

The Pentagon

Pentagon admits running secret UFO investigation

Washington

The truth is finally out there, after the Pentagon admitted it ran a secret UFO investigation programme for five years until 2012.

The Department of Defense's own "X-Files" operation, known by the less catchy title of the Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program, was closed after a change in funding priorities, it said.

But the remarkable revelation has raised more questions than answers, including whether the programme has been completely shut down, or just covered up further.

While the Pentagon claims it ended five years ago, it said

it continued to take seriously "all threats and potential threats to our people".

The military intelligence official Luis Elizondo, who ran the programme on the fifth floor of the Pentagon's C Ring, according to the New York Times, which broke the story, told the paper it was only the government funding that had dried up. He said activities continued under the direction of his successor, whom he declined to name.

Either way the revelation is likely to provide some satisfaction to UFO enthusiasts, often dismissed as conspiracy theorists.

Nick Pope, who used to run the British government's UFO project, said: "The take-

home message here is that there's probably something out there, but we don't know what it is. It's an extraordinary revelation, not least because it directly contradicts the many specific denials that the US government has issued previously when asked about this subject, and their involvement in it.

"It precisely reflects my own experience of this intriguing but frustrating subject with the British government. Like our US colleagues, we too denied - even to parliament - that we were undertaking secret studies into the UFO phenomenon and consistently downplayed the true extent of our interest and activity at the Ministry of Defence."

The New York Times said the project, parts of which remain classified, received \$22m (£18.7m) each year, hidden away in US Department of Defense (DoD) budgets worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

It said its initial funding came largely at the request of the former Senate leader Harry Reid, the Nevada Democrat long known for his enthusiasm for space phenomena. He was quoted as saying: "I'm not embarrassed or ashamed or sorry I got this thing going. I think it's one of the good things I did in my congressional service. I've done something that no one has done before." (*The Guardian*)



U.S. President Donald Trump shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin during their bilateral meeting at the G20 summit in Hamburg

CIA 'helped stop Russia terror attack'

Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned U.S. President Donald Trump yesterday to thank him for a tip-off that helped prevent a terrorist bomb attack on a cathedral in the Russia city of St Petersburg, the Kremlin said.

Information provided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) allowed Russian law-enforcement agencies to arrest the would-be attackers before they could carry out their plan, the Kremlin said in a statement posted on its Internet site.

A senior Trump administration official confirmed Trump and Putin had spoken yesterday. However, there was no immediate confirmation from U.S. authorities that they had shared the intelligence with Russian officials.

The foiled attack was to have been carried out on Kazansky Cathedral, in Russia's second city of St Petersburg, and on other locations in the city where large numbers of people gather, the Kremlin statement

said. The cathedral is a popular tourist site.

Russian media reported last week that the Federal Security Service had detained followers of the Islamic State group who had been planning a suicide bomb attack on Kazansky Cathedral on Dec. 16.

"The Russian President thanked his American colleague for the information passed on by the Central Intelligence Agency, which helped detain a group of terrorists preparing explosions in St Petersburg's Kazansky Cathedral and other busy sites in the city," the Kremlin said.

The Kremlin did not give any details of the identity of the people detained.

In their phone call, Putin asked Trump to pass on his thanks to the CIA officers who had gathered the intelligence, according to the Kremlin statement.

Putin said Russia would alert U.S. authorities if it received information about any attack being planned on the United States, the Kremlin said. (*Reuters*)

Row over Trump team email trove

Washington

A lawyer for Donald Trump's transition team has alleged special counsel Robert Mueller unlawfully received tens of thousands of emails, in the latest attack on the credibility of the probe into Russian meddling in the US election.

With the ex-FBI director's investigation making inroads into the president's inner circle in recent weeks, Republicans have cast doubt on its impartiality and pressed for a new independent prosecutor to investigate anti-Trump bias.

This in turn has led to speculation that the administration could be

laying the groundwork for firing Mueller.

In a letter to congressional committees, Trump campaign lawyer Kory Langhofer alleged the General Services Administration (GSA) "unlawfully produced" private materials, including privileged communications which Mueller then used as part of his Russia probe.

GSA is the government agency which supports presidential transitions -- the interim period after a new president is elected but before he takes office.

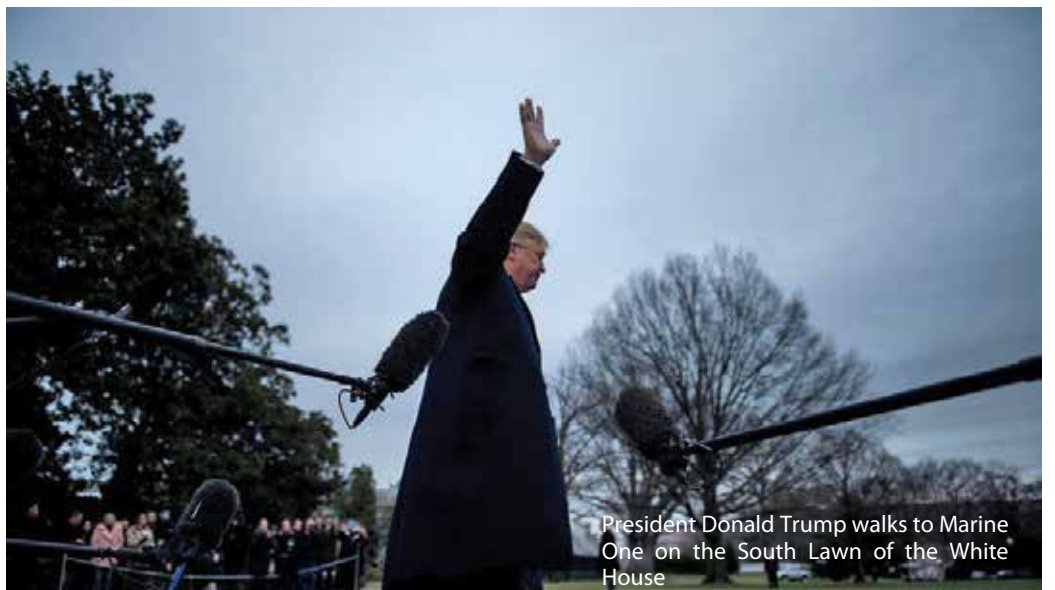
Langhofer wrote that Mueller's office "received from the GSA tens of thousands of emails,

including a very significant volume of privileged material," according to a copy of the letter published by Politico.

The letter added that a warrant should have been obtained for such materials, and said it violated the Presidential Transition Act.

A spokesman for Mueller, Peter Carr, responded on Sunday to the accusations to CNN.

"When we have obtained emails in the course of our ongoing criminal investigation, we have secured either the account owner's consent or appropriate criminal process," CNN quoted him as saying. (*AFP*)



President Donald Trump walks to Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House