

# Lions and tigers and Area 51, oh my!

by Mark Pavilons

I believe alien life is quite common in the universe, although intelligent life is less so. Some say it has yet to appear on planet Earth.

Stephen Hawking

An event called 'Storm Area 51, They Can't Stop All of Us' appeared on Facebook earlier this month, encouraging people to gather and march on this mysterious military facility.

The move, launched pretty much as a joke, attracted more than one million people saying they're interested in going.

'We will all meet up at the Area 51 Alien Center tourist attraction and coordinate our entry,' the invitation read. 'We can move faster than their bullets. Let's see them aliens.'

P.S. Hello US government, this is a joke, and I do not actually intend to go ahead with this plan. I just thought it would be funny and get me some thumbs up on the internet,' a pinned post on the event page read.

I love a good alien story and this was a beauty. It has widespread appeal and maybe the slow summer period caused it draw more support than usual.

The popularity of the event drew interest from international media and the U.S. government.

'(Area 51) is an open training range for the US Air Force, and we would discourage anyone from trying to come into the area where we train American armed forces,' USAF spokeswoman Laura McAndrews told the Washington Post. 'The US Air Force always stands ready to protect America and its assets.'

Typical sabre rattling from our U.S. neighbours.

The site has been subject of countless stories, rumours, movies and speculation for decades.

It may not be as ominous as thought.

The United States Air Force facility commonly known as Area 51 is a highly classified remote detachment of Edwards Air Force Base within the Nevada Test and Training Range. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the correct names for the facility are Homey Airport (KXTA) and Groom Lake, though the name Area 51 was used in a CIA document from the Vietnam War.

USAF public relations has referred to the facility as 'an operating location near Groom Dry Lake.' The special use airspace around the field is referred to as Restricted Area 4808 North.

Its current purpose is unknown but it's probably a facility that develops and tests experimental aircraft and weapons. As such, it's not surprising it utilizes unbelievably strict security measures. Apparently, even passers-by on public roads many miles away are photographed and their licence plates recorded.

While the base is no secret, the research there is classified as 'Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information.' The CIA publicly acknowledged the existence of the base for the first time in 2013, following a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed in

2005, and they declassified documents detailing the history and purpose of Area 51.

It's located in the southern portion of Nevada 83 miles north-northwest of Las Vegas. A large military airfield is situated at its center on the southern shore of Groom Lake. The Air Force acquired the site in 1955, primarily for flight testing the Lockheed U-2 spy plane, made famous by the capture of pilot Gary Powers by the Russians in 1960.

What makes it cool is the surrounding area is a popular tourist destination, including the small town of Rachel, Nevada on the Extraterrestrial Highway.

In all likelihood, Area 51 is just that, a test facility in a modern weapons-driven air race. It's a perfect spot for secret missions. I have heard that satellite imaging of the site is also restricted, but I don't know who controls space at the moment.

Area 51 has been regarded by UFO and conspiracy believers to be a test bed of another variety of aliens and alien technology. It's believed that captured alien craft are being tested and reverse engineered there, along with a host of other weapons. Some believe the U.S. is developing time travel and teleportation technology on the site as well.

I love a good yarn, and a good chuckle. I don't think we have many alien ships laying around, ready to take off at a moment's notice. But I love the thought of it.

The folklore has generated a lot of interest, and business for some. From t-shirts and coffee mugs to books and documentaries, Area 51 and alien conspiracies abound.

I'm too long for an encounter of the third kind and I really hope that evidence of alien existence is revealed in my lifetime.

It's fun to ponder but I won't be heading out to Nevada any time soon in an RV wearing a tinfoil hat.

There may be aliens in our Milky Way galaxy, and there are billions of other galaxies. The probability is almost certain that there is life somewhere in space, according to someone who's been out there, former astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

Anecdotal, and even real, hard evidence of UFOs does exist. But until we can plunk an alien in a chair on the Tonight Show, we'll have to wait for rock solid proof.

As we marked the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, we recognize our thirst for knowledge. We are driven to explore and both NASA and private enterprise will push the space envelope.

Keep looking towards the heavens!