



Ian Mathias
HEADQUARTERS AIR COMMAND
RAF Business Secretariat 3

Spitfire Block
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Dr David Clarke
Via Email

Our Ref:
08-12-2009-135632-001

25 February 2010

Dear Dr Clarke

Further to my letter of 29 January 2010, I am now able to provide a substantive response to your Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) request. You requested copies of any documents relating to the discontinuation of investigating UFOs or responding to reported sightings.

I previously informed you that there is information contained within the documents, which may have fallen within scope of FOIA exceptions. I further informed you that the public interest test was taking longer to conduct than anticipated and we were unable to provide you with a copy of the documentation at that time.

I have now performed the public interest test as follows:

Section 22 (information intended for future publication)

Arguments for withholding are:

- The documentation would be available to all members of the public at the same time as part of the file release programme to the National Archives and could be reviewed alongside other contemporaneous documents on the subject.

Arguments against withholding are:

- To show that a thorough assessment of the benefit to defence of this work had been carried out with the correct level of scrutiny; and that it had determined to have no defence value.
- Release of these individual documents will not delay the wider file release programme.

Section 35 (the formulation of government policy)

Arguments for withholding are:

- The requirement to allow the civil service to provide impartial advice highlighting the pros and cons of a decision. Particularly allowing the future ability of Ministers and officials to conduct rigorous and candid assessments of their policies.

Arguments against withholding are:

- It would demonstrate openness to the taxpaying public that the department has identified and moved to stop nugatory effort on an area of work that had no defence value, and has been proactive in reallocating these defence resources to areas of core defence business.

Section 27 (International relations)

There were found to be no arguments supporting withholding and this has been fully discounted.



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



Section 42 (legal professional privilege)

There were found to be no arguments supporting withholding and this has been fully discounted.

Weighing up the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in release of the information, in this instance the balance of the public interest rested with releasing the documents in full.

Attached at Annex A are the Ministerial Submission from Command Secretary, Headquarters Air Command and Minister(Veterans) noting of that Submission. The only redactions are the names and telephone numbers of department officials on the Submission distribution list. These have been redacted under Section 40 (Personal Information) of the FOI Act which is an absolute exemption.

With your email of 3 February you further asked for further clarification of my response on what role will the Directorate of Counter Terrorism and UK Operations (CT&UK Ops) play in the future assessment of UFO incidents reported to the UKADR and from Official Sources. I informed you in my interim response that there was no change to Quick Reaction Alert reporting procedures. You will note that at the top bullet of page three of the attached Submission it gives that:

"Investigations into UFO sightings, even from more reliable sources, serve no useful purpose and merely divert air defence specialists from their primary tasks. Accordingly, no further investigations should be carried out into UFO reports received from any source. Any UFO reports received in future should be answered by a standard letter a draft of which is attached at Annex B and there should be no suggestion that they have been investigated by MOD."

All MOD staffs involved in Quick Reaction Alert control and reporting, including CT&UK Ops are aware of this policy.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your 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 Head of Corporate Information, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@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 dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD 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.ico.gov.uk>. I hope that this information is useful.

Yours sincerely

[original signed]

Ian Mathias
RAF Bus Sec 3



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

