

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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Psychospy Suffers Convulsions

It seemed like an ordinary day in an ordinary mobile home park not too far from a not-too-secret secret base where nothing out of the ordinary ever seemed to happen. A man went to his mailbox to get the mail. It seemed like ordinary mail at first: some bills, a newspaper, ten million dollars from Ed McMahon and yet another flyer from the Jehovah's Witnesses.

But there was more. Just behind the envelope bearing Ed's smiling face was another, much bigger envelope. It had no return address but was postmarked in California. It seemed like an ordinary envelope.

The man couldn't guess what was inside the envelope. How could he have possibly known? On such an ordinary day in this ordinary place it was easy to let down ones guard. The man never even considered that the envelope might contain something dangerous, like a letter bomb or an IRS injunction. HE WAS THAT KIND OF TRUSTING SOUL.

He opened the envelope.

The man stared at what he found. It was a document with the word SECRET on the front. Disbelief was the man's first reaction. Stunned silence. He did not think the document was real until he began to glance through its pages. The man looked again at the cover of the document.

That's when it began. A strange sound started to gurgle in the man's throat. It got louder and louder until bursting forth from his mouth with terrible, unexpected fury. It almost sounded like laughter, but it wasn't any normal, healthy kind of laugh. I was more of a cackle. It was like the evil, psychotic laugh of the Wicked Old Witch of the West after sending out the flying monkeys and threatening, "I'll get you my pretty!"

The man could not control himself. The horrible utterance possessed him like a demon and shook his whole body with violent spasms. Convulsions. His arms flailed. His legs collapsed beneath him. With an almost superhuman effort, he dragged himself to the desk and dialed the telephone. He dialed a number in California. It rang and rang, and then a machine answered and said to leave a message. The man tried to speak but only the hideous, cackling sound came out. It

exploded in wave after wave of uncontrollable screeches, until the machine cut off and the line went dead.

The man dropped the phone. Then he collapsed and died.

This story is STRANGE BUT TRUE (all except the part about the man dying, which was added for dramatic effect). IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU.

It WILL happen to you--although perhaps less violently--when you see the March edition of *Popular Science* magazine.

Popular Science Cover Story

"SECRET AIR BASE" it says in big letters on the cover, beside a Soviet satellite image of the Groom Lake facility.

Other words on the cover say: "The government doesn't want you to know what's going on at Groom Lake, Nevada. Officially, the facility that developed the U-2 & SR-71 Blackbird spy planes doesn't exist. In fact, it continues to expand, and now the Air Force wants to grab 4,000 acres of public land to keep curious civilians away. Are there shadowy projects underway that citizens have a right to know about?"

The article inside recalls the exploits of a hardy band of aviation buffs who hang out at the border of the Groom base trying to catch a glimpse of rumored secret aircraft that never seem to materialize. In reality, it's a futile exercise in hypothermia, but here on the pages of Popular Science, these hopelessly distracted, get-a-life males are presented as heroic crusaders fighting for our freedom.

We see no reason to complain, however. We have been stumbling along in this seemingly hopeless battle to save the viewpoints. We have run off a few flyers, sent out some letters and hoped that someone would listen. Suddenly, the game has changed. It's like someone has taken one of our flyers, run off 1.8 million copies and displayed it in every Safeway Supermarket, Seven- Eleven and Thrifty Drug in the world.

Excuse us if we cackle.

Readers may or may not agree that the larger-than-life "Groom Lake Interceptors" are doing the right thing. Certainly, many in the defense establishment would call them misguided. Our need for a secure facility did not end with the Cold War, they say.

One thing this article does prove, however, is the importance of public relations and the dangers of ignoring it. The existence of the Groom base has long been one of the worst kept secrets in the world; yet, the military has stubbornly clung to the awkward position that the place doesn't exist. This cripples the military more than anyone else, because spokesmen cannot respond to legitimate claims and questions, and speculations rage out of control. Everyone loves a secret base, and the more hush-hush it is, the more people want to know.

Once upon a time, the press kept a respectable distance from Groom because of the perceived Soviet threat. Now, the world has changed but the Pentagon hasn't. The withdrawal application was just the spark necessary to set off a press feeding frenzy. In the past few months, the crisis has gotten deeper and deeper, and no one in the Air Force has taken any action to address it. Cold War Colonels have been trying to handle the withdrawal in the brute-force, Reagan-era way while leadership from above seems entirely absent. We sense an aimless drift in the handling of this affair and suspect it is related to the change of guard at the Defense Department.

Now, the AF is in a major bind. Instead of announcing the base gradually on its own terms, the AF is being forced to address all the charges at once under conditions of acute embarrassment. A few months ago, they could have probably gotten away with saying, "Yes, there's a base at Groom but we can't tell you what's going on there." Now, everyone wants to know everything, and it's hard to imagine the frenzy subsiding until they start offering public tours.

With this is mind, here's how to request a tour yourself....

Groom Tour Info

In response to our report on the Caliente hearing [DR#2], TRADER@cup.portal.com has told us more about the AF representative, [Col. "Bud" Bennett](#). His real name is Col. Warren A. Bennett, Jr. and he is Commander of the 554th Range Squadron. At least that's how the Colonel signed a reply to TRADER's request to tour the Groom facility. The Colonel wrote:

"Thank you for your letter of January 3, 1994, requesting a tour of part of the Nellis Range Complex. I have forwarded your request to the appropriate officials. You should receive a response shortly."

We are jealous of TRADER, because when the AF does open up the Groom base to public tours, he is going to be first in line. If you want to be just behind him, we suggest your write to Col. Bennett right away to request your own permission to visit. Even if he can't grant your request himself, the Colonel evidently knows where to send it.

Write to:

Col. Warren A. Bennett, Jr.
554th Range Squadron
3770 Duffer Drive
Nellis AFB, NV 89191-7001

There Is No Crisis Corner

Psychospy goofed. Can you forgive us?

On page 56 of the Popular Science article is a handsome 3-D map of the proposed withdrawal area. It shows three separate parcels of land: To the north is White Sides; in the center is Freedom Ridge, and to the south is Crisis Corner. This map is based on our initial plotting of the township/range specifications appearing in the Air Force's formal application to BLM. For the record, the exact specifications for the withdrawal, as shown in the application, are as follows:

- In Township 6 South Range 56 East sections 25 and 36.
- In Township 6 South Range 57 East section 31 and The West 1/2 of section 30.
- In Township 7 South Range 56 East section 1, The West 1/2 of section 13, and the Northwest 1/4 of section 24.
- In Township 7 South Range 57 East section 6.
- Located in Lincoln County, Nevada, USA.

When we first received a copy of the application, we plotted the sections on a map. We double- and triple-checked our work, then sent the map to our supporters around the world.

Most of the sections were no surprise. The north and central parcels were perfect "G-strings" covering the naked viewpoints of White Sides and Freedom Ridge, where the public might jeopardize its "safety" by casting eyes upon the indecencies at Groom Lake. The southern parcel was a mystery, however. We dubbed it "Crisis Corner," although the crisis taking place there wasn't clear. We made several tours of this parcel trying to find the viewpoints that the military must have wanted to neutralize, but all potential views of Groom Lake were blocked by higher hills already within the Zone. The most we could see was a small portion of the southern Emigrant Valley where there were no obvious installations. Numerous theories ran through our heads about what the land might be needed for.

The solution only occurred to us at the Caliente hearing, when the AF public relations people briefly showed a transparency of the proposed withdrawal area. There were only two parcels shown! This prompted us to recheck our

work, and, yes, we found that Crisis Corner existed only in our imagination. We had misread the map and plotted two sections in the wrong place: Township 8 instead of Township 6. The AF is not seeking any land south of Freedom Ridge.

The error is minor. It doesn't effect White Sides or Freedom Ridge. It only clears up a mystery. Now, there is not the slightest ambiguity about the AF's intentions. The only sections being sought are those that offer a direct view of the Groom facility.

We are deeply embarrassed by our mistake. At the same time, we feel the exhilarating rush of fame and power in seeing OUR ERROR reproduced 1.8 million times and distributed to every corner of the globe.

Fun With Sensors

[In an article in the Dec. 93 issue of *Intercepts Newsletter*, we reported the following.]

Here's a challenge to you radio buffs: Find the sensors planted on public land around the perimeter of the top secret Groom Lake base. The most common kind are magnetic anomaly detectors planted beside dirt roads to detect passing cars. If you happen to drive past one of these, you can be certain that the anonymous, camouflage-clad dudes in the white Jeep Cherokees will be along in a few minutes to shadow you, even if you go nowhere near the border.

The sensor apparatus consists of two detection units--plastic canisters about the size of soft drink cans buried beside the road. Inside each are some primitive electronics and a coil, which senses any big hunk of metal passing nearby. The two detection units are wired to a transmitter hidden in bushes about twenty feet away. The transmitter is about the size of a gallon paint can and takes its power from some batteries contained in a nearby ammo can. Given the vastness of the desert here, finding these devices seems almost impossible at first, and it took us many months to locate even one. Most of the dirt roads approaching the Restricted Zone are miles long, and the sensors could be anywhere. You can't home in on them with a radio even if you know the frequency, because they transmit only a single brief pulse when they detect something--not enough to deduce the location from afar.

The solution? We cruise the roads with a frequency counter, set on its fastest gate time. When 496.25 MHz comes onto the display, we know we just passed one of those top secret sensors. We get out, comb the sides of the road and sure enough, there's another transmitter hiding in the bushes. We have now found a dozen of these sensors in logical places, usually many miles from the border, and we have made a map of where they are. Now, when we want to preserve our privacy on public land, we temporarily unscrew the antenna from the transmitter before driving by. We are then very careful to replace the antenna after passing so as not to be accused of damaging government property.

We never cease to be amazed at how the apparatus of secrecy can be turned into a spotlight on its makers. The transmitted pulse is available for anyone to pick up, so we are working now on ways to monitor the sensors ourselves. We'll use them to keep track of the cammo dudes in the white Jeep Cherokees.

Alas, we may not get the chance to implement this particular plan. We gave a copy of our map to local officials of BLM, the custodian of public lands. BLM is not happy. The Air Force has no jurisdiction on public land and is supposed to apply to BLM before it does this sort of thing. Bad Air Force. If you want the challenge of finding these sensors for yourself you better come soon, because we predict they won't remain in place for very long.

It's like the remote TV camera on a tripod that we once found on public land. We had a picnic beside it, made faces into it from six inches away and scribbled our names on the legs. Sure enough, within days, the camera vanished and reappeared on the other side of the border where it belongs.

Someone has to keep an eye on Big Brother!

Sensor Update

After the existence of the sensors was reported to BLM, a ranger was sent to dig up a couple of them. Finding the sensors themselves turned out to be easier than finding who they belonged to. The nonexistent base with the nonexistent security force is also protected by nonexistent sensors. Initially, the AF neither confirmed nor denied their responsibility.

A break in the case came at the Caliente hearing. When asked about the sensors, the BLM Area Manager confirmed that the AF had finally owned up. He said BLM and the AF were "working together" to find an arrangement whereby the sensors could be laid legally. We asked whether the location of the sensors would be public information. The Area Manager said no. The AF would be given permission to lay sensors within specified parameters, probably up to five miles from the border.

We are concerned about the ethical and civil rights implications of a sensor network on public land. The AF seized the Groom Range as a vast, unused buffer zone for Groom Lake. If the land is formally under their control, we have no problem with them laying all the sensors they want on it. Now they are saying that they need a buffer zone for the buffer zone. It seems that no matter how much land we given them, they always want to control more.

With the sensor network tracking visitors and unidentified armed guards shadowing them many miles from the border, this land is not "public" at all. It is a military controlled area, differing from the adjoining Restricted Zone only in the absence of a formal withdrawal.

If BLM will not defend the public's right to free and anonymous travel on public lands, then the Groom Lake Freedom Fighters will. We are not happy about the sensors being there, but we feel we can live with them if we are able to map them and broadcast their locations to the world. The AF has proposed to BLM the use of smaller, less intrusive devices that are presumably also harder to detect. All the more sporting, we say! We'll invite radio buffs to join in regular "Easter Egg Hunts" to find the sensors and win prizes. If the AF wants to set up the game board for us, we'll happily play it.

In Brief

NEW SECURITY HUMMER. In July 1993, the cammo dudes patrolling the Groom perimeter traded in their tan Blazers and Broncos for spiffy white Jeep Cherokees. The choice of color wasn't terribly wise; these vehicles now stand out as bright beacons against the beige landscape and can be seen for miles. However, a new, stealthier vehicle has also been spotted: an olive drab Humvee. This one is difficult to spot unless you're looking for it--or if the dudes choose to park it at the top of a prominent hill as they always seem to do. (You can't teach old dudes new tricks.)

VEGAS LAND GRAB HEARING. Nothing has changed regarding the Las Vegas land grab hearing, although the Popular Science article should greatly increase the attention. It will be held Weds., March 2, 1994 from 5-8 pm at the Cashman Field House, rooms 203- 204. (Cashman Field House is a stadium complex at 850 North Las Vegas Blvd. just north of Downtown.) Each speaker will be limited to 3 minutes, so if you have something to say you will have to be organized and concise. Flyers are a good way to get your point across; you can make them available at the door. You can also continue to submit written comments to BLM up until the date of the hearing. These comments DO have an effect. At least they assure that the contents of the case file will be heavily weighted toward the opponents. Apart from the paid military representatives, we have yet to hear of ANYONE offering support for the withdrawal, either in writing or at a hearing, but certainly twenty pounds of opposing comments are better than two. Be creative. Think of your own angle on the withdrawal and explain it in a courteous letter to BLM. Send comments to:

Mr. Billy Templeton
BLM Nevada State Director
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, NV 89520

Also send a copy of your letter to:

Mr. Curtis Tucker
BLM Caliente Area Manager
P.O. Box 237
Caliente, NV 89008

It is likely that [Desert Rat #4](#) will be issued sometime before the hearing, with any late-breaking details reported therein. If you are planning to attend the Las Vegas hearing and don't receive DR#4, then it may be a good idea to contact us a few days before for the latest plans.

[\[Preparations for Las Vegas hearing in DR#3A\]](#)

[\[Report on Las Vegas hearing in DR#4\]](#)

VEGAS POOP. When in Vegas you SHOULD VISIT the Luxor pyramid. It's worth at least a 10 minute walk-through and the attractions inside are worth the price if the lines aren't too long. The buffet is recommended, too. DON'T BOTHER with the MGM Grand theme park. It's a dud--a pale imitation of Disney. Buffet's a dud, too. DO SEE the free pirate battle in front of the Treasure Island casino, every 90 minutes starting 3:30. There's nothing much of interest inside, however, and the buffets are unimpressive. We usually recommend VACATION VILLAGE as the best place to spend the night on weekdays (2 miles south of Luxor, weekday rates as low as \$20, 800-658-5000). For the night of the hearing, however, we expect to be staying at a closer downtown hotel, Fitzgerald's (probably about \$25-30, 800-274-5825). On weekends, try NEVADA LANDING on I-15, Exit 12 (\$31, 800-628- 6682). Favorite buffets: PALACE STATION and the FRONTIER. For cheaper, quicker buffet eats with minimal lines and traffic, try: NEVADA LANDING, GOLD COAST or ARIZONA CHARLIES. Supermarkets can be found on Sahara Ave. several miles west of I-15.

[\[Accommodation info in DR#3A\]](#)

Wisdom Of Jack D. Ripper

Correction to [DR#2](#): We want to apologize to [Col. Warren "Bud" Bennett](#) for comparing him to Jack D. Ripper of the movie *Dr. Strangelove*. Such an insinuation is entirely political and should not be regarded as a personal reflection on Col. Bennett.

There was also a question about whether the Desert Rat correctly reported Mr. Ripper's rank. Some readers thought he was "Colonel Ripper," not "General" as reported. To resolve this question and relive fond memories, we watched "Dr. Strangelove" again. The man responsible for Armageddon is General Jack D. Ripper, Base Commander, 843rd Bomb Wing. His wisdom....

Mandrake, do you recall what Clemenseau said about war? He said, 'War is too important to be left to the generals.' When he said that fifty years ago he might have been right, but today war is too important too be left to politicians. They have neither the time, the training or the inclination for strategic thought. I can no longer sit back and allow Communist infiltration, Communist indoctrination, Communist subversion and the international Communist conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids.

[\[Issue #3A: Supplement on preparations for Las Vegas hearing\]](#)

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