



# Ministry of Defence

Air Command Secretariat  
Spitfire Block  
Headquarters Air Command  
Royal Air Force  
High Wycombe  
Buckinghamshire  
HP14 4UE

Ref. 2016/5052

[REDACTED]

20 May 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your e-mail of 10 May asking for information about a Search and Rescue incident and Tornado aircraft being scrambled in March 1997.

You requested the following information:

*"all information pertaining to a search and rescue incident carried out by the Royal Air Force on March 24th and 25th 1997 in the area of Howden Moor, Strines and Peak District.*

*The incident started at approx 2215 hours on 24th March 1997 when numerous public witnesses reported to the local police of the area, that a light aircraft had crashed on the moors. This was well documented in the press at the time. I am particularly interested in the RAF decision to scramble Tornado fighter jets from 2100 hours onwards on 24th March 1997 to pursue and unidentified aircraft which proceeded to crash on Mangary Hill on Howden Moor at approx 2225 hours that's evening. I would like all files relating to his to be included."*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

Our records indicate that on 24 March 1997 an RAF Sea King helicopter from "E" Flight 202 Squadron was scrambled to search for a possible missing light aircraft after reports of an explosion in the Peak District. Searches took place between 23:25 and 02:55 on the night of 24/25 March and between 08:15 and 12:10 on 25 March. Nothing was found.

We can find no record of Tornado aircraft being "*scrambled*" to intercept an unidentified aircraft on 24/25 March 1997.

However, under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) of the Act, you might wish to note that the events of that evening were the subject of a number of Parliamentary Questions. In particular you may wish to note the response to a Parliamentary Question from Helen Jackson MP on 7 April 1998. A link to the response can be found below:

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/vo980407/text/80407w23.htm#80407w23.html\\_sbhd3](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/vo980407/text/80407w23.htm#80407w23.html_sbhd3)

Additionally, the events of that evening became the subject of interest to ufologists and it is therefore possible that information relating to them may be found in the MOD's UFO files from that period. They have been transferred to The National Archives and are available to the public via their website at the following link:

[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/search/search\\_results.aspx?Page=1&QueryText=ufo&SelectedDatabases=BOOKSHOP%7cRESEARCHGUIDES%7cWEBSITE](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/search/search_results.aspx?Page=1&QueryText=ufo&SelectedDatabases=BOOKSHOP%7cRESEARCHGUIDES%7cWEBSITE)

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 2nd Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

  
Air DRes Sec 3a1