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IN JANUARY 1992, the Spanish air force began declassifying its UFO files. The released documents provide tantalizing details of amazing events. Reports of sightings, radar traces, and scramble incidents permeate the files.

The Spanish air force probe into UFOs began as a result of a 1968 Iberian UFO wave. The air ministry published a note in various newspapers requesting citizens to report UFO sightings to the nearest air base. Unlike Project Blue Book in the United States, the Spanish probe didn't have a code name, and it differed from France's GEPAN (see *UFO Chronicle*, October 1994) in that it was not supervised by a scientific commission. In Spain, the inquiry was conducted by an investigative adjutant, who collected witness depositions and other evidence, evaluated the data, and prepared a final report.

The first peek into the Spanish files was published in 1976 by Bilbao journalist J. J. Benitez, who obtained documentation on 12 UFO incidents from a high-ranking general. He discussed these events in his first bestseller, *UFOs: Official Documents of the Spanish Government*. As a result, the Air Ministry tightened its security and all UFO files remained restricted information until 1992.

In the mid-1980s, Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos and Joan Plana of Valencia's Center for Interplanetary Studies began lobbying the Spanish air force to declassify its UFO files for scientific and historical research. Olmos and Plana's work culminated with the de-



Spanish Ufologist Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos

classification policy of 1992. All known UFO files have been released, according to the Aerial Operative Command (Spanish acronym MOA), the air force agency in charge of the declassification process. MOA also promised to search for additional files. More documentation will likely appear as new incidents occur.

In his paper "Monitoring Air Force Intelligence," presented last July at the International MUFON Symposium in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Olmos reported that the released documents consisted of 62 files pertaining to 122 events, including 29 radar cases and 11 Close Encounters. Forty-five incidents involved aircraft (27 commercial airliners and 18 military jets). Of these, 67 percent of the civil airplane incidents and 78 percent of the military aircraft cases were solved. That is, the observed UFOs were ultimately identified. Eleven reports describe scrambles of military jets, launched, for example, in the pursuit of unknown radar targets. In four cases, no successful identification was made.

The Doctor's UFO

Scores of civilians and military personnel in the Canary Is-

UFO CHRONICLE

J. ANTONIO HUNEEUS



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