

information on their work. Since its creation in 1964, the British Ministry of Defence (MOD) has had a UFO study unit, whose [designator] abbreviation Sec(AS)2a stands for Department 2a of the Secretariat (Air Staff) division. Its activity was recently described by Nick Pope, who was its head from 1991 to 1994, in a book written in a very lively style, *Open Skies, Closed Minds*.

This department receives telephone calls or letters from witnesses, but more generally reports prepared from the depositions of these witnesses taken at police stations, airports or RAF bases. It conducts classic investigations if it deems them useful. They then question radar stations or weather stations, the RAF space object surveillance base at Flyingdales, other RAF bases, the Greenwich Observatory, etc. Its unique mission is to determine whether the reports are of interest for defense purposes ("area of defence significance").

Nick Pope, who is currently a MOD career employee, has broken new ground in comparison with his predecessors. He has given interviews to the press and participated in television programs.

He has cooperated with the ufological associations, giving their address and phone number to witnesses who have written to him. In his letters of response he admitted that a small proportion of UFO sightings defied explanation and that the MOD was keeping its mind open regarding these. His predecessors wrote: "*If we had sufficient data, all of the cases could undoubtedly be explained.*" In his book, Nick Pope evokes various hypotheses to explain certain unidentified cases that were the subject of credible and detailed reports. He strongly favors the extraterrestrial hypothesis and expresses the desire that his ministry take seriously the potential threat that UFOs represent in his eyes.

Is there a department that is further developed than his (where he is alone) in the Ministry of Defence that would conduct secret studies on the UFO phenomenon? His statements on the subject are contradictory (pp. 129 and 181). Ralph Noyes, who was one of Nick Pope's predecessors from 1969 to 1972 and ended his career at MOD in 1977 as Undersecretary of State for Defence, considers the existence of such a department likely. Lord Hill-Norton, Admiral of the Fleet, who was Chief of Defence Staff from 1971 to 1973, shares this opinion. This information is found in a book the foreword to which was written by Lord Hill-Norton himself (*Above Top Secret*, by Timothy Good). Admiral Hill-Norton was among some thirty lords active in a House of Lords group studying UFOs in the 1980s. If this secret study department does exist, it can be presumed that it works in collaboration with the United States (*Above Top Secret*, pp. 48-49).

9.3 Organization of the Research in Russia

The Academy of Sciences of the USSR has conducted studies on UFOs since 1979 at least. During that time, Vladimir Migouline, a member of this academy, expressed his opinion in *La Recherche* regarding the sightings made in the Soviet Union of luminous phenomena and unusual objects: "*The vast majority of these sightings correspond to real phenomena just about the same as those sighted in other countries. But there is no indisputable proof that some of them involve technological manifestations of a highly developed civilization. It is also necessary to try to connect them with atmospheric phenomena,*" he said.

This is the goal that his assistant Platov aimed for in a work published in 1992, *UFOs and Modern Science*. At that time, Migouline and Platov, heads of the expert's group on abnormal phenomena in the Academy of Sciences, proposed a scientific and technical