
THE BRITISH MoD STUDY: PROJECT CONDIGN

BY DAVID CLARKE AND GARY ANTHONY

Condign, *adj.* Severe and well deserved (usually of punishment).
—*Concise Oxford Dictionary*

Early in May 2006 we revealed to the world's media the existence of a secret study of UFOs, codenamed "Condign," commissioned by the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD). The discovery of the study's four-volume report, completed in February 2000, was the culmination of almost 18 months of investigative research involving a team of Britain's most experienced UFO researchers.¹

The story made news headlines around the world, but the superficial nature of the coverage can be summarized by the headline of the London *Sunday Times*, May 7, 2006: "Sorry ET—you're just a puff of plasma." At our press conference, held the following day in London, it quickly became apparent that the news media were happy to base their coverage of the MoD study upon the contents of the Executive Summary alone. Few journalists had the time to scrutinize the 465 pages of the main body of the report when the full contents were released on the MoD website shortly after our announcement.

The reaction of ufologists was equally superficial, with dismissive cries of whitewash, garbage, and disinformation widely disseminated across the internet, even before the complete text was available. Unfortunately, in the clamor to express an opinion and take a position, a number of commentators overlooked the historical significance of the discovery and its more interesting contents and findings.

The key finding from the perspective of ufology is expressed in the introduction to the study, where the report's author states that it is an indisputable fact that some UFOs, or UAPs (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena) as they are described throughout the report, *are generated by an unknown phenomenon*. As British skeptic John Rimmer commented, "Isn't this what ufologists have been wanting to

hear [from official studies] for years?"²

That may well be the case, but it seems the negative reaction was mainly because the report's author concluded there is no evidence this "phenomenon" has an extraterrestrial source. He attributes the residue of unexplained incidents to "natural, but relatively rare phenomena." Some of these are well known, if little understood, such as ball lightning. Others, such as atmospheric plasmas, "are still barely understood" and the report makes it clear that "the conditions and method of formation of the electrically-charged plasmas and the scientific rationale for sustaining them for significant periods is incomplete and not fully understood."

Nevertheless, this finding and additional speculation concerning the possible effects of plasma-related magnetic and electric fields on humans became the focus of all the subsequent media and ufological discussion. However flawed these findings may be, the fact that a study of this magnitude was commissioned by the UK government as recently as 1996 must be significant. During the course of the study, the British government continued to maintain, in public at least, that they had no interest in UFOs. Indeed, they insisted on a number of occasions, both in parliamentary answers and in statements issued to the media, that they had never carried out any detailed examination of the phenomenon.

The fact that the report was commissioned at all raises a number of questions. At face value the study was commissioned to determine, once and for all, if the UFO phenomenon posed any form of threat to UK national security. The main outcome, as would be expected, was to support the MoD's policy—which has remained consistent for more than half a century—that UFOs, whatever their origin, were "of no defence significance."

Why then, after years of playing down UFOs, did the MoD decide at this late stage to commission a study, however incomplete or inadequate, into the phenomenon? And if there was nothing to hide, why was the study carried out in great secrecy and only uncovered as a result of our sleuthing using Britain's new Freedom of Information legislation?

This article will attempt to answer some of these questions. We first summarize the nature of the MoD's interest in UFOs. We will then explain in detail how we came to learn of the report's existence and how we obtained it, drawing

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upon original MoD documentation released to us under the FOIA. Finally, we will look at the contents of the report itself, the sources used by the author, and the scientific credibility of the conclusions and recommendations.

THE MoD, FOIA, AND UFOs

The very existence of the UK MoD report would have remained a secret if our team had not persisted in efforts over a number of years to gain access to official records on UFOs withheld from the public under Britain's stifling secrecy laws. Before the millennium, the UK government's interest in UFOs had remained obscured by the shadow of the more extensive and highly public USAF Project Blue Book. Before the publication of the Colorado University study (the "Condon Report") brought the USAF's public responsibility for UFO reports to an end in 1969, British Air Ministry policy on the subject was heavily influenced by the USAF and CIA.

For decades, few details of the Air Ministry's own interest in UFOs emerged into the public domain. This was partly because of a decision taken as early as 1952 or 1953 to play down the subject. The fact that the Air Ministry, which became part of an expanded Ministry of Defence in 1964, maintained an office in Whitehall that dealt with UFO reports as part of a range of other duties has been public knowledge for decades. What has remained a mystery was the extent of the MoD's investigations and research. For years, letters from civilian UFO researchers to Whitehall went unanswered or were stonewalled, and even MPs found it difficult to discover anything substantive about the Ministry's policy on the subject.

This situation did not arise because of a "conspiracy of silence" concerning UFOs in particular. For much of the Cold War, Britain's secrecy laws covered every single aspect of the Whitehall machinery. Before the mid-1990s, the Public Records Act, which kept all official papers secret for a minimum of 30 years, and the Official Secrets Act, which prevents military and civil servants from speaking in public on any topic, ensured nothing significant could leak out of the MoD machine.

As a result, before 1994 it was virtually impossible to obtain access to any UK government files until 30 years after action on them was finalized. However, under an initiative pioneered under the Major administration a limited right of access to government documents was introduced. This allowed researchers to gain access to a certain amount of material previously withheld. It was the proactive use of this legislation that allowed us to obtain early release of MoD files on the Rendlesham Forest incident and the report by the Flying Saucer Working Party during 2001–2002.³

Since 2005, researchers have had a new weapon to help them access official information. The Freedom of Information Act has brought to light masses of information held by official agencies on UFOs and other unexplained phenomena. And it was through careful use of the FOI that we uncovered the existence of the MoD study and obtained a

full copy after lengthy negotiations with the department concerned.

ON THE TRAIL OF CONDIGN

The existence of the study emerged from extensive contacts we have had with desk staff at the Directorate of Air Staff since 2000. DAS is the MoD secretariat currently responsible for UFOs and is often referred to as "the UFO desk." It is the most recent incarnation of the various secretariats that have, since at least 1954, dealt with administrative tasks in support of the RAF. One of these is to act as the MoD's focal point for UFO inquiries from the public, the press, and Members of Parliament. Since the 1950s this responsibility has been held by a number of different branches, including S6 (Air), S4 (Air), DS8, and Sec(AS), the latter being the name it used in 1991–1994 when Nick Pope was employed as a desk officer there. Sec(AS) finally became DAS in yet another Whitehall reshuffle late in the year 2000.

For many years, MoD has insisted that this secretariat was the single and only branch with responsibility for UFO reports, a task that took up only a fraction of its time. It is certainly true that DAS and its predecessors acted as a public focal point at MoD for UFO matters. However, inside the confines of Whitehall, DAS was just one of a number of more specialist MoD branches whose job it was to assess any defense or intelligence implications of UFO sightings at a much higher level of security clearance. The most secretive and shadowy of these branches is the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) whose space weapons section, DI55, has been responsible for assessing the "scientific and technical" aspects of UFO reports since 1967. The fact that DI55 played a role in the study of UFOs did not emerge publicly until 1986 when a standard MoD UFO report form that contained an internal distribution list was released (Figure 1). Such lists were normally edited from forms released to the public, but in this case a clerical error revealed the true extent of the ministry's involvement.

In July 2001, we asked DAS if DI55 continued to keep records or files on UFOs. The answer was: "As part of the MoD's assessment of aerial sightings, [UFO] reports were copied [by the Air Staff Secretariat] . . . to [a branch of] the Directorate of Intelligence Scientific and Technical (DIST). Towards the end of 2000, DIST decided that these reports were of no defence interest and should no longer be sent to them. The branch still retains files containing reports received up to 4 December 2000."

Following up this intriguing response, we asked the MoD to clarify the current position and were told that for more than 30 years UFO reports had been routinely copied to DI55 "in case they contained any information of value relating to their primary role of analysing the performance and threat of foreign weapons systems, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes and emerging technologies." However, towards the end of 2000 they had decided these reports were "no longer valuable" and should

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ANNEX B

MODCIS (RAF10)

ANNEX A TO
SOP 502

101

REPORT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT

1. Date, Time & Duration of Sighting 262050 Local Apr 93 several minutes
2. Description of Object (No of objects, size, shape, colour, brightness) Like a puff of cloud, then circular, very light with a red light flashing (note - crossing from right to left)
3. Location, indoor/outdoor, stationary/moving Outside
4. How observed (naked eye, binoculars, other optical device, still or moving) naked eye
5. Direction in which object first seen (A landmark may be more useful than a badly estimated bearing) Going from Wimbledon towards Roehampton
6. Angle of Sight (Estimated heights are unreliable) Not known
7. Distance (By reference to a known landmark) None estimated
8. Movements (Changes in 5,6 & 7 may be of more use than estimates of course and speed) Seemed to be about the speed of an aircraft
9. Met conditions during observations (Moving clouds, haze, mist etc) Clear sky
10. Nearby objects (Telephone lines, high voltage lines, reservoir, lake or dam, swamp or marsh, river, high buildings, tall chimneys, steeples, spires, TV or radio masts, airfields, generating plant, factories, pits or other sites with floodlights or night lighting) Nothing of note
11. To whom reported (Police, military, press etc) AFDO
12. Name & Address of Informant
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX just off Wimbledon Common

S. 40

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SECRET

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Fig. 1. Standard UAP report form used by the Air Ministry and MoD.

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13. Background of Informant that may be volunteered
Sensible, was partially mollified by the Airship Ford Mondeo

14. Other Witnesses

15. Date, Time of Receipt (in AFOR)
261955Z Apr 93

16. Any Unusual Meteorological Conditions

17. Remarks

Would have believed the Airship Ford Mondeo but for the fact that we were told it was operating in the Ilford/Romford area. May we have a Telephone No for the operators of the airship so that we may check its operating area? That would be very helpful.

XXXXXXXXXX S.40

Date: 26 Apr 93

RO2
Duty Operations Officer
Air Force Operations

Distribution:

Sec(AS)2, Room XXX Main Building
AEW/XX, Room XXX Main Building
DI 55, Room XXX Metropole Building
File D/AFOPS/2/5/1

not relevant

NB. Please note that the format of this form accords with Civpol formats

TO ALL AFDOS; PLEASE USE THIS AS A MASTER COPY AND IMMEDIATELY ON OPENING USE THE "SAVE AS " FUNCTION TO MAKE A COPY FOR THE ACTUAL REPORT! SORRY BUT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO PUT THIS REMARK AT THE START OF THE REPORT, AS IF TRIED ALL THE BLOCK SETTINGS ARE DESTROYED!!!

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SECRET

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Fig. 1 (continued). UAP report form.

no longer be sent to them.

This decision was a surprising one. In effect it marked the end of the Defence Intelligence Staff's involvement in UFO matters. Their interest could be traced all the way back to the deliberations of the Flying Saucer Working Party and the report they produced which was used to brief Prime Minister Winston Churchill following the Washington, D.C., UFO flap in 1952. What possibly could have happened in 2000 to lead them to decide the phenomenon was of no further defense interest?

As we puzzled over this question, we agreed such a final policy decision must have been based on a study of some kind. So early in 2005 we decided to use the UK's newly arrived Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), to request copies of correspondence between DI55 and the civilian "UFO desk" from the relevant period, circa 1997–2000.

We were already aware from other released material that a "policy review" on UFOs had been carried out by the MoD in January 1997. This led us to suspect that whatever had caused DI55 to abandon UFO work may be revealed in the correspondence generated by this review. As a result, in August 2005 a number of MoD documents were released under the FOIA. These dated back to 1993 and included a copy of a minute dated December 4, 2000, that announced the completion of the DI55 study (Figure 2). The security classification of this document was "Secret," with the caveat "UK Eyes Only," but even this information was withheld until release on appeal early in 2006 (see Appendix B).

In many ways these background documents were more interesting than the contents of the report itself. They revealed how since the 1960s UFO reports received by the MoD had been routinely copied to a range of specialist branches. In addition to Sec(AS) or DAS—the supposed "focal point"—all reports were copied to DI55 and various RAF units dealing with air defense and radar. It was these specialist branches that were responsible for making further inquiries into cases deemed to be of defense interest.

These documents reveal a significant fact which is crucial to any critical evaluation of the credibility of the report's conclusions. This is the lack of any in-depth investigations carried out by the MoD. After 1967, when the last field investigations were carried out into UFO reports, none of these branches were allowed to follow up reported sightings or interview witnesses. This procedure, which would appear to be essential for any serious appraisal of the phenomenon, was strictly ruled out as it was deemed to contradict public statements that MoD had no interest in the subject. Indeed, one document notes that for a period of more than 20 years, due to pressure on staff resources, UFO reports copied to DI55 had been simply glanced at, then filed away.

The basic source material utilized by the report's author was, therefore, limited to a standard report form that had been used by the Air Ministry and MoD since at least 1953 (Figure 1, pp. 5–6). In Volume 1 of the Condign report he writes:

In the 1950s, the then Air Ministry produced a "minimum format," one page, "UFO" reporting procedure for both public and military reporting of the phenomena. This procedure has remained unchanged and all event analysis in this report is based on an analysis of a voluminous paper database, which spans about 25 years. Further, it is not within the remit of the department to pursue witnesses to elicit any further information beyond that which they have provided to the MoD on the standard form. This information source has many inadequacies—and much of the initial work concentrated on the conversion of this material into computer database format.

What also emerges from the report is that neither DI55 or any other MoD branch had carried out any study, other than a basic numerical listing, of the thousands of reports they had received since the 1950s. Even worse, record-keeping was so poor that desk officers were unaware of work carried out on the subject in the past in all but the vaguest terms. Large collections of sighting reports and correspondence, including intelligence reports, had been routinely destroyed at five-year intervals until 1967 as they were deemed to be of "transient interest." As a result, relevant papers, such as that by the Flying Saucer Working Party, had been "lost" in the defense archives for decades. Ironically, the six-page report summarizing the Working Party's findings was not discovered in MoD archives until 2001 as a direct result of our requests, almost a year after the Condign report's author had completed his study!

This level of interdepartmental ignorance is highlighted by a Sec(AS) file note from 1995 that sums up the MoD's knowledge of its own work on UFOs as follows: "Essentially, we don't do research into the phenomena; we haven't done any; we only would if there were some good reason for doing so—i.e., evidence of a threat. It remains the case that no threat has been discerned which has been attributed to an unidentified flying object."

Several attempts had been made pre-1996 to pressure the MoD into carrying out a study of UFOs. The most significant occurred during the UFO flap of 1967–1968, which saw a substantial increase in the number of reports received by Whitehall. As a result, the Ministry found itself particularly vulnerable to pressure from the press, from MPs and Peers of the Realm, many of them encouraged by ufologists. The idea for a study at this stage was abandoned when the negative conclusions of the Colorado University team, commissioned by the USAF, were published in 1969. The MoD was then able to claim that the U.S. investigation supported their informal conclusion that UFO reports did not represent a defense threat. They argued that any British study was likely to duplicate the USAF findings and would therefore constitute a waste of public money.

Unlike the USAF, however, in 1970 the MoD decided to continue to receive UFO reports but would not commit any resources to investigate them unless a threat to UK

defenses was identified. Almost two decades later in 1986, under great secrecy, staff in a scientific support branch, Science 3(RAF), drew up a plan to produce a computerized database of the thousands of UFO reports they had on file. They felt this could help other branches categorize sightings and answer queries from the public. This proposal was supported by DI55. But when news of the plan leaked to Sec(AS) in February 1988, officials were furious and demanded that all work on the database stop. A handwritten note from the head of Sec(AS) found in policy documents released in 2005 reads: “. . . spoke to [Science 3] explaining that this could be very embarrassing for us and urging caution. It is exactly what we (and Ministers) have been saying for years we do not do, and could not justify!”

As a result of this intervention, the DI55 officer backed down and sent a memo to the Director General of Scientific and Technical Intelligence (DGSTI) on March 11, 1988, which read, “I understand that when Sec(AS) heard about the study, they decreed that all work should cease as it was in contravention of Ministerial statements to the effect that UFOs did not pose a threat to the UK, and that resources would not be diverted from more important work to investigate UFO incidents.”

Fortunately, the impetus to produce a database of cases that could form the basis for a definitive study did not end with this shameful episode. Curiously, it was DI55 who continued to champion the cause for a fully funded study of UFOs in the face of continued attempts by the UFO desk—Sec(AS)—to place obstacles in its path. On June 1, 1993, the DI55 desk officer wrote to his new opposite number in Sec(AS)2a, Nick Pope, who was already noted as being more sympathetic to the subject than his predecessors: “You may be interested to hear that at long last I have had some funds allocated for serious UFO research. The study will include a review of our data, the construction of a database, a detailed review of specified incidents and recommendations for the future. . . . Needless to say we do not want this broadcast and it is for your information only.”

Of interest here is the original intention to include within the context of a fully funded study “a detailed review of specified incidents.” This seemingly fundamental requirement was removed from the Terms of Reference at a later stage, apparently for financial reasons. A follow-up minute from DI55 to Sec(AS), dated October 18, 1993, underlines their determination to undertake the study: “A cursory glance at [our] files indicates that over the years a large amount of data has been accumulated. We have never therefore established if UAP’s exist and, if they do, whether or not they pose a defence threat to the UK. Some recent events, and a cursory examination of the files indicate that the topic may be worthy of a short study.”

In short, by the mid-1990s with public interest in UFOs running at an all-time high, DI55 felt the MoD was particularly vulnerable if closely questioned on their standard line that UFOs were of no defense significance. They believed it would be difficult to sustain this position if they were forced

to admit that no study had ever been carried out. In a 1997 internal exchange concerning the nature of DI55’s interest in UAPs, this dilemma is summarized as follows: “The lack of evidence to date in DIS on the extraterrestrial hypothesis has to reflect the fact that we have not carried out any analysis.”

This concern is in effect the genesis of the decision to commission the Condign study. In support of the idea of a UK study, a DI official added: “I am aware, through intelligence sources, that Russia believes that such phenomena exist and has a small team studying them. I am also aware that an informal group exists in the US intelligence community and it is possible that this reflects a more formal organisation. . . . It is difficult to meet our remit of advising on possible threat implications since we have never studied the topic of UAPs.”

However, despite its initial optimism DI55 said it could not afford to divert any of its desk officers to examine UFO files “to determine whether we should apply any significant effort to the matter.” They went on to propose the employment of an outside contractor—a person “well known to DI55”—who could be offered the task as an extension on an existing defense contract. This would, they said, avoid having to put the project out to tender which “would potentially expose the study to too wide an audience . . . since a potential exists for political embarrassment.”

DI55 attached a draft copy of the proposed contract for the UFO study which specified the employment of “a degree level engineer, with a [technical intelligence?] background, to prepare an Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) database.” Even at this early stage the project hit a familiar obstacle—cuts in defense funding—and the initiative did not go ahead. DI55 made two further attempts in 1995 to gain approval for funding, but the timing clashed with the onset of a Defence Study deemed more important than UFOs, and the project was shelved yet again.

THE CONDIGN REPORT

After three years of prevarication, on December 11, 1996, DI55 finally wrote to their favored contractor asking him to initiate a computerized database of their UFO records. He was given complete access to the department’s UFO records, which included 22 files dating back to the mid-1970s. The database, they stipulated, should include at the minimum,

- an event number for each incident
- details of location(s) including any potential military or economic targets
- times and dates
- witness details
- categorization of the event (e.g., aircraft/space junk/hoax/unidentified)
- any possible explanation, such as military exercises.

This contract (NNR2/366) formed the “Terms of Reference” for the UAP project, which was included as an

appendix to the final report. At this stage DI55 warned the contractor, “because of the sensitivity of this activity it most [sic] be conducted on a strict need-to-know basis at SECRET UK EYES B level. The activity will be known as PROJECT CONDIGN.”

Much speculation has surrounded the meaning of “Con-dign,” with connections made to the USAF project Sign and the University of Colorado Condon report. One definition of Con-dign, cited earlier in this article, refers to a punishment well deserved. This may be a reference to the MoD’s attitude to the “UFO problem,” as they described it. Publicly they insist that Con-dign, as in the case with other codenames for MoD projects, was a randomly generated word and any connections with Condon are “purely coincidental.”

The identity of the contractor who carried out the study and produced the report remains unknown. The MoD say his identity, or that of the company he worked for, cannot be revealed under an exemption to the FOIA which protects the details of defense contractors. This exemption is currently the subject of an appeal to the Information Commissioner who has the power to order the MoD to reveal information if he decides the release of the information is in the public interest.

The documents released by the MoD do provide a limited insight into the background of the report’s author, whom we henceforth designate “Mr. X.” They reveal he has a background in the RAF and technical intelligence and had been called upon by the MoD to offer expert advice on UFO reports on a number of occasions in the past. He may also have had a personal experience of his own, which he revealed when discussing the standard MoD UFO question-naire that he says was “invented” in the 1950s, adding: “I know because I filled one in myself after a sortie when flying in the RAF at the time.”

In the same memo, addressed to M. J. Fuller at Sec(AS) and dated January 22, 1997, Mr. X emphasized that he wished to keep “a low profile,” writing to Sec(AS) as follows: “as [deleted] one could imagine the embarrassment to [deleted] if my activities were media knowledge—especially as they would undoubtedly soon link these with my other known activities on . . . and probably connect my long-standing involvement with DI55—which we also wish to avoid.”

It was only as a result of this correspondence between Fuller and Mr. X early in 1997 that Sec(AS) first learned that DI55 was now working on a detailed study of the contents of its UFO archive. This revelation came at precisely the time when Sec(AS) had embarked upon a review of its UFO policy. The review itself was a result of the mounting workload generated during 1996–1997 by inquiries from the media and public following a number of high-profile UFO stories. The review was aimed at clarifying the MoD’s role in UFO matters and reducing its workload on the subject. As a result, from May 1997 Sec(AS) agreed to continue copying reports to DI55 and to Air Defence staff. However, only those which Sec(AS) judged to be well documented, corroborated, and timely

would be passed to specialist staffs in the future.

These documents reveal much about the compartmental mindset that operates within the MoD, where it is quite possible for one department to be unaware of work being carried out by another at a higher security level. They also give the lie to claims that the civilian UFO desk was the focal point for what Nick Pope has described as “the British Government’s UFO Project.” The newly released documents provide unambiguous evidence that, since 1995, Sec(AS) (renamed DAS in 2000), were out of the loop and were not involved at any stage in the study or production of the report.

According to the DIST minute of December 4, 2000, announcing completion of the study (Figure 2, pp. 10–11), only the Director General (Research and Technology) along with DI55 and DI51 received copies of all four volumes. The UK Air Defence Ground Environment (UKADGE) received the Executive Summary and Volume 3, which contains “sensitive” material related to the limitations of UK radar in the detection of UAPs.” Summaries of the UAP report were sent to the Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence (DCDI), to the Inspectorate of Flight Safety (RAF), and to HQ MATO (Military Air Traffic Organisation, RAF Uxbridge).

The DIST minute revealed that DI55 had concluded sighting reports provided nothing of value in its assessment of “threat weapons systems.” As a result, the department had decided to “carry out no further work on the subject [of UAPs]” and added, “while most of the report is classified at only RESTRICTED UKEO [see Appendix B] we hardly need remind addressees of the media interest and consequently the sensitivity of the report. Please protect accordingly, and discuss the report only with those who have a need to know.”

Sec(AS)—renamed DAS in 2001—was conspicuous by its absence from this privileged distribution list. Presumably this was because someone at a higher level in the pecking order felt they had no “need to know.” This decision may well be a direct result of the activities of the former Sec(AS) desk officer Nick Pope, who had gone public with his pro-UFO beliefs in 1996, a period that coincided with the doubling of the workload for the UFO desk staff.

We asked DAS staff how, if they were not included in the distribution of the report, they learned of DIST’s decision. The reply, dated November 23, 2005, stated: “[We] have searched our UFO Policy file for the period and there is no document specifically concerning this issue. [We] can therefore only assume that we were informed by telephone.”

So much for claims that Sec(AS) was the central focal point for all UFO matters within the Ministry of Defence!

UAPs IN THE UK AIR DEFENCE REGION

The report’s Executive Summary opens with this unequivocal statement: “That [UFOs] exist is indisputable. Credited with the ability to hover, land, take-off, accelerate to excep-

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ENCLOSURE
26

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DIST/11/10 196/H73

4 December 2000

DCDI
DG(R&T)
ADGE
IFS(RAF) (FS ATC)
HQ MATO (OPS (LF) 1)
AD/DI51

Copy to: AD/DI55

UNIDENTIFIED AERIAL PHENOMENA (UAP) – DI55 REPORT

1. The DIS has received copies of UAP sighting reports from Sec(AS) for about 30 years. Until recently these have been filed with only a cursory look at the contents by DI55 to discover whether anything of intelligence value could be determined. However, it was obvious that any value from the sighting data could only be derived by carrying out a Study of a significant sample of the reports. Consequently, over the past 2 years DI55, under low priority tasking, has compiled a database of information taken from reports received between 1987 and 1997, and has carried out an analysis based on data statistics. A report is now available. With the exception of DG(R&T), who receives the full report, other addressees are being provided with the Executive Summary only, which details the main findings of the Study. Should you require the full report, or parts of it, contact details are given on page 3 of the Summary.
2. The main conclusion of the Study is that the sighting reports provide nothing of value to the DIS in our assessment of threat weapon systems. Taken together with other evidence, we believe that many of the sightings can be explained as: mis-reporting of man-made vehicles; natural but not unusual phenomena, and natural but relatively rare and not completely understood phenomena. It is for these reasons that we have taken the decision to do no further work on the subject and will no longer receive copies of sighting reports.
3. In addition to this major conclusion, however, the study produced subsidiary findings which will be of interest to addressees. The potential explanations of UAP sightings, the characteristics of natural atmospheric phenomena and the consequences of sightings from aircraft will be of interest to those responsible for flight safety. Similarly the characteristics of some of the phenomena with respect to their detection on UKADR systems will be of interest to both the ADGE and flight safety staff. Finally, DG(R&T) will be interested in those phenomena associated with plasma formations, which have potential applications to novel weapon technology.
4. Although we intend to carry out no further work on the subject, we would value any comments you may wish to make on the report. Please direct such comments to AD/DI55. Finally, while most of the report is classified at only RESTRICTED UKEO, we hardly need remind addressees of the media interest in this subject and consequently the sensitivity of the report. Please protect this subject

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Fig. 2. DIST minute of December 4, 2000, announcing Condign Report.

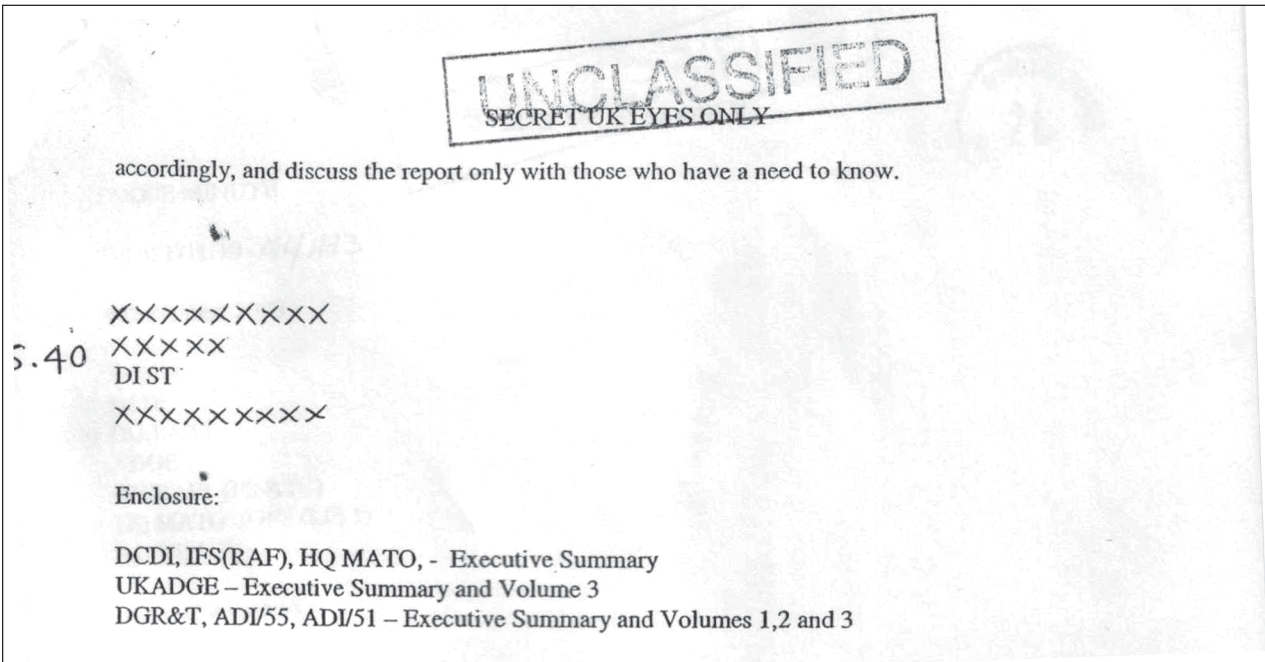


Fig. 2 (continued). DIST minute of December 4, 2000, announcing Condign Report.

tional velocities and vanish, they can reportedly alter their direction of flight suddenly and clearly can exhibit aerodynamic characteristics well beyond those of any known aircraft or missile—either manned or unmanned.”

Throughout the report, Mr. X refers to UFOs as UAPs or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (see Appendix A for an explanation) and says that, while they most definitely exist, “there is no evidence that any UAP, seen in the UKADR [Air Defence Region] are incursions by air objects of any intelligent (extra-terrestrial or foreign) origin, or that they represent any hostile intent.”

Significantly, drawing upon his access to the contents of the DI55 UFO archive, the author adds: “No artefacts of unknown or unexplained origin have been reported or handed to the UK authorities, despite thousands of UAP reports. There are no SIGINT, ELINT or radiation measurements and little useful video or still IMINT.” SIGINT is signals intelligence, ELINT is electronics intelligence, and IMINT is imagery intelligence.

The study does not attempt to investigate any specific UAP incidents in depth. This disappointing outcome is a direct result of the decision to reduce the “terms of reference” from the original 1993 proposal, which as we have seen did include “a detailed review of specified incidents” within its remit.

THE UAP DATABASE

Mr. X single-handedly input basic data from various time periods covering approximately 25 years into a Microsoft Access computer database. One of these periods spanned 10 years from 1987 to 1997. This span, along with two clusters from 1988 and 1996, were then statistically analyzed, along with the subsequent writing of the substantial 465-page

report, all in just over three years. We requested a processed electronic copy of the Condign UAP database, but the MoD informed us that as it was surplus to requirements it was destroyed shortly after the study ended. However, from Volume 1, Annex D, it’s possible to see what this database looked like. Whether it could or should be reconstructed from MoD records, to follow the train of study, is arguable for important points hereafter.

When eyewitness data is utilized in scientific experiments it is usually obtained by face-to-face interview or other qualitative methods. (The latter is also utilized effectively in law enforcement.) These offer the interviewer other non-leading opportunities to ask the witness to clear up ambiguities, observe traits, and clarify details without many naturally indistinct phrases hindering the process. Some of these could not be picked up on the telephone and therefore subsequent errors arise.

The very quality of data used as the basis of the Condign study is therefore questionable. If a skilled researcher had been employed to follow up samples of reports from the archive, or even to gain a perspective on their reliability, this might have improved its credibility as a source. However, in a statistical analysis involving thousands of reports, without such qualitative sampling, false representations will emerge and these logically will lead to false conclusions. The value of any statistical conclusion or scientific examination rests initially upon how carefully the data were acquired, their quality, and who is doing the research. To be fair to the author, he does at least mention the limitations of statistical analysis in Volume 1, Chapter 3, page 3. Based on the inadequacies of the raw data used in the Condign study, poor data in means poor data out, hence equally poor science.

Volume 1, Chapter 1, page 2 states: “Only UAP in the UK Air Defence Region is used in database analysis, al-

though the support of authoritative scientific reference sources world-wide has been made to come to a considered decision as to the most likely causes of the phenomenon.” In the preface appears the following: “. . . a rational scientific examination of the phenomena—based only on the raw material—UKADR incident reports.”

In the words of Isaac Koi, a commentator on Condign, “If an analysis is to be performed then it should be performed competently.” Therefore, the question might not only be whether the raw material is sufficient for the task, but was Mr. X qualified to undertake detailed analysis of this type? In his introduction to Volume 1 of the study, the author says, “every effort has been made to take a wide systems approach, to avoid over-focusing on single events.” And he adds, “There has been neither intention of debunking the extraterrestrial lobby or of taking the opposite view—except based on hard scientific evidence.”

Nevertheless, a mere 15 pages later, the extraterrestrial hypothesis is dismissed after data emerged that correlated UAPs with natural phenomena. As a result, the study concludes that an ET origin for the residue of unidentified report is “very unlikely,” and the author adds: “Defence intelligence interests will not [be] furthered by continued investigations which focus on potential extra-terrestrial sources.”

One of the most serious flaws in the report is that in some places the basis on which Mr. X accepts some and rejects other evidence is not apparent from the content presented. We have identified numerous assertions made without reference to evidence or any form of logic. To list those here would be beyond the scope of this article, but it is sufficient to note that there appears to be a large amount of speculation presented in the report as fact.

Volume 2 of the report is a hefty document entitled “Information on Associated Natural and Man-Made Phenomena.” It contains 25 working papers touching upon a variety of important influences upon the UAP data. The categories include:

1. UAP effects on humans, electrical/electronic equipments and objects
2. Ball and bead lightning
3. Potential reasons for higher densities of UAP sightings
4. Afterimages as a result of flashes of light
5. Detection of UAPs by radar
6. Exotic technologies
7. Sightline rules of flying objects and meteorites
8. Rarity of UAP sound reports
9. Black and other aircraft programs as UAP events
10. Ley lines, earthlights, and UK faultlines
11. Collected imagery and classification of UAP shapes
12. Earth’s magnetic field in the UKADR
13. Visual meteorological and other natural phenomena
14. Meteorological balloons

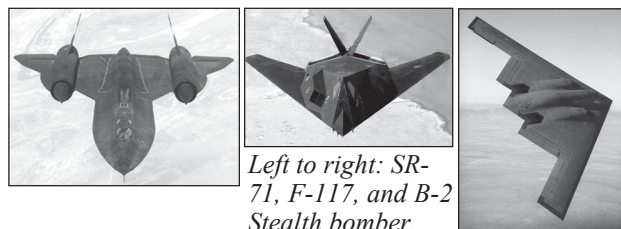
15. Airships and hot-air balloons
16. Sunspot, aurora, and seismic correlations
17. Visual observation of satellites
18. Projected shapes/shadows, fluorescence, and luminescence
19. Charged dust aerosols
20. Optical mirages
21. Ionospheric plasma
22. Artifacts
23. Linked vortex rings
24. Sprites, elves, and blue jets
25. Overview of magnetic-field effects on humans

Most of the alleged scientific sources mentioned form the basis of the working papers in Volume 2, and it is precisely these that represent likely causes for UAPs and related phenomena. None of these phenomena are unknown to science. In fact, probably a number of readers might confidently agree that all of the above *might* be responsible for proportions of initially reported UFO sightings that have been explained as misperceptions of man-made and natural phenomena. The question remains: Do the working papers cover all possibilities and could their attendant phenomena and circumstance be responsible for *all* UAPs or UFOs and related phenomena? The simple answer is no. We believe there is room for other possibilities. Essentially Condign doesn’t consider or mention all possible causes of UAP or UFO sightings. We’ll leave the reader to fill in any blanks.

More extraordinarily, in order to reach conclusions, as far as we know this “scientific” examination was completed without undertaking any consultation with scientists in the relevant fields connected with the working papers. Nor do we have reason to suppose this report was externally sent out for scientific scrutiny. The secrecy factor is very pertinent here and demonstrates how and why most of this exercise was ineffective.

BLACK PROJECTS

One important category of influence listed in Volume 2 of Condign is black aircraft programs. Working Paper 9, classified as “NATO Restricted,” opens with the statement, “It is acknowledged that some UAP reports can be attributed to covert aircraft programmes—in which unusual air vehicles may be seen, either at the experimental stage or in service.” The paper proceeds to describe a number of black project shapes that it says are “frequently reported as UAPs.” Those illustrated include both UAVs and three manned U.S. projects: the 2,000-mph SR-71



Left to right: SR-71, F-117, and B-2 Stealth bomber.

Blackbird, the F-117, and B-2 Stealth bomber. A 14-line description of Program 2 and a 10-line description of Program 3 have both been withheld under Section 27 of the FOIA on the grounds that it was supplied in confidence by “another nation.” This exemption is justified on the grounds that “release . . . is likely to prejudice the future exchange of such information and may also damage the UK’s relationship with that nation.”

In addition, the names of both black programs have been withheld along with two photographs that accompany the text. However, in Working Paper 6 (“Exotic Technologies”) appears the line, “The projected (USAF) priority plan is to produce unpiloted air-breathing aircraft with a Mach 8-12 capability and transatmospheric vehicles . . . as well as highly supersonic vehicles at Mach 4 to 6.”

This intriguing reference has led a number of British media outlets, including BBC *Newsnight* and the London *Guardian*, to speculate that one of the withheld photographs might be a picture of the infamous Aurora. There has been much speculation about the existence and capabilities of this supposed hypersonic black project since the early 1990s. While the U.S. authorities have denied such an aircraft exists, sightings of unusual aircraft shapes have added to rumors that a secret aircraft exists that is capable of flying at up to Mach 8. In summary, Mr. X notes that from “certain viewing aspects . . . these vehicles may be described as ‘saucer like’—hence they are not ignored by observers—as more conventional and familiar aircraft shapes would be.”

PLASMAS, PLASMOIDS, AND EM EFFECTS

The study found that while it could rule out aliens and hostile foreign aircraft, it could not fully account for some of the stranger UAP events. These reports, many of which are made by credible witnesses, “are almost certainly attributable to physical, electrical and magnetic phenomena in the atmosphere, mesosphere and ionosphere” created by “more than one set of weather and electrically charged conditions.”

Mr. X goes even further by drawing upon the controversial research and conclusions of research carried out at Laurentian University by Michael Persinger. He finds merit in the theory that plasmas or earthlights may explain a range of close-encounter and even “alien abduction” experiences. The report says that on rare occasions plasmas can cause responses in the temporal-lobe area of the human brain, leading observers to suffer extended memory retention and repeat experiences. This, the report’s author believes, may be “a key factor in influencing the more extreme reports . . . [that] are clearly believed by the victims.”

We should stress that we do not accept these speculations as being scientifically valid explanations of the close-encounter experience. Though EM and other cortex stimulation effects on humans may provide clues towards the origin of some aspects of alleged abduction phenomena elements, we are not aware that any plasmas or “transients”

such as those described by Persinger have ever been detected or measured in the environment, nor do we know of any stimuli present in the environment capable of producing all such reported effects.

There is a limited but growing body of research into various alleged environmental EM and other pollution effects on humans, animals, and plants covering a number of manmade and other natural emission sources. However, these require investigation in long-term studies in order that data can be established and some real scientific consensus to develop. Until then, this field will remain curious and controversial, replete with boastful and biased commentary from its extremes.

A limited Google search on the influence of microwave mobile phone, relay, and transmitter pollution effects on humans reveals the polarized nature of discourse on the controversy. On one side are companies who promote the emission or transmission technology. They claim it is perfectly safe and there is no evidence that any humans have been harmed by exposure. On the other extreme are people who claim they or their children have developed everything from electrohypersensitivity to leukemia as a result of proximity to ground waves from microwave relay masts (in rare cases, either individually or in consortium, litigation is involved).

Unfortunately, scientific groundwork that is independent and unbiased is rare or difficult to locate. Often it is impossible to establish the objective facts when so much material is lost in an electronic fog. The best we can say is yes, radiation affects people, but no one really knows yet exactly to what extent, or who may be more or less sensitive.

Besides noctilucent clouds and auroral displays that may explain some UFOs, there are other dusty plasmas in the Earth environment that may cause rare types of visual luminescent phenomena that can be reported as UFOs. However, until proper scientific detection and measurement occur these explanations must remain only hypothetical. As mentioned in the report, ball lightning produced in a laboratory is just one example of one such unproven possibility.

Since the report was released we have approached more than 40 scientists from different nationalities and across a range of disciplines to obtain expert comment and opinion on the findings of the Condign study. Approximately two-thirds were plasma physicists. Many are unwilling to be publicly associated with the topic in any shape or form. Here we have a perfect example of the shyness often ascribed to scientists in the past when they are asked to contribute a critique of a so-called scientific assessment of UFOs. However, on a positive note, and despite requests for anonymity we have been provided with comments, useful references, and suggestions. The process is ongoing and we intend to persist in our efforts to involve pertinently qualified scientists in a comprehensive review of all the Condign documents.

(continued on page 29)

METEORIC DUSTY PLASMAS

Meteoritic dusty plasmas certainly exist, but whether they can be charged or otherwise visually incandesce beyond their initial entry into the atmosphere is debatable. Certainly dusty plasmas can interfere with radio and are made more turbulent by bombardment with high-frequency emissions (HF). What is not explained is how these could cause someone to undergo a “close encounter.” After all, most plasma phenomena described occur in the upper portions of the Earth’s atmosphere. What about plasmas and UAP effects in the lower atmosphere?

UAP-METEOR CORRELATION

The Condign report claims to have established a correlation between meteor-shower peak dates and UAP activity (see Figure 3, but note the dates for peak meteor-shower activity in the associated table are incorrect). This supposition is a strong point in one of Mr. X’s arguments, a correlation between possible meteoric dust-generated plasmas accounting for UAP reports. It is not disputed that meteors produce plasma when they enter the atmosphere, and their microscopic debris contributes to atmospheric dusty plasmas.

However, since the MoD has not been careful in collecting the eyewitness information, there is no way to filter out possible direct observation of meteoric phenomena as probable misperceptions. In fact, there is a more logical assertion that can be made. Any such correlation may be due to direct misperception. (Note previous comments concerning the information recorded on the standard report form and the fact that Mr. X was unable to recheck facts.)

Mr. X places too much trust in the public being able to report meteoric phenomena accurately. Suffice it to say that although many people can recognize meteoric phenomena

there is still a significant proportion who can’t, and it is these who occasionally file UFO reports.

We can state this quite confidently, drawing comparisons with data from the BUFORA Astronomical Reference Point (ARP). The ARP continually received UFO reports from all over the UK in the period covered by Condign. The data demonstrates the fluctuating fraction of yearly UFO reports that were actually produced by direct observations of meteors, satisfactorily determined by rechecking information with witnesses.

Guess what? These too show a similar correlation to meteor-shower peak dates.

DUSTY PLASMAS

Much new scientific research is being conducted into the subject of dusty plasmas. For example, in relation to atmospheric plasmas, the European Incoherent Scatter (EISCAT) Scientific Association in northern Scandinavia bombards the atmosphere in the polar regions with HF and then studies the resultant plasma turbulence. The European Cluster II spacecraft was also tasked to investigate plasma phenomena and the Earth’s magnetosphere. The more we observe Earth with spaceborne remote-sensing and optical equipment covering the full range of the radiation spectrum, the more unusual, rare, and as yet undiscovered visual atmospheric phenomena yield to detection and study. One example is the observation of three types of transient optical phenomena at high altitudes above thunderstorms. These are now fully integrated into the scientific nomenclature as sprites, elves, and blue jets (see Working Paper 24 in Volume 2 of the Condign report).

UAPS ON RADAR

Working Paper 5 in Volume 2 and Chapter 1 in Volume 3 deal with the technical capabilities of UK air defense radar within the context of UAPs. A number of specific incidents are alluded to with insufficient information to allow detailed scrutiny. Mr. X implies there have been very few trackings of UAPs/UFOs on UK air defense radar within the period covered by the study (1987–1997). He cites one occasion when “a triangular (visual) formation was tracked on radar with an acceleration from 100 to 980kts in two seconds and an altitude change from 7000 to 3000ft in 1 second.” Unfortunately, this appears to refer to an incident during the Belgian wave of 1990, so it falls outside the UK coverage of the study he himself set out in his Terms of Reference.

A key finding from Mr. X’s sur-

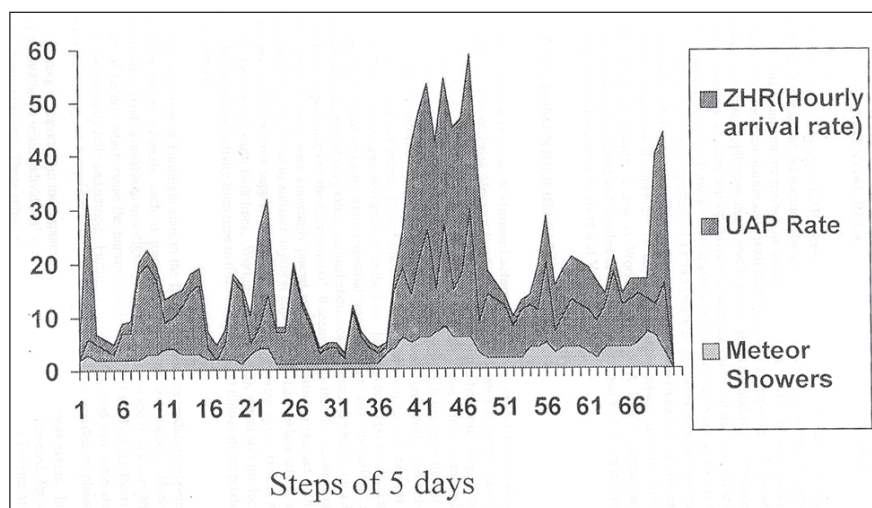


Fig. 3. Correlation of number of meteor-shower types and meteor entry rate with UAP reports, 1996.

vey of DI55's report archive is that "there is a significant absence of radar plots/tracks on UAPs" in the UKADGE when contrasted with the numerous visual reports made to MoD. He considers a number of possible explanations, three of which have been deleted for reasons of security, and concludes: "Clearly, some UAP response to radar is variable, otherwise all radars would see all the objects which entered their respective coverage zones all the time." The implication is that the radar wavefront of a UAP target is not consistent with a solid craft but may be consistent with atmospheric phenomena, such as a dusty plasma. This leads him to speculate that variability in radar detection "may be due to aspect or orientation, material composition or both." Hence, "if UAPs are plasmas, their intensity would probably be diminishing as their physical life decays," which might explain the variability in radar detections both by air defense and civil air traffic radars.

As we expected, the sections dealing with radar have had large sections deleted under exemption Section 26 of the FOIA. According to the author, these sections "contain performance values of the UKADR radars [and] radar performance is directly relevant to whether UAPs can enter and leave UK airspace and whether they constitute a threat." As a result, the MoD decided the release of this information "could be of significant value to the planning of an attack on the UK, including from terrorism." These exemptions are currently the subject of appeal.

HAZARDS TO AIRCRAFT

Although the Condign report concludes there is no evidence that solid craft exist which are unidentified and could pose a collision hazard, Chapter 2 of Volume 3 examines seven unexplained fatal accidents involving RAF aircraft. It also scrutinizes seven unexplained air-miss incidents reported by civilian aircrews "where the identity of one of the conflicting objects is never explained." Just one of these incidents involved a simultaneous radar trace of a unidentified target. All seven air-miss events were reported between 1988 and 1996 and were investigated by the Joint CAA and MoD Airprox Section (JAS). The study states that, while there is no evidence for any fatal accident resulting from a collision with a UAP in the UK, fatalities have occurred in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

UAPs are deemed to pose little or no danger to aircraft (a risk assessed as being lower than bird strikes), unless violent maneuvers are undertaken to either intercept or avoid them. It adds that "despite . . . hundreds of reports of low altitude UAP activity, there is no firm evidence in the available reports that a RAF crew has ever encountered or evaded a low altitude UAP event" or that any RAF aircraft has been involved in an interception involving this type of phenomenon.

Nevertheless, Mr. X makes a number of "subsidiary recommendations" resulting from the findings of this section of the report. He feels the air-miss database for higher

altitude reports (up to 20,000 feet) is lacking data because of reluctance on the part of airline crews to make formal UAP reports. Here again the "bad press" which UFOs receive in the media and via the activities of ufologists is blamed, as Mr. X observes: "There is evidence that [crews] are seeing far more than they are reporting for fear of ridicule or the potential effect on company business."

He recommends that military and civilian aircrews should be advised that "no attempt should be made to out-manoeuvre a UAP during interception" and civilian aircrews "should be advised not to manoeuvre, other than to place the object astern, if possible."

We made a follow-up request in May 2006 for evidence of action taken as a direct result of these recommendations. The MoD confirmed the findings had been sent to the Directorate of Air Operations (DAO) who would have been responsible for further dissemination to the Civil Aviation Authority and RAF. However, it said "no further correspondence regarding the 'subsidiary recommendations' have been found on the accessible files for the period in question."

UAP WORK IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Volume 3 of the report refers to research and studies carried out in a number of foreign nations into UAPs, atmospheric plasmas, and their potential military applications. This short chapter includes sections on the former Soviet Union, China, Spain, the United States, and Canada. Despite claims of an international UFO coverup, the author notes "there is no intelligence exchange or collaboration of any sort on the topic of 'UFOs'" between the UK and foreign governments.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, we have found the Condign report is replete with errors and reads like an intelligence report rather than a scientific memorandum. Knee-jerk dismissals of the documents as a "whitewash" and mishandling by the media have only slightly hampered our attempts to reveal the actual meaning and context of these documents. The research we have presented so far on our website and elsewhere refute all ignorant and idle guesses, and leave no doubt in our minds that Condign—whatever its flaws—is an important document in the history of ufology. This should be apparent to anyone who spends sufficient time delving into these matters for themselves.

If the report is a whitewash and the MoD really knows "the truth" about UFOs, this poses an interesting question. If evidence of an ET presence on Earth had been established, why would the MoD need to commission a three-year study—carried out in secret—to tell them what they already knew?

As this article has demonstrated, the internal documents show the study was commissioned after a long battle against internal prejudice in the MoD over three decades,

many years before Britain had a Freedom of Information Act on its statute books. Unless all these internal documents are fakes or deliberate plants, claims by conspiracy theorists that the report was produced specifically for public consumption can be confidently dismissed as nonsense.

The contents of the report suggest the MoD actually knows very little about UFOs and even that some civilian ufologists know far more. Its main recommendation (implemented in December 2000) is that “it should no longer be a requirement for DI55 to monitor UAP reports as they do not demonstrably provide information useful to Defence Intelligence.”

This coalesces into its main *raison d’être*, to remove the sensitive Defence Intelligence section of the MoD from the unwelcome publicity it had received as a result of its involvement in the UFO business. This hidden agenda may well explain the restricted distribution of the report and why the public “UFO desk,” Sec(AS), were kept out of the “need to know” loop.

Unlike Edward Condon, who had a team, Condign was the product of one man (Mr. X), working with inadequate data and a tight budget. He was not authorized to interview witnesses or speak to scientists. Under these circumstances, it seems he did the best he could, and although his report is unscientific there are some resourceful aspects to the outcome. The study also works well as an example of how not to scientifically study UFOs. The limited remit of Mr. X’s aim is underlined by the TORS (Terms of Reference) in Annex A of Volume 1—“to determine the potential value, if any, of UAP sighting reports to defence intelligence.”

Despite its many and varied flaws and false suppositions, we have to accept that the Condign report is likely to be the most detailed attempt by the Ministry of Defence to assess this multifaceted phenomenon for many years to come.

Again, this raises another question. If DI55 are no longer interested in UAPs or UFOs, why do they still maintain an open file on the subject, as we have established using the FOI? The clue that could explain this continuing interest is found in the Executive Summary: “The conditions for the initial formation and sustaining of . . . buoyant charged masses . . . are not completely understood. . . nevertheless, the underlying physics may have some military application in the future in the form of active visual, radar and IR decoys and passive electromagnetic spectrum energy absorbers.” The recommendation is that “further investigation should be [made] into the applicability of various characteristics of plasmas in novel military applications.”

Many other unanswered questions remain. There are background details to uncover, more documents to request, and the identity of the author to pursue. These avenues could all provide missing information to complete the jigsaw.

Despite claiming from the outset that he was working from raw data and had made a conscious effort to avoid

influence from the media or the UFO industry, ultimately Mr. X was unable to escape the pervasive influence of ufology on popular culture. On our first reading of his report, we were quite surprised to find his conclusions *do indeed show* such influences drawn from his literature search, particularly the works of Paul Devereux and Jenny Randles.⁴ These influences make Mr. X’s quote at the beginning of Volume 1 (“prejudice will take you further from the truth than ignorance”) sound rather ironic!

On this note we shall conclude with a final message both directed to ufologists and the author of Condign: “Prejudice *will* take you further from the truth than ignorance.”

RESOURCES

The latest news on UK FOIA releases along with extensive commentary on the Condign report can be found at our website, www.uk-ufo.org/condign/.

All four volumes of the report can be downloaded in pdf format from the UK Ministry of Defence FOIA website at www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme/SearchPublicationScheme/UnidentifiedAerialPhenomenauapInTheUkAirDefenceRegion.htm.

David Clarke and Andy Roberts, *Out of the Shadows: UFOs, the Establishment, and the Official Cover-up* (London: Piatkus, 2002), is a detailed analysis of the MoD’s interest in UFOs from World War II to the present.

Recent papers and research on atmospheric plasmas include:

EISCAT, www.eiscat.com/about.html.

Cluster spacecraft, clusterlaunch.esa.int/science-e/www/area/index.cfm?fareaid=8.

New Microscopic Properties of Magnetic Reconnection Derived by Cluster, May 19, 2006, clusterlaunch.esa.int/science-e/www/object/index.cfm?fobjctid=39246.

Research Activities of the Dusty Plasma Group, debye.colorado.edu/research.html.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The team of researchers who uncovered the Condign report and associated documents included David Clarke, Gary Anthony, Joe McGonagle, and Andy Roberts.

2. *Magonia* 92 (June 2006): 2, 11.

3. Facsimiles of the Flying Saucer Working Party and Rendlesham files can be found at the two websites listed in Resources.

4. Photocopied maps and graphics from two identifiable books appear in Volume 2 of the report. They are (a) Paul Devereux, with David Clarke, Andy Roberts, and Paul McCartney, *Earthlights Revelation* (London: Blandford, 1989), in Working Paper 18; and (b) Jenny Randles, *UFOs and How to See Them* (London: Anaya, 1992), in Working Paper 3.

APPENDIX A: UAPs

The acronym UAP is used both in the title and throughout the main body of the study commissioned by MoD. The Defence Intelligence Staff has long regarded the acronym UFO as discredited, because of the connotation that objects or craft of extraterrestrial origin have been observed. This idea is endemic both in the media and popular culture. It becomes apparent that UFOs and ufologists have such a negative press that it was impossible for any branch or individual within the MoD to commission studies of the material they hold. Attempts to do so were stymied because of the perception that any work on UFOs would be seen as “a waste of public money” particularly during the 1980s when the defense budget was pruned to the bone. The creation of an alternative, more definitive, term—UAP (unidentified aerial phenomena)—to describe the residue of inexplicable incidents was the solution. By the early 1990s, UAP was frequently used by the British defense intelligence staff while their civilian colleagues in Sec(AS) continued to use UFO.

However, UAP (pronounced “whap”) was not new, because the phrase “aerial phenomena” has been in use by the RAF since at least 1952. While UAP appears in DIS documents as early as 1962, shortly afterwards ufologists began to adopt an alternative version of the term. UAP, with the meaning “unidentified atmospheric phenomenon,” was coined by UFO investigator/writer Jenny Randles in her discussions with J. Allen Hynek during the late 1970s. Jenny recalls that “we talked about his classification scheme and how I felt it needed to be updated. I argued that UAP was a better term to use in order to interest scientists because it presumed less and was more accurately descriptive than UFO, which, both by its use of the word object and by years of presumed application now inferred a material craft, usually a spacecraft, in many people’s minds.”

APPENDIX B: UK SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

The MoD has stated publicly on many occasions over the past 40 years that the topic of UFOs was not classified. The material released both at the National Archives and under the FOIA suggests, however, that on occasions when UFO reports impinged upon other areas that were covered by security—for example, the capabilities of defense radars—they could become subject to the Official Secrets Act (OSA). For example, an Air Ministry document from 1960 states clearly: “The Press are never to be given information about unusual radar sightings. . . . unauthorised disclosures of this type will be viewed as offences under the Official Secrets Act.”

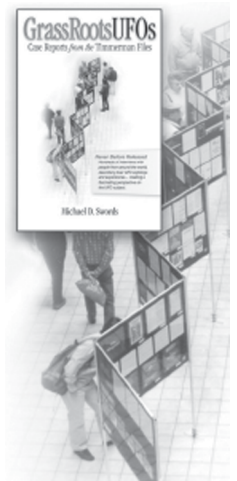
In the UK there are two levels of security classification for official documents: secret and top secret. The UAP Study of 2000 was classified at the lower level of “Secret/UK Eyes Only.” However, in 1998 the MoD released a

group of UFO documents classified at the higher level of top secret at the National Archives. These are the minutes of the DSI/JTIC committee, 1950–1951, which established the Flying Saucer Working Party at the height of the Cold War. The FSWP report itself was classified “Secret/Discreet” and both sets of documents dismissed all reports received to date (1951) as optical illusions, misperceptions of man-made and natural phenomena, and hoaxes.

In the House of Lords, on January 25, 2001, the late Lord Hill-Norton asked MoD “what is the highest classification that has been applied to any MoD document concerning UFOs.” The reply was, “A limited search through available files has identified a number of documents graded Secret. The overall classification of the documents was not dictated by details of specific sightings of ‘UFOs.’” Hill-Norton followed up his question with another on May 3, asking “why the UFO documents referred to were classified secret; whether these documents had any caveats attached to them; and what was the reason for any such caveats.” The answer was, “One document was classified ‘Secret’ with a ‘UK Eyes Only’ caveat because it contained information about the UK air defence ground environment that could be of significant value to hostile or potentially hostile states. Associated correspondence was given the same classification. Generally, however, notifications of and correspondence on the subject of ‘UFO’ sightings are unclassified.” ♦

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