

It grieves me to add that I think we have some evidence of direct and deliberate mis-statement on the part of the Ministry of Defence in at least one important case, the occurrence of strange events on two nights in late December 1980 in a part of Rendlesham Forest adjoining the USAF Base at RAF Woodbridge. We have the evidence for these events in a statement signed on 13th January 1981 by the then Deputy Base Commander, Lt.Col. (now ~~Brigadier~~^{Colonel}) Charles Halt of the United States Air Force. This statement was not made public until 14th June 1983 when - following persistent pressure by the authors of CLEAR INTENT (see above) - its release was authorised by the USAF in America under the Freedom of Information Act. Whether this release was an inadvertency at rather low level in the USAF we may never know: despite the Freedom of Information Act, American agencies have proved perfectly capable (and often no doubt with good reason) of sustaining objections in the courts to the release of documents. There is certainly some evidence that Halt was not consulted about the release and that it somewhat dismayed him. Be that as it may, however, the letter of release included the extraordinary statement that the USAF had disposed of its own copy of Halt's report but that: "... through diligent inquiry and the gracious consent of Her Majesty's government, the British Ministry of Defence and the Royal Air Force, the US Air Force was provided a copy for you." The Ministry of Defence have confirmed in reply to a Parliamentary Question tabled by Major Sir Patrick Wall, MP, that a copy of Halt's report was indeed received by them. Yet we are told in a recent book - SKYCRASH by Brenda Butler, Dot Street and Jenny Randles (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1984) that the Ministry of Defence had flatly denied any knowledge of supposed ^{EVENTS} in Rendlesham Forest when enquiries were made to them in 1981, following strong local rumours of an extraordinary occurrence.

The Ministry of Defence may well have good reasons for withholding information about the Rendlesham incidents. As a former Defence official, I would not wish to press questions on any matter touching national security; and in those circumstances I would not be surprised if questions pressed by others were met by a refusal to reply. But I cannot help feeling that it is something of a lapse from the usual standards of a government department to issue a direct mis-statement. Concealment is one thing (and is often justified), false denial is quite another.

The RAF Woodbridge case of December 1980 strikes me as one of the most interesting and important of recent years, anyway in this country - perhaps the most significant military sighting (or supposed sighting) since the celebrated events of 13th/14 August 1956 near RAF Bentwaters and RAF Lakenheath (both of which are, by an entertaining coincidence, quite close to Woodbridge in that much-haunted county of Suffolk). Those who wish to study the Bentwaters/Lakenheath incidents will find descriptions of them in the books mentioned below. The RAF Woodbridge case is described at length in SKYCRASH (see above). It is also to be the subject of several radio and television programmes. Much was said about it in THE NEWS OF THE WORLD in 1983, mainly in its issues of 2nd and 9th October. Alone in Fleet Street, the then editor, Derek Jameson decided to give space to Halt's report; and Keith Beabey of THE NEWS OF THE WORLD pursued it vigorously in the face of the kind of ridicule which the "quality" newspapers seem to find it expedient to attach to this mysterious and persistent phenomenon.

It was the Woodbridge case which prompted me to take up a long-shelved intention to write a "UFO book". I have chosen, quite deliberately, to cast it as a piece of fiction. Fiction allows the imagination to range widely, and it seems to me that this can sometimes be productive in turning better-qualified minds to new aspects of a problem. A false hypothesis can often have as much heuristic value as a good one! It does, at the least, enable serious researchers to consider - and properly test - a new idea, even if only to throw it away when it fails to stand up to scrutiny. I am far from being wedded to the hypothesis on which A SECRET PROPERTY is based. The main object of the book is to entertain, and to do so in the form of a thriller. It most certainly does not reflect any inside knowledge or startling revelation on the part of a former Defence official. (If I had such knowledge, the Official Secrets Act would forbid me to reveal it!).