

Alien nation as Britain reveals its X-files

THE opening of the latest batch of Britain's "X-files" reveals that in 1997 the Royal Air Force mounted an inquiry into reports of a large, triangular "humming" object in the sky above the home of the home secretary.

The Ministry of Defence files reveal that six members of the public, including two fire-fighters, said the UFO hovered for several minutes above a field near the town of Folkestone in Kent before shooting off in a flash of light.

Sophie Wadleigh, 25, told the *Folkestone Herald*: "It all felt really odd and I heard this humming noise. As I looked across the field I saw a large



Churchill ... demanded a report.

triangular-shaped flying craft hovering about 300 feet [91 metres] off the ground."

The file includes a report from Chris Rolfe, of the East Kent UFO monitoring group, which says he

believes the UFO could have been looking for the then home secretary, Michael Howard.

The inquiry into the sighting, on March 8, 1997, concluded there was no evidence of any "unauthorised incursion of the UK air defence region on that date", nor "any unusual or unauthorised air activity, civil or military".

The incident is one of thousands of reports of what are officially known as "unexplained aerial sightings" in the latest batch of MoD files released yesterday. The files span 6000 pages and cover the period 1994 to 2000.

They were released alongside another file dating to 1952 which

showed the prime minister, Winston Churchill, requesting a briefing on UFOs from his secretary of state for air.

"What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to? What can it mean? What is the truth? Let me have a report at your convenience," he wrote.

In the reply, Churchill was told alleged UFO sightings could be explained by earthly phenomena such as optical illusions, mistaken identification of planes, birds and balloons and hoaxes.

The more recent files detailed reams of other UFO spottings.

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Agence France-Presse

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