



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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

AF/BJ 84/76

29 March 1976

Dear Sir John

I now have the report I called for about the letter you sent to me on 26th February from Mr J J A Hennessey of Vistula, 43 Walnut Tree Road, Heston Hounslow.

The material Mr Hennessey saw on his visit to the Meteorological Office had been extracted from Merchant Navy log books. From time to time the more interesting of these observations are recorded in the "Marine Observer", a journal which is published by HMSO and is on sale to the general public. The log books themselves are also available to the public and form part of the National Meteorological Library permanent archive. Mr Hennessey should consult these sources if he is interested in the material. It is unfortunate he took advantage of the Meteorological Staff by obtaining the photostat copies he has shown you. The decision to destroy or retain the files has yet to be taken - he saw only a recommendation for disposal. The gift of any files is a very rare occurrence. It is most unlikely that any Ministry of Defence records would ever be handed over to an individual member of the public or to any organisation in a foreign country.

As Mr Hennessey has been told repeatedly, the Ministry of Defence files on Unidentified Flying Objects contain no more correspondence than is necessary to establish the possible defence implications and this may sometimes involve references to classified material. The files must remain closed to the public under the rules laid down by the Public Records Acts. Mr Hennessey told us on 19th December 1971 that he was fully aware of these rules and he has also referred to them in his latest letter. He should also be informed that, for obvious reasons, we shall review the files before their eventual publication in order to eliminate any information of a classified nature.

There is no inconsistency between Merlyn Rees' letter of 14th August 1967 and Lord Winterbottom's letter dated 26th March 1970. The decision to retain UFO records indefinitely was taken between

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these two dates. It was not necessary to go into that when Lord Winterbottom wrote to you in 1970.

I can offer no assurances about the material at Fylingdales or within the Air Traffic Control Organisation. The retention of BMEWS tapes and air defence radar film is ruled out because of the cost and the problem of storing the accumulating material. There are also security objections. No films are made of civil air traffic control unit radars.

I would also like to deal with the attached letter dated 25th February which Mr Hennessey has addressed to my Department on the subject of the F111 activity on 26th October 1971. There are now no records available to provide the details Mr Hennessey requests. Nor can we help him with the statistical analysis of UFO reports. These analyses were discontinued in 1974 and it is no longer possible to provide the figures.

*Yours sincerely
Brynmor John*

(BRYNMOR JOHN)