

## British Navy comes close to fire at UFO's

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A British Navy warship may have come within seconds of opening fire on Unidentified Flying Objects above Merseyside, possibly narrowly avoiding the precipitation of an interstellar war and the extirpation of humanity by testy aliens.

Reports have it that the UFOs - speculated to have been visiting spacecraft from beyond the solar system - were tracked on naval weapons radars.

The revelation comes from the Telegraph, reporting on last week's sightings of "orange, ball-shaped" UFOs cruising above scouse beauty-spots between South Liverpool and Southport. The orange, blob-like flying balls - said by some witnesses to have "dropped fire" at times - were assessed by some to be floating Chinese lanterns, but this theory was widely disparaged among headline-writers in favour of the more crowd-pleasing interstellar visitors hypothesis. Also, Chinese lanterns don't move 3,000 miles/hr.

So far, so what. But then the Telegraph entered the debate with stunning revelations from "an ex-military source" regarding the presence of HMS Daring, a Royal Navy Type 45 destroyer which was docked in Liverpool as the UFOs passed over.

"The guns on the ships are powered by radar," [?] said the source, "but military radar and civilian radar work on different frequencies, so that is probably why the airport said it had not picked anything up."

The Telegraph says that the UFOs were actually "countermeasure flares used to test the radar systems of huge anti-missile guns on the ship". The broadsheet carries on to say: Countermeasure flares are designed to prevent radar-based missile systems locking on to aircraft by providing multiple targets.

The warship, which was docked at Liverpool's cruise liner terminal, is fitted with radar-activated Phalanx guns, which are capable of firing more than 3,000 rounds a minute.

"What happened was a plane flew over at high altitude following the path of the river and dropped the counter measures, which the radar tracked," said the paper's unnamed source.

"That's why people reported seeing them where they did, from Mossley Hill up to Southport."

Actually, while the Type 45 ships are designed to be fitted with Phalanx radar-controlled guns, they don't have them yet, owing to lack of money. The plan is apparently to cannibalise weapons from older ships as they retire. But Daring does have her 4.5-inch main gun, and a pair of ordinary slower-firing 30mm cannon intended for use against pirate dhows and the like.

The 4.5" "Kryten" gun turret (a type of weapon in use since before World war II) can be fired under radar control. It would normally be seen as a poor choice for anti-aircraft work these days, but beggars can't be choosers - the ships' PAAMS missiles, their primary armament, aren't ready yet either.

The "Radar countermeasure flares" notion is plainly poppycock, however. Countermeasure flares are for confusing infrared systems, not radar - though ordinary illumination flares are used occasionally as aiming targets for lighter manually-aimed guns. But you certainly aren't going to start letting off flares over a densely-populated urban area in the UK, so we're staying with the much more credible alien-visitors idea.

So what we've got here is HMS Daring tracking extraterrestrial spacecraft, and possibly almost certainly coming within inches of triggering an interstellar invasion by an ill-timed freak accidental firing mishap. That is, in the unlikely event that

the rather feeble weapons actually fitted to the navy's newest, billion-dollar destroyer were actually able to do any harm.

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