



## Marching orders, please!

an hour or more. The object to the south was visible for two or three hours and beamed down a stream of light from time to time. Numerous individuals, including the undersigned [ie Lt Col Charles Halt himself] witnessed the activities in paragraphs 2 and 3.

You might have thought that this sensational report would have set the rafters alight. Not a bit of it. The Ministry of Defence admitted unusual lights had been sighted, but said there was no explanation.

Naturally the scoffers had a field day. Most reckoned those strange lights came from Orford Ness lighthouse, five miles away, and that the indentations in the ground were made by rabbits.

Nobody has yet explained



CHATTING with Ken Livingstone, the ex-GLC leader tells me how his thumbnail-size frogs breed: upside-down. I want more, but you can't keep Ken off politics. Tomorrow's poll will be "Labour's biggest win for 15 years".

to my satisfaction how light-houses manage to fly in a blaze of lights nor how rabbits give off radiation.

The three authors have also produced some fascinating supplementary evidence and Ralph Noyes, former head of the MoD department responsible for RAF intelligence, said in a statement: "We now have evidence — I blush to say about my own Ministry — that they have lied about this case. They have covered it up."

### Conspiracy

And so the conspiracy of silence continues, though these determined ladies have no intention of giving up their pursuit of the truth.

Their book raises some awkward questions about the USAF bases in East Anglia in view of Mrs Thatcher's decision to allow them to be used by F-111 bombers for the attack on Libya.

Quite clearly we have little control over the bases and, when something untoward occurs, lose no time in helping the US cover it up.

I do not believe that the UFO which disturbed the Suffolk woodland on that wintry night carried some spooky visitors from a distant planet.

No, the explanation is much simpler. A UFO it was — an American military spacecraft which had been on an illegal mission in outer space years ahead of President Reagan's beloved Star Wars programme.

**R**IGHT, fall-in, three ranks, you shower! I am riding my hobby horse. Bring back some form of National Service for the army of unemployed youngsters aimlessly wandering our streets.

Oh, I know all about freedom of the individual and suchlike, but can any of us who did our stint in uniform honestly say we did not thoroughly enjoy it?

I will not inflict you with such rubbish as: "It will make men of them" or "A bit of discipline will sort that lot out".

My experience in the Army was that it did neither. More important, it showed us how people from all parts of the country, of all classes, colours and religions, could live in harmony. It also gave us a chance to see the world beyond these shores, and taught us how to look after ourselves.

I hope the spirit of those times will be captured in an exhibition on National Service, opening at the Imperial War Museum in London next September. Altogether some 250,000 of us were conscripted between 1948-63.

What a laugh it all was. My post-bag suggests that others came away with the same impression.

Patrick Moore, from Bromsgrove, sends me a British Armed Forces 3d voucher (BAFs, we called them) with the comment: "I think I picked it up in Berlin or Nairobi... or was it Mauritius or Madagascar?"

Ah, sweet memories, he says. I'll second that.

Eric Firth, from Wilsden, Yorks, would not agree. He was a regular soldier who served 14 years, and reckons National Service was a waste of time, money, manpower and lives.

He writes: "Young men around 18 were plucked from their jobs, homes and loved ones, put into ugly, ill-fitting uniforms that made them resemble walking coal sacks, and dispatched to a variety of international destinations."

Well, you could say that. However, the youngsters I am talking about have no jobs to be plucked from. And that is the most dreadful waste of all.

THE TIMES

## Saudis seek to offset British Tornado deal

From A Correspondent, Riyadh

Mr George Younger, the Defence Secretary, met Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, his Saudi counterpart, yesterday to discuss Saudi proposals for British investment to offset the £5 billion Tornado fighter deal.

The investment programme would be similar to that imposed on a consortium of companies led by Boeing. The consortium had to invest 35 per cent of a \$1.2 billion contract to provide ground control for the airborne warning and control system (Awacs) jets sold to the Saudis by the Americans.

The difference is that the

US offset programme was stipulated before contracts were signed with private companies. No such prior agreement was reached before the Tornado deal was signed.

Mr Younger is expected to meet King Fahd and other important Saudi officials during his three-day visit, which may lead to another arms deal if a \$357 million (about £238 million) air-to-air and air-to-ship missile package fails to clear the US Congress. The Saudis may again look to Britain to fill the gap as they did when they bought the Tornados instead of the American-built F15 fighters they originally wanted.

SCOTSMAN

### £5 BN. ARMS DEAL

Mr George Younger, Defence Secretary, was in Saudi Arabia yesterday to iron out details of the £5 billion arms deal signed last year. The deal — Britain's biggest export order — is for 132 aircraft including 72 Tornados, support equipment and spares.

THE GUARDIAN

## UK clinches Saudi deal

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia is considering buying weapons for its navy from Britain, after concluding a big aircraft deal with London, the defence minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, said yesterday.

"We are discussing the possibility of purchasing arms for the navy from friendly countries including Britain," the official Saudi Press Agency quoted him as saying after talks with the British defence secretary George Younger. Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz gave no details of the navy's requirements, but said that Riyadh had concluded final agreement on a £5 billion purchase of British military aircraft.

The deal, Britain's biggest export sale, includes 72 Tornado fighters, 30 Hawk trainers, and 30 PC Orion surveillance aircraft plus missiles, training, technical support and spares.

Prince Sultan said that some of the Tornado fighters had arrived in the kingdom and were due to take part in an air show today.

Saudi Arabia invited Mr Younger here to discuss final details of the deal, including a requirement under the Saudi "offset programme" that 35 per cent of the value of the contract be re-invested in Saudi Arabia.—Reuter.

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