

Popular Mechanics cover article June 1997

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Subject: Popular Mechanics cover article June 1997

The cover article of June 1997 Popular Mechanics is "The new 'Area 51'".

The article was written by Jim Wilson, Science/Technology editor for the magazine. He claims to have visited the border of Area 51 recently and encountered only a locked gated with a rusty lock and no one or nothing in sight. This contrasted sharply with the time that a PM correspondent, Abe Dane, was guided to the border by Glenn Campbell.

The article's theory is that the Air Force has abandoned the top-secret testing site in favor of the Utah Launch Complex of the White Sands Missile Range. This complex is located south of Utah Route 70 and east of the Green River - beneath unlimited-ceiling restricted airspace designated as R-6413. This complex is supposed to be the launch site of the X-33 type of "pop-up" satellite and weapon launcher that the military wants to use as one of the next generation of weapon systems. NASA and the Air Force have signed an agreement to share "redundant assets". This direct descendant of the Mach 15, 50 mile altitude, Have Region code-named aircraft is a lifting-body shaped vehicle capable of carrying and launching a 6 to 10 thousand pound payload.

The landing site for this vehicle is reported to be Michael AAF. Both of these bases are part of the Air Force Space Command (AFSPC) and its Space Warfare Center (SWC). Falcon Air Force Base just became the the home for the SWC's 576th Flight Test Squadron, reports PM. Where Groom Lake had the NTS to control access, Michael Army Air Field is in the midst of Dugway proving Ground, the place where the Army stores and tests nerve gas and chemical weapons.

The article closes with the report that Air Force CT-43 transports, which previously flew workers to Area 51, have begun making flights to Utah. Also noted is that not far from the the "new Area 51" is the 480-acre Sherman ranch that millionaire Robert M. Bigelow purchased for his National Institute for Discovery Science.

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