

The Groom Lake Desert Rat

"The Naked Truth from Open Sources."

Area 51/Nellis Range/TTR/NTS/S-4?/Weird Stuff/Desert Lore

An on-line newsletter.

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Direct from the "UFO Capital," Rachel, Nevada.

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Sensor Wars

In [DR#3](#), we reported the existence of a number of road sensors on public land near the outer perimeter of the Groom Lake base. Each apparatus consists of two canisters about the size of soft drink cans buried about fifteen feet apart beside the road (magnetic detectors). These are wired to a transmitter about the size of a gallon paint can half-buried behind a bush. The unit is powered by batteries housed in an ammo can sitting beside the transmitter. At one point, we counted twenty of these on public land, extending up to seven miles from the border.

The sensors upset us because they suggest that the military, not BLM, is in practical control of this land. If you trip a sensor, within a few minutes an anonymous security patrol will appear. Your license plates will be recorded and relayed to the nonexistent base. If you deviate from the expected path to Freedom Ridge, a patrol will actively shadow you and won't let you out of its sight until you return to the paved highway. If you happen to show up at an inconvenient time, the non-accountable patrols may even block your access to this public land, as reported in [DR#9](#).

At the least, the sensors represent bad public relations. They convey the message that no matter how much land the military has, they will always seek to control even more. Every military perimeter needs a buffer zone to protect it, then another buffer zone to protect THAT perimeter, and so on. In fact, the Groom Mountain Range was taken in the 1980s for no other purpose than to provide an unused buffer zone. If you cross the border in the vicinity of Freedom Ridge, you still have to traverse at least seven miles of empty sagebrush before you come to the border of "Area 51." The sensor network essentially turns public land into a buffer zone for that buffer zone.

No one objects to the military installing sensors within the areas they legally control. The military has a right to detect when people actually intrude onto their land, but collecting information on the whereabouts and identity of people who have NOT intruded is different. That is purely an intelligence function. Is domestic surveillance part of the military's charter? When the entity collecting the intelligence is itself unacknowledged, the potentials for abuse are great. Where is this intelligence being sent? Will it be passed to the FBI, NSA or some other intelligence agency? Will people whose vehicles are seen near the border be flagged as "suspect citizens" and watched more closely for un-American activities? It may sound far-fetched, but when the data collecting apparatus is entirely anonymous and no one can be held accountable for abuses, then there is no telling how the information may be used.

Such a discussion about whether the sensors are legal and proper has been largely academic until now. Although we are opposed to them on philosophical grounds, as a practical matter we know where they are and how to disable them. You

can pull the power plug before you pass and reconnect it after you leave. When television crews visit, the sensors provide an irresistible visual illustration of Big Brother at work. We express our theatrical outrage into the camera as we point out the transmitter hiding behind the bush. Until now, we've been happy with the status quo. We wouldn't want to remove a sensor because, for one thing, we have already carefully mapped them, and removing one would mean that a new one would show up somewhere else and we would have to change our maps accordingly.

Mysterious Disappearances

A few days ago, on Oct. 5, we were out in the field with a crew from yet another TV affiliate. Part of our shtick as we are driving the press to Freedom Ridge is to use our radio equipment to detect a sensor, then get out of the car with camera in tow to look for it. On cue, we convey our sentiments: Look, it's a sensor ON PUBLIC LAND! It means THEY KNOW WE ARE COMING and we're going to be shadowed by ANONYMOUS SECURITY GUARDS IN WHITE JEEP CHEROKEES. This sensor is an offense to our FREEDOM, PRIVACY AND PEACE OF MIND. It makes us feel so... so... VIOLATED!

Of course the exercise is totally staged, because we already know where the sensors are and when to tell the cameraman to start rolling. Often we give our radio equipment to the reporter sitting beside us so that he'll have the satisfaction of saying, "There it is!"

....So we're cruising down the dirt road toward Roadblock Canyon with the TV cameraman in the back seat and the reporter in the front. Suddenly, we stop the car, close our eyes, open them again and announce our remarkable clairvoyant intuition: "Sensor ahead." We give the scanner to the reporter and tell him to yell out when "496.25" shows up on the screen. With the camera rolling, we start driving again, past a sensor we have already mapped and identified as number 810.

Nothing happens.

We back up, drive forward again. Still nothing. Okay, so clairvoyance is never perfect. If we were alone, we would get out and check the bushes, but the crew has a deadline to meet. We tell the cameraman to stand by because we know there are other sensors on this road: five altogether. About a mile further down the road we pass the prior location of sensor 811. The camera is running, but still no response on the scanner. Now we are beginning to sweat and wonder if we will ever have a chance to express our outrage. We have the reporter look at the frequency counter instead of the scanner as we back up and pass over the site again. Nada.

We drive ahead, and get no response at the presumed locations of 812 and 813. By this time, the exercise is getting tired. Psychospy has cried wolf once too often, and the camera doesn't roll when we announce a possible sensor. We start feeling a bit depressed and wonder if maybe the military had taken them all away, just like the very photogenic "No Photography" signs they removed after the KNBC fiasco [[DR#15](#)]. The sensors are part of our dog and pony show. Since the base itself is relatively static, most crews decline even to shoot it. (Most now rely on still photos or stock footage borrowed from other stations.) The only reason to go into the field now is to catch shots of the ominous Cammo Dudes sitting on a hill, the sinister "Use of Deadly Force Authorized" signs, the mysterious "black" helicopter and the ubiquitous sensors hiding behind bushes miles from the border. Take away these things, and for a visual medium like television THERE IS NO STORY.

Could the military have suddenly gotten smart?

What Happened?

After passing through the infamous "Sensor Alley" to Freedom Ridge with nary a blip on the screen, we theorized that someone at a high level in the Air Force saw the Larry King TV special on Oct. 1. In it, the sensors were mentioned, and we figured that a member of the brass with some P.R. sense had seen it and conveyed a message down the chain of command that sensors on public land aren't terribly prudent. Even without the sensors, there are so many patrols in the field now that it seems highly unlikely that a vehicle could slip into the area undetected. Instead of protecting the border, the sensors were drawing people to it. They were among the props that made Freedom Ridge the sort of irresistible

adventure destination that cannot help but attract already-seen-it-all tourists.

We surmised that the orders had to come from a high level because the local command structure has always seemed crippled and incapable of changing with the times. The local Dudes seem trapped by their own antiquated rules, still fighting a heavy-handed battle with Soviet spies and not the subtle P.R. challenges of the 90's. Change, if it happens, has to come from above; otherwise, the organization marches ahead in robot mode and repeatedly shoots itself in the foot whenever given the opportunity.

Although we felt depressed about losing our props, removing the sensors was the right thing for the military to do. We thought it indicated a glimmer of intelligence and hope at the top of the command structure.

But we were wrong.

A Visit From The Law

The day after the TV crew visited, two sheriff's deputies dropped in to see us at our Research Center. They were Undersheriff Gary Davis and Lieutenant Richard Triplett. They said they were investigating the disappearance of eight road sensors reported AWOL by the Air Force.

They wanted to know if we knew who had taken them. We said we didn't, and that's the truth.

The deputies mentioned that Sergeant Lamoreaux had visited our office on an earlier occasion, seeking information on who might have run down a cow near the Black Mailbox. In the course of his visit, we might have shown Sergeant Lamoreaux the detector unit we had found in the middle of a road over a year ago. This was one of the soft-drink-sized canisters, made from standard PVC pipe, containing a coil and some primitive electronics. The wires leading out of the unit were frayed and chewed up, as though a coyote had gnawed on it and maybe pulled it from the ground. At the time we discovered the unit, we weren't sure what it was. There was a manufacturer's name on it, but no indication that it was government property. Subsequent examination of the inner electronics gave us the clues we needed to find a complete apparatus. A friend of ours stumbled upon the first one. By driving past it repeatedly and analyzing the output, we found the radio techniques we needed to discover the rest.

The two officers asked us if they could see the detector unit we showed to Sergeant Lamoreaux. We pointed to it sitting on the table beside them. It was a popular item at our Research Center, and we did not hesitate to show it to visitors. As reported in our Viewer's Guide, we considered it abandoned property and would be happy to return it to anyone who can prove ownership.

We opened the unit and explained to the officers how it worked. The officers said that the detector unit we held in our hands was worth \$1000. We laughed at that one. We said that it was possible that the entire apparatus, including transmitter and battery, might have cost the military \$1000 at very inflated contractor prices. We were not talking high tech. The detector unit was composed of off-the-shelf electronic components performing a very simple function: to receive the electric current produced by a big piece of metal--a car--passing by a coil, amplify the signal and pass an impulse along to the equally rudimentary transmitter. Any knowledgeable hobbyist should be able to reproduce the functions of the detector with about \$20 worth of overpriced parts from Radio Shack.

The officers insisted that the sensor unit alone cost the government \$1000, while the transmitter was valued at \$4000. That's a total cost to the taxpayer of \$6000, batteries not included. The officers told us, very politely, that any theft of government property worth more than \$250 was a felony. For example, theft or possession of one of these detector units that we now held in our hands was punishable by one to four years in prison.

Just then we felt something go "clunk" in our digestive tract. In an instantaneous clairvoyant revelation, we saw where things were leading.

They were out to nail Psychospy.

How To Neutralize An Irritant

People have often asked us if, as the military's chief irritant here, we have ever suffered any threats or retribution for our activism. Alas, we have had nothing sinister to report. Once, our home was visited by mysterious Men in Black [[DR#1](#)], but they turned out to be Jehovah's Witnesses. On many occasions near the border, we have been deliberately buzzed at very close range by the big Blackhawk helicopter, no identifying numbers, in direct violation of the Air Force's own regulations on clearance distances. We were outraged, of course, but wouldn't miss it for the world. Recently, we were arrested for apparently interfering with the warrantless seizure of a news crew's video tape. We'll fight it all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary, but even if we lose the fine probably won't be more than a couple hundred dollars--well worth the price in entertainment and political value, we'd say.

People warn us, "Be careful. If they want to get you, they will." We have always taken these warnings lightly. All we need to do to protect ourselves, we reply to our advisors, is remain pure of heart and clean of spirit, be honest, open and honorable at all times and the goons can't touch us. Oh, naivete! As we talked to the officers with a thousand dollar piece of junk in our hands, we were feeling a wee bit vulnerable. We saw, in our clairvoyant vision, that if "they" ever wanted to get us, this is how they'd do it. They'd look around for opportunities and strike us wherever we were exposed.

Officer Triplett said that he was not going to read us our Miranda rights because we were not under arrest. We were just having a friendly conversation. Nonetheless, he wanted us to know that what we said could be used against us in court. He was going to ask us a series of questions, and we had the right not to answer if we so chose. However, if we did choose to respond, and that answer turned out to be a lie, it could be a bad for us in the future. Officer Triplett asked us if we understood what he had just said, and we replied that we did.

What followed was a game of "I've Got a Secret." The officers asked us questions, and we replied with "Yes," "No" or "I'm sorry, but I'd really rather not answer that." The tone was cordial throughout our chat, and we had a chance to give each question careful thought before replying. We do not recall the exact sequence of the questions, but what follows is the gist....

The officers asked us if we had any sensors in our possession, other than the piece we held in our hands.

We said, "No."

They asked us if we knew who had taken the sensors.

We voiced our theory that the sensors were stolen by mice. We explained to the officers that when the mice come to see Groom Lake, they often want to take a souvenir back home with them. The sensors are convenient and easy to find now that we have published the frequency and told the world how to locate them with any off- the-shelf scanner [[DR#15](#)]. The sensors are a compelling symbol of authority, as irresistible to purloin as the Restricted Area signs. Because they are farther from the border than the signs, sitting all by their lonesomes in the desert, the mice find them easier to snag.

The officers asked us if we knew any of these mice personally.

We said that we knew a few adventurous rodents who might do that sort of thing. We said that we had no specific evidence, however. We suggested that the sensors were probably taken independently by a number of different mice rather than in a concerted effort by one or two.

The officers asked us if we had ever HAD a detector unit in our possession, other than the one we held in our hands.

We thought about it carefully and replied that we preferred not to answer that question.

The officers asked us if we had ever had one of those \$4000 transmitters in our possession.

Again, we replied, thoughtfully, that we preferred not to answer the question.

The officers asked us if we had ever had a battery in our possession.

We replied proudly and unequivocally, "No." We have never had a battery in our possession.

In very hypothetical terms, we recounted for the officers a bit of history. There was a time, many moons ago, when the Air Force refused to acknowledge that it had any sensors on public land. The nonexistent secret base guarded by nonexistent Cammo Dudes was also protected by nonexistent road sensors. BLM, the custodian of the lands on which the sensors are buried, had no knowledge of them either until a reporter we talked to inquired. A BLM ranger had to dig one up himself and present it to the Air Force before the AF admitted anything.

We explained to the officers, strictly hypothetically, that prior to the AF admission, the status of the sensors was very vague. If one happened to stumble upon one of these orphaned items in the desert, it would peak ones curiosity, would it not? If no one admitted to owning them, they would seem like abandoned property, like any of the dozen crashed jets or practice bombs found littering the area. Unable to obtain any official information about what this strange apparatus was or who might have left it behind, a curious individual might be tempted to take one home to examine. Hypothetically, one might want to dissect it to find out how it works. That sort of information might help lead one to the owner, to whom, of course, one would want to return it immediately if they could prove it is theirs.

We explained to the officers that after the Air Force conceded that it did have sensors on public land, the situation would have changed. One would not want to have any such apparatus in ones possession. To any person or organization who had become a painful thorn in the side of both the military and the Sheriff's Dept., possessing any such hardware could be a very dangerous liability, could it not?

In an embarrassing breach of etiquette in our otherwise polite and hypothetical conversation, Undersheriff Davis blurted out, "So who did you give the sensor to?"

We looked mystified. "Sensor? What sensor?"

We reiterated that we had no sensors in our possession and did not know which rodent was responsible for the current wave of sensor- nappings. We liked the sensors just the way they were. They were part of our act for the TV cameras. Why would we want to mess up a good thing?

Undersheriff Davis, in another faux pas, asked if they could search our Research Center for sensors. We thought about it a moment then politely declined. We said that it was a matter of principal. Although we did not have any sensors or other contraband in our possession, we did not know if there was anything else in our Research Center that might be construed against us. We could not think of anything specifically, but we liked our privacy and would feel more comfortable if the premises were not searched.

The officers said that they would have to confiscate the one detector unit we had found in the road. We expressed our dismay, since it had no government markings, was found abandoned in the road where any passing patrol could have picked it up and was discovered before we had any idea what it was. Nonetheless, the officers insisted that we knew that it belonged to the government. They said that the responsibility would be the government's to prove it was theirs, and if they could not do so, then it was possible it would be returned to us. (Fat chance, we thought.... Just like those dozens of rolls of film taken from visitors with the promise of "free developing.")

The officers gave us a receipt for the detector. They agreed that we had been courteous and helpful. They said that they would go to their Rachel substation (a rarely-used building a block away) to talk it over and would come back to us if they had any further questions.

Cutting A Deal

The officers returned about fifteen minutes later. They said they had been talking on the phone to the Sheriff but that they had not yet contacted the Air Force, who they had been cooperating with in this investigation. The information and offer that Officer Triplett subsequently made to us we assume had the direct approval of the Sheriff himself.

First, Officer Triplett showed us a snapshot of a sensor and transmitter, apparently given to them by the Air Force. He

said that he wanted to let us know, in a friendly sort of way, that they would be going door to door to all of our neighbors in Rachel to show them the picture and ask if anyone had ever seen us with such an apparatus or heard us talking about having one. They were not going to make any accusations, mind you, just have a friendly chat about us with every person in town.

Then Deputy Triplett made us an offer. It was a friendly offer, based on the kind of deal, he said, that is often cut in drug cases. Triplett said that they already had "two or three good suspects" in the disappearance of the sensors. If these suspects were confronted with their crimes, there was a risk that they might "roll over" in exchange for more lenient treatment. In a drug case, this means that the addicts turn in the pushers; the pushers turn in the distributors, and the distributors turn in the Mafia dons that can't be convicted by any other means. Triplett said that, unfortunately, due to our prominent position, we were the party who the authorities would most want to convict. If the other suspects could implicate us in any way, then there would be no protection for us; we would have to suffer the full force of the law.

On the other hand, if we chose to turn in those two or three suspects before they could turn in us, Officer Triplett could assure us that would not be prosecuted for any involvement in the crime.

We politely declined this generous officer. We told the officers that we doubted anyone would implicate us because we were innocent of any involvement in the crime. It would also seem difficult for us to turn in the other suspects if we did not know who they were. Any possible mice we knew of were already far outside the jurisdiction of the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department.

Our friendly conversation concluded, the officers proceeded to the door. We thanked Undersheriff Davis for his purchase: He bought a topographic map on which we had marked, at his request, the location where we had found the detector unit in the road. We suggested to the officers that the best way to prevent theft of sensors in the future was for us to publish an account of the officers' visit in our Desert Rat. We would warn the mice of the potential penalties--one to four years in mouse prison--and perhaps this would dissuade them. The officers agreed that this was a good idea.

We walked the officers to the door and bid them a warm good- bye.

Hulk Reborn

At the time the officers parted, we felt nothing but respect and sympathy for these noble defenders of the law. The Air Force had made a complaint, and the Sheriff's Dept. felt obligated to investigate it. It can be difficult being stuck in the middle like that, but justice is blind, and these officers were doing their job as best they could.

Psychospy is naturally a mild-mannered character. He is not given to anger or rash outbursts. He prides himself in being able to see both sides of every issue and in understanding the complex human motivations in every social interaction. There are no "good" or "bad" people, just people with different points of view.

But even as we recited to ourselves these good and proper thoughts, we couldn't help but sense that something wasn't quite right. Inside, we felt a churning. A transformation. Our clothing felt too tight. There was a heaving in the chest. A change in skin tone. From deep within our gut, a horrible, wrenching impulse started making its way to the surface.

We were getting pissed.

The more we thought about what the officers said the more furious we became. We hadn't felt this way since we spent a January night outside the Lincoln County Detention Center waiting for the release of the seven accused trespassers [DR#1]. No one in the Sheriff's Dept. would even confirm that the prisoners were being held, never mind their status, so we had no choice but to spend the night in our car in the parking lot, in sub-freezing temperatures, awaiting their release. When they were finally bailed out, at about 4 am, we were asleep and missed them.

That's when the beast first emerged. A mild-mannered Bill Bixby was transformed, in a metaphysical sense, into a raging green Incredible Hulk. We were possessed by the irrational and uncontrollable urge to do grievous damage to the Lincoln County Sheriff's Dept.

Nothing in the first part of our conversation with the two deputies bothered us. The officers had a job to do and conducted themselves professionally. What gnawed at us was what they said after coming back from talking to the Big Guy. Psychospy does not "roll over." We stand proud for our crimes and do not rat on others to reduce our own sentence. We remain pure of heart and honest and honorable in all of our actions, so if we are accused of anything, we will stand trial and exercise every one of the legal rights available to us. Psychospy is not your run-of-the- mill, sell-out-your-neighbor drug dealer. We do not cut deals.

We're mad as hell and getting more livid as we speak. We recognize that there are a couple of issues that need to be addressed right away. One is the future of the Sheriff himself. He is up for reelection on Nov. 8, so now is the time to declare our allegiances. Another issue is the lingering problem of the road sensors, which we want to see removed from public land once and for all. If the military will not remove them willingly, then we predict no sensor will be safe from the mice.

A Desert Rat Political Endorsement

In the upcoming elections, the current Sheriff, Dahl Bradfield, is facing a credible outside challenger, Don Brown. Brown appears to be an experienced law enforcement officer, including two terms as a Sheriff in Washington State. We have met Mr. Brown and are impressed. We can't say that we know him very well, but two advantages overrule our unfamiliarity: (1) Brown has vowed to sever all ties with the Air Force, and (2) he is not Dahl Bradfield.

After the KNBC video tape seizure, the Las Vegas Review-Journal printed an editorial cartoon (7/26) showing the stereotypical pot- bellied Sheriff with reflective glasses standing beside his squad car at the side of the highway. A road sign in front of him reads:

Now Entering LINCOLN COUNTY, Nevada...
NO Videotaping
NO Trespassing
NO Bill of Rights

The more we know about Dahl, the more he seems to fit the stereotype.

One misjudgment that continues to sour many voters is his orchestration of a removal campaign for a Lincoln County Commissioner, Floyd Lamb. Floyd is a cagey old politician and certainly no angel, but he was a strong leader who was willing to stand up to Dahl. Floyd was once a powerful state senator whose career ended when he was convicted in a bribery case; the voter's knew about his past when they elected him to the County Commission. Floyd's worst crime as commissioner, as far as we can fathom, is that he called Dahl a "liar" at a Commissioner's meeting and threatened to cut the Sheriff's Dept. budget. In a county with one of the largest per-capita police force in the country, the Sheriff's Dept. is entity to be feared. The age-old dilemma applies: When you live in a police state, who will protect you from the police? Signatures for Floyd's recall were collected chiefly by Sheriff's deputies and their spouses--the sort of obvious conflict of interest that never would have been tolerated in the big city. In the recall election, Floyd was defeated by a slim margin (making us feel guilty that we didn't get out and stump for him).

We have met the Sheriff himself only in passing. We have never encountered him near the border of Area 51, only his deputies, but we see in their actions an absence of critical judgment from above. The compensation the Sheriff's Dept. receives from the Air Force is minor: They pay for one deputy and one car. Yet, when the Air Force calls, the Sheriff's Dept. always seems to jump-to. Contacts and agreements between the feds and the Dept. are secret, and until recently, the Dept. was deputizing members of the anonymous security force. When the military, through its own unwise decisions, places itself in an absurd and untenable position, the Sheriff seems willing to share those problems upon request, no matter how damaging to the department's credibility.

Only now, as the election approaches, is the Dept. backing off. It may be too late! The worst political gaff you can commit in this county is to be seen as a stooge of the federal government.

While we normally remain agnostic in political matters, we have seen enough questionable decisions by Sheriff

Bradfield to draw us out of the closet. THE GROOM LAKE DESERT RAT ENDORSES DON F. BROWN FOR THE NEXT SHERIFF OF LINCOLN COUNTY.

(Whoa! Bradfield must be quaking in his boots now!)

[[Campbell's political ad opposing Bradfield.](#)]

The Sensors Must Go!

The sensors themselves have become a symbol of paranoia, security overkill and government inefficiency. At \$6000 per assembly, they could easily be equated with the \$500 screwdrivers and \$1000 toilet seats the military is known for. Anyone who seriously wants to evade the sensors can do it; the only people who trip them are casual tourists and those who deliberately WANT to find them to take pictures or souvenirs.

We do not recommend that anyone steal the sensors. As the deputies pointed out, it could be a felony if you are caught. However, we see nothing wrong with disabling the sensors simply to assure your own privacy. If the military asserts the right to monitor citizens on public lands, citizens should also be able to refuse participation in this surveillance program if they so chose. The proper method to disable a sensor is to gently disconnect the power cord. Don't get caught doing it, because Sheriff Bradfield may initiate a "tampering with government property" charge against you. Given that the sensors have not been sanctioned by BLM and you have done no permanent damage to them, we believe that the charge would be untenable in court, but you don't want to endure the hassles of hiring a lawyer and going to court either.

Following is some additional embarrassing information on the road sensors.

Sensor Addressing

All road sensors we have found in this area broadcast on the same frequency: 496.25 MHz. When tripped, a transmitter emits a burst of digits indicating the unit's ID code and the direction the vehicle is traveling. The ID code is set by easily-changed dip switches inside the transmitter. For example, the first sensor on the road to Freedom Ridge is number 810, the second is 811, and so on. We collected many of the ID numbers back in the good old days when security broadcasted "in the clear" and the patrols would call them out when passing. Now, the ID's can (hypothetically) be confirmed by a five minute examination of each sensor.

We do not recommend that anyone remove or disassemble a sensor, but if anyone DID engage in such evil acts, this is what they could do for fun: "Borrow" a sensor, sit on a hill and systematically change the dip switches in one sensor unit to the numbers of different units. One unscrupulous person could repeatedly trip a single sensor using different ID numbers and thereby orchestrate an invasion! First, you could send the codes for 810, 811, 812, etc. (assuming these sensors are eventually replaced). Then, you could trip a series of sensors from the north, maybe on several different roads simultaneously. The Cammo Dudes would be frantic, and helicopters would be everywhere looking for the imaginary visitors.

Not that we would EVER do such a devilish thing, but it would be easy to carry out and is certainly fun to contemplate. And now that the Dudes know what we know they know we know, they'll have to ask themselves every time: "Is it live, or is it Memorex?"

Illegal Repeater Station?

After the AF was forced to admit that they had the sensors, they sent BLM a letter announcing their intention to keep them on public land within the scope of "casual use." Casual use means that you can use public lands for almost anything you want as long as there is no significant impact on the land or wildlife. You can, for example, pitch a tent or build a campfire almost anywhere, as long as your return the site to its natural state when you leave.

The Air Force argues the road sensors are discreet and present no significant environmental impact. Looking at a single sensor as an inert object, we agree that it probably would fall within the scope of casual use. We object only the

surveillance function, as well as the fact that there is not just one, but an big organized network of devices. It is like building a dozen campfires simultaneously within a limited area of public land.

Anyway, if one sensor apparatus--no more than two feet high including antenna--does not violate casual use, how big does it have to be before it does? Four feet? Eight feet? Can the AF park a ten-foot microwave relay station on public land without applying to BLM for a right-of-way? What about a 16 foot radio repeater station?

It so happens that there is a 16-foot solar-powered repeater on public land about two miles outside the border. It is used in connection with the sensor network, relaying the signal of certain isolated transmitters back to the main receiver. Since BLM wasn't informed of the sensors until the issue was forced, we assume the AF never bothered to apply for a right of way for the repeater station either.

The repeater is located in Township 5 S, Range 55 E, Section 28. To get to it, take Valley Rd. from SR-375 (LN 11.4) for 5.3 miles, turn left on the side road and go 3.4 miles. Stop the car and look at the top of the hills to the left.

Could it be illegal?

Felony Charges

If you are caught stealing or dismembering a road sensor, you must be prepared to suffer your own fate. However, you should let us know about your predicament, and we'll do what we can to assist your defense. A felony charge is not pleasant to face, but unlike the misdemeanor obstruction count Mr. Campbell is currently playing with, a felony offers full rights of "discovery." That means we can put the AF through the ringer as to who, exactly, placed the sensors on public land, when and under what authority, how they were purchased and how their valuation was determined. If \$20 detectors are indeed being sold to the government for \$1000, discovery would yield the documents to prove it. At the trial--a jury trial, of course--BLM officers could be subpoenaed to determine their policy toward military sensors on public land. (At present, they have issued no opinion.) Carefully handled, a felony proceeding can be turned around to put the accuser on trial. Could be deep woo-woo for the AF.

Bounty Offered For New Sensors

There have long been rumors that the Dudes have road sensors that cannot be easily detected. Presumably, these would be smaller units that need less maintenance. They may be totally buried and use a transmission system that cannot be detected with a frequency counter. No doubt, these would cost the taxpayer \$10,000 a piece instead of \$6000. We don't know for certain that these sensors exist, but if they do Psychospy is offering \$100 for information leading to the first one found on public land. (Do not remove it; just tell us how to find it so we can photograph it and tell the world.)

In summary, we fear that any road sensors left on public land will be both useless and vulnerable to theft. With so many tourists now flocking to the area, there is also a risk of accidental damage to the sensors if they are not explicitly marked with fluorescent "Sensor Here" warning signs. (We've tried doing this ourselves, but somebody keeps taking them down.) For example, people might innocently run over the transmitters when driving off-road or accidentally shoot a hole in one when hunting for rabbits. The obvious AF solution: They'll install sensors to protect the sensors. Maybe they'll train TV cameras on each, but then how will they protect the cameras? You gotta love those security dudes because they'll never go down easy.

A Journalist's Opinion

After we told an acquaintance of ours, a reporter on a big city crime beat, about our visit from the deputies, he replied....

Interesting development on the road sensors. You said eight (8) were missing? That's a lot of sensors. And a lot of money (\$32,000, or thereabouts?). I wonder who is taking them, and why, other than general disruption of Groom security activities.

Oh, by the way: Police ALWAYS use that tired old line that they have other suspects and they might talk as a way of getting information. As you probably know, it is NOT illegal for police to lie to get a confession. I once went to a seminar at which interrogation tactics of police were detailed. It was interesting. I came away with one guiding principle: If I am ever accosted by police in an interrogation setting (they're only supposed to interrogate if they believe you're guilty of the crime.) SAY NOTHING and CALL MY ATTORNEY. Their little tricks are very clever, but any reasonably smart person can see where things are going and avoid the trap.

In your case, it doesn't sound like it got heavy at all. They're probably just trying to see if you would easily confess. Their promise to interview everyone in Rachel sounds like just another tactic to shake loose a confession. These cops are SO predictable.

Rumor: Groom Lake "Fan Man" Sails Toward Base

The following information came from a witness who prefers to remain anonymous. Owing to lack of confirmation, we print it here as "rumor."

In the early morning hours of Sept. 22 (or thereabouts), a man in his 40s attempted to "paraglide" into Area 51. He was with a group of ex-Vietnam buddies from Southern California who had decided, at the spur of the moment, that they were going to intrude into the secret base. You know: capture an alien, bring it back and put it on display during the Larry King extravaganza. The group did not have the "Area 51 Viewer's Guide" and had only a vague notion of where they were going. The source's description suggests that they were way off target. They climbed a ridge, which could have been the north end of the Groom Range, and saw some lights in the distance, which probably weren't the main base.

The intruder apparently took off from the top of the ridge using an unpowered, airfoil-shaped parachute (a paraglider). The other members of the group didn't know the intruder was planning his stunt until he passed over them. The intruder is described by our source as a gung-ho, off-the-wall type who would try anything. He apparently did sail across the line into the Nellis Range buffer zone surrounding Groom, but he didn't get very far. He was chased down by security; a scuffle ensued, and he was hauled off to Nellis Air Force Base. A second member of the group followed him in on foot and was also detained by the Dudes.

Both of the intruders happened to be in the Marine Reserve, so their case has been handled by military justice. According to the source, the parachutist was supposedly held at Nellis AFB for almost a week, then released. He will go on trial in a military court, which can apparently be kept secret. The member of the party who followed on foot paid a fine of about \$1100 and agreed to sign some security forms.

Inquiries to Nellis have yielded, "No comment." (Does this mean the incident DID take place?) Inquiries to the Sheriff's Dept. yielded only ANOTHER pair of intruders--two men from Utah who drove past the Keep Out signs on Groom Lake Road later the same day.

Members of the original group do not want publicity. The source has allowed us to publish only the above general outline. Although we can't confirm any of it, we feel that the account is credible--because the intruders sounded so naive and ill-prepared. We wish we could have been there.

Intel Bitties

KING SHOW WENT WELL. We were pleased overall with the Oct. 1 Larry King UFO extravaganza, broadcasting live from Rachel. King was great. The producers were great. The crew was great. The panel was great. The people of Rachel were great. We want to thank them all for making it a great show. Perhaps in the next issue of the Rat we will be able to comment in more detail on the circus, including the still-unanswered questions about King's possible cloning. (He did

seem a little older and thinner than he appears on TV.)

SEMI TRUCK AT WHITE SIDES. Sighted at the White Sides trailhead on Sept. 19: A North American Van Lines tractor-trailer truck. The drivers had some time to kill and came to take the hike. (Note: The White Sides trailhead offers a convenient turnaround for truckers, while the Freedom Ridge trailhead does not.) C'mon down, good buddies!

ADVICE REPEATED. Naive tourists have been driving across the border lately at the rate of about one car per week. Immediate arrest, the towing of your car and a fine of up to \$600 are guaranteed. It may seem obvious but is worth repeating: If the big signs say "Restricted Area," "No Trespassing," "Keep Out," and "Use of Deadly Force Authorized," it means you shouldn't drive past them.

RUNWAY EXPANSION? Unsubstantiated third-hand rumor: One of the runways at Groom will be extended by about a mile. The contractor is Bechtel and the work will begin after the first of the year. [Thanks to a reader.]

AURORA SIGHTING. You can find Bill Sweetman's version of the alleged Aurora spyplane (different from the Testor's version) in the toy section at Wal-Mart stores. It is a two-inch model packaged in a Micro-Machines set of three aircraft, including the SR-71 and alleged TR-3A. Also found in the package are a couple of tiny Cammo Dudes--all for less than \$5. [Thanks to a reader.]

NEW CATALOG ITEMS. The following items are now in stock and available for immediate shipment from our mail order arm, Secrecy Oversight Council: Ben Rich's *Skunkworks* book, Lazar saucer model, book on Edward Teller (*Teller's War*), book on NSA (*The Puzzle Palace*), *Comprehensive Guide to Military Monitoring*, Tonopah Test Range satellite image (Cactus Flat), Nevada Test Site satellite image (Pahute Mesa), *UFOs And The Alien Presence: Six Viewpoints* and *Watch the Skies*. A bound copy of all Desert Rat back issues is available for \$1 per issue (\$17 plus postage). Ask for our latest catalog for ordering information.

REMEMBER THE SEVEN TRESPASSERS? [DR#1] Well, their charges have been settled [DR#11], but they still haven't got their equipment back from the AF. This includes binoculars, a telescope and a camera--worthless to the military but a significant loss to the owners. WHAT IS GOING ON HERE? Is the equipment contributing the national defense, or is the Air Force being PETTY AND VINDICTIVE? Let's resolve this case.

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