

The Groom Lake Desert Rat

"The Naked Truth from Open Sources."

AREA 51/NELLIS RANGE/TTR/NTS/S-4?/WEIRD STUFF/DESERT LORE

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Caliente Land Grab Hearing

About forty-five people packed the tiny VFW Hall in Caliente on Feb. 1 for the first of two public hearings on the Groom land grab. As expected, the event was attended primarily by Lincoln County residents and Nevada land-use advocates with a variety of objections, mostly unrelated to the Groom Lake base itself. Curtis Tucker, Caliente Area Manager for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), presided over the hearing with admirable restraint and professionalism. Nine civilians spoke at the podium, all opposing the withdrawal, and many others asked questions, which Mr. Tucker did his best to answer.

Representing the Air Force were two Nellis public relations staffers and a stone jawed Colonel, who did most of what little talking there was. Even the staffers didn't seem to know much about the Colonel; when we asked one of them for the Colonel's first name, he didn't know and had to ask. The officer was finally identified as [Col. Bud Bennett](#), Range Squadron Commander, and his appearance and bearing reminded us vaguely of General Jack D. Ripper in the movie *Dr. Strangelove*.

For most of the meeting, Colonel Bennett sat silently at the front taking copious notes. He spoke at length only at the beginning, reading from index cards in a practiced monotone and offering precious little information beyond the one-liner given in the withdrawal application: "to ensure the public safety and the safe and secure operation of activities in the Nellis Air Force Range Complex." The Colonel said from the outset that there would be many questions that he could not answer, and he skillfully avoided most. Here are some of his more lively comments...

The military lands withdrawal act of 1986, with an amendment in 1988, withdrew the land currently in the Nellis Range Complex. Certain elevations on the east side of the range were not included in the withdrawn area. Due to the increasing visits by people to this area, the Air Force determined that something had to be done to ensure public safety and the safety and security of operations in the Nellis Range Complex.

When someone is on White Sides and other nearby areas, altitude and route changes have to be made by aircraft to avoid harming people and to prevent disclosure of operational matters. Some missions have to be delayed or canceled. This impacts the effective use of the Nellis Range Complex.

The area proposed to be withdrawn was looked at very carefully and, in discussions with BLM, we were

told to keep the amount to be withdrawn to an absolute minimum. We eventually did so, selecting several thousand acres less than originally was roughed out."

That was it for informational content. The only other data the Colonel leaked out was in response to a question at the end of the meeting. When did he first learn about the current withdrawal? He said he was first informed of it around August. How long before that had the withdrawal been in the works? He said he did not know exactly, but that it was at least a year. (It is unclear now whether he meant a year before now or a year before August.)

Citizens were allowed five minutes each to voice their concerns, a restriction that some chose to flaunt in a show of civil disobedience heartily supported by the audience. Most of the expected angles were covered: A representative of the Shoshone Nation pointed out that this land and most of the Nellis Range was deeded to the tribe by treaty in the 1800s and that the government had taken it without permission. Sadly, we suspect that this argument won't go any further now than it has in the past. Other speakers were concerned that the AF had not kept the promises it made for the earlier Groom Range withdrawal, such as paving the road from Rachel into the Test Site. Mr. Tucker countered that most of the promises he knew about had indeed been met. He noted that although the road from Rachel was not paved, it had been considerably improved at AF expense.

This reporter exercised his five minutes standing in front of a big map of the area. He protested the vague reason the AF was giving for the withdrawal and said that the application could only be evaluated if the AF gave the real reason, which wasn't a national security issue in itself. He read a list of the major newspapers and defense publications [See below.] that had already reported on this land grab and described the Groom base as one of the best publicized defense installations in the world. Although acknowledging that some of the secrecy at Groom may be justified, he described the continued non-existence of the base as an absurdity.

This speaker then noted that if the purpose of the withdrawal was to hide the base from public view, then the AF had failed once again. He pointed on the map to Tikaboo Peak and Badger Mtn., which he said also offered a direct view of the base. He was concerned that, if the AF was allowed to take the current land for a vague reason like "the public safety," then it could come back later to take the other viewpoints for other vague reasons. Thereby, the AF could subvert the Engle Act, which requires withdrawals of more than 5000 acres to be reviewed by Congress. He concluded by warning the audience, "If we let this withdrawal go through for this vague reason, then they'll be able to take all of Nevada in little bitty pieces."

Lincoln County Commissioner Eve Culverwell was mad as hell. (We wouldn't want her any other way.) She brought up some important points about mitigation and asked for the release of other lands in Lincoln County that the AF no longer needs. However, the focus of Culverwell's ire, and the principle target of many others in attendance, was not the AF but the BLM, which controls the vast majority of land in Nevada. Culverwell and other activists do not necessarily question the AF's right to take the land, but they say the AF should be dealing with the state and county, not BLM. They say the federal government has no real jurisdiction over public lands, based on statutes at the time of statehood. This rather radical approach throws a wild card into the land grab fight, and certainly adds some color to the proceedings. [More [below](#).]

In all, the hearing was lively but proceeded pretty much as anticipated. No one spoke in favor of the Air Force except for their hired representatives, but there was some pessimism among attendees as to whether even their near-total opposition made any difference. Several people voiced the concern that no matter what the citizens of Lincoln County said, their comments would simply be filed away and the AF was going to get the land anyway.

We understand their pessimism but do not share it. The current battle is taking place on many different levels: in the media, along the border, within the BLM and inside the AF itself. The public hearings represent only the most obvious portion of a mostly subterranean conflict, but they are vital as a visible show of popular opposition and a preliminary step to future legal action. Remember that the land grab fight can be a powerful tool to achieve much larger goals. Our ultimate purpose is not so much to save the land but to expose the base, and that process seems to be marching ahead even more inexorably than the White Sides withdrawal.

Throw The Bums Out

Speeches by Nevada "home-rule" activists greatly enlivened the Jan. 31 hearing. Seeing this land fight as a test case for their new ideas, several speakers drove hundreds of miles from other parts of Nevada to be in attendance. When a leader of the movement, Dick Carver, finally had his chance to speak, he announced that five minutes were not enough, and that he would go on as long as necessary. When the five-minute tone was sounded, the BLM moderator tried to interrupt but was rebuked by the audience, who unanimously demanded that Carver be allowed to continue. Carver thus walked away with about 15 minutes of air time and gave everyone in the audience the warm satisfaction of having beaten BLM into submission at least on that issue.

Readers who live outside the western U.S. may have never even heard of BLM, never mind grasping the boundless animosity it often enjoys among locals. The vast majority of land in Lincoln County is "public," that is, owned equally by all U.S. citizens, and is currently managed as a public trust by the federal government. A significant portion of the economic activities in the county have to go through the BLM. It leases grazing and mineral rights and enforces many despised environmental regulations, thus placing it in the role of evil landlord who everyone loves to hate. Local sentiments are elegantly expressed by one resident's well-trained dog who stays, sits and lies down on command. The dog will also "kill" on command, but only on special key word. Give him a old shoe, say "BLM," and it's rendered to shreds instantly.

The position of the revolutionaries is that the federal government has no right to manage public lands within the state and that it does so only by default. The activists cite statutes dating back to Nevada's founding which they contend give the state the sole authority to manage public lands. BLM, they say, has no real delegated authority to do anything, and they are trying to prove this by a series of Freedom of Information requests. Whenever an interesting legal case comes up in which BLM is the enforcer, they demand that BLM turn over documents to prove that they indeed have that authority. According to the activists, BLM is inherently unable to supply those documents and thus can be forced to back down from whatever action they were attempting.

We are pleased that the rebels have adopted the Groom land grab as a cause celebre. Without them, there might have been only half as many people at the Caliente hearing. At the same time, we are a little confused on what the end result of this rebellion is supposed to be, and we are mildly skeptical about whether it can succeed.

The current anti-BLM movement reminds us of a number of radical females we have known who would just as soon eliminate the male gender altogether. On the surface, we can understand the sentiments. Males must account for 85% of the violent acts in this country and easily 99% of the female grief and pain. They're aggressive, suppressive, insensitive and demand too much. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile. WHO NEEDS THEM ANYWAY? "Just say No," is the best solution. If you excise them definitively from your life then all your problems will be solved.

Okay, so maybe that's a bad example. The point is, although such dramatic plans to "Throw the Bums Out" may seem solid in theory, they usually get tripped up somewhere in the implementation. We march into the battle with high idealistic hopes but a few years later usually find ourselves living with the bums anyway. Given this typical outcome, one wonders if it would be more productive to take a less combative approach that might be more likely to succeed in the long term. Instead of expending all our resources in an attempt to totally annihilate the enemy, we could take the time to understand him, learn his fears and vulnerabilities and the kind of leverage we have over him, then take him by the balls and turn him into our slave.

No, wait, never mind. BAD example.

Las Vegas Hearing Date Set

The Las Vegas hearing on the Groom land grab has been officially set for Weds., March 2, 1994 from 5-7 pm at the Cashman Field House, rooms 203-204. (Cashman Field House is a stadium complex on Las Vegas Blvd. just north of Downtown.)

This is the BIG ONE. (Caliente was only 4.0.) Everyone's invited! More info will be provided in [Desert Rat #3](#), which will be issued at least a couple of weeks before then.

[Report on hearing in [DR#4](#)]

Trespassers' Trial Delayed

In [Desert Rat #1](#), we reported the case of the seven Las Vegans who stumbled across the military border while visiting the Tikaboo Valley. Due to their lawyer's schedule conflicts, their trial, originally scheduled for Mar. 2, has been delayed to a later date. (We'll publish the date when we know it.) The location will be Alamo Justice Court in the County Annex Building in Alamo, 90 miles north of Las Vegas. Come one, come all!

The change of date is providential because it means that the trial will not compete with the Las Vegas hearing.

An Ambassadorial Visit

On Jan. 28 at our psychospy headquarters in Rachel, we were pleased to receive a surprise visit from the Ambassador Merlyn Merlin II from the planet Draconis. He had taken human form, resembling to us a bearded Abe Lincoln or Amish farmer, and was driving a 10-year-old brown Monte Carlo. When he first appeared at our door, he was holding a small black book in front of him in both hands. In an impulsive attempt at humor, we blurted out, "Oh, a Bible salesman!" He smiled at that and showed us that it was only a notebook. The bible, it seems, was out in the car. Later, he went to fetch it and read to us some lengthy passages.

Three aviation watchers from the Bay Area happened to be visiting our headquarters at the time, and we were all quite fascinated with the Ambassador. He was a "Being of Light," he said, although we touched him and found him to be quite solid. He was on a mission to promote the coming "Golden Age," when the aliens would be integrated into our society and we humans would evolve into a higher form. This transformation, he said, would take place within the next five years.

The Ambassador did not always know that he was a Draconian. He had thought he was an ordinary human for most of his time on earth until he began to experience some revelations in 1986. Even now, he has no direct memories of Draconis, although he is certain that that is his origin. He said that another part of him was on Draconis even as he was speaking to us. He suspected that he was also simultaneously a Venusian and that part of his being was currently at home on Venus.

He was proud of his role as Ambassador to Earth and was especially pleased to be officially recognized in that capacity by the State of Nevada. He gave us a xeroxed letter to prove his status. It was on official state letterhead from the Secretary of State in Carson City. The letter was dated March 31, 1993, and was signed by the secretary herself. It read:

Ambassador Merlyn Merlin II
The Embassy of Christ

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Thank you for your invitation; however, I will not be able to be in California. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Cheryl A. Lau

We wish the Ambassador the best of luck in his mission and urge the Federal government to accord him similar

recognition.

"Paranoid News" Launched

Pleased with the instant success of The Groom Lake Desert Rat, psychospy has launched yet another free on-line newsletter--this one on an unrelated subject. *The Paranoid News* will explore psychospy's favorite mental disorder, paranoia, and show how it effects the thoughts and behavior of all of us.

Paranoia is a fascinating mechanism by which a person tends to bring about the very thing he most fears. If he is terrified enough of failure, then he will often create it for himself by his own hand. Paranoia is more pervasive than we might suppose, and there is not one of us who isn't touched. Paranoia effects our every decision, especially our most important ones, so don't read this newsletter unless you are prepared to question your past choices or the wisdom of your current circumstances. This is not a pretty newsletter. There are a lot of icky things inside our minds, and *The Paranoid News* will delight in exposing them.

[[Three issues](#) of *The Paranoid News* were published before it was suspended (too much work).]

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