

CNN LARRY KING LIVE

UK Government Releases UFO Files

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KING: From Seacrest to spaceships. We'll look at Britain's top secret UFO files after the break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Welcome back.

Britain's Ministry of Defense has just released secret UFO files on sightings dating from 1978 through 1987. They include live, eyewitness accounts and the government's response. More files dating from the 1950s and recent events will be released over the next four years.

Joining us to discuss this in London is Nick Pope. He ran the British government's UFO project at the Ministry of Defense from 1985 to 2006.

Also in London is Bob Rosamond, chairman of the British UFO Research Association.

In Spokane, Washington, Peter Davenport, director National UFO Reporting Center.

And in Washington, Lieutenant Colonel Chuck Halt, retired from the Air force. He sited a UFO in 1980 while he was deputy base commander at Brent Waters Woodbridge Base in Suffolk, England.

Nick, what do you make of all of this? What's in these files?

NICK POPE, FORMER OFFICIAL, UK MINISTRY OF DEFENSE: Well, this is extremely exciting news here in the UK. It is a massive story. What we've seen is the first step in a three to four-year program to release the government's entire archive of UFO files. Now, some of the material in there and what we have got just in this first batch of about 2,00 pages of documentation -- some of it's quite mundane.

But in amongst those reports, we have got some absolutely fascinating cases. A lot of UFOs seen by police officers. We have got some cases where pilots have seen UFO. And we have got a really amazing case where a UFO was tracked on military radar traveling 10 nautical miles in 12 seconds.

KING: Bob, why did the government release these files? The French government, I know, they released some documents last year. Governments have always kept it secret, the United States included. Why now do you think now, Bob?

BOB ROSAMOND, CHAIRMAN, BRITISH UFO RESEARCH ASSN.: I don't really know. Perhaps from a cynical point of view, it is a good PR exercise. It's the Ministry's opportunity of showing the world, hey, we have got nothing to hide. Here's all of our files on UFOs. The motive, the reason could be anything, to be honest. Why now, I really don't know.

KING: Peter Davenport, will this tend to put naysayers away?

PETER DAVENPORT, UFO EXPERT: It's still heresy evidence. I find it interesting that the release follows hot on the heels of the Vatican just yesterday, I think it was, stating that they felt it was OK to believe in aliens and UFOs and life elsewhere in our galaxy. This is an interesting one-two punch.

KING: Lieutenant Chuck Halt, the only one of our panel, I guess, who's seen one. What do you make of it?

CHUCK HALT, RETIRED UNITED STATES AIR FORCE: I find it quite puzzling. Why is this being spread over four years? It doesn't really make sense to me, unless the volume is so great it takes that long to preview it.

KING: What do you think, Nick? Why four years?

POPE: Well, yes, that's the point. Under the Freedom of Information act -- and by the way, that's one of the reasons why the Ministry of Defense have decided to release this. The MOD get more FOI requests on UFOs than any other subject. So the administrative burden of dealing with that has been so big that the government decided it's better to just take all the files and put them in the National Archives, so that in future people can be referred there.

But, of course, there are all sorts of exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act. Personal information of witnesses, classified information such as, for example, the capabilities of military radar systems. And some poor desk officer has to go through all of this material -- and there are tens of thousands of pages of this. I mean, it is an absolutely massive job. So we're going to get maybe half of a dozen files every month for the next three or four years.

I mean, I know it's taking a long time. But of course, as you would expect in the Ministry of Defense, there are all sorts of competing priorities.

KING: Bob Rosamond, has the British UFO Research Association had many, many, many reports over the years about sightings?

ROSAMOND: We have a substantial archive, actually. We have somewhere in the region of 12,000 to 15,000 case files going back as far as 1925. So it's quite a substantial amount of documentation, quite possibly more than the Ministry itself has.

KING: Peter, why has this been in the United States and prior to this in Great Britain some dark secret? Why won't the United States release anything it knows?

DAVENPORT: Yes, a lot of people conjecture on that, Larry. None of us even serious-minded UFO investigators knows the answer to that question. But it is an intriguing question. Of course, Belgium and Chile and France and now England, to a degree the Soviet Union, and now Russia have all to one degree or another opened their files on this subject.

I would look to the United States government now to do the same. And what I would like to see somebody senior in the U.S. government, in the military and intelligence communities, say to its people, if you know anything about the UFO phenomenon, you are free to talk to the press and to the American public. That would solve the problem in a hurry.

KING: Lieutenant Colonel Chuck Halt retired from the Air Force, sighted a UFO in 1980. We'll hear one of his tapes when we come back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Colonel Halt, as you know, made an on the scene sighting when he was a lieutenant colonel in service in the United States. He made a tape while he was investigating the scene. Let's listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HALT: There was no doubt about it, there's some type of strange flashing red light here.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I saw a yellow tangent in two.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Weird.

HALT: It appears to be making movement a little bit this way. It's brighter than it has been. It's coming this way.

It is definitely coming this way.

Now we've an object about ten degrees directly south, ten degrees off the horizon.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: One's moving away from us.

It's moving out fast.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: Colonel halt, how were you treated by the powers that be after this report was filed?

HALT: Well, I was treated with respect, but everybody kept me at arm's length. Nobody wanted to get too close or too deeply involved.

KING: Why?

WHY: Well, let's face it, there's a stigma that comes with this. Very few people are willing to speak out and tell the truth. It's just too awkward, you're criticized.

KING: Do you think the British government's actions might lead to somebody in the United States?

HALT: I would certainly hope so, but the situation here is a little different. Keep in mind, there are at least half a dozen or more intelligence agencies that have their own -- how should I say -- files, programs, whatever. They share when convenient. They trade when convenient. And they withhold from each other.

KING: Do you look in the sky a lot?

HALT: Do I look in the sky a lot?

KING: Yes, now.

HALT: No, no. I don't belong to any organization or any magazine or whatever.

KING: But you are convinced you saw something that wasn't an airplane.

HALT: I definitely saw something that can't be explained. Excuse me.

KING: Nick Pope, give me an example of a report you have seen in Great Britain.

POPE: Well, we had -- this is a report that's been in the public domain for a while, but just to show the sorts of spectacular cases we do get, we had a sighting from a commercial airline pilot who saw two UFOs estimated as being almost a mile long. And this thing was actually tracked on radar. There was a primary radar return.

Then a few years before that, we had a case with a UFO flying over two military bases in England, seen by numerous police and military witnesses. One of the Air Force officers described this thing as vast triangular-shape, moving from a virtual hover to a speed several times that of a fast jet, just in seconds. And this is an Air Force officer with eight years' experience talking to me.

KING: We have a question from a caller in Mobile, Alabama. Hello.

CALLER: Hi, Larry.

KING: Hi. CALLER: I was wondering if there's any data in the files relating to alien life forms or is it all the data strictly regarding unidentified flying objects?

KING: Good question. Bob Rosamond, in your files, do you have anything relating to alien forms?

ROSAMOND: In our files, yes. Before we have vast number of files with reports of encounters of alleged alien beings, entities and alleged abduction experiences.

KING: Do you believe them?

ROSAMOND: Pardon?

KING: Do you believe them?

ROSAMOND: Before our strictly objective organization, it's not about belief. It's where the facts and the evidence takes you.

KING: Peter, do you think the events in Great Britain will open up things in other places?

DAVENPORT: It's an encouraging sign, Larry. It may suggest that there's a movement afoot to mete out information piecemeal, maybe to prepare us for something that the government knows and would like to have us know more about. But that's pure conjecture. We have been saying the same thing for now well on 61 years that it's just around the corner. So it's an encouraging note, I would say, but I'll wait to see if the U.S. government responds to this at all. It will be interest to see what the Vatican has to say about it, too.

KING: Do you think their reasons would be national security?

DAVENPORT: It's hard to know. That's what everybody gravitates to. Everybody says, well the government is not feeding this information to the American public because they're afraid we'd panic. That doesn't make an ounce of sense to me, frankly. I don't think we would panic. If you look at cartoons every Saturday morning, to my eye about 90 percent of them have to do with alien life and spaceships and so on and so forth. There may be some other reason they're doing that.

KING: More on the UFO files. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back. Chuck Halt, do you think we'll ever know the whole story?

HALT: I rather doubt it. I think we have gone too far down the road and we're not going to get the story.

KING: So we'll -- we'll never know it?

HALT: I won't say never know it. If something strange lands in Times Square and the White House lawn, I suspect we'll find out something.

KING: That would be nice. Nick Pope, we hear that the Pope's astronomer said today that alien beings are a product of god's creation. Did that surprise you? Is that news?

POPE: Yes, it is made quite an impact over here in the UK. I mean, I welcome statements like that and I think it is interesting that the two things have happened so close together. I mean, just picking up on the idea of cover-ups and conspiracies, I should say that if people are expecting in these ministry of defense files to find definitive proof of extra terrestrials, they'll be disappointed. But they can find, I think, whether they're skeptics or believers this -- they'll find things which raise important defense, national security and flight safety issues.

By the way, I should say to anyone who wants to actually look into these files, it's on the UK National Archives Web site, which is NationalArchives.gov.uk/UFOS. They have set up a dedicated Web site for this. And this whole subject, I think, this move, I greatly welcome this move. It's going to propel this subject really into the mainstream.

KING: Want to repeat that Web site again, Nick?

POPE: It's NationalArchives.Gov.Uk/UFOS.

KING: Bob, when you get reports, what do you do with, you just file them? Look into them? What do you do?

ROSAMOND: No, we conduct a thorough investigation. Initially, we receive e-mail communication, sometimes a phone call from a witness with an experience or a sighting. We get them to file an initial report, which gives us solid data work from. And from there, we go into a detailed investigation, uncovering as many possible stones to get to the answer.

KING: Peter, same thing I asked Chuck. Do you think we'll ever know the whole story?

DAVENPORT: I think we will, Larry. In fact, I published an article about four years ago with regard to the use of passive radar for detecting UFOs. It is the answer to resolving the UFO issue. As soon as we get one of those system built, I think we'll be in a very good position to take the monopoly away from the U.S. government on UFO information. And if people would like to share their sighting reports with the National UFO Reporting Center, I'd invite to them to write out just a paragraph or two describing their sighting of a suspected UFO and submit it at UFOCenter.com.

We're a service organization to the American people. We provide a place for them to call. And when they send us information, we post it publicly, so everybody may know what information we've received. Anonymously, of course.

KING: Chuck Halt, you mentioned landing in Time Square. I guess it might have to take that that for it to happen. If it does happen, we'll have it on first, OK, Chuck? And you'll be on with us that night.

HALT: Sounds great to me, Larry.

KING: In fact, we'll fly you to Times Square to interview the first alien landing there.

HALT: Great.

KING: And fly in the Pope's astronomer, too. Thank you all very much for enlightening segments on this extraordinary story out of London today.

A friend of mine and this show died today. Warren Callen, a public relations giant and an all around terrific guy. He represented some of the biggest names in the business, Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball, John Wayne, just a few of his clients. Our condolences and best wishes to the Callen family. We'll never see his likes again.

Not too late to participate in our quick vote; who will be the next "American Idol," David C or the other David? Go to CNN.com/larryking and tell us. And tomorrow, we'll be "Dancing with the Stars." Glen, Bruno and Carrie Ann will be here, and the finalists too. Who will waltz away with the prize? LARRY KING LIVE Friday.

Now, we'll tango over to Anderson Cooper and "A.C. 360" -- Anderson, the floor is yours.