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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Citadel in the Rockies and Star Wars

From: Stig Agermose <Stig.Agermose@online.pol.dk>
Date: Sat, 8 Aug 1998 01:27:36 +0200
Fwd Date: Fri, 07 Aug 1998 22:04:14 -0400
Subject: Citadel in the Rockies and Star Wars

From Scripps Howard News Service via the Nando Times.

http://www2.nando.net/newsroom/ntn/voices/080798/voices12_26965_noframes.html

Stig

ANN McFEATTERS: Citadel in the Rockies and Star Wars

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CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN, Colo. (August 7, 1998 09:12 a.m. EDT
<http://www.nandotimes.com>) -- Hidden cameras photograph the undersides of vehicles entering this top-secret complex one-third of a mile inside this beautiful, 100-million-year-old mountain 7,100 feet above sea level.

Twenty-two thousand visitors a year must go through metal detectors, surrender cameras and beepers and are watched by uniformed soldiers with guns. Inside the darkened command center, where a four-star general sometimes comes to ascertain if the United States is in danger, banks of virtual reality computer monitors plot developments around the globe.

Blast doors that can withstand 1.5 million tons of TNT protect 1,250 people, 240 mainframe computers and nearly three miles of tunnels and 15 buildings, 11 of them three stories high.

Any time an unidentified plane flies into U.S. airspace or whenever a missile is fired anywhere in the world, crews on duty here 24 hours a day know it.

But the folks at the Cheyenne Mountain Air Station, men and women from the U.S. and Canadian military services who run the operations center for the North American Air Defense Command, the Air Force Space Command and the U.S. Space Command, are not satisfied.

The Cold War is over, but they want Star Wars.

As nations such as Iran and Iraq pursue nuclear weapons, pressure is growing among Republicans in Congress to put Ronald Reagan's old Strategic Defense Initiative, dubbed "Star Wars" by

the press, on a faster track.

Although \$50 billion has been spent over the last 15 years on the effort to develop a space-based shield against nuclear missiles, it's still just a concept. There is as yet no way to protect against incoming ballistic missiles; some scientists think it's not feasible. Also, it would violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which holds that the best way to prevent nuclear war is for nations to remain defenseless against missiles. Without the treaty, Russia might cancel arms reductions.

But the possibility of terrorists firing missiles at U.S. cities has given a new impetus to the Star Wars debate.

Officials at Cheyenne Mountain, who make it clear that they only assimilate information about missile launches and pass it on to superiors to decide a U.S. response, are blunt about their wishes. They'd like to see SDI go forward and they'd like to be in charge of it.

President Clinton is spending \$4 billion a year on missile defense research but won't decide until 2000 whether to push for deployment, if possible, of an anti-ballistic missile defense system by 2003.

Most recently, House Speaker Newt Gingrich has become a big supporter of spending money to try to develop such a system. He is supported by conservative groups, including Gary Bauer's Family Research Council, Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy and the Coalition to Defend America.

NORAD was established in response to the Soviet Union's military and space advances in the 1940s and '50s. The Cheyenne Mountain center, which sits on 1,319 springs each weighing 1,000 pounds to cushion personnel and equipment in event of a bomb blast or an earthquake, set up shop in 1966 at a cost of \$142 million (it would cost \$18 billion today). Its annual budget is \$175 million.

The facilities bear resemblance to James Bond movies, although officials here complain "our No. 1 enemy is Hollywood." They constantly, wearily insist they can't track UFOs, don't have a computer named HAL that could start World War III and can't launch anything or scan the horizon.

The nature of the threat to the United States has changed since the Cold War ended, but U.S. officials are still nervous about rogue operators getting control of nuclear missiles in Russia or terrorists launching missiles at the United States.

On any given day, the Cheyenne Mountain Air Station monitors 8,000 manmade objects floating around in space. They alert authorities about illegal drug flights. They keep an eye on nuclear tests. And they keep their fingers crossed that the politicians will get serious about SDI.

The debate about whether taxpayers want to spend billions of dollars to try to develop protection against incoming missiles ought to concern every American. Some experts say such a threat is at least a decade away. Others say it is immediate.

There are no guarantees. If Americans choose to spend billions of dollars on research, it could well be a waste of money -- a giveaway to defense companies.

But if nothing is done to figure out how to counter incoming missiles, a rogue missile launched against the United States could not be stopped.

In this citadel devoted to watching the skies, minds have already been made up.

(Ann McFeatters covers the White House and politics for Scripps Howard News Service. Her e-mail address is mcfattersa@shns.com.)

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