

E11/1/25

Section 40

31st May, 1985

Section 40

Sec. AS.2a,  
Room Section 40  
Ministry of Defence,  
Main Building,  
London SW1A 2HB

Dear

Section 40

Thank you for your letter of 15 May, replying to mine to Section 40 of 25 February.

I am glad of your assurance that unidentified events in British airspace and territory are properly evaluated by the MOD for their possible Defence significance. It is no more than I would have expected from former colleagues !

I gather from the duty desk (which I telephoned recently during 'silent' hours) and also from the Flying Complaints Flight at Rudloe Manor that a standard form is currently in use for noting data reported by the public, the civil police and the CAA. As one of those who are at present attempting to make some scientific evaluation of a surprisingly persistent and not readily explicable phenomenon, I was interested to discover that the MOD and the Flying Complaints Flight have identified several factors which may be relevant in evaluating reports, eg. the proximity of high-voltage lines or bodies of still water in the area of a reported sighting. It would be of great value to myself and scientific colleagues if I might have a copy of the standard report-form which is currently in use in Whitehall and at the FCF. I assume that there can be no security objection to our having it in view of your assurance that no Defence significance has ever been detected in any sighting reported to Defence authorities. It would, on the other hand, be of interest to those who are looking at the matter from a scientific standpoint lest there is any potential factor identified by MOD experts which we may possibly have overlooked.

I assume from your recent re-organisation that the functions of both the former DS8 and the former S4(Air) have been absorbed into the new AS.2. If so, I congratulate you on a desirable piece of tidying-up ! The dividing line between the two former Divisions was never easy to administer. My own Division, DS8 (anyway during my term as Head of DS8 from early 1969 to late 1972) saw only such cases as appeared to have a possible air defence significance; and we doubtless missed many others. Nonetheless, the AD 'cases' were often interesting. I have been a little disappointed to see from the Answers to PQs in recent years that the MOD disclaims having kept on record any material earlier than (as I recall) 1962 or so. Recent enquiries to the Public Records Office suggest that this is not, in fact, quite accurate: I have by me two written reports - freely available from the PRO - which are dated 1950 and 1952, both by serving officers and both recording events in British airspace which closely resemble the mass of material which continues to be reported, and which we, with a scientific interest, cannot altogether dismiss.

I also recall having been shown, during 1970, during my term as Head of DS8, some interesting gun-camera 'clips' which suggested the existence of a puzzling phenomenon observed by RAF pilots (notably during the 'flap' at Bentwaters/Lakenheath in 1956). I hope these have not been thrown away. Now that we have had