

Re: Pop. Mechanics on Utah Launch Complex

From: **Rich Thomson**
 Date: Mon, 12 May 1997 13:11:43 -0800
 Subject: Re: Pop. Mechanics on Utah Launch Complex

In article <199705091423.HAA04638@lists1.best.com> ,
 "JOHN C. YEARGIN" <JOHN_YEARGIN@compuserve.com> writes:
 > 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.

I find this very hard to believe. There are no significant runway facilities of the type at Groom (5 mile runway, etc.) at the Utah Launch Complex, as far as I know. The site is used to launch missiles towards White Sands for testing. Their booster rockets are dropped over the Canyonlands region of Utah. The disposal of these boosters over such a sensitive natural area (Canyonlands National Park, Dead Horse Point State Park, etc.) has had environmentalists fighting the use and extension of this facility.

> The landing site for this vehicle is reported to be Michael AAF.

Now this seems a little more credible. Michael AAF is deignated as an alternate landing site for the space shuttle, so it could definately accomodate the kind of aircraft landing at Groom. However the air strip is located in plain sight of a BLM campground at Simpson Springs. I've been to the area myself and the town of Dugway and all its above-ground facilities are located within plain view.

> [...] Dugway
 > proving Ground, the place where the Army stores and tests nerve gas and
 > chemical weapons.

Chemical and biological agents are not stored at Dugway. They are tested at DPG, but they are stored at the Tooele Army Depot, located approximately 75-100 miles from DPG.

> 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.

I'd appreciate it if someone could give a more accurate geographical location for the Sherman ranch. There isn't much private land out in these areas; most of the property is either under restricted access (Dugway Proving Ground, Utah Test and Gunnery Range, Wendover practice range), or BLM land.

A search of the web revealed these relevant documents on the Utah Launch Complex and indicate that the launch complex is not currently under military jurisdiction, but instead is owned by the state of Utah.

<URL: <http://www.em.doe.gov/er/greenriv.html>>
 Environmental Restoration Site Summary

"The mission of the site was to provide uranium for the United States national defense program. Union Carbide built the mill in 1958 and operated it until 1961. Later, the mill buildings were used for assembly of missile components for the Utah Launch Complex. The State of Utah acquired ownership of the mill and tailings site in 1988."

<URL: <http://www.em.doe.gov/bemr96/grri.html>>
 Utah UMTRA (Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act) Sites

"The former Green River mill and tailings site covers approximately 3.6 hectares (nine acres) and is located in the east-central portion of Utah in Grand County. The site is 1.6

kilometers (one mile) southeast of the City of Green River and 113 kilometers (70 miles) west of the Utah-Colorado border. The U.S. Army's White Sands Missile Range Utah Launch Complex uses most of the vacant land south and east of the site."

...

"The State of Utah currently owns the site and will participate in decisionmaking."

<URL: <http://www.media.utah.edu/medsol/UCME/g/GREENRIVER.html>>

Short description of the history of the town of Green River, including this short statement regarding the ULC:

"The southeastern Utah uranium boom of the 1950s provided a temporary economic stimulus. More important was the establishment of the Utah Launch Complex of the White Sands Missile Base in 1964, which brought the town's population to a high point of almost 2,000 before the closing of the complex in the 1970s led to yet another economic downturn."

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``Between stimulus and response is the will to choose.''' -- Steven Covey

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email me for more info

Rich Thomson
rthomson@ptc.com

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