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**WORLD
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AREA 51
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ACCOUNT**

The story they
don't want you to read...
The photos they don't want you to see...

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Is this the secret of Area 51? Just what is going on at Dreamland? With an eye-witness account of a US Black Project taking off from Groom Lake in broad daylight, a run down of what's out there and exclusive pictures over the next three issues, *AI* treads where no other mag has gone before...

A hard-hitting exclusive that, if you are reading it whilst sitting comfortably in your government office, should make you spit your cigar out onto your plush shag-pile carpet...

It was all a bit too quiet wasn't it?

Area 51, Dreamland, Groom Lake, The Ranch, The Box, Paradise Ranch, Watertown — call it what you like, the mystery behind 'America's most popular secret base' has fuelled more rumours and stories than any other military installation in the world. Officially, it doesn't exist — the US government denies all knowledge of the facility. But, forever-famed for its role in ensuring the development and flight testing in complete secrecy of such projects as the U-2, A-12 and F-117A, this remote dry lake bed at the foot of Emigrant Valley, Nevada, has featured in the imagination of pretty much every die-hard (or day-dreaming) enthusiast.

One of the most popular subjects of any such debate over recent years has been what is commonly referred to as Project 'Aurora'. This name was used for years to allude to the development of a highly classified manned reconnaissance platform. As a replacement for the SR-71 Blackbird, the aircraft was reported to be capable of flying at anything up to Mach 8, and was being operated/test flown out over the world's hotspots from Groom Lake amongst a handful of other places. The name 'Aurora' has since been proved to have been the term used as a cover for the then secret ATB competition between Lockheed and Northrop, which resulted in the B-2. But despite this, the name still sticks to the aircraft that, if it exists (or

existed), would be one of man's greatest achievements ever to have flown.

While there is little hard evidence to go by, 'Aurora' has been the subject of countless magazine and newspaper articles on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond. Sightings and eye-witness reports from all over the world have constantly fuelled rumours that the US has successfully developed, produced and flown a manned aircraft capable of flying on the edge of space at somewhere around 4,000mph.

Hard evidence or not, such reports reached a peak in the late-1980s/early-1990s, perhaps reaching fever-pitch when a 'US stealth aircraft' apparently crashed at our very own Boscombe Down test establishment on 26 September 1994. Since then, things have appeared to slow down a bit, with less sightings reported and fewer rumours flying around. Until now...

Enter Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle.

Mienrad is a near rabid 'Groomie', feverishly climbing Nevada's seemingly inaccessible mountain ranges whenever the opportunity

Above: The road to nowhere. The Area 51 border at 'Groom Lake Road', some 13 miles off Highway 375 in deepest, darkest Nevada. Stepping over the line and you not only lose your rights, but the 'Use of deadly force is authorized'. And you should be in no doubt that you ARE being watched...

steve_hauser@desertsecrets.com

Below: Man on a mission. Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle and Steve 'AF-2' Hauser — watching, always watching. The intrepid pair is shown having scaled the dizzy heights of Reveille Peak and overlooking Groom Lake a few days before the all-important sighting. The large optical telescope on the right, known as 'Big Momma', gives a focal length of over 2,000mm, and carrying it up a mountain is no mean feat! Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle



WARNING

Restricted Area

It is unlawful to enter this area without permission of the Installation Commander
Sec. 37, Internal Security Act of 1950: 40 U.S.C. 757
While on this installation all personnel and the property under their control are subject to search.

Use of deadly force authorized



arises to spend days (and nights)-on-end gazing out over the arid desert at the 'base that doesn't exist'. Accompanied by a hand-picked selection of equal-minded 'Groomies', our man embarked on one of his many trips to the area in September last year. The main purpose of this particular 'assault' on the US government's sacred land was to conquer an uncharted and un-visited viewing site that overlooks Groom Lake from the northwest of the site. After successfully completing this mission of immense proportions (see later issue!), Mienrad and his band of merry men decided to spend a few days on the slightly more accessible Tikaboo Peak to take in the sights. Tikaboo is the regular haunt of visitors wanting to see Groom for themselves and, with the facility about 25 miles roughly to the west, it's the closest you can hope to get without being shot! However, like any of Groom's 'viewing sites', Tikaboo can only be scaled by those who come suitably equipped for its arduous 7,900ft climb.

So, with the perils of another Tikaboo climb under his belt and with binoculars on Quick-Reaction Alert, our intrepid explorer and his team sat overlooking Dreamland and waited... Would they see anything? Would they be visited by the seriously serious 'cammo dudes' — the anonymous security guards there to watch their every move and make sure the base's 'border' is not crossed? Once you cross the border (invisible unless you know where and how to look for it) you lose all your rights. And, as the warning signs point out 'THE USE OF DEADLY FORCE IS AUTHORIZED'.

Watching. Waiting. Mienrad and his team sat and peered out over the desert...

Incredibly, he saw what he believes to be the legendary 'Aurora' take-off right in front of his eyes...

Here is his report. Exclusive and all yours.

The base that doesn't exist. The Groom dry lakebed can be seen in the foreground, with the massive base infrastructure at the foot of the mountains beyond. This is in fact rumoured to be only a fraction of the base itself, with unfounded claims of vast facilities underground. This image was taken from the 'Freedom Ridge' viewpoint that, at 12 miles out, was the closest you could get before the land was incorporated into the Area 51 border in 1995.

What is Area 51?

Occupying a dry lake bed within the three million acre Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range, the enormous base encompasses literally hundreds of buildings and boasts the world's longest runway at 30,000ft — almost six miles. It has made high profile 'appearances' in numerous magazines, tabloids, books and even X-Files episodes. Yet incredibly, the US government denies all knowledge of the facility — officially, it doesn't exist.

Most popularly called Area 51, the official name of the base remains unknown, this designation coming from when the area was part of the Nevada Test Site.

It was originally constructed in 1955 as a remote home for the top-secret U-2 programme. Since then the base has expanded rapidly, swallowing hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars with it.

Only a handful of Groom's fruits have seen the public light of day, most notably the U-2, A-12/3R-71 and P-117 programmes. Exactly what has gone on at Groom Lake over the years will probably remain classified for years, if not forever, but only time will tell.

One of the base's best security devices is its remoteness — the nearest viewing point (Tikaboo Peak) is 25 miles away. Previous viewing sites at White Sides Mountain and so-called 'Freedom Ridge' (offering views from around 12 miles away) were 'land-grabbed' by the US government. As a result, Area 51's border was extended in April 1995 to include these two sites leaving Tikaboo as the nearest viewing point.

The nearest civilisation to the base is the tiny town of Rachel, which is found down the 'Extraterrestrial Highway' (Highway 375). Travelling along the highway there are a number of single-track roads that stem off towards the border. After travelling about 13 miles down the largest of these (towards 'Groom Lake Road'), the road reaches the border and forceful signs clearly warn off anyone who thinks he/she might try to cross it. Elsewhere along the desert floor and mountain ranges, scarce and almost invisible orange posts flag the border. But, even if you have the guts to have ventured so far as to actually see the border, you can guarantee that you are not alone.

You will have been carefully watched by crack security patrols from within the base, via movement sensors and cameras strategically placed along its edge. The two-man security patrols, wearing no insignia or identification, are dressed in desert fatigues, and are known as 'cammo dudes'. They drive white Jeep Cherokees, with a light bar on the roof, and you can bet your bottom dollar they know you are coming as soon as you turn off the Highway. They are armed, and if the borders are crossed, as the warning signs point out, 'The use of deadly force is authorized'.

It is undoubtedly the most intriguing base on earth.

Coming soon: *The history of Area 51 and how to see it for yourself!*



The government on the run! Incredibly, on sight of a 'cammo dude's' security jeep heading towards the border, our team decided to give chase. At the hands of image stabilised lenses, the faceless 'dudes' suffered multiple photographic hits as they sped towards the safety of the border. Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle

gunner, Raffi took to our EOS5 (boasting 300mm image-stabilised zoom lens) and locked on to our prey. Fire! The camera-shy cammo dudes suffered multiple photographic hits. We called it the 'Motha of all Chases' and got some great snapshots.

The chased vehicle took up a position on a hill located to the left of the sign forest near the Groom Road Ravine. Our group also repositioned, making our way carefully along the orange posts marking the borderline to Dreamland. We crawled up through black dust, avoiding the stinging yuccas, and on top of the hill, we took to our cameras again for snapshots of the Dudes monitoring us monitoring them.

Ahaa! Something new to report. In thick black letters, the word CALF was painted onto the vehicle's hood. What did CALF stand for? We mulled over the possibilities Captured Alien Life Forms? CALF as in cows...? As in cattle mutilations? Our conspiracy-theory-fed minds spun into overtime. Was CALF meaningless or was it an acronym for some secret organisation? Maybe it was just a contrived set of letters designed only to screw with our brains. I became convinced... we'd definitely been watching too many X-files episodes.

After what appeared to be a cammo dude shift change, we decided to leave them to it — but not before noticing the dudes' new 'MIB-styled' attire — black(!) tee-shirts, beige trousers and black paratrooper boots. Very stylish indeed! But, enough frivolity, our agenda was tightly filled — we had a mountain to climb and a secret base to view.

Above right: Where only Groom Lake Interceptors dare. The imposing sight of Tikaboo Peak (on the right), as seen from Groom Lake Road. Only the most experienced and well equipped climbers should even think about ascending its 7,900ft of treachery! Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle

Right: Taken on a previous trip to 'Dreamland', the Swiss Mountain Bat monitors Tikaboo valley and the restricted area. To the left can be seen Bald Mountain. Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle

IN SITU

Tikaboo Peak, 7 September 1999: We made the 7,900ft Tikaboo ascent in good time. With many climbs completed in the past, we knew exactly what to expect and we came well equipped. On top of the essentials, our inventory boasted a full array of Canon image-stabilised binoculars, photo/video cameras, a Uniden Bearcat 3000 XLT scanner, a Sony tape recorder and last (but not least) brand-new lawnchairs sporting new (Have Blue-styled!) markings — white and light blue stripes. And so we began another day of monitoring the goings on (or the lack of) at the Groom Lake base.

While there might have been nothing to report all day, the sheer pleasure of sitting in (almost) complete solitude high above a stunning landscape almost makes you forget why

you are there and what you are doing! A truly humbling and majestic experience.

But, while there might not be any movements over yonder to get your blood pumping, there is always the intrigue of the 'JANET' flights to fuel your expectations. These are regular Boeing 737 flights arriving from nearby Las Vegas McCarran Airport. Flights that bring in scores of anonymous workers to be shut away in those huge hangars to work on the things dreams are made of...

PINCH YOURSELF...

Day two. Despite the night's airshow (fiercely flickering flares originating from widespread aerial wargames over the southern parts of the Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range) the team had managed to get enough rest to crawl completely refreshed out of their sleeping bags.

At 05.30hrs, we were up and alert with the nervous anticipation of the day ahead. We were ready for anything. Our video cameras were loaded with fresh batteries and we 'scoped' the base with our telephoto lenses, while our scanners searched the bands for signs of radio activity.

The sun slowly rose higher and higher over the awakening desert as our synchronised watches passed 06.00hrs. The temperature began to climb. Essential sips of water tamed our thirst. I sat chomping away on a carrot waiting... for something... anything to happen. We were patient yet apprehensive.

'Sigh... a dull morning, this'. Until...
...a crackling Bearcat.

...Traffic departing off Runway 32 is a fastmover...the wind calm... cleared for take-off... !!!

Now the adrenaline pumped. It's amazing how quickly one manages to swirl around to



Live life to the Machs!

By Mienrad Eberle (aka The Swiss Mountain Bat), with thanks to Steve Douglass

In order to keep their latest cutting-edge, state-of-the-art gadgets a secret, both civil and military aircraft manufacturers from either side of the Atlantic burn away millions of dollars every year — the US being the biggest culprit. But, while billions of dollars are hidden away in so-called 'black budgets', a simple piece of equipment — a deckchair costing just \$8.50 from the nearest Walmart (!) — allows you to venture out for 'extreme desert camping' right outside of installations run by untouchable military/industrial agencies and guarded by elite camouflage-clad security troops...

WALKING WITH ALIENS

Sand Spring Dry Lake close to Rachel Nv,
7 September 1999:

After a night enriched by a hearty meal conjured from a camp fire and washed down with ice-cold beer (ah!), three Swiss hikers Raffi 'T-Bird' Bloechlinger, Dino 'Godzilla' Regli and I decided to take a break from our outdoor adventure to seek solace in the nearby Little A'Le'Inn.

Pronounced 'Little Alien', this motel is the region's sole watering hole and can be found in the town of Rachel, which is home to the only civilisation for miles — its population of about 100 is housed in a scattering of mobile homes just off Highway 375 ('The Extraterrestrial Highway'). The term 'town' used to describe Rachel is actually pretty generous because if you blinked, you'd miss it. Small it maybe, but the town and its motel are world famous, with every UFO-nut and conspiracy theorist having paid homage to their 'shrine' and eaten an 'Alien Burger' at some stage of their quest for the truth.

Despite its small stature, we'd heard that Rachel was armed to its teeth... or at least that's what we were told recently. If you are unwise enough not to partake in the local cuisine, it's told that the angry A'Le'Inn proprietors will beam you out to some forlorn 640th rock from the sun post-haste! But our troop was hungry and ready to boost the local economy with a few bucks, so we were safe from deportation.

The eggs weren't half-bad and the conversation flowed about tales from previous visits to Area 51, where the skies are occasionally ripped open by fast-moving black secrets...

LOVE NOTE

A few days previously, accompanied by two American 'stealthchasers' (known to those who know as 'AF-2' and 'Navigator'), I had completed my chosen mission of scaling a new Groom viewpoint — all 8,800ft of it! This trip up Reville Peak was hard-graft from start to finish, but was it ever worth it! A new Groom observation post that offers those who dare a totally new viewing perspective! What's more, and possibly on an equal scale of significance, Reville offers a view of the enigmatic Papoose Lake, nine miles to the south of Groom at the same time (pics in a later issue!). As some readers may know, Papoose is the long-famed home of the 'flying saucer' programme that the US government is allegedly involved in, brought



'Dear Area 51 Commander... 'The joint Swiss/American team had just conquered a new Groom Lake viewing point at Reville Peak and decided to let the Base Commander know about it. They thoughtfully chained a personal message for him/her to the 'Interceptor's Calling Card' — a deckchair — and left it at a signpost along 'Groom Lake Road', heading westwards towards the restricted border of Area 51.

Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle

into the open by a former worker at the site. His claims were that no less than nine flying saucers were housed and test flown at Papoose Lake, or S-4 as it is apparently known, while he worked there between 1988-1989 as one of the contracted engineers to 'reverse engineer' the craft. All of his claims have, not surprisingly, been completely denied by the government.

X-Files material aside and whatever the truth, we had successfully added the Peak to 'our territory', and to make sure the anonymous workers of Area 51 knew about it, we left them a little token.

It is customary for us 'stealthchasers' to leave a calling card near the 'scene of the crime' — just to let them know that we are watching, forever watching. In our case, the calling card is always a deckchair.

Addressed, naturally, to the base Commander, we attached a shiny metal 16in x10in 'love note' to the chair, and wrapped them both around a 45mph speed zone sign on the entrance of the Groom Lake Road, using three masterlocks and a trio of foot-long, finger-thick galvanised chains. The road heads off Highway 375, over the border (nearly 14 miles from the Highway) and eventually onto the base. The note featured a saucy greeting and a quickly drawn rendition of the 'SR-75 Mothership' sighted recently (at mid-altitude over Spring Dry Lake around 06.00hrs a few days previous) by a young co-worker at Glenn Campbell's Rachel-based Area 51 Research Center. Those who have visited the area will recall that photography and artwork of anything seen flying over the area is strictly forbidden, and enforced by official US Air Force warning signs that are posted on the border of the Nellis range. In response, and in jubilation of having grabbed Reville Peak, we left a sign of our own:

'DEAR AREA 51 COMMANDER,

Have just added Reville Peak to our bag of tricks. Try to land grab this one! The Groom Lake Interceptors... Always around when you expect us the least!

THRILL OF THE CHASE

To our great relief our calling card was still there when we returned, and to our great amusement it was surrounded by virtually hundreds of footprints! Imagine the scene: Our greeting... our post card... may not have been delivered (physically) to the Commander during the past 48hrs but it was clear to us that dozens of people must have seen it, taking pictures, walking round it. Maybe some were the infamous cammo dudes? Maybe our greeting was delivered in a virtual way after all?

We had a good chuckle over that... until we spotted other prey — a cammo dude's white Jeep speeding southward on a dirt road close to the Medlin Ranch.

Time to add insult to injury... With the pedal to the metal, our Expedition Vehicle (EE-VEE) exceeded the local 45mph speed limit to zoom in on the Security Patrols' Jeep dashing towards safe havens behind the restricted border.

With his immediate field promotion to act as our EE-VEE's upper turret

WARNING
RESTRICTED
AREA
USE OF DEADLY FORCE
AUTHORIZED



Above: Taken on the day in question, a Boeing 737 JANET flight arrives at Groom at first light. The all-white aircraft, bringing in anonymous employees to the base from Las Vegas McCarran Airport, can be seen on the runway at the far left of the photograph. Menrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle

Right: A map of the area, showing Groom Lake to the left and the Tikaboo Peak viewpoint to the right, at 25.6 miles away.

grab a pair of bino's to point them at the base. Milliseconds... no nanoseconds. We'd honed our fast reactions on many a mission and today our practice and patience finally paid off.

With our eyes to image-stabilised lenses, the following is the description of the aircraft that we three eye- and ear-witnesses saw on its take-off roll, travelling left to right from the southern end of Groom Lake's Runway 32.

- Streamlined silhouette.
- Smoothed-out overall appearance.
- Massive upper main body/fuselage.
- No shining parts whatsoever visible.
- Aircraft coloured in deep black.
- Cockpit hardly visible, well integrated into aircraft body.
- Two very high and massive-looking rear fins close to wingtips.
- No undercarriage whatsoever visible.
- No signs of engines mounted under, at or right above wings.
- No signs of engines integrated into lower aircraft body.
- No engine inlets visible.

The aircraft continued accelerating down the tarmac and got airborne before climbing swiftly to altitude, accompanied by a distinctly audible low, rumbling — but not pulsating — noise.

Our black bird then hung a left high above Emigrant Valley, not too far away from Bald Mountain.

Previously seen in side view, the craft's silhouette then started growing — into a delta shaped platform, showing us its flat, dull black belly. No engines were visible, no apparent air intakes and no under-fuselage stores of any kind — just a smoothed-out triangular body-work.

Estimated details as follows:

- Estimated overall length: 100ft.
- Estimated overall height: 12ft.
- Estimated overall width: 55ft.
- Estimated wing sweep: 75-degrees.

Also striking was the complete lack of lights on the aircraft: Neither any blinking/turning red anti collision nor any other lights of any description were visible. Just one dark mass turning westward, steadfastly heading out of sight.

Having decided, to my regret, to watch the departing craft by means of binoculars instead of trying to film with my 44-times digital zoom video camera or even take photos, I then tracked — for the last few seconds — the craft's wide backside as it turned towards us.

But WHAT a backside! Visible was a roughly segmented rear wing area with two vertical fins, which left me with the initial impression that they were slightly canted outward, reaching up higher than the main fuselage, but that effect might just have been created by wavering air over that long distance. My two colleagues had the impression that they were not canted in any way.

Topping it all off were (at least) two huge, just HUGE exhausts, which appeared to be still on afterburner. The engine exhausts seemed to be integrated into the main upper fuselage, rather than bolted down onto wing area or such.

Their shape and size? For a split-second, they did not look like round exhaust holes. Not your-run-of-the-mill rounded black engine holes like on the SR-71. I got the distinct impression that they were rectangular in shape. Huge they were, so huge!

With the craft having disappeared in the Western skies, we lowered our binoculars and spoke no words at all for a few moments. Amazed at our luck. Amazed we had actually seen a secret aircraft flying right before us.

So why now? Why now roll the beast out for us to see? We'd had a roaring bonfire on the peak the previous night. Surely they knew we were there? Why did they choose to launch



their secret-bird by morning's light? A tight test schedule? A deployment that couldn't be postponed? Or did we see what they wanted us to see?

With so many unanswered questions to add to our bewilderment at what we had just seen, we took a long time to come back down to earth, so to speak. We had just added another secret aircraft to our list, dragging out of the black roaring and screaming despite the cammo dudes' best attempts to hide it.

CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF...

Did I mention that while milling around on Tikaboo Peak that historic morning of 8 September 1999, our tape recorder was running from about 05.50hrs to 06.45hrs recording our encounter with the 'fastmover'?

Needless to say that after our return to Europe, we locked the master tape away in a safety deposit box in a Swiss Bank. Some things are just too hot to be kept at home. (A: A copy is in our hands here at 'Area 52' and a transcript is shown later).

A word of comfort to those who built that fast moving bird: Ladies

WARNING
RESTRICTED
AREA
 USE OF DEADLY FORCE
 AUTHORIZED

RADIO TRANSCRIPT

With years of experience in intercepting clandestine radio transmissions,

STEVE DOUGLASS of **PROJECT BLACK** lends us his expert ear to decipher Mienrad's tape of Groom Lake's excerpts and some other interesting banter:

■ Groom Tower controller '...Traffic departing off of runway three-two is a fastmover... the wind calm... cleared for take-off'

■ '...745 climb and maintain flight level two-zero-zero...'

(SD: This is an air traffic controller instructing the aircraft to climb to 20,000ft).

■ The aircraft answers: 'climbing to flight level two-zero-zero'

■ On what sounds like chatter on a maintenance channel: 'Hey Danny... is there any way we can get some packages for the morning meeting?'

■ 'uhh this looks like its gonna be a bust... we have an unusable beacon again'

(SD: Sounds to me they may be referring to an in-flight refuelling beacon transponder)

■ '(Unintelligible call sign) ...has to burn down to land'

(SD: This means the aircraft has to burn off some excess fuel before it can land)

■ Different voice than last 'Let's just burn down... if I'm not holding... in anybody's way'

(SD: Maybe the tanker or chase plane?)



With the radio scanning and the tape running, the Swiss Mountain Bat watches and waits... Mienrad 'Swiss Mountain Bat' Eberle

■ '(Unintelligible) ...12 o'clock ...20 miles opposite direction ...same type ...at flight level one-nine-zero'

(SD: Sounds like ATC traffic advisory for a same type aircraft (as the one he is talking to) flying at 19,000ft in the opposite direction)

■ Same ATC voice. '...out opposite direction... flight level two-zero-zero... same type'

(SD: From what it sounds like to me the air controller is talking to two of the same type aircraft... advising each on the other's location. The fact that the military controller is not stating what the aircraft are and only referring to them as 'same type', may be because they are a classified type)

■ 'Five three... they changed out wear

strips and need a fix on the blades... he saw it on the form'

(SD: Another communication that sounds like a maintenance channel)

■ A quick flurry of what sounds like more maintenance traffic.

'this is eight one'

'this is forty one delta go'

'forty five... do you have knowledge of... garbled'

'bear if you copy me... tell the OD it will be more like eight o'clock... before everybody gets over there... we're bringing equipment up again this morning'

'for the blade...they didn't put any corrective action in here'

(SD: Engine blades?)

and gentlemen sit back, exhale and smile: The 'white world' finally knows for good about your outstanding achievement in black aircraft technology. Any bets how long it will take the US Air Force (or whatever agency is operating that platform) to come clean about the aircraft and its operational history?

Remember what they told us? 'Doomed by a line item veto, the US Air Force recently put out of service the SR-71 Blackbird, one of the most successful reconnaissance aircraft every built. According to official sources, there is no successor.'

Yeah right.

Black birds

So there you have it, a first-hand account of, possibly, the most important event in the world of military aviation for decades. Why the significance? Because if, and that's a big 'if', the aircraft our team witnessed was indeed the fabled hypersonic, globe-circling 'Aurora' reconnaissance platform, then the technology employed by such a craft could literally shatter the white world. If, for example, the technology from this craft's powerplant alone were employed to commercial air travel, the implications and applications would be immense.

We're waiting...

In the interest of unbiased reporting, we've given the US a chance to respond to this sighting. We contacted the Air Attaché at the US Embassy in London and spoke to Col Michael Mahar, who was extremely helpful and efficient in dealing with our request. Although Col Mahar was not in a position to comment himself, he assured us that the report would be sent to the HQ of the US Air Force's 3rd Air Force immediately, who in turn would send it on to the Pentagon. Now, a response may take some time to filter back to us, but we'll let you know what happens as soon as we can. Col Mahar added that he had read previous reports on Groom Lake, and would be very interested in sorting this one out. He said that although he did not know what sort of response we'd get, the usual one is 'we cannot confirm or deny anything...'

That aside, the sheer fascination of such a deep-black project to be actually in existence — in a seemingly impossible-to-hide dollar-conscious environment — would blow the world's political and public minds with one massive sonic boom...

But was it definitely the most sought after trophy of any aircraft enthusiast? It is clear from numerous telephone interviews and his report that Mienrad is convinced that it was the SR-71 Blackbird replacement — the hypersonic reconnaissance platform that has been rumoured for years and denied by anybody and everybody.

What is clear is that Mienrad and his colleagues saw a black triangle roar out from Groom Lake. Most could jump to the natural conclusions that yes, indeed, it was the legendary 'Aurora', and that its much-debated configuration is indeed that of the foreseen 'black-triangle'. But one important factor of the event that might be overlooked is that it happened in daylight. Why? The easiest way to keep a secret a secret is to operate it in the thick of night, as the F-117s had demonstrated so successfully with years of clandestine operations from their initial base at Tonopah. When the Nighthawks began daylight operations, the aircraft was declassified, albeit not straight away and at a slow pace. Has a new black aircraft just started daylight operations,

■ Another maintenance communication, but kind of strange.

'Core personnel... firecom in the blind... if you can read me... call me on the work order line'

■ Unidentified aircraft communication: 'Four Five... I've got your numbers for Silver Bow (Tonopah Test Range) I have the field in sight... request a visual (landing) one-four'

(SD: Sounds like an aircraft heading for Tonopah ('numbers' is probably a reference to altitude, winds heading, etc). Good indication that Tonopah is not vacant)

■ Military ATC to unknown aircraft... possibly a JANET flight: 'Contact McCarren (Las Vegas Int) twentyfive six'

(SD: Possible 125.600 Mhz)

■ Another interesting (but garbled) communication 'I'm not sure what happened... uh... ah... on the ground they uh... said they had you there for a little while... so we launched you and then... then it kicked out after that'

(SD: Reference to same malfunctioning beacon as before?)

■ Interesting fragment '...in building three-two-one'

■ 'Took out a low fastmover... bullseye one six eight at thirty three'

(SD: Sounds like 'Red Flag' combat chatter. The aircraft targeted a low fastmover. A low fastmover is any low fast flying aircraft. This probably has nothing to do with the 'fastmover' that took off from Dreamland. In

this case it is actually a B-1 bomber, as revealed in the next communication)

■ Same voice as above. 'Showtime... Snake Four... confirm the B-1 that's headed northbound is unintelligible'

(SD: Showtime could be 'Red Flag' AWACS. Miramar-based US marine Corps F/A-18s and US Air Force F-16s from Hill AFB use callsign SNAKE)

(Steve Douglass runs an Interceptors Online newsletter service monitoring the black world — see his excellent Project Black website at www.persoids.com/projectblack to subscribe)

So what was going on?

After analysing Mienrad's tape, it is easy to conclude that only a few of the communications intercepted pertain to the sighting. The Groom Lake controller clearly refers to a 'fast-mover' taking off, which is what alerted the team to the activity on the base in the first place. Upon hearing this, they trained their binoculars towards the runway to see the described aircraft on its take-off run.

It is important to note that the term 'fast-mover' is a generic term used by any controller to describe a fast moving military aircraft, from an F-16 to an SR-71. Therefore although the controller refers to a fastmover taking off, this does not mean that the aircraft is called 'The Fastmover'.

In fact the controller appears to be talking to a third party, not to the aircraft itself. This allays some fears as to why such an aircraft would be using 'standard' UHF frequencies anyway, rather than a secure 'green' channel or an encrypted 'Have Quick' system, or indeed radio silence. Of course, any such transmissions between the controller and the aircraft might have already taken place and not

picked up (wind speed and direction, cleared to line up, cleared for take-off etc), and the controller was merely informing a third party of the traffic. This in itself is a little strange in that the instructions to the third party seem too sketchy. A simple 'the winds calm, cleared for take-off' is not your usual departure instructions or traffic information. But then again, Mienrad (or anyone else for that matter) cannot hope to know all of Groom's frequencies, so such instructions could have already taken place on another channel. Perhaps the controller was in fact talking to a helicopter, which would not need instructions concerning which of Groom's two runways to line up on. Indeed, what is believed to be an EG&G-operated Bo-105 can be seen transiting from Nellis AFB out over the ranges for whatever duty on a regular basis, although usually during less unsociable hours.

The three watchers did not see another movement at the base during or after the take-off of their bounty — who would have been looking for one anyway in the aftermath of what they saw? So is there in fact another possibility? With all the movement sensors hidden amongst the brush, the endless security patrols by 'cammo dudes' and the TV cameras along the border, Area 51 knew Mienrad and his colleagues were there. If by some huge fluke they missed him, he and his colleagues kindly lit a bonfire the night before, burning bright on the side of the mountain whilst their food cooked. There is no doubt that Groom knew it was being watched, so — as Mienrad himself questions — why launch the aircraft the next day in the first place? And why did the controller give such a puzzling transmission out over the radio — did they only say what they wanted them to hear...?



thus allowing it to come out from the shadows? High-powered sources have apparently suggested that a new black project is to be revealed imminently, so was this the first drip-feed of information?

There is a strong rumour emanating from the Black Project community that a secret jet is indeed about to be let out of the darkness. Dubbed the 'Switchblade' and also A-17 by some observers, this beast is understood to incorporate some form of swing-wing into its design, and per-

NEXT MONTH!

Over to the experts. A comment on the sighting from people in the know

What is out there? An illustrated run-down of the latest black projects

Is a new 'Black Project' about to be unveiled? A report on the possible imminent unveiling of the 'Switchblade' — a stealthy 'swing-wing' attack aircraft

PLUS EXCLUSIVE PICS!

TR-3!

Flying triangles!

'Doughnuts on a rope' contrails!

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New viewing site revealed. Reville Peak is conquered

Views from Reville of Groom and Papoose. Well worth the hike

The history of Area 51. All you ever wanted to know about the secret base.

'Black websites'. But remember, 'they' might be watching you...

Exclusive shots from Tonopah and White Sands!

Left: Is the 'Switchblade' about to be unveiled? Steve Douglass/ Project Black

forms a stealthy strike role as the next generation of F-117-type aircraft. Sources close to AI have indicated that such an aircraft has indeed begun daylight flying, and is about to be declassified — possibly very, very soon (more next month!)

So just what was it? If not 'Aurora', then what else could it be? What is out there? There's only one way to find out — get next month's copy of Aircraft Illustrated, on sale 10 March...

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