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# No contest plea for Groom duo

By Susan Greene  
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Two Las Vegas charged with trespassing on land near the secret Groom Lake Air Force base have said they will plead no contest in exchange for Lincoln County officials dropping charges against two others in their party.

William Fitzgerald and Constance Ruiz had planned to appear in Pahrangat Valley Justice Court on Wednesday to fight misdemeanor charges alleging they trespassed onto what authorities described as a "U.S. Government Military Installation, Nellis Bombing Range," near Groom Lake, a dry lake bed west of Alamo.

However, facing scheduling problems and growing legal expenses, Fitzgerald and Ruiz decided Tuesday to plead no contest and pay \$100 fines so Lincoln County District Attorney Thomas Dill will not prosecute Ruiz's children — David and Cissy Ruiz — for similar charges.

"We'll just give them the blood money and get this over with once and for all," said Fitzgerald.

On Jan. 1, Fitzgerald and his sons Tim and Kevin Fitzgerald, his neighbors the Ruizes, and friend Gilbert Narvaiz took three vehicles to view the Groom Lake base from public lands before the Air Force withdraws the area for a more extensive buffer zone around the installation.

The base, which has never been acknowledged by the Air Force, is believed to be used to test secret military aircraft.

When the group accidentally drove a half-mile into the restricted zone, they were surrounded by unidentified guards in camouflage fatigues who pointed M-16 rifles at them. After the group was detained for two hours, a Lincoln County sheriff's deputy came to arrest the seven sightseers, then shackled them with waist chains and jailed them for several hours at a Pioche detention center.

Soon after the incident, charges were dropped against Narvaiz and the Fitzgerald brothers when they pleaded no contest and paid \$250 fines.

But the rest of the party planned to fight the charges.

"The Air Force, or whoever these people are, were delighted to hassle us and arrest us, to take advantage of regular folks who accidentally stepped over a line," said Constance Ruiz.

Dill, the Lincoln County prosecutor, was unavailable for comment Tuesday, but Tracie Lindeman, the defendants' attorney, said the names of the guards who detained her clients still remain secret.