

UFO Declassification - The Spanish Model

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Abstract - Since 1992 to 1999, all UFO records held by the Spanish Air Force which were withheld from public consultation have been declassified. Now, documents formerly classified as secret are part of the public domain: 84 files containing near 2,000 pages of text which describe 122 different UFO events occurred in the period 1962-1995. The author's intervention proved instrumental in the generation of this historical declassification process. A collaboration offer from the author was accepted by the Intelligence unit in charge. It allowed the author to stay very close to the development of the process. From this unique position, the author was basically able to (a) confirm that full contents of the archives were totally released, (b) accelerate the speed of the file processing in various times, (c) manage the liberation of several confidential papers and protocols related to past military handling of UFO information, and (d) successfully achieve through timely proposals that the Air Force produced a search for missing UFO data, which took place in three different occasions, giving rise to an improvement in quantity and quality of the files. After a background introduction, the most representative dates in the official UFO declassification process are reviewed, the major achievements from the civilian cooperation are exposed, and a basic statistical overview of released UFO sightings is presented.

Keywords: declassification - civilian cooperation with the military - history - Spanish Air Force - case statistics - UFO archives - UFOs *versus* IFOs

Introduction

As Spanish ufologists know well, the outstanding topic in local ufology in the nineties has a distinct name: the UFO declassification process 1992-1999. It was the decision made by the Joint Chiefs of the Staffs, April 14, 1992 to green-light the access of UFO documents for the public. Those documents, a series of case files dating back to 1962, had been resting in peace in the archives of the Air Staff, Air Force Headquarters in Madrid, under the custody of the Flight Safety/Air Space sections (Operations Division) over the years. No follow-up analysis was ever performed on the case material, no statistics were carried out, not even a simple record list was typed until 1991. Nothing beyond the mere filing of the original investigation reports prepared by the military judges appointed to review the UFO sightings.

A number of recent literature references explain different steps in the process and the history of the involvement of Spanish Air Force in the UFO affair (Ballester Olmos, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b). This paper is concerned with presenting a chronological summary of the declassification process -from its official memoranda-, highlighting the main by-products of the civilian cooperation with the Spanish Air Force, and contributing an updated statistical picture of the UFO documentation disclosed by the military. This paper intends to compliment prior reports prepared by the author. In the cited references, the reader will find case histories, facsimiles of official reports and plenty of additional details on

the process. The aim of the current article is to offer the final balance of a process which has lasted eight years.

The Official UFO Declassification in Spain: Magical Dates

May 22, 1991. Flight Safety Section's *Informative Note* to Chief, Air Force Staff. It recounts the author's contacts with officers of the Air Force during 1990-1991 requesting the liberalization of UFO data. Such contacts prompted the start of the declassification process in Spain. It contains the first catalogue of actual UFO files on record in the Air Staff (55). This memorandum proposes that UFO files are declassified.

July 26, 1991. Second Chief of the Staff's letter No.8690 to the existing Air Commands communicating that all available UFO archives should be submitted to the Madrid Air Force Headquarters for centralization purposes.

December 4, 1991. Air Force Cabinet to Ministry of Defense. At the request of Defense, a report informs the Minister on the classification level of UFO files, the research procedures in force, and the present-day volume of files (60).

January 15, 1992. General Chief of Air Staff (JEMA)'s letter No.061 to General Commander-in-Chief of the Air Operative Command (MOA), assigning MOA the management of all UFO information, including past archives and instructing the development of routines for classifying/declassifying UFO files. (Acronyms in Spanish).

March 9, 1992. General Commander-in-Chief of MOA (CJMOA)'s letter No.164-C enclosing an *Informative Note* on the management of matters concerning UFOs. It includes 3 attachments: (a) documents articulating the Air Force regulations on UFO reports, 1968 to 1985, (b) information requests to the Air Force on UFOs, 1967 to 1991, and (c) draft of IG-40-5, a General Instruction for compulsory fulfilment within the Air Force, representing new operating procedures for the investigation and handling of UFO observations, when officially reported to air authorities. On March 31, 1992 JEMA approved the IG-40-5. On June, this new IG was distributed to all units through official channels.

March 13, 1992. MOA Staff Intelligence's *Informative Note* entitled Proposal for Declassification of Files Concerning Sightings of Strange Phenomena in the National Air Space. It was signed off by MOA's General Commander-in-Chief on April 13, 1992 and by JEMA on April 28, 1992. It included 2 attachments: (a) Spanish military UFO regulations, 1968 to 1985, and (b) a listing of all UFO files arrived and collected by MOA (62).

April 14, 1992. JEMA presents to the Joint Chiefs of the Staffs (JUJEM) a formal proposal to declassify UFO files, based on MOA's prior memo. The JUJEM agrees to downgrade the secrecy level attained by UFO information since 1979 from "classified" to simply "internal reserve". In practice, it provides JEMA the ultimate authority to handle UFO-related information, including the power to declassify.

September 1, 1992. MOA Staff Intelligence's *Informative Note* delivering a proposal of scientific cooperation by the present author on behalf of CEI, the oldest UFO organization in Spain, acting as Director of Investigations. (Author to supervise and coordinate a group of consultants with university qualifications who had agreed to analyze declassified UFO case materials and provide research reports). On November 2, 1992 CJMOA informs JEMA that the best design to materialize the proposed cooperation offer will take the form of a loose agreement (i.e. an informal relationship), as opposed to an official, formal protocol initially suggested by the Air Force legal department.

September 25, 1992. JEMA's signature on declassified file dated August 1962 marks the end of secrecy over UFO files and the commencement of a new era in the treatment of UFO information by the Spanish Ministry of Defense. Declassified files are kept in the General Library, Air Force Headquarters in Madrid where the public may obtain copies.

November 17, 1992. CJMOA's letters No.1251-C to 1255-C are dispatched to Air Commands requiring those further information on UFO sightings. Some responses arrive during this month.

December 23, 1992. CJMOA's letter No. 1355-C to JEMA requesting that papers covering the policy directives on UFOs followed by the Air Force from 1968 to 1992 are revised from "classified" to "limited circulation". JEMA's approval was issued on January 12, 1993. On February 26, 1993, MOA's Commander-in-Chief now proposes to JEMA a full disclosure of all such regulation records when aged 10 years. JEMA agrees on March 23, 1993. The pertinent file was released on December 1996.

July 11, 1994. MOA's teletypes No.705-C to 708-C are submitted to Air Commands as well as to multiple air bases, radar sites, airfields and other Air Force units requesting the search for dozens of specific UFO cases potentially on file at the local level. Replies are collected during July and August. As a consequence of this action, MOA catalogue of files increase from 62 to 78.

May 31, 1998. The two last UFO files are declassified. Absolutely all information known to exist on UFOs in the Spanish Air Force environment is now public domain.

September 14, 1998. As an academic requirement for the 57th course for promotion to General, the declassification responsible officer Staff Lieutenant Colonel Enrique Rocamora presents his paper "El proceso de desclasificación de la documentación acerca de OVNIs en el EA" (The Process of Declassification of Documentation Related to UFOs in the Air Force). It is formed of 20 pages of main text plus 16 attachments. In addition to showing history, precedents and the current declassification process in detail, it also includes position papers on a number of public reactions to the declassification, major UFO cases, etc. This extremely valuable document - containing 296 pages - is classified Confidential, as every other materials generated in the Escuela Superior del Aire (Air Superior College).

April 21, 1999. An ultimate declassified file gathers together four catalogues of the UFO records actually in the possession of the Spanish Air Force which were prepared during 1991 and 1992.

Major Accomplishments of Civilian Cooperation with MOA

The bottom line to the achievement of various modes of informal contribution by the author to the process is trust, confidence, discretion, reputation, and friendship. Any relationship built on that basis allows certain inspiration or influence. From mid-1992 to early 1999 the author developed over 50 face-to-face meetings with the two Intelligence officers charged with the "UFO project", in the course of which dozens of research reports were facilitated in order to complete and complement the official files. Some 200 hours of direct, sincere conversation with the people responsible for sorting out, analyzing and releasing the UFO secret files provided ample room and possibilities for discussing and implementing ideas and initiatives that would have not arisen otherwise. All in all, what was accomplished exceeded what could have been made only through officialdom and bureaucracy.

This section will necessarily overlap partially with the preceding one, yet it aspires to clearly point out in what phases and how the author influenced, assisted or monitor the declassification process from a non-official level. Firstly, the civilian action or initiative is introduced, then the resulting reaction is described and it appears into parenthesis.

* 1990-1991: Placement of declassification concept in the Air Force decision-making pipeline, through numerous visits to the Air Force Public Relations and Flight Safety sections. (As a result, declassification of official UFO archives started September 1992.)

* 1991: Suggestion that UFO archives were consolidated into one unique clearinghouse. (As a result, reports from the various Air Commands were concentrated in the Air Force Staff offices on July 1991- files increased from 55 to 60).

* 1991: Facilitation of samples of UFO questionnaires (USAF and CEI.) (As a result, IG-40-5, the new Spanish Air Force protocol for UFO inquiry, reflects the familiar flavour of typical UFO data collection forms. Gullible writers have misrepresented what this UFO form really means: they have wrongly stated that mere questions devoted, for instance, to UFO occupants, crash remains, or photographs reveals an inner knowledge on UFOs by the Spanish Air Force!)

* 1992-1998: Transmission of research reports for most of actual case files to the Air Force Intelligence unit directly engaged in the declassification process. Many UFO investigators contributed analysis reports to this documentation back-up. (As a result, (a) own Air Force archives were complemented with external analytical input, and (b) occasionally, complementary data or clarifying documents were added to the files being declassified.)

* 1992: Request that certain missing files were searched by the Air Force regional centers. (As a result, MOA distributed official solicitations to all Air Force Commands on November

17, 1992. A few new reports were found and sent to MOA. All new incoming information was duly declassified thereafter.)

* 1992: Request that policy documents on the Air Force doctrine on UFOs were suspended from classification.

(As a result, a "directive" file with documents 1968 to 1985 was made public by 1996.)

* 1994: Request that Air Force bases, radar sites and other military complexes were contacted with lists of UFO events allegedly occurred at their locations or involving their personnel, to look for possible records.

(As a result, MOA sent messages to concerned units on July 11, 1994. Responses produced references to 21 sightings. Finally, MOA's count of original files increased to 78.)

* 1992-1998: Continuing surveillance over the declassification process through periodical meetings with the officers in charge, including on-the-spot inspection of original archives.

(As a result, (a) it was reached the conviction that, beyond any reasonable doubt, both historical and modern-day UFO information accumulated and managed by the Air Force under the "UFO" label has been totally released to the public (i.e., no UFO report is deliberately hidden), and (b) momentum was kept alive, delays were shortened and acceleration was pushed whenever possible, mistakes were noted and corrections were in place sometimes.)

* 1992-1998: A certain quality control was intended to be performed over the official operation of document-release. A special interest was invested in the tracing of forgotten records through the many meetings held with the two lieutenant colonels responsible of the UFO declassification.

(As a result, the author acquired an exhaustive knowledge on historical documents. Several inadvertently concealed items were found and recovered. Among others, a misplaced set of color slides from file 790305, a missing additional report from file 690225, cases from 1967 and 1968 located in the correspondence files, a few pages which had failed to be released in the early stages of the declassification process, the report for radar incident 891205 which was filed on a local unit level, satellite-decay research materials dating back 1965 including a 265-page report by the Battelle Memorial Institute [released to the author on a personal basis as records were not considered UFO information], etc.)

* 1998-1999: The idea of releasing a file containing all case catalogues prepared by the Air Staff and MOA was entered during the latest meetings held with the military.

(As a result, and not without much pressure, on April 1999 the Intelligence officer signature was stamped on such file, one that closed the declassification process. For any bona fide observer, this convincingly proves the reliability of the process and the assertion that the Spanish Air Force has declassified all its records entirely, as the lists of UFO materials historically owned by Defense 100% match with the documents finally produced.)

The Official UFO Files in Figures

The first UFO file was declassified on September 1992. The last case file was censorship-free by May 1998, the last non-case file saw the light by April 1999. It took almost seven years to release all the documentation. It was a slow process because in addition of being a part-time, one-man effort, every file had to be reviewed prior to proposing its declassification. Two Staff lieutenant colonels were in charge of the process: Angel Bastida Freijedo (1992-1993) and Enrique Rocamora Aniorte (1993-1999).

A summary of the statistical balance of the Spanish UFO declassification follows:

Case Files (originals)	78 (comprising 122 different UFO events)
Case Files (bis)	4 (files with supplementary info)
<i>Directive</i> File	1 (assortment of historical regulations)
<i>Catalogue</i> File	<u>1</u> (four Air Force UFO-case listings)
Total	84

The sequence of file releases was as follows:

Year	Files
1992	6
1993	29
1994	8
1995	15
1996	17
1997	6
1998	2
1999	<u>1</u>
Total	84

In total, these 84 files gave shape to a rich collection of 1,953 pages of officially-stamped military documents, radar overlays, witness declarations, etc.

Distribution of 122 UFO events in time

News of UFO observations arrived to the Air Force in the following annual trend:

1962	3 cases	1973	1 cases	1984	3 cases
1963	0	1974	2	1985	5
1964	0	1975	8	1986	6
1965	2	1976	3	1987	0
1966	1	1977	7	1988	1
1967	3	1978	11	1989	3
1968	23	1979	12	1990	0
1969	7	1980	7	1991	2
1970	1	1981	1	1992	1
1971	2	1982	1	1993	3
1972	0	1983	1	1994	0
				1995	2

This table is not suggestive of any special pattern, other than a general decline of UFO reporting over the years, as it becomes evident when computed by periods of 10 years:

Sixties	39 (maximum: year 1968 with 23 events)
Seventies	47 (maximum: year 1979 with 12 events)
Eighties	28 (maximum: year 1986 with 6 events)
Nineties	<u>8</u> (maximum: year 1993 with 3 events)
Total	122

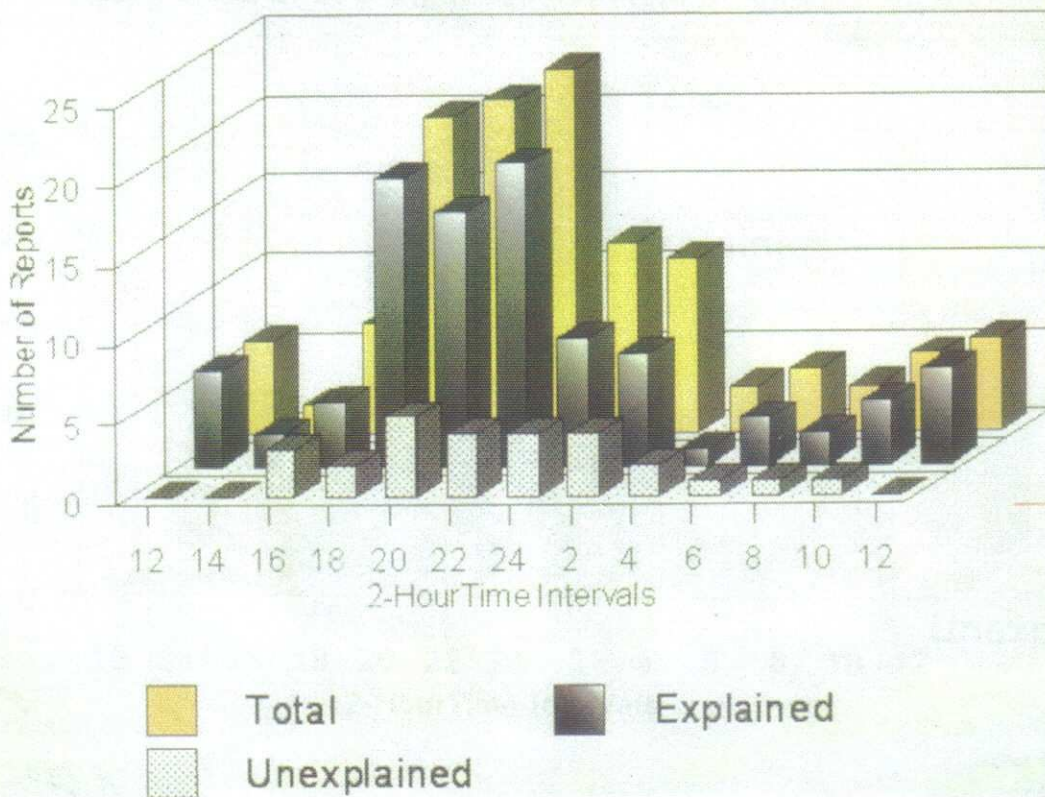
It becomes evident that the magnitude of reporting in peak years decreases exactly by 50% each decade.

As far as the monthly distribution is concerned, the tally of reports by month does not display any significant feature, as peaks show up (chance-wise) in February, March, September, November and December.

Time-of-the day

Reference is made to the following 3-D diagram which depicts the distribution of events by hour. It clearly shows the well-known preference of sightings to happen during night hours. 74% of all reports are scattered from 6 pm to 4 am, which is compatible with objects emitting or reflecting light. When non-explained and explained cases are pictured according to time, we realize that the night-time feature is a common attribute to both sets of data (70% and 75%, respectively.) Basically, UFO and IFO reports seem to follow the same hourly pattern. Because of the minute size of the sample, no further discussion appear to be relevant.

Time Curves of UFO Sightings Reported to the Spanish Air Force



Sightings by type

A generally accepted classification system of UFO sightings (Hynek, 1972) has been applied to UFO cases reported to the Spanish Air Force. A modification was introduced whereby radar cases are splitted between radar-visual (according to Hynek's denomination) and purely radar tracks, i.e. those with no witness confirmation. When comparing 25 unexplained with 97 explained cases, we observe certain unequal structures:

	<u>Unexplained</u>	<u>Explained</u>	<u>Total</u>
	(%)	(%)	(cases)
Nocturnal lights	13	87	68
Daylight discs	0	100	14
Radar-visual	35	65	20
Radar tracks	67	33	9
Close encounters	27	73	11
		Total	122

Over half of the total cases concerns to nocturnal lights, yet there is a total preponderance of such type of sights (distant lights in the night sky) in the group of solved events. This was expected considering the high rate of misperception of short-lived lights in the firmament.

On the diurnal disc class, there are no cases of typical "flying saucers" seen in plain daylight in the set of unknown reports. All such incidents had standard solutions.

Radar-visual incidents represent the highest score in terms of aeronautical strangeness, typically an uncorrelated track matching the sighting of an anomalous object in the space. Although 2 out of 3 of the reports lie in the explained category, there are a few unknown phenomena of this kind. In principle, it could be interpreted as a promise of paydirt in the Air Force UFO stories.

On the contrary, most of the absolute radar cases (i.e. no human witness intervention) are in the unexplained division. Basically it is due to the fact that most records are strictly poor as far as factual data is concerned, few lines -taken from military radar logs- with no follow-up. Being candidates for false echoes in its majority, lack of information prevents from doing a proper analysis. Close encounters score high in strangeness too, and what was said over radar-visual cases applies here as well.

Pilots and UFOs

43 reports refer to anomalous observations from aircraft cockpits, i.e. sightings from commercial airplanes or military jets. Conventional explanations were found on 35 cases (81%), which confirms a fact usually missed even by thorough researchers: pilots err as much as laymen do (Wichman, 1971; Oberg, 1994; Wright, 1995.)

Identified vs Unidentified

Historically, the level or depth of UFO inquiry by the military in Spain was superficial, with a few exceptions. Until 1968, UFO reports produced by the Air authorities had not a common format. Since December 1968, an internal norm regulated the framework for the field investigation of a UFO sighting. These were to be conducted by one Air Force officer acting as military "judge" (the last such investigation took place on 1980). Up to the apparition in 1992 of IG-40-5 (a modern UFO directive for proper UFO investigation), the two key features of most field inquiries were amateurish (i.e. there was no scientific consultancy) and briefness (i.e. lack of interest to dig deeper). Contrary to what one could think, emphasis was never placed in looking for explanations at any rate, whether or not they fitted the occurrences (yes, it happened in some cases). In reality, many crystal clear sightings of giant meteorological balloons, meteors, Venus, or missiles -to name just a few misleading stimuli-, were missed in the original conclusions by the military investigators.

As a civilian UFO researcher, the authors role has been to analyze the new outcoming information, in the perspective provided by own case files, and to attempt determining whether or not there was a raw cause to explain the sighted objects. Innumerable hours of multidisciplinary study have been spent in the review of declassified reports by several researchers who volunteered their time and expertise (with different level of involvement as consultants): engineers M. Borraz, J.A. Fernández, F. Ares de Blas, physicists M. Guasp, J. Ardanuy, W. Smith, astrophysicist J. Armentia, and other experts like J. Ruesga, C. González-Cutre or J. Plana. Specialized assistance and input from both Spanish and foreign scientists, agencies and organizations in the analysis of specific events was also enjoyed. Unless additional information appears, at this time it is considered the process as 100% completed.

It is no surprise (Hendry, 1979) to find out how military cases divide between rare and normal:

Explained events:	97 (cases solved, 80%)
Insufficient info:	16 (cases with not enough data for evaluation, 13%)
UFO:	9 (cases with no clear-cut solution, 7%)
Total	122

In turn, explained events are distributed in five categories, as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
* <i>Aerospatial</i>	37 cases	(38%)
^o aircraft - 14		
^o meteo-balloons - 13		
^o rockets/missiles - 7		
^o space reentries - 3		
* <i>Astronomical</i>	35 cases	(36%)
^o planet Venus - 19		
^o meteors/fireballs - 9		
^o other planets/stars - 6		
^o the Moon - 1		
* <i>Psychological</i>	13 cases	(14%)
^o hoaxes/fabulations - 7		
^o low witness reliability - 5		
^o hallucinations - 1		
* <i>Miscellaneous</i>	8 cases	(8%)
^o false radar echoes - 6		
^o fireworks - 1		
^o lights from refinery - 1		
* <i>Meteorological</i>	4 cases	(4%)
^o reflections - 2		
^o temperature inversions - 1		
^o lenticular clouds - 1		

The most frequent single explanations found are Venus (20%), aircraft (15%) and balloons (14%), a stereotype that seems to be global when old UFO reports are inspected. Regarding the nine unexplained cases, there seems to exist alternative, plausible and conventional scenarios for most of them, as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Alternative Hypothesis</u>
750101	Quintanaortuño	EC2	Fraud
750102	Bárdenas Reales Firing Range	EC1	Helicopter
780714	Mazarrón	EC1	?
780720	Agoncillo Airdrome	NL	Helicopter/airplane
780909	NW Mediterranean Sea	RV	?
790225	SE Gran Canaria	RV	Airplane
790313	SW Mediterranean Sea	RT	False radar echo
800522	South Gran Canaria	RV	False radar echo + Venus
851223	Las Palmas-Arrecife	NL	Airplane

In other words, in the majority of duly documented reports which we have been unable to identify a cause for, the complete sequence of events described might be compatible with the sighting of aircraft, the apparition of radar pseudoimages, or mere inventions. But there are a number of uncertainties on these possible/probable explanations (mostly due to lack of factual data to corroborate the hypotheses), and the analyst is not prepared to provide a reliable diagnosis, therefore these cases are categorized as UFOs.

The last five UFO reports refer to offshore observations, i.e. objects sighted or tracked over the Mediterranean Sea or the Atlantic Ocean (in the vicinity of the Canary Islands), zones with heavy marine and air traffic, both civilian and military.

A simple, working reliability scheme has been designed to divide cases by quality class. Basically it conveys a measurement of the weight of a case in terms of strangeness and documentation. A matrix places the cases into three categories: high, medium and low, as follows:

Strangeness:

High (2)	2	3	4	HIGH	(3-4)
Medium (1)	1	2	3	MEDIUM	(2)
Low (0)	0	1	2	LOW	(0-1)

Documentation:

Low (0)	Medium (1)	High (2)
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If the 25 non-explained cases are grouped by reliability, as defined above, these results are found:

	Low	Medium	High	Total
UFOs	1 11%	2 22%	6 67%	9
Insufficient info	11 69%	5 31%	0 0%	16

As expected, most of cases declared UFO are high-reliability scored (i.e. well documented and strange). Conversely, most of the reports declared poor are low-reliability scored (i.e. hardly documented and not strange).

In no case, however, the level of strangeness of the UFO events was so paramount and extraordinary that it would commit the analyst to think of an *out-of-this-world* (tongue in cheek) hypothesis.

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