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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

26th March 1970

Dear Sir John,

We have now completed the review of our policy on dealing with reports of unidentified flying objects which I mentioned in my letter to you of 9th February.

As I explained in that letter, the Ministry of Defence has not operated a special unit for dealing with these reports. These are dealt with in the course of our normal operations and the extra effort necessary is quite small. Much of the information drawn upon in looking into UFO reports, e.g. air traffic movements and satellite orbits, is collected for other purposes and these functions would continue even if the Department no longer took an interest in reports of UFOs.

This Ministry investigates reports of UFOs because of their possible implications for the air defence of the United Kingdom. No evidence has incidentally been found to suggest that UFOs represent a threat to our air defences. However, this Department has a duty to keep within its purview all matters which might be relevant to the defence of the United Kingdom and, in view of the small effort required to investigate reports of unidentified flying objects, we propose to make no change in our present arrangements.

The Ministry of Defence hold UFO records from 1962 onwards. These records will not be destroyed, but, I am afraid, we cannot make them available to outside bodies at this stage because of the effort that would be involved in editing reports to preserve the anonymity of the reporters or, alternatively, obtaining the reporters permission to release the information. It would also be necessary to scrutinise all records before release to any organisation outside the public service to ensure that no classified information used in the course of investigating reports was inadvertently included.

/In

Sir John Langford-Holt, MP
House of Commons
London SW1

In the normal course of events UFO records would remain closed to public scrutiny until they become available under the usual rules at the end of 30 years. If, however, a major scientific organisation of high standing had strong reasons for obtaining access to our records then its application would be considered on its merits.

*Yours sincerely
Winterbottom*

(WINTERBOTTOM)