

balloons or aircraft lights seen in unusual meteorological circumstances. We cannot undertake to pursue research to a point where positive correlation with a known object is established. To carry out a review of our findings, as he suggests, whenever an observer does not agree with our explanation, would go beyond our purely air defence interest and we would not be justified in terms of the expenditure of time and effort that would be needed to seek and assess information which might or might not enable us to make a positive identification of the object reported.

Since the Ministry of Defence interest in UFOs is limited to the defence aspect, a study of the scientific significance of UFOs has not been carried out. Nor would there be any justification for expending public funds in duplicating studies already carried out elsewhere. I refer, for example, to the studies by the University of Colorado, the main findings of which were made public early in 1969 and were endorsed by a panel of the (US) National Academy of Sciences. As Mr Hennessey no doubt knows the panel concluded, inter alia, that:

- a. about 90% of all UFO reports proved to be quite plausibly related to ordinary phenomena;
- b. little, if anything, had come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that added to scientific knowledge;
- c. further extensive study of UFO sightings was not justified in the expectation that science would be advanced thereby;
- d. no evidence had come to light that UFO sightings might represent a defence hazard.

Our own experience is such that we would not disagree with any of these findings.

Records of UFO reports received since 1962 are retained in the Department. Although these reports may themselves be unclassified, correspondence between the Department and members of the public is treated as confidential and thus documents cannot be made available to any organisation outside the public service without either the reports being edited to preserve the anonymity of the reporter or our obtaining the observer's permission to release the information. The reports would also need examination to ensure that no classified information was inadvertently disclosed. The extensive time and effort needed for this task would, in my opinion, not be justified. UFO records therefore remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the rules laid down in the Public Records Acts, i.e. at the end of 30 years.

Mr Hennessey has sought our comments on the question of international effort being made to seek explanations of UFOs.

/This