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UFOs? Aliens? Area 51 Revealed

Former insiders speak about one of the world's most secretive military bases.

By ABC News

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April 10, 2009 -- It's the centerpiece of virtually every modern [UFO theory](#) and a symbol for everything the government doesn't tell us.

About an hour's bus ride northwest of Las Vegas, Area 51 is one of the most famous military bases in the world, in part because the government barely acknowledges its existence.

According to [UFO lore](#), Area 51, near Nevada State Route 375, otherwise known as "Extraterrestrial Highway," is where the Pentagon has, for decades, stored frozen extraterrestrials and [recovered alien spacecraft](#). In the movie "Independence Day," it was where the heroes led a final attack against alien invaders.

But now that the CIA has started to declassify top secret programs developed at Area 51, former military officers and engineers are beginning to shed some light on the enigmatic airfield and give the UFOlogists some new information to consider.

"No one really knew we existed," said Thornton "T.D." Barnes, 72, a former special-projects engineer at Area 51. "Even our wives didn't know where we were going when we left Monday morning and came back Friday evening."

A specialist in advance radar and Soviet MiG fighter aircraft, Barnes said he was tapped by the CIA to join a "cadre" of experts that

could handle any kind of military project.

As an electronics engineer for NASA, he worked on the country's first rocket plane, the X-15, the Apollo space capsule and lunar lander research vehicles.

At Area 51, he helped develop the A-12 OXCART, a super-secret spy plane built by the Lockheed Corporation. Barnes said his colleagues conducted 2,850 test flights of the A-12 out of Area 51.

Traveling 2,200 mph at 90,000 feet, nothing could catch the planes. But, he said, people would see flashes of light.

That, he thinks, is what started the rumors of an [extraterrestrial safe haven](#).

In some ways, Barnes said, the UFO myths actually helped keep the site's true activities under wraps.

"We considered it to be a bonus," he said. "They made it easier to conceal what we were doing."

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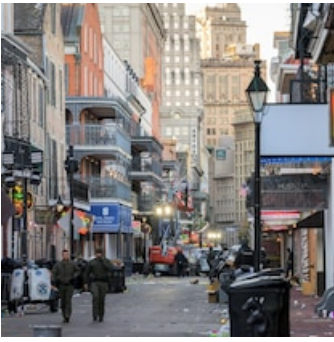
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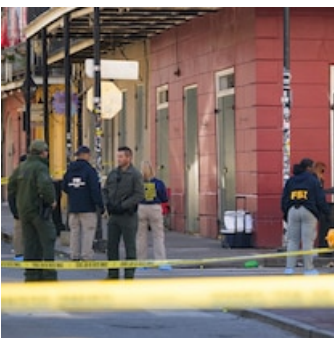
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