

UFO films, TV spark rise in sightings

Michael Evans
London

SIGHTINGS of unidentified flying objects increase when public interest is aroused by films and television programs about aliens, newly declassified files indicate.

There was a surge of UFO reports in 1996 when the Hollywood film *Independence Day* was released and the television series *The X Files* was popular.

Ministry of Defence files released by the National Archives show there were 609 sightings in 1996, compared with 117 in 1995.

In one case in 1995, two men

told police in Staffordshire that an alien figure with a lemon-shaped head had come out of a spaceship they had seen that was four houses high and hovering over a field, telling them: "We want you. Come with us." The men gave police a drawing of the craft resembling a flying saucer. The files also contained drawings of other supposed sightings.

A US spy plane may have been behind other allegations made in 1993. More than 70 people, including police and military personnel, reported UFOs in Devon, Cornwall, south Wales and Shropshire early on March 31.

Many described a large, low-flying object that made a humming sound.

A note to Anthony Bagnall, then the assistant chief of air staff, from Nick Pope, head of the MoD's UFO desk, said there was evidence of an unidentified craft evading British defences.

He said he would not normally concern Sir Anthony with UFO sightings but continued: "You may wish to be aware of a recent particularly unusual incidence of UFO sightings over the UK, involving descriptions that match some of the reported characterisations of the so-called Aurora."

The Aurora was the name given to a US plane supposedly developed in secret black programs in the 1980s that was allegedly capable of hypersonic flight, five times faster than the speed of sound.

Mr Pope said yesterday: "There are some fascinating cases here (in the released files) and while we could explain 95 per cent of the sightings, the rest were a genuine mystery. We were particularly concerned by near-misses with aircraft and cases where UFOs were seen close to military bases."

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John Parkizzi Sydney Australia