

Well may you think we investigate UFOs, sir, but ...

LONDON: The British Ministry of Defence went to extraordinary lengths to cover up its true involvement in investigating UFOs, according to secret documents revealed under freedom of information laws.

The files show officials tried to expunge information from documents released to the Public Records Office under the 30-year

rule that would have revealed the extent of the ministry's interest in UFO sightings. In particular, the ministry wanted to cover up the operation of a unit dedicated to UFO investigations.

Conspiracy theorists have likened the unit, called DI55, to a sort of "Men in Black" agency for defending the Earth against invasion, but the released docu-

ments show this is not the case. One 1995 memo from DI55 to the ministry's public "UFO desk" said: "I have several books at home that describe our supposed role of 'defender of the Earth against the alien menace' - it is light years from the truth."

The files were made public following freedom-of-information requests by David

Clarke, a lecturer in journalism at Sheffield Hallam University, and his colleague Andy Roberts.

The trail begins with a 1976 request from a UFO fan for access to records on sightings. A note from the UFO desk to the head of security shows officials intended to deny him access because the files contained confidential information of "very little value to a

serious scientific investigator". The ministry said the public did not need to know investigators' methods. "It is undesirable that even a hint of this should become public, and we are currently consulting the [Air Historical Branch] on ways of expurgating the official records against the time when they qualify for disclosure."

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Sydney Morning Herald 27 September 2006 John Palazzi Sydney Australia