

THE BERKELEY GROUP  
"ENCOUNTERS"/AREA 51  
INTERVIEW WITH: CONGRESSMAN JAMES H. BILBRAY  
JULY 5, 1994

Q  
I think for some background information before we get going, tell us the committees that you're on research wise...

A  
I'm on the Armed Services Committee where I serve on the research and technology sub-committee, the military construction sub-committee and the personnel sub-committee. I'm on the a (unintelligible) committee on intelligence which is the committee which has jurisdiction over the CIA, the National Security Agency and the ah ah FBI's ah you know international task force on terrorism and so forth. We're on we're over every aspect of the intelligence agency and the other committee that I serve on is small business but doesn't really have much to do with what you're coming in here to talk to me about today.

Q  
So you're in there.

A  
In intelligence and armed services that's correct.

Q  
Okay. The area that we're talking about this Area 51 I know that ah that's not what you referred to it as. You refer to is as the ah Nevada Test Range or Ranges.

A  
Nellis Test, Nellis, Nellis Training Facilities ah the it's very clear that you know by the secrecy act we cannot refer to any specific area within the classified areas that's run by Nellis and the Air Force as to any specific name. Ah you refer to an area as Area 51, we can only say that as far as the Na Nellis Training Ranges and Testing Ranges ah that there are facilities up there. We won't get specific, the military doesn't want to get specific, something that's very difficult for me ah ah you look at me and say what's at Area 51 and I have to say I can only talk in general terms about the entire area rather than one specific area. Ah everybody knows that there are areas that are referred to by the names Area 51, the NTS, there's other areas, Tonopah, all the people know about these areas, they come and talk to us but we can't acknowledge that they exist. You know they exist, I know you know exist, the Russians know it exists but but we can't refer to it. It's just part of our ah method of secrecy.

Q  
Let's pursue that a little bit. Why is it important to have that method of secrecy because you just acknowledged that we all know it exists, there are pictures out there that says it exists that shows it it exists, why do we have to keep it secret.

A  
Well I think that that the Air Force rationale and the Department of Defense rationale is that there are other facilities within the United States and within the Na Nellis Ranges that are also secret and ah if you start spelling out that this area is is called Area 51, this is called Tonopah, this is called something else ah by definition of you can almost narrow down what's going on in what area and I think they would rather just refer to it as the Na Nellis Ranges and leave it at that and and again that's the admonition that's given to members of Congress that are familiar with the with the facilities.

Q  
In your experience has there ever been a place that is regarded as secret that so much information is out there about it.

A  
Oh I'm sure that ah you know over the years with the with the Soviet satellite systems, with people that have climbed to the top of mountain ranges that surround the Nellis Ranges and taken pictures that people are widely aware that there are facilities and and bases in the Nellis ranges that are not disclosed ah. I whether or not there's other areas I I'm sure you have other top secret facilities over the years that have top secret experiments going on that are well known too in ah in Alabama, New Mexico and other areas but whether this is the most well know secret base I don't know but it's certainly ranks up there in the top five.

Q  
You've been there, in the...

A  
I have been to various facilities within the Nellis Ranges.

Q  
Difficult to get into there even for you.

A  
Not for me, not for me.

Q  
Just a request and then you go.

A  
Yes.

Q  
Is it part of the job and you have to go.

A  
I have felt as a member of the Armed Services Committee and the and the Intelligence Committees that I have to know what's going on in my backyard and ah anything that I've asked to see ah the military and the Department of Energy have made available to me.

Q  
Can you tell us anything you've seen in there.

A  
No I can not.

Q  
Stories that come out of there, things that people say they see, the saucers, the round shapes, the lights, the people who even have who have said they worked there, seen the the alien crafts and all that sort of thing. It makes for a great story in realizing you can't tell me what you saw there and what you know about the place.

A  
I can deny that and and I can tell you right now that I have never seen anything that resembles anything that's alien. Ah flying saucers, ah secret underground caverns ah that they refer to. In fact I've seen pictures on television of these secret underground caverns, I've seen those caverns but there not at these bases, they're part of the Nevada Test Site and they're part of the atomic energy experiments in ah in detonating nuclear facilities and part of the tests that are going on periodic so what's happened is a lot of people that are trying to say that there's this alien base or these alien ah ships up there in these underground caverns, they take pictures of what is known as the Nevada Test Site and then show those pictures and show these workers working up there and then imply because they're so close to some of these facilities that those are the same thing but I have been and have walked many of these facilities if not all ah. Whether or not there's some

facility out there that I've never seen I can't tell you that. This area is as big as the state of Maryland or Virginia ah you know I've been to what what I believe is to every critical facility up on the Na Nellis Ranges and Nevada Test Site but there are no aliens up there. I I'm I I feel strongly about that or any alien space ships.

Q  
In seemingly peaceful times and I know there are the trouble spots...

A  
Uh huh.

Q  
But you know the red threat is no longer there, we've come to believe. Is it important to still have places like this that are secret, that the government can say as matters of national security we can't tell you what's going on in there.

A  
Oh absolutely, absolutely ah the the world may be less safe today than it was just a few years ago. When we had two super powers, each one pretty much ah balanced ah with ah thirty thousand or more nuclear weapons aimed at each one ah massive military ah machines ah it was more or less of a balance ah. Both sides were logical, they negotiated tough but they both controlled a lot of the sub-states around them. Ah the Syrias, the Iraqs, ah ah were under tremendous Soviet influence ah. We controlled our sub-states ah today all that influence is gone and you have a lot of crazy countries out there like the North Koreans, ah like the Iraqs, like the Trans that ah are capable of causing tremendous harm and and ah destruction and we still develop technology, we still work on ah projects that will handle this sort of threat. You also cannot totally disregard a rearming and nationalism in Russia. Now we by our intelligence estimates we have you know four to five to six years ah ah probably advance warning of this sort of thing taking place but what happens if ah the crazy right wingers like happen in Germany in 1933 take over Russia. A bigger super power than Germany with more man power, more natural resources and a fanatical people that could come on very, very strong in history the Russians have been known to ah as the most fanatical fighters in in history and ah what happens if they start rearming. Do we sit back and do nothing for the next five to six years, say everythings peaceful and we're not going to have to worry about another super power. We have to develop technology, we have to explore foreign technologies. Where can that be done except in a remote area like the Nellis Ranges. We need a Nellis Range, we need these type of facilities for the national defense and where what are what are we harming I mean I don't understand people wanting to come down and view these facilities. Ah fact is we have secret facilities I would think the most people in the United States would respect the ability of the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Agencies to protect that ah that technology and ah but they don't, they climb up to the mountains, they come out at night, they take pictures down of the facilities, whatever's going on down there has to be hidden away. Ah you mentioned earlier you'd been up there. You didn't see much, the reason you didn't see much if there was anything going on they knew you were up there and they immediately had to stop doing whatever they were doing. If they were working on a particular technology or working on a particular ah problem ah they knew you were going up there and they knew you were up there before you got up there and immediately had to withdraw, stop doing whatever they're doing. They could have lost eight, ten hours worth of work that they were working on and they would stop and and ah and move everything into hangers or camouflage it and then when you went back down they'd start up again working on what they were working on.

Q

It's referred to I think around here as the land grab. I think ah the government acquiring some of the ah property around the area where people are climbing up and looking down into those areas. It sounds to me that you might support something like that.

A  
Well you've got to remember when the original boundaries for the Nevada Test Ranges was was created ah it was pretty much laid out and done by somebody at the Pentagon. Ah they forgot to put certain areas in ah they just drew lines and said this is in, this is out...

Q  
Right.

A  
In this particular case there are some mountains that you can climb up on and you have done that and look right down at the facility. Ah we feel and I feel strongly that for national security reasons and actually economics so we don't have to stop doing what we're doing down there for days ah weeks sometimes cause they keep coming up during certain times of the year. It's like a holy mountain almost some of the the space buffs that believe the aliens are down there like to climb up there it's almost like a ah psychic experience to them to go up there and look down with the ah night vision lenses at night, to stand up there with binoculars during the day with ah ah ah with high powered cameras during the day ah it costs probably the tax payers millions of dollars a year just having to stop and you have people on payroll up there that are working day after day and are getting paid salaries that can't do anything as long as people are up there on the mountain or very limited facilities.

Q  
This has come this little act of people climbing up the mountain looking at whatever they can see, the security people coming and if they take pictures or you know tailing them and then you know hoping don't let them get too close. If they take pictures take the film away that sort of thing. With a lot of people we've talked to it's been regarded somewhat as a game. I don't think you look at it that way.

A  
No I don't, absolutely. I think it's it's it's you're playing with fire. I think that you're going down we are conducting top level secret ah installation this is top secret and they're conducting top secret experiments down there and people are interfering with that because some of the things can't be done in the hangers, cannot be done under camouflage, have to be done out in the open and yet we have people up there that want to take pictures of that sort of thing. Whether it's critical that the United States government is going to fall or the National Security is going to be breached to such a point that our our national security is put in jeopardy highly questionable for each event but when you take it and add it all together ah it becomes a serious problem. Why not just withdraw some additional areas prohibit the ability of people to look down and spy on that facility and that's what probably will happen. It's probably about a five hundred square mile area that would probably be added to the present ah Nellis Ranges and with that done ah that alleviates the problem. There'd still be people that will come out in the middle of the night with jeeps and they'll try to get in the facility. We have people that try to climb into the Nevada Test Site during testing. Ah would crawl out there and try to get to ground zero ah at they would they would lay out there and bring these like these sheets that were like silver on the top and when we go over with our helicopters they could pick up heat sensing bodies they would have that over their heads and when you go over you wouldn't pick it up because it it wouldn't penetrate and these people ah you know endanger themselves plus the helicopter crews that had to fly at night in some dangerous terrain to try to find them and we find that

everywhere. There's also some highly radioactive areas out there that were still are still highly radioactive after having been tested above ground testing that went on in the ah in in the forties and fifties at the Nevada Test Site and ah some of those areas, some of those dry lakes out there are very hot today and if you walk through that and spends some time out there you would probably have a high dose of radiation.

Q

I read of I mean if it if it happened if some of the technology that ah to develop stealth was conducted out there and if it posed an environmental hazard or we also hear and and this is you know as you do research on these things you read you come across these articles. We also hear of seemingly unlimited budgets, amounts of money being poured into this work out there that's you know it seems to have no check system. Those things like that do you think there should be some do you think those two things should allow us to be able to know what's going on out there.

A

Well we have done a lot of checking on that ah you know when the B2 bomber came out ah most members of Congress did not know the B2 program even existed just in rumors and when it finally came out of the of the special access which was used to be called the black projects now it's special access is the correct terminology ah when it came out it was at twenty-two billion had been spent on the B2 bomber before Congress even knew that the B2 program existed. It was done in various programs, it was listed under different names. I mean the money always shows up in the budget but you don't know what it's going to show up under. For instance one of the great myths of the of this of this last five years has been Aurora that ah some super spy plane that could travel at speeds that were just tremendous ah because they found a budget line item after the B2 came out that laid over for one year and that was called Aurora and it had many millions of dollars in it. Aurora was one of the cover up funds for the B2 and ah it was listed under Aurora and they had it in different funds. We have taken a tight hand in the Armed Services Committee and said hey we don't ever want to see another project that spends this kind of money again and comes out and we're kind of obligated to continue because we've poured so much money already into it that we can't really cancel it and just throw away the tax payers dollars. So we have a cap now that once a project reaches a certain level that we must have the full committee in Armed Services ah even if it's in closed briefing must be fully aware of where it is and then we have a point where it has to come out of the special access and has to come public and I don't remember the exact amount that is I think it's someways like three hundred and fifty million dollars that still sounds like a lot of money but it certainly when you compare it to twenty-two billion isn't is a lot better but all that money is accountable. There are people within the committee, the full committee chairman Armed Services and on both sides, the ranking minority members know about these projects. The full committee chairman on ah research and technology knows about it. There are a lot of people in Congress the leadership knows about these projects. Their not as if there so secret that no one knows about them. There are a lot of members on a need to know basis that are aware of them and more and more are becoming available aware because we are now breaking that down because we don't we don't ever want to see another B2 happen again to us where the reason the B2 costs so much is that we put so much ah research and technology into it that it was I mean if you break that down to what it costs per bomber if we just forgot that part of it it probably cost us about three hundred million a bomber that's still a lot but it's more like eight hundred and fifty million bomber when you take in all that R and T that was done and I think we would have put a stop to it somewhere along the line at a time when we're running these massive deficits and said hey listen we're going to the B2 maybe desirable but we just can't

afford it but but there's probably a lot of money being spent out there but I know most of the project that are going on out there and it's not anything like that kind of money and the kind of projects being done out there don't require the kind of money you're talking about. There's not the development of some super sophisticated system going out there. These are not the kind of projects that are going on out there right now.

Q

With a government of our size and and of the stature when you talk about things like above top secret projects is it possible that a program could exist and could be so secret that even a man of your position that this knowledge would be withheld from.

A

Well ah certainly there's there's the possibility that projects in my position, my paid raid is ah not that high I mean I'm a member of the Armed Services Committee a ranking member on the Intelligence Committee but I'm certainly not the chairman of the full committee or non the speaker of the house or the rank minority leader. Yes I could not know about them. I do not believe a project could exist that is that secret. There are not at least a dozen people in the United States House and Senate that do do not know about these projects and on some of these projects I know for instances that ah that come up ah like Aurora. I know Senator Bird who is the chairman of the Appropriations Committee in the Senate has had people looking into Aurora and has found no evidence of it. So obviously he knows doesn't know anything about Aurora so ah you know I I think that the likelihood of these projects being found that are so secret that no one knows about them. Now there are things people are working on there's all sorts of scientific ah experiments being done throughout the military industrial complex that the at the military labs that ah lazar technology and all sorts of technology that we I may could find out about but maybe I because there's so much you know I would not find out about it. Now if somebody pinned me on and said there is a top secret facility at the Nellis Ranges that is doing a certain item I could find out. I could go to the Department of Defense and say listen this has been alleged, now they may say to me Congressman you can't talk about it but yes we do have a project of that sort going on out there and if you want to come out and view the project we'll take you out there and I could go out there but on the other hand I don't think any of them would look me in the eye and say, no it doesn't exist where it does exist. They may say I have a problem talking to you about that Congressman you better I'll have to clear it at a higher level and I could do it but I don't believe any real top secret projects exist that that the the top people in Congress don't know about.

Q

Ah we've seen some some video of all the light things moving and strange maneuvers over the mountains is that something that...

A

Well let me give you a hypothetical. If I was moving people in and out of a secret area and I was doing a lot of this in the evening and I was flying them out on airplanes and or helicopters and in many of these cases the the helicopters and the planes had windows that are open and lighted ah planes take off like 707s, 727s with their windows open with the lights on ah at the middle of the night these planes take off over the top of the mountains and ah people see them and the first reaction is that they're flying saucers, their secret equipment, they hear roars of engines ah I wonder if there is you know new types of engines technology being worked on in the valley and those val mountain valleys as quiet as it is you can hear a pin drop you could imagine what turning on a high ah ah engine of high velocity would create in those mountain valleys and echos that would go on. So ah I'll tell you right now I think people are seeing things, I don't think they are making

them up but I think they're very explainable except the fact that the military doesn't want to explain it.

Q  
Could you just once more give us a sense of the size of the area the scope of that whole area.

A  
Well

Q  
(unintelligible) remoteness of it.

A  
Okay the remoteness is if you flew from Las Vegas and took a helicopter ride up there you could go by the time you got even at a high speed helicopter it would take you two or three hours to get from one end from Las Vegas to the very end of the facilities. Ah the land mass is probably somewhere around twenty to thirty thousand square miles ah that would give you an idea that ah I imagine a state like Maryland probably about fifteen thousand square miles I I could be wrong on that but it's it's like a large state. I would be like driving from ah probably Washington D.C. to New York to get to the end of the facility and that gives you an idea of the massiveness of this facility. I mean this is and it's a desert valleys, one valley after another ah it's an amazing facility.

Q  
(unintelligible) Um the ah friendship photographs the Russians have photographed (unintelligible) U.S. geological survey map now ah aerial photos um obviously everyone knows that something exists out there and (unintelligible) why can't the government say there is a secret base that sits out there and you just can't look into that and that's the end of it.

A  
Let let me tell you it's like the process of ah as you were a kid when somebody would come you know and ask you a question you didn't want to answer and they say well would you tell me is it this and I'd say no, well is it this and I'd say no and finally they'd say well is it this and I'd say I won't answer that. Well you would then by process of elimination know what it was. I think the problem again of the Department of Defense is that there is more than one facility out there and there is some facilities you know about and I guarantee there's some facilities you don't know about and if they start revealing facilities you do know about by process then you'll start saying well are there other facilities out there and what what's this little cabin sitting out in this little valley is that is that a facility and if they say we're not going to tell you about that facility then you really get your interest ah up and you're going to make sure you try to find out what's going on at that facility. I think the better tact in this what the military has taken is to just deny everything and to remain silent and by remaining silent ah it makes it more difficult for you to penetrate the secrecy that's out there. They believe it's necessary, a lot of people in government believe it's necessary, I believe it's se it's necessary for the national security of this country and the fact is that ah ah there's a lot of people that'd like to know, members of the press would like to know, members of the scientific community would like to know and someday they will know but right now we believe for national security purposes it should be shut off from the general public.

Q  
It's one of those things I mean when you say (unintelligible) child you say we just give it to them (unintelligible) they're going to go away (unintelligible).

A  
I don't think in this particular case that people would go away because the next question well if you have a

base and you acknowledge it's there what do you do there. Do you have this there, do you have that there. It's better as far as the military is concerned rather than try to explain what's out there it's better just to remain silent.

Q  
Do you think there is a potential for some real confrontation in the future with the ah you know with what's happening in in media they ability for people to get in there with ah...

A  
Oh there there people are going to try all the time ah I would say that on an average of once a week somebody tries to penetrate in there to see what's going on. Sometimes by accident I've I've I've talked to people who've been out there just just joy riding in jeeps trying to find around all of a sudden found themselves surrounded by people with M M16 rifles and escorting them out and calling me indignantly and saying why was I kicked out of that area. I didn't know I crossed I didn't see any signs you know but the fact is people will will always try to find out what's going on in some secret area. It's it's just the intrigue. I I'd probably want to know myself if I didn't know already. That's why I found out (laughter).

Q  
Congressman thank you very.

A  
Alright.

Q  
(unintelligible) (laughter)

A  
George, someday I'd love to take you out there (laughter)

Q  
Can you tell us any thing you've seen there.

A  
No, no I cannot tell you what goes on within the facility. You know there's facilities there but I can't tell you what they are.

Q  
The stories we hear about things in there, we hear about flying saucers, things flying over can you confirm any of that.

A  
I can tell you that there are no flying saucers out there and there are no aliens out at that particular facility.

Q  
A lot of people who think they should have access to be able to see what's going on in there would that be a threat to national security.

A  
I think it would be, I think that ah the fact is that we have the right to have secret facilities and test secret equipment and test ah equipment ah say that ah from other foreign nationals and that the fact is that ah by having people have access to it it would be very, very dangerous to our national security.

Q  
It's become known around here as ah land grab, do you think that needs to be to protect national security.

A  
Absolutely and and one of things that we didn't bring up before is the fact that ah people that ah that that is government owned land it's not as if it's land that belongs to some third party.

Q  
Right.

A  
We're not taking anybody else's property, we have had some mining claims that we've worked with the people on and we don't really have any protest from people whose you know are in the area. The protesters are outsiders from the outside the area coming in.

END OF INTERVIEW