written
SUPPLEMENTARIES REQUIRED?	:	No
MINISTER REPLYING	:	PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE - USofS
LEAD BRANCH:	:	SEC (AS)
COPY ADDRESSEE(S)	:	

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

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

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

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

MP's DETAIL: MR NIGEL JONES (LIB DEM)(CHELTENHAM)

QUESTION

16|To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement on his Department's investigations into alleged sightings of unidentified flying objects intruding into British air space. [14907]

REMEMBER you are accountable for the accuracy and timeliness of the advice you provide. Departmental Instructions on answering PQs are set out in DCI GEN 150/97 and can be viewed

on the CHOTS public area and on DAWN.

64/4

****
PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION - URGENT ACTION REQUIRED
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6/11/97

DRAFTED BY : Section 40 : TEL: Section 40

AUTHORISED BY : Section 40 : TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : Grade 7

AUTHORISED BY : Mr M J D Fuller: TEL: Section 40
GRADE/RANK : SCS

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

BACKGROUND

1. Nigel Jones is not known to us as an MP with an interest in "UFOs". It is possible that he has been lobbied by a constituent with such an interest.

2. This year saw the 50th anniversary of the first "UFO" sighting and the subject has, therefore, attracted a predictable amount of media attention and speculation, ~~once again~~.

2 ~~3~~. The question provides us with a useful opportunity to reiterate the MOD's policy in this area.

I have amended this because I recollect some ufologist claiming that a Biblical reference was in fact the first UFO sighting.