

**From:** XXXXXXXXX  
**Sent:** 31 July 2008 15:10  
**To:** XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

**Subject:** Release-authorized: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST 30-07-2008-114223-003

Dear XXXXXXXXX,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 29 July 2008 asking for details of UFO sightings in Co Tyrone for the period 1958-2008. Additionally, you asked whether the MoD had a specific department or set of experts on UFOs.

The MoD holds some 150 files on the subject of UFOs covering the period 1987 to the present day. Accurately answering your question regarding UFO sightings would involve manually checking them, the cost of which would far exceed the £600 limit set for compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and, as provided by Section 12 of the Act, the Ministry of Defence is not obliged to comply with your request. That having been said, details of UFO sightings reported to the MoD for the period 1997-2007 are available via our website <http://www.mod.uk/> by searching under "UFO report" and this may provide you with much of the information you request.

You may also wish to know that MoD files were routinely destroyed after five years until 1967 when they were generally preserved for The National Archives. A few have survived before 1967 and these together with records up to 1987 are now available for public viewing. The National Archives can be contacted at Ruskin Avenue, Richmond, Kew, Surrey TW9 4DU or telephone, 020 8876 3444. The National Archives also have a website giving information about the records they hold and how to access them. This can be found on the internet at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

Further, the MoD has recently started a 3 year programme to transfer files covering the period 1979-2007 to The National Archives where they will be available for viewing on their website. The Ministry of Defence Freedom of Information website also contains some released information on UFOs. This can be accessed the internet at: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme>, by searching under UFO reports.

The Ministry of Defence examines any reports of 'unidentified flying objects' it receives solely to establish whether what was seen might have some defence significance; namely, whether there is any evidence that the United Kingdom's airspace might have been compromised by hostile or unauthorized foreign military activity.

Unless there is evidence of a potential threat to the United Kingdom from an external military source, and to date no 'UFO' report has revealed such evidence, we do not attempt to identify the precise nature of each sighting reported to us. We believe that rational explanations, such as aircraft lights or natural phenomena, could be found for them if resources were diverted for this purpose, but it is not the function of the MOD to provide this kind of aerial identification service. It would be an inappropriate use of defence resources if we were to do so.

To describe the MoD as having a department that deals with UFOs is rather misleading as I suspect it gives the impression of a large organisation within the MoD dedicated to research into UFO matters and extra-terrestrials. There are only two posts within the MoD (including mine) that are dedicated to UFO matters. Although the overwhelming majority of the UFO work in these two posts involves (and has for decades) answering correspondence from the public or recording sightings reported to the MoD, we do on occasion investigate reports. This usually involves liaising with air defence specialists (e.g. radar specialists) on perhaps half a dozen reports per year. These will generally be sightings made by aircrew, members of the armed forces or the police. We do not do field investigations.

You have asked if the MoD has experts on UFO matters. We have a great many specialists on air defence and scientific matters who can be consulted if we decide to investigate a UFO report. However, whilst incumbents of the two posts to which I referred will by default gain a level of knowledge on the subject of UFOs and Ufology, “*UFO expert*” is a term I would wish to avoid. We have no official definition for the term and to use it in any but the loosest manner might be to overstate our position.

If you are unhappy with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of this request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Director of Information Exploitation, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall SW1A 2HB (e-mail [InfoXD@mod.uk](mailto:InfoXD@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain unhappy following an internal review, you may wish to take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate the case until the internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner’s website, <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>.

I am sorry I was unable to be more helpful.

XXXXXX

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