

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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!!!!!!!!!!!! NEWS FLASH !!!!!!!!!!!

Campbell Arrested During Second TV Seizure

Government oversight activist Glenn Campbell was arrested near Freedom Ridge yesterday evening (July 19) when he attempted to prevent the seizure by county authorities of a news crew's video tape.

In circumstances reminiscent of the April 4 ABC News incident, a news crew from KNBC-TV of Los Angeles had filmed an interview with Campbell at the popular viewpoint overlooking the unacknowledged Groom Lake air base. The crew consisted of reporter Chuck Henry and camera operator Julie Yellen. The two assert that they did not film the restricted base itself, which is visible at a distance of twelve miles from this public location. They, like ABC, intended to emphasize the absurdities of being able to see the base but not photograph it, according to the signs posted in the area.

About two hours after they arrived, Campbell and the crew were joined on Freedom Ridge by a Lincoln County Sheriff's deputy, Sergeant Doug Lamoreaux, who said that the security patrols had seen them pointing their camera at the base. The anonymous security guards--popularly nicknamed the "Cammo Dudes" for their camouflage fatigues--are a private contract force that patrols the Groom-area military border and adjoining public lands. Although widely rumored to be employed by the EG&G corporation under Air Force contract, their existence is not publicly acknowledged by either the military or EG&G. Previous reports by the nameless security guards resulted in the seizure of ABC's tape and equipment, which was later returned.

Lamoreaux asked that the KNBC crew turn over all their videotapes to him for inspection by the Air Force. Reporter Henry said that he could not do this, but that Lamoreaux could view the tapes through the camera's viewfinder to assure that none were of the secret base. Lamoreaux replied that he could not view the tapes because he did not have the required security clearance and authority to do so. The tapes, he said, could only be viewed by the Air Force.

That claim appears to be logically inconsistent. On the public land where this exchange took place, the base itself was clearly visible in the distance. If the crew had taken any pictures of the base, they would have been no different than what Lamoreaux could see himself. Why would viewing the video tape require a security clearance?

A sudden rainstorm and the threat of flash flooding interrupted the encounter. With the deputy following them, Campbell and the crew, who were travelling in a single four wheel drive vehicle, were directed to drive down from Freedom Ridge to the Groom Lake Road. There they were joined by a second Sheriff's deputy, Kelly Bryant.

On Groom Lake Road, Lamoreaux asked Campbell and the crew to step out of their vehicle. The discussion then

resumed between Lamoreaux and Henry, while Campbell and Yellen remained silent. Lamoreaux repeated his request for the crew's video tapes. Henry reiterated that although they had taken no pictures of the base, he did not wish turn over the tapes. He repeated the offer to let Lamoreaux inspect them through the camera's viewfinder.

Lamoreaux then said that, since the crew would not turn over the tapes voluntarily, he would seize them without a warrant. Lamoreaux claimed that the crew had pointed the camera at his vehicle as he approached them on Freedom Ridge--a charge the crew denied. He said that since this was also in the general direction of the base, his viewing of this action constituted "probable cause" for the seizure of the tapes. He said that a Supreme Court ruling, which he could not name, gave him the authority to seize such "contraband" from a vehicle without a warrant.

Lamoreaux and Deputy Bryant then moved toward the crew's vehicle with the apparent intention of searching it and seizing the tapes. At this point Campbell, who had been standing on the opposite side of the vehicle, reached in and pushed down the door locks on the side that Lamoreaux was approaching.

Lamoreaux said, "You're under arrest." Campbell was immediately handcuffed and placed in Deputy Bryant's vehicle.

Lamoreaux then proceeded to thoroughly search the crew's vehicle, although permission had not been granted and no warrant issued. Under threat of arrest by Lamoreaux, the two members of the film crew did not attempt to interfere. Lamoreaux seized all recorded video tapes in the vehicle--five altogether. He did not seize the camera, blank tapes or any other equipment. After the video tapes were taken, the crew was told that they were free to go.

Campbell was taken in handcuffs to the Lincoln County Sheriff's Substation in Alamo for booking. He was charged with Obstructing a Public Officer (NRS 197.190). This is the first time Campbell has been charged with any crime in Lincoln County. He posted \$600 bail and was released. Arraignment will be Wednesday, Aug. 3, 1:30 pm, in Alamo Justice Court.

Prior to the ABC and KNBC seizures, Campbell has been involved in three incidents in which film was taken by the Sheriff's Dept., turned over to the Air Force and never returned. In separate incidents on June 16, 1993, and June 30, 1993, Campbell was seen photographing a helicopter over public land near the military border--but not near any locations where the Groom Lake base is visible. Campbell voluntarily gave his film to Sgt. Lamoreaux upon request, with the explicit understanding that it would be developed and returned. Campbell saw this as an opportunity to prove that he had taken no illegal pictures, but his film was never returned; no charges were filed against him and no notice was given that the film was being formally seized.

In a third incident, on March 23, 1994, Campbell escorted a reporter and a photographer for the New York Times to Freedom Ridge. The photographer was asked by Lamoreaux to turn over his film, and he voluntarily relinquished two rolls. However, that film is widely assumed to be blank.

Campbell's previous experiences of having his film effectively confiscated without a warrant may have prompted his actions in the most recent incident. It is unclear why the Sheriff's Dept. did not seek a search warrant for KNBC as they did for ABC News or whether such a warrantless search is legal.

Notes

The Nevada statute under which Campbell was charged reads as follows:

197.190 OBSTRUCTING PUBLIC OFFICER. Every person who, after due notice, shall refuse or neglect to make or furnish any statement, report or information lawfully required of him by any public officer, or who, in such statement, report or information shall make any willfully untrue, misleading or exaggerated statement, or who shall willfully hinder, delay or obstruct any public officer in the discharge of his official powers or duties, shall, where no other provision of law applies, be guilty of a misdemeanor."

The Supreme Court ruling Sgt. Lamoreaux cited to justify the seizure--the name of which he could not recall--was later

revealed by Deputy Bryant to be the case of "Ross vs. U.S." No details of this ruling were available at press time.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Dept. is under contract with the U.S. Air Force to investigate, on demand, suspected violations of law along the military border. According to a recent county invoice, the Air Force pays the Sheriff's Dept. approximately \$50,000 per year for this service.

[Federal photography statute: [18 USC 795](#)]

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