**AREA 51 INSTALLATION**

**GROOM LAKE, NEVADA**

Every weekday morning, at least 500 people arrive at the guarded terminal owned by EG&G on the northwest side of McCarran Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada. Here they board one of a small fleet of unmarked Boeing 737-200s. Using three digit numbers prefixed by the word "Janet" as their callsigns, the 737s fly off North every half hour.

Their destination is Groom Lake, also known as Area 51, an installation so secret, its existence is denied by the government agencies and contractors that have connections there. By late 1955, the facility had been completed for flight testing of Lockheed's U-2 spy plane. Since that time, Groom Lake has undergone vast expansion, catering to the needs of testing the most advanced aircraft projects in the world. Forty-four years after it was created, Groom Lake has hosted flight testing of the aforementioned Lockheed U-2, the SR-71 Blackbird, the F-117 stealth fighter, Northrop's B-2 stealth bomber, the mysterious Aurora Project, and possibly even alien spacecraft.

Tony LeVier, Lockheed's test pilot assigned to test-fly the U-2 spy plane, claims the credit for recognizing Groom Dry Lake as a suitable test site. The CIA gave U-2 designer Kelly Johnson the task of choosing and building a secure test site. In March 1955, Johnson sent LeVier and Skunk Works foreman Dorsey Kammerer to visit potential test sites in the deserts of southern California, Nevada, and Arizona. After two weeks, LeVier presented Johnson with his impressions, and Johnson chose Groom Lake.

The Groom Lake facility has been known by many names since its construction. Kelly Johnson named the place "Paradise Ranch". When his flight test team arrived in July 1955, they simply called it "The Ranch". In fact, the secret base was formally named Watertown Strip, after the town in upstate New York where CIA director Allen Dulles was born. In June 1958, it was officially designated Area 51 by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). The adjacent AEC proving grounds became known as the Nevada Test Site and divided into such numbered areas. The base is now known worldwide as "Area 51" (thanks to numerous mentions in Hollywood shows and movies), though officially this designation was dropped in the 1970s.

By 1970, the USAF Systems Command took over the operation of Groom Lake. At this time, the U-2 and A-12/SR-71 spy planes had both been tested and in service on reconnaissance missions. Unmanned high-speed drones were also being tested, including the Model 147 Lightning Bug, Model 154 Firefly, and D-21 Tagboard. In 1967, the United States acquired its first Soviet MiG-21 and the US efforts to acquire Soviet weapons technology expanded.

In 1975, the Red Flag series of realistic air warfare exercises started at Nellis AFB, using large portions of the ranges surrounding Groom Lake. The box of airspace surrounding Groom Lake was strictly off-limits to Red Flag aircrews. It became known as "Red Square" at this time, but later acquired the semi-official title of "Dreamland" as a series of new exotic aerospace projects evolved in the late 1970s. These included the Have Blue and Tacit Blue stealth technology demonstrators. The testing of these aircraft brought extreme security measures at Groom Lake.

The Groom Lake base was considerably expanded in the 1980s. The main runway (14/32) was extended to the south, and then a huge northernly extension built out onto Groom Dry Lake, today having a length of 27,000 feet. A smaller parallel runway was built in the early 1990s. Semi-recessed "scoot and hide" shelters were built on the main taxiway so that secret aircraft could be more easily hidden from spying satellites overhead. New radars, satellite telemetry and other communications facilities were installed, and extra warehouse and assembly areas constructed. The base housing area was completely rebuilt, accommodating up to 2,000 people, and an extensive recreational facility provided. Today, Groom Lake seems to be administered by Detachment 3 of the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB.

Perimeter security was also increased. Until 1984, it was easy to view the base from Bald Mountain and other hills in the Groom Range to the north of the lakebed. The USAF then extended the Nellis range military reservation to cut off the view...or so they thought! Two hillsides to the south of the Groom Range still offered a view of the base from 12 miles away. White Sides Peak and Freedom Ridge, these points were annexed by authorities in 1995.

Clearly marked but not actually fenced, the entire boundary of the base is patrolled by an anonymous security force equipped with high-tech surveillance gear. Remote electronic sensors detect movement along known dirt tracks and roads leading towards the installation. It has been thought for quite a while now that the surveillance equipment is so advanced that certain sensory equipment has the ability to smell a person coming near the boundary, and distinguish him/her from other animals nearby. The ground patrols, often called "Cammo Dudes", are assisted by FLIR-equipped Sikorsky MH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters.

Since the Tacit Blue flights ended in 1985, only two further black projects which were presumably test-flown from the secret base, have since been officially acknowledged. These were both stealth air-launched missiles: the Lockheed Advanced Cruise Missile (ACM), cancelled in 1992, and the Northrop Tri-Service Stand-Off Attack Missile, cancelled in 1994. So what activities are taking place at Groom Lake?

In 1989, a man named Bob Lazar appeared on a Las Vegas television station and claimed that he had been employed at Area 51 for the purpose of "reverse engineering" alien flying saucers. He alleged that nine of these disc-shaped craft were flown from a highly secure facility named "S-4" at Papoose Lake, 10 miles southwest of Groom Lake.

Lazar's story has been widely criticized and a more credible link to disc-shaped objects is that they are testbeds for anti-gravity propulsion systems, being tested at Groom Lake. Such technology would represent an unprecedented leap worthy of the most extreme secrecy. So would an operational hypersonic spy plane with another new propulsion system, such as Pulse Detonation Wave Engines or hydrogen-powered scramjets.

There is much circumstantial evidence to link Groom Lake with (at the very least) experimental high-Mach vehicles. It has even been claimed that a new mother/daughter combination like the A-12/D-21 has been flown, known as the Super Valkyrie. Evidence from base-watchers and elsewhere also suggests other top-secret, Special Access Programs that have been conducted at Groom Lake in recent years:

* **High Altitude Stealth Reconnaissance**: Large subsonic long-endurance vehicle jointly developed by Lockheed and Boeing to replace the SR-71's ability to overfly denied territory at will. Based on the Skunk Works failed bid for the Advanced Tactical Bomber (ATB) - the B-2, it was cancelled in 1992 after at least $300 million had been spent, and replaced by the Tier 3 Minus UAV (Lockheed's Darkstar).
* **Covert Assault Transport**: Probably a delta configuration with advanced V/STOL capabilities but with very low noise as well as radar signature. Probably cancelled in 1993 in favor of further Bell/Boeing V-22 Osprey development.
* **Stealth Helicopter**: Different designs with emphasis on low blade and transmission noise, also exploring new technology to reduce blade and efflux signature. (Sikorsky's new attack helicopter, the successor to the Apache - the Comanche, incorporates stealth technology, but this is being tested elsewhere.)
* **Cloaking Technology**: Cloaking technology in the form of electro-chromatic panels mounted to aircraft has been revealed as being tested at the Area 51 installation.

Recently, a new theory which is of a very good basis has risen which gives an idea as to the glowing objects seen above the Groom Lake installation. Researcher Tom Mahood has mentioned his theory that the objects moving at incredible speeds with sudden directional changes, emitting an unusual glow, could in fact be the result of experimental proton beam systems.