

Article in [Groom Lake Desert Rat #35](#)

Doubletalk on the E.T. Highway

As the Research Center prepares for war on the "E.T. Highway," a Fox publicity manager responds to requests about their movie *Independence Day* and its involvement with the State of Nevada. We provide full translation and analysis of PR lingo. Meanwhile, in the hyperspace of Washington, D.C., we sense some agitation from the "E.T. Governor"?

The "War on the E.T. Highway" continues.
See [Alien Highway page](#) for latest developments.

Below is a message left on my answering machine by the 20th Century Fox executive in charge of their E.T. Highway/*Independence Day* promotion. It is a response to [a letter I faxed to them on 3/28](#). In the letter I asked three things:

1. Whether any of *Independence Day*, which it set in Nevada, was actually filmed in Nevada.
2. Where the "ID4 monument" would be located, and whether appropriate permits had been applied for.
3. Whether I could be allowed to attend the Las Vegas gala and participate in the UFO panel discussion.

I had faxed the letter to Sean Dudas, who is Manager of Publicity and Promotions for the Fox movie studio in Beverly Hills. Dudas and a couple of Fox vice presidents visited Rachel by helicopter a month or two ago, accompanied by Nevada's Lt. Governor "Loony" Lonnie Hammargren. The three movie people struck local observers as *trés snob*, as though they were expecting the Inn to serve Perrier and offer valet parking for their chopper.

I had said in the letter that I needed to hear from them by Friday, because I would be using the information in my own publicity campaign the following week. Here is Dudas' record reply from my answering, received at 5pm on Friday. It is transcribed here without his permission because he is speaking as a representative of Twentieth Century Fox and he knew the call was being recorded.

Hi Glenn, this is Sean Dudas calling from 20th Century Fox. I got your fax the other day and I noticed that you had a deadline on it by which you needed us to respond. I'm a little bit confused because it seems as though you are really against this event and yet am I to understand that you want to be involved. I'm a little bit confused about that but I will answer your questions.

I wish that there was some way that we could get you turned around and maybe see that this event will be good for your area and in general just a fun thing for everybody involved. But at any rate, as to where "Independence Day" was filmed that's just generally something we don't talk about. I'm not really sure. I will try to find out.

Your second question, about where the monument will be, that's something that we're actually saving to, you know, for the unveiling. That's just a fact that we're sort of keeping secret until we actually get to the unveiling. That's, that's sort of part of the surprise. So all of those details will be revealed at the Press Conference itself, and of course we're going to acquire all of the proper permits and that kind of thing because we are working with the State.

As to your last question about the panel, you know, we'd love to have you on the panel but the panel has already been set. It's actually been set for quite a while. We have several panelists of UFO related experts.

And the other thing that I would urge you to do if I can is consider the fact that apparently you have a copy of the script, and I know that you have some negative feelings about the story for "Independence Day", but the, scripts change dramatically and, during the filming, and we would ask that you just judge the finished film rather than your perception of what it might be, because the whole idea of the film is the "what if?" question, and "what if" these things were to happen. An I know, that you with your interest in Area 51, ask this question probably more than a lot of other people do, and have to keep an open mind about things, so we would ask that you keep an open mind with regard to what we are doing as well.

OK? Hope that answers your questions. Thank you very much.

Analysis

To decode this message, you need to understand the position of the speaker. The Fox publicity department exists to promote movies, both good and bad. Even if the film is a clunker and they know it, they are still going to invent superlatives to describe it and will seek any opportunities to build interest.

Area 51 seems like a perfect publicity asset for anyone who can exploit it. All you have to do is build some Area 51 link into your movie, and then you can feed off the publicity that has already been generated by Lazar, Psychospy and others. If you can get the Governor of Nevada to endorse your movie, it's even better.

When opposition comes up, say from someone who has read the script and thinks it clucks, then the job of the publicity executive is to say, "You know, you really can't judge a movie before it comes out. Scripts can change, and scripts are only a small part of the whole package anyway. All we ask is that people keep an open mind and see the movie before they judge it."

A little pre-release controversy doesn't hurt, because it builds interest and encourages more people to "judge for themselves" by buying a ticket. Remember, it is not the quality of the movie that matter to Fox but *people buying tickets*.

The job of the publicity agent is to build pre-release interest, to fill the air with superlatives and to disable criticism until the movie is released. "You have to see the movie to judge it," is one stock response to criticism, and another is, "We'd really like to keep that information secret so as not to spoil the fun." Still, it is hard to see how the studio can justify not revealing *where* the movie was filmed. My question was very simple: "Was any of the movie filmed in Nevada?" If it was filmed in the state, why not say so and diffuse the tension?

On the other hand, if no significant part of the movie was filmed in this state, there is a very good reason to keep this fact secret. The Governor of Nevada has joined forces with Fox in a politically dubious effort to promote the film, supposedly because it takes place in his state. It might not look good for the Governor if this movie, set fictionally in Nevada, was actually filmed in, say, Utah. That would mean, in effect, that the Governor is encouraging studios to film in other states by rewarding them with publicity in the end. If this fact were known and loudly broadcast, say, by a government accountability activist, it would guarantee a political nightmare for the Governor that would make both him and the studio look bad. The publicity agent cannot lie about the filming location, because hundreds of people with no loyalty to Fox were involved in the production, so the agent's best alternative would be to stonewall as long as possible.

I also addressed the same question to the governor's office in [this letter](#). His press assistant [replied](#), but referred the question back to Fox. We smell evasion. *If the governor spent the taxpayer money to fly to L.A. to meet with Fox, and the governor has entered into an agreement with Fox that promotes their movie, then he ought to know whether or not the movie was filmed in his state.*

The Monument

It is fascinating to watch the L.A. publicity machine try to leave "Planet Hollywood" and interact with the real world. According to the Fox publicity blitz, they plan to unveil an "ID4 monument" somewhere along the E.T. Highway as part

of the April 18 ceremonies. "The monument will serve as a beacon for possible 'close encounters' with visitors arriving from the far reaches of outer space," says a press release.

The questions I asked were simple: Where will this monument be located, and have the appropriate permits been obtained or applied for?

This is one area where real life differs from Hollywood. While the studio can try to keep secret details of the movie's story, like whether or not the earth is saved in the end, it has no right to erect a monument in secret. A monument designed to attract space travelers would have to be pretty substantial, not just a plaque on the ground, any project like this would require some kind of permitting process whether it be placed on state, BLM or private land.

Constructing the monument within the highway right of way, owned by the state, poses safety and policy issues and would seem require a state review process. State Dept. of Transportation spokesman Scott Macgruder, who ought to have information on such things, says he has no knowledge of the monument and doubts it would be constructed on the right of way. He says that, as far as he knows, the monument is entirely Fox's project. Yet, Dudas is saying, in his message above, that Fox is working with the state. The governor certainly ought to know about the monument because it is mentioned in the official press release from his office. The official press release seems to imply that the governor has approved of the monument plan, yet no state paperwork seems to have been filed.

The state often places historical markers along the right of way and may allow local agencies to do the same, but to authorize a private company to put up a monument commemorating their product would be a ground-breaking event. It is essentially a rent-free billboard, sanctioned by the state, where none would be allowed otherwise.

The land just beyond the right of way, along the total length of the highway except in Rachel, is controlled by the BLM. Rights of way to disturb the land in any manner generally take months to obtain, and it seems extremely doubtful that the BLM would approve any such private monument anyway, even with the state's support.

The easiest route to take is to build the monument on private land, which is limited to Rachel. A building permit would be required, which cannot be obtained instantly, but otherwise the bureaucracy would be minimal. (Unless, of course, the neighbors objected.) This pretty much means that the monument would be built at the Little A'Le'Inn or the Quik Pick convenience store. If the governor participates in the monument's unveiling, as his press release implies, it would reinforce the charges that the state is officially endorsing one business or another. (Up to now it has been the Little A'Le'Inn which has received all the attention and implied endorsement.)

Hmmm... from a publicity agent's point of view, it would indeed be best to keep the location of the monument "secret" while the vice presidents gather to drink Perrier and figure out what to do.

Panel of UFO Researchers

I am crushed. I really wanted to be on that panel, but now that I've been rejected I guess I'll have to live with it. Vengeance is not my goal, and its not like I would start my own competing panel. On the other hand...

Anyway, I am really curious about this respected panel of UFO researchers--certainly a oxymoron. If the panel has already been selected and these are well-known UFO researchers, then why didn't the Fox publicity department include their names in their press releases. The *whole idea of Hollywood* is to drop names, so if Fox had purchased someone with the name recognition of Stanton Friedman or Jacques Vallée for the event, you can be sure they'd be throwing that name around like it was Stallone of Madonna.

But wait, I have a psychic vision. I see a name, and I think I now know at least one person who will be on the panel regardless of whether it has yet been confirmed. He is the mother of all B.S. artists, who speaks the Fox lingo and sucks up to these Hollywood types like a leech to a warm blooded creature. If you need a UFO expert for your panel--even the world's foremost UFO expert--he will be there, at your elbow, right when you need him. As an added benefit, he is also a "stunningly accurate" psychic and predictor of earthquakes, which can be handy in Southern California.

Oh... but that vision is fading now. I can't see the name anymore. It must have been a dream.

Another candidate I would like to see on the panel is former California Governor Jerry Brown, aka "Governor Moonbeam." It would be a grand event to see one E.T. governor meet another, and I am looking now for a similar catchy moniker for Miller. It should be the sort of nickname that rolls off the tongue and will stick with him for the rest of his political career. Any ideas? (Just "the E.T. Governor" might be good enough.)

Fox Meets Psychospy

Poor Mr. Dudas can't seem to figure it out. Why would someone who opposes an event ask to be involved in every aspect of it? Dudas does not grasp the Psychospy style of warfare, which is an intimate, low-key, soft-spoken form of intellectual terrorism. Our style is to get as close as possible to our opponent, explain our position to him as clearly, openly and completely as possible, and give him every opportunity to change. Meanwhile, we collect as much information as possible, preferably from our opponent himself. We wait a while and look for opportunities. Then, if he does not respond, we slowly strangle him with his own ironies.

Arrayed against us are the combined resources of the State of Nevada and the worldwide Fox entertainment conglomerate, not to mention the Little A'Le'Inn. This could be a cakewalk, though, at least compared fighting to the Air Force and Sheriff's Department, because both Fox and the governor are exquisitely sensitive to publicity. For them, the E.T. Highway is solely a "feel good" event, so stonewalling does not solve the problem like it does for the military, which does not care about image.

To Fox and the governor, Area 51 seemed like a free lunch: unlimited publicity at virtually no cost. What they didn't understand is that publicity is a two-edged sword, and that you cannot take from a resource without giving. They must have seen the success of the Larry King extravaganza in Oct. 94 and figured, "We can take that train." Larry King, however, had something to give. Sure, there was no new ground broken and the whole idea of erecting a stage in the desert was mildly ridiculous, but the intentions of the producers were good, and the production was credible. I think it represented a step forward in public acceptance of things unworldly.

Am I opposing the big E.T. Highway production because I was never consulted, or was I never consulted because they knew I would have been opposed? In any case, there is no trace of a political or intellectual contribution in the April 18 promotion. It will do nothing but obscure the issues and invite more idiots to the cross the border. Fox and Miller may be helping promote the local merchants--including the Research Center--but they have no comprehension of any other goals.

The Battle Continues

The position of the Research Center is that the E.T. Highway should not be unveiled until the safety and civil rights issues affecting tourists are addressed. There is no way this can happen before April 18, but appropriate mitigation might eventually change our view. We have to walk a careful line here, because we *do* want the issues addressed, not just a total retreat by the governor, which he will gladly do if given the opportunity.

Our position on *Independence Day* is less forgiving. Regardless of the quality of the film, there is no way that the State of Nevada should be seen to endorse it. If we want to get hysterical, then it is easy to point out that the film portrays human genocide on a large scale, and the governor wouldn't want to be associated with that. What is more important, though, it that the governor should not be promoting any single commercial product, be it a casino, chocolate bar, movie or restaurant/bar/trailer park.

We are also dead set against Fox using Area 51 to promote its fictional product, which ought to stand or fall on its own quality, not a marketing gimmick. *Independence Day* does nothing to advance the UFO movement, because the one-dimensional aliens want only to "kill, destroy, annihilate." Fox has arranged to paint "ID4" in huge letters on roofs of all the trailers at the Little A'Le'Inn. They want to film some kind of helicopter shot there for promotional purposes. I suspect that even if the April 18 event evaporates, they are still going to exploit the Area 51 connection by any means available.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, we must defend the dignity of our secret base. Whatever counter-event we hold on April 18 will only be the beginning. If Fox uses Area 51 in its publicity campaign, then July 4 will be our D-Day, too: That's how long we will have to build a counter-campaign on the internet. Plot, characters and denouement will all have to be aired, and Rupert Murdoch will rue the day he messed with *this* secret base.

(We'll still watch *The Simpsons* and *X-Files*, though.)

Governor On Edge?

In his recent public appearances, the governor has seemed a tad defensive about his Extraterrestrial Highway, mentioning it in speeches where it has no reason to be. For example, When inaugurating the new Desert Inn overpass in Las Vegas in mid-March, he opened his speech with something like, "This is not the E.T. Highway." No one laughed. A 3/30 article in the Las Vegas Review-Journal also leaves one wondering about what planet the Guv is on.

Will The Real Miller Stand Up?

WASHINGTON--Gov. Bob Miller has raised his national profile this year, but apparently not enough.

The March 30 issue of National Journal includes a picture of the Nevada governor with a flattering full-page article touting how a "new Democrat" governor has succeeded where President Clinton has failed. Unfortunately, the article is about Georgia Gov. Zell Miller, and the picture identifies the Silver State's Miller as the Peach State's Miller.

"I made a mistake. It's pretty simple," said Richard Bloom, the National Journal photographer who mixed up the governors' pictures.

Steve Tompkins, a spokesman for Gov. Zell Miller, said the governor was aware of the article and the photo but declined to comment.

Nevada's governor was not so reticent.

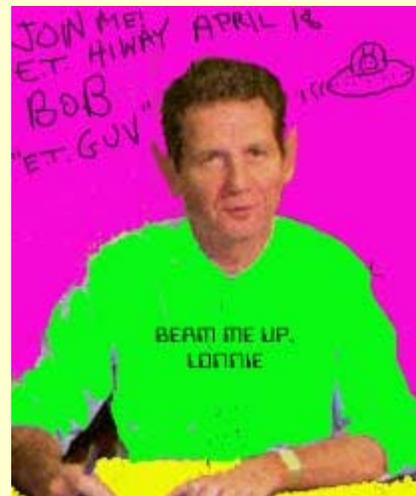
"Gee, I didn't know that when we designated an extraterrestrial highway in Nevada that strange things would start to happen so quickly," he said through spokesman Richard Urey. "I guess this media confusion is the beginning of unexplained events here on planet Earth. So I just have to live with it."

Miller's tongue-in-cheek reference was to a 100-mile stretch of dusty highway that skirts the mysterious Groom Lake military installation. The road has become a magnet for seekers of UFOs, and was recently dubbed the Extraterrestrial Highway.

As vice chairman of the National Governors' Association, Miller has made several trips outside Nevada this year, and he attracted the national media.

Perhaps when he becomes the association chairman in July, the weekly periodical will figure out which Gov. Miller he is.

It seems as though Miller is trying to say, whether his audience is interested or not: "Gosh, the E.T. Highway is FUN, don't you think? It's not a serious issue at all; it's a FUN issue. Don't you think I'm having FUN? Well, I am. FUN, FUN, FUN. I'm not worried at all." But his timing is off, and he is trying too hard.



Links

Other important documents in the "War on the E.T. Highway" ...

- E.T. Highway revealed in [governor's press release](#) | [entertainment wire](#) | [news article](#)
 - [Campbell's Report on Safety Issues](#), Mar. 6, 1996.
 - [Proposed "counter-event" to April 18 unveiling](#), Mar. 25, 1996
 - [Full document list on E.T. Highway](#)
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Reader Responses

In today's Sightings program (3/31), host Tim White said that the ET Highway signs may be installed flat on the ground, for easy reading by aliens. This is about as goofy as the rest of the name change! Humans are their real audience for this publicity gimmick.

-- virginia@teleport.com, 3/31/96

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