

Area 51: The truth is out there

The U.S. Air Force's *Area 51* facility has been shrouded in mystery since the 1950s, when people first reported seeing Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) around the Nevada military complex



Area 51:
Also known as **Paradise Ranch, Watertown, Dreamland, Homey Airport** and **Groom Lake**

FACILITY HISTORY

- **1864:** Lead and silver discovered in Nevada
- **1870s:** British **Groome Lead Mines Ltd** finance mining operations – lending district its name
- **1876-1950s:** Various owners mine land
- **1942:** **Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field** opens two 1.5km runways
- **1955:** CIA establishes Groom Lake test facility for **Project AQUATONE** – to develop secret spy plane
- CIA acquires land, designated **Area 51** on map, from **Atomic Energy Commission**
- **Kelly Johnson**, head of **Skunk Works** team working on AQUATONE, renames site **Paradise Ranch**, to entice workers to move to remote facility
- Nine months after being commissioned, Johnson unveils **Lockheed U-2** reconnaissance aircraft



- **1959:** Work begins on **Project OXCART**, to build new **A-12** spy plane – precursor to slightly longer variant **SR-71 Blackbird**



- **1960s:** Runway extended to 2.6km and facilities expanded. Site begins to be referred to as **Area 51**
- Following shooting down of U-2 plane over Soviet Union, **Project Tagboard** attempts to create pilotless drones – later scrapped as new spy satellites can reach anywhere in world
- Evaluations begin of captured foreign aircraft, particularly Soviet **MiGs**
- **1970s:** Work begins on stealth aircraft programme
- **1983:** **F-117 Nighthawk** stealth attack aircraft takes to skies
- **Later operations:** Work continues on secret projects and facility expands, gobbling up land, including mountains that overlook base

CAPTURED UFO CLAIMS

✓ **1989:** In Las Vegas local news interviews, **Bob Lazar** (right) claims he helped reverse engineer alien spacecraft at **S-4** – offshoot of Area 51. He says S-4 has concealed hangar doors housing nine flying saucers propelled by **Element 115** that generates gravity wave



✓ **1990:** Lazar arrested for aiding and abetting prostitution ring. Pleads guilty to lesser charge

✓ Lazar's claim that he was employed at **Nellis Air Force Base** is later disproven

✓ **2019:** Documentary **Bob Lazar: Area 51 & Flying Saucers** streams on Netflix

