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Odd, intriguing and alarming UFO files released

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US pilot was ordered to fire missiles at blip on screen

MoD makes papers public after enthusiasts' pleas

[Ian Sample](#), science correspondent

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On a cloudy night in Kent, Milton Torres, a US air force fighter pilot based at RAF Manston, was scrambled to intercept a UFO. Ordered to go full throttle towards East Anglia, within minutes he was 15 miles from a mysterious blip that looked as big as a B-52 bomber on his screen. He was ordered to fire a full salvo of 24 missiles, but before he could, the object vanished.

Details about the incident, on May 20, 1957, appear among 19 files released by the Ministry of Defence and [newly revealed by the National Archives](#). It is the second tranche of UFO files to be made public since a handful were released in May.

The reports range from the bizarre to the intriguing. There is the Alitalia pilot who shouted to his co-pilot to "look out" as a brown, missile-shaped object shot past the cockpit, and a sketchy self-portrait of a pointy-eared woman in a gown, who told the MoD she had crashlanded on Earth during the second world war, having left her home planet of warrior women.

The [MoD released the files](#), covering 1986 to 1992, after a flood of requests from enthusiasts and conspiracy theorists who are convinced the truth is out there.

Details of the East Anglia event only emerged after Torres, who was warned never to mention it, did discuss it with a military historian at a reunion at RAF Manston in 1988. The MoD, whose policy until 1967 was to destroy UFO files every five years, had no data on the event.

An account from Torres, now 77 and living in Florida, describes his anxiety at failing to fire after struggling to read codes on a scrap of paper in the cockpit of his F-86D plane. "It was totally black and the lights were down for night flying. I used my flashlight, still trying to fly and watch my radar. To put it quite candidly, I felt very much like a one-legged man in an ass-kicking contest," he said.

David Clarke, a UFO expert at Sheffield Hallam University, said: "If the UFO had turned out to be a civil aircraft that had strayed off its course, it could have been a major international incident, and yet it's been airbrushed out of history."

He believed the pilot was a guinea pig in a test of the Palladium system, developed by the US to make "phantom" aircraft appear on Soviet radars.

Another incident in Britain, in April 1991, recorded a captain of an Alitalia airliner, flying at an altitude of more than four miles on route to Heathrow from Milan, seeing a missile-like object. At first this was labelled "cruise missile?" but it was quickly found not to

be a military weapon. There were a number of similar sightings within the next six months. Four passengers on a Dan Air Boeing 737 spotted a "wingless projectile" flying under their plane.

Other papers reveal the MoD's sensitivity to military helicopters taking pictures of crop circles, which they feared would undermine the line that the government had no interest in the phenomenon.

Documents also relate how a Tina Turner concert triggered a spate of UFO sightings in London in 1989, and how one person was "contacted by aliens" descended from "legendary feathered serpents from ancient Peru".

Clarke said the papers showed the government could not conceal anything and that people were not going to find "that elusive bit of evidence that proves we're being visited by aliens".

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