

Scene from the movie "Independence Day." Credit: 20th Century Fox

The British Ministry of Defense released 4,000 pages of documents detailing hundreds of UFO sightings between 1981 and 1996. A summary of the documents by UFO expert David Clarke comes as no surprise to scientists and skeptics: many of the sightings coincide with the release of popular sci-fi movies or television shows.

609 UFO sightings in 1996, compared with 117 in 1995 correspond with the rise in popularity of the "X Files" television show and the release of the alien blockbuster film "Independence Day." "Obviously, films and TV programs raise public awareness of UFOs and it's fascinating to see how that appears to lead more people to report what they see to the authorities," Clarke said.

The documents released include sightings reported by police officers and fighter pilots as well as young children, the [Daily Mail](#) reported Monday. 90% of the sightings could be explained by mundane objects such as bright stars and planets, meteors, artificial satellites and airship advertising.

The other 10% were listed as "unexplained," mainly because of insufficient information.

For an excellent overview of what really happened in one of the most famous UFO stories of all, the 1947 Roswell, New Mexico alien spaceship crash, listen to [Brian Dunning's 365 Days of Astronomy](#) podcast on the subject.

Source: [Reuters](#), [UPI](#)

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