

# British aristocrat fears UFO cover-up

LONDON (AP) — Whatever the truth about unidentified flying objects, Britons are seeing more of them, the House of Lords learned in a close encounter between a government peer and an aristocratic UFO buff.

The Earl of Clancarty, 70, founder of a worldwide UFO movement, Contact International, said he had logged more than 2,000 press reports last year of British sightings.

Lord Clancarty is also a top member of the Ancient Astronaut Society, which theorizes that creatures from other planets visited the earth in spacecraft in ancient times, and is evidently suspicious of a cover-up by the Conservative government. He wanted to know what the military was doing about the UFO sightings.

Viscount Long, replying Thursday for the government, said there had been a total of 600 UFO reports up from only 150 in 1978, and the Defense Ministry checked them all out — but only to make sure they weren't enemy aircraft.

"All UFO reports are passed to operations staff to examine them purely for their possible defense implications. For example, a Soviet aircraft which might approach our defense system," said Viscount Long.

Several other peers joined in. What happened to the reports? asked Lord Hill-Norton, a former head of the Royal Navy.

Since 1967 the Defense Ministry has filed them all away, but before that they were thrown away after five years as being of "no interest," said Viscount Long.

"Who was it who decided they were of no interest?" persisted Lord Hill-Norton.

"I thought you were going to say the Royal Navy had seen the Loch Ness monster many times," said Viscount Long.

Addressing himself to Lord Clancarty, he added: "If the noble Lord is suspicious the Ministry of Defense is covering up in any way, I can assure you there is no reason why they should."

Royal Air Force spokeswoman Sarah Cullum told The Associated Press later: "All of the incidents reported to us were looked at to see whether they constituted a threat. By threat we don't mean Martians, because we don't consider them a threat."

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