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In opposition to the premature unveiling of the "Extraterrestrial Highway" by Governor Miller and the Fox studio, the Area 51 Research Center proposes....

A Free-Speech, Performance-Art, Counter-Cultural "Happening" In The Nevada Desert, April 18, 1996

...to be held along Highways 375 and US-93 between Las Vegas and Rachel, Nevada.

**** This document is a proposal only. If the official highway unveiling proceeds as planned, the final invitation to our counter-event will be published on the internet around April 1. In the meantime, your comments and ideas are encouraged.*

For more information on the "Extraterrestrial Highway" see http://www.infi.net/~psyspy/area51/events/highway_bill

BACKGROUND

Governor Bob Miller of Nevada has recently designated State Route 375 through Rachel, Nevada, as the "Extraterrestrial Highway." In doing so, he has bypassed the Nevada Legislature, where the measure had previously failed, and ignored both visitor safety and the many serious state issues connected with Area 51, the secret military base just south of the highway.

Near the highway, anonymous security guards and unsupervised local police routinely abuse the civil rights of tourists who approach the tense and poorly marked military border. Film and video tape has been repeatedly seized from both tourists and journalists without warrant or accounting, and people accused of inadvertent trespass are considered "guilty until proven innocent" in the local Justice Court. These are the kinds of issues a responsible governor should be dealing with, but Miller seems more concerned with entertaining aliens and pleasing Hollywood.

A 23-page report on the dangers to tourists was submitted to the governor in early March, but he has chosen to ignore it and proceed with the unveiling of new road signs. ([The full report can be found at the web site above.](#)) Last month, Miller traveled to Los Angeles, apparently at taxpayer expense, to meet with producers of an upcoming big-budget movie exploiting Area 51. Together they have arranged a publicity spectacle for April 18. There is no evidence, however, that Miller has visited the affected communities or consulted with anyone who might oppose the designation. Instead of soliciting the diverse views of residents, Miller has apparently listened to "Ambassador Merlin," a lobbyist in Carson City who thinks he is an alien.

For educated and well-prepared visitors, this area may hold some subtle attraction, but for the average tourist the "E.T. Highway" is false advertising. Most, if not all, of the "UFOs" seen here are the misperceived flares and aircraft lights of military war games. Aside from searching the skies for these lights, there is nothing to see, nothing to do and nowhere to go for the average tourist except wander too close to the border and taunt the military security guards. While this has always been the primary activity here and may indeed achieve greater openness over time, it is surprising to see the state encourage this kind of behavior and attention.

Miller has done nothing to repair the state's vague trespassing law or the many law enforcement abuses in Lincoln County that have victimized tourists here. Likewise, he has said nothing about the alleged environmental and worker rights crimes at the base. Nor has he addressed the problem of base contractors not paying their state and local taxes. Instead, Miller has chosen only to invite still more tourists here without preparing them for the potential dangers.

Under these circumstances, the governor's triumphant unveiling of his "E.T. Highway" cries out for a contrarian response.

THE MOVIE

Stepping beyond the state's usual neutral role, Miller has joined forces with Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp. to promote and essentially endorse their new movie "Independence Day" at the highway's unveiling. The movie is scheduled for nationwide release around July 4, and this event is seen as a way to build pre-release interest.

The film is a big-budget remake of "War of the Worlds." Judging from the original script, the characters seem one-dimensional and the plot predictable. Part of the movie is supposed to take place at "Area 51," but this fictional site bears little resemblance to the real facility. It is unfair to judge the movie before its release, however, since the producers have spared no expense in special effects. Still, one wonders if it deserves a state endorsement. The situation here seems similar to the state endorsing a single casino or other business that the governor has a personal relationship with.

Genuine UFO enthusiasts have reason to be upset about this film. The invading aliens are blandly evil and have nothing deeper to say than "Destroy, annihilate... will kill you all." Billions of earthlings are killed in the course of this movie and most of the world's major cities are wiped out--but viewers can rest assured there is still time for romance among the leading characters. According to the script, the President of the United States takes to the air as the pilot of a jet fighter in the final climactic battle against the alien mothership. In the end--you guessed it--planet earth, or what little is left of it, is saved in the nick of time, and the hero and heroine fall into each others arms.

THEIR PLAN

The Governor and movie studio are planning a big publicity event for the highway unveiling. According to a March 20 AP newswire (apparently taken from a Fox press release):

The gala unveiling and dedication will get a starry kick-off in Las Vegas on April 17, when Governor Miller and Fox host a special screening of selected scenes from INDEPENDENCE DAY, followed by a press and V.I.P. reception at Planet Hollywood. Several of the ID4 film makers and stars are also expected to participate.

The following morning, a large convoy of UFO watchers and movie fans, many of whom were winners of special promotional contests held across the country, will gather in Las Vegas, at a location to be determined, in buses, limos, helicopters and R/Vs. The giant ET HWY/ID4 convoy will then journey to the town of Rachel, which is next to the highway, for the unveiling and dedication ceremonies.

Activities on site will include welcoming speeches by Governor Miller and Nevada state officials, presentation of the key to the Pioneer Territory to the ID4 stars and film makers, a panel discussion with some of the nation's leading UFO experts, and distribution of special ET HWY/ID4 commemorative items. The event will culminate with the unveiling of the ET HWY signs and ID4 monument. The monument will serve as a beacon for possible 'close encounters' with visitors arriving from the far reaches of outer space.

OUR PLAN

There is no way average citizens with limited budgets can match the combined resources of the State of Nevada and Twentieth Century Fox, but if we choose our opportunities carefully and exercise maximum creativity, we might exploit the same publicity the governor and studio have created. Planet Hollywood, an aptly-named restaurant in Las Vegas, will be under the control of the movie studio, so no protest or public opposition would be tolerated there. Once they leave this artificial environment, however, there is 150 miles of empty desert between Las Vegas and Rachel.

Think of it as 150 miles of blank canvas with a captive audience and unlimited artistic potential.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

As an example of one possible artistic project, imagine this great convoy of dignitaries, tourists and press have been driving for about 45 minutes from Las Vegas. The terrain is barren and boring, and the travelers are searching the horizon for any interesting feature to break the monotony. Then, on a bluff near the road, they pass a sign. It is a small, temporary sign not unlike the many placards erected along the state's roadways by Miller's campaign in his last election. This one, however, bears a different message.

That message should be kept secret until the day of the event, and we need suggestions now as to what it may be. It should be a phrase or motto of two or three words that perfectly captures the issues and causes the greatest possible embarrassment to the governor and movie company. For now we call it simply "THE PHRASE."

The travelers think nothing at first of the lone sign in the desert, and the convoy continues on for another fifteen minutes without incident. Then another sign appears in a prominent but unexpected place bearing THE PHRASE. The interest of the travelers has become aroused now, and a game ensues for the next hour of desert highway. Signs with THE PHRASE are hidden in obscure locations near the road where you won't see them unless you are looking. The bored travelers in the buses, limos and RV's will begin to award each other points for being the first to spot each sign.

The density of signs becomes greater as the caravan approaches Rachel, ending in a gauntlet of them at the first stop. This will probably be the former site of the "Black Mailbox," the gathering spot of UFO buffs that will be replaced by a monument. When the travelers arrive, they will find an existing encampment of freedom fighters who have set up their tents and temporary artistic installations on public land as close as possible to the monument, almost crowding around it. The contrarians, who will all be wearing pins or t-shirts with THE PHRASE on them, will mix with the crowd and stay with it for the duration of the ceremonies.

Some volunteers will hand out flyers containing various messages relevant to the proceedings. One hand-out, for example, might contain a complete synopsis of the movie as well as quotes from the script so that visitors can judge for themselves its probable quality. (The quotes will not be so long as to infringe any copyright however.) Other flyers can offer political commentary on the Governor's star-struck alliance with aliens and movie stars at the expense of his constituents and future visitors.

Accompanying the convoy wherever it goes will be the Great Banner, carried in a pickup truck. It will be a huge display, perhaps 8 feet by 32 feet, made from tarpaulins and rolled out at every stopping point. Held up on posts by several volunteers, the banner will contain THE PHRASE in letters so huge that it cannot possibly be missed in any photograph or video tape taken at the ceremony. This will be an especially useful as visual aid for the helicopters, which the Fox team plans to use to ferry its VIPs from Vegas and to film the event. For the benefit of these higher visitors, THE PHRASE may also be spelled out in even bigger characters using natural objects arranged on the ground at every potential filming location.

Waiting for the helicopters will be a scene reminiscent of one in the movie itself. In the movie, UFO buffs gather on rooftops in Los Angeles to welcome the approaching aliens, who are still thought to be benign. They hold banners and signs toward the sky bearing phrases like, "Welcome Space Brothers." We could do the same but hold up signs that are not nearly so respectful of Fox and the governor.

At any point where the governor or studio have manufactured a photo opportunity, the goal of the freedom fighters is to make sure THE PHRASE also appears in the shot. However, we must not inhibit in any way the free speech of state dignitaries or movie people. There will be no hecklers or other interference with the ceremonies. Instead, we will simply offer alternative ceremonies before and after, and hopefully these will be far more interesting than the official version.

The above examples are only an illustration. The aim of this counter-event is not to restrict creativity but to provide an open medium for its expression. There are no specific rules apart from the constraints of Nevada law and BLM regulations. Each participant is free to develop his own project or join others to produce a larger work of art.

The energy to power this event will come from the state and the movie company. They will provide the journalists, publicity, VIPs and curious visitors. We, in turn, will generate the artistic tension and political conflict to transform the unveiling from a forgettable Hollywood publicity stunt into a worldwide embarrassment for the governor.

OUR GOALS

The main aim of this counter-event is political action. We want to force the governor to address the issues of visitor safety and civil rights along this highway before signs are unveiled and further publicity is generated. If he chooses to proceed without these problems resolved, then we need to create the greatest possible embarrassment for both him and the movie company.

If the governor backs out and sends another state official to take the heat, then his abdication will be loudly broadcast as the event proceeds. Likewise, the governor cannot relieve his responsibilities by simply reversing his "E.T. Highway" and pretending it never happened. Now that it has been passed, the designation is strongly supported in struggling Lincoln County for the promised economic benefit of increased tourism. The official designation has already resulted in significant investments by local businesses who expect the governor to follow through with his promises.

Miller apparently hates controversy and will not attack difficult issues unless forced to. The E.T. Highway was supposed to be a light and meaningless PR event, bringing the governor only positive publicity and photo opportunities with movie stars. Our job, as artists and freedom fighters, is to change that equation and make this one of the hottest political potatoes the governor has had to deal with, painful enough to result in action.

There is nothing wrong with the governor promoting Nevada locations for filming, but an ethical line is crossed when the state government endorses, or is seen to endorse, a final commercial product. Most of the scenes in the movie supposedly taking place in Nevada were filmed instead in Utah and California, and the governor is now rewarding that oversight. Miller's recent actions, especially visiting Fox in Los Angeles to coordinate the ceremonies with them, raise serious ethical concerns. Who is the governor representing here: a commercial film company in another state or the citizens and visitors of Nevada? Has he ignored in-state issues in favor of his own self-promotion?

If the governor cannot grasp this logic on his own, then we need to impress it on him publicly and with the greatest dramatic flair.

CONTINGENCIES

This document is a proposal only and a solicitation for ideas. A final plan of action will be published on the internet around April 1. The Area 51 Research Center is now encouraging your advice for how this project should proceed. We are looking for THE PHRASE and other catchy slogans to describe the movie, the highway and Governor Miller's participation in both. What should our event be called?

April 1 should give participants time to make travel plans and prepare their artistic projects. After this "April Fools Day" cut-off, our plans will be difficult to reverse, and we will probably go ahead with them in some form even if Fox and Miller back out at the last minute. We will present the same themes as planned, but now without opposition, and the event may still be noticed due to the residual publicity of the governor's retreat. We will get a jump on the studio's pre-release publicity by offering our own version first, and we will make sure the world knows where the governor stands on the unresolved issues here.

April 18 is a Thursday. On April 17, while the governor is hobnobbing with movie stars at Planet Hollywood, we will be preparing our own presentations in Rachel. On Saturday, April 20, Rachel will be holding its annual town celebration, "Rachel Day," with a parade, booths and events. On Friday, if there is enough interest, we may organize a hike to Tikaboo Peak, a mountain overlooking the secret base at Area 51. Weather in Rachel is generally mild in April, but is often very windy. Camping is the probably the easiest accommodations.

THE SPONSOR

The Area 51 Research Center is the principal local organization distributing information on Area 51 and promoting greater government accountability there. We have been established in Rachel for over three years, and we published the first book on the base, "The Area 51 Viewer's Guide," back in 1993. No one from the State of Nevada or Fox has ever

contacted us regarding the alien highway or the accuracy of the movie. Over the past three years, the Research Center has organized many safe and productive political activities including active opposition to the Freedom Ridge land withdrawal, "Groomstock '93," and many other hikes and camp-outs near the military border. This will be our first "artistic" event but not our first protest of government abuses.

The Research Center will be acting only in an advisory capacity, however. We will provide general coordination, as well as some materials and suggestions, but we cannot tell participants what to do. Each person will be responsible for his own safety and conduct.

Email is preferred for comments. Please send them to campbell@ufomind.com. If necessary, you can also contact the Research Center by telephone at 702-729-2648, or write us at PO Box 448, Rachel, NV 89001.

Please forward this document to anyone who might be interested.

Glenn Campbell / Director
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