

## Area 51

*An uncensored history of America's top secret military base*

Annie Jacobsen

London: Orion: 2011, £20, h/b

**B**uilt round interviews with participants, journalist Jacobson has written an account – not quite a history, really – of the U-2 and Blackbird surveillance planes, and their significant role in the Cold War. There are lots of interesting snippets in here, she writes well and this is worth the time of anyone interested in the period. Presented as that, however, the book would have received little attention; hence the use of Area 51 with its overtones of deep mystery. Fair enough: the planes were developed at Area 51.

But Jacobsen has bookended her account with sensational material about the Roswell event: did a flying saucer with or without aliens crash in New Mexico in 1947? Jacobson interviewed an early alumnus of Area 51 who told her that, yes, there was a saucer; and yes, it did contain bodies of little humanoids with big heads; and, yes, two of them survived the crash. But, no, it wasn't from outer space: it came from the Soviet Union. How did they know that? One of the disc's parts had Cyrillic letters on it.

It was a cold war stunt by Uncle Joe Stalin to try and panic the Americans` *a la* War of the Worlds in 1938. The notorious Nazi medical experimenter, Mengele, we are told, carried on his experiments for Uncle Joe and in less than two years had developed a crew of little people with enormous heads who travelled in an experimental disc-shaped craft – perhaps designed by the Horten brothers who built the 'flying wing'<sup>1</sup> – which could also hover, flown remotely from Alaska to New Mexico. The presence of such material in this book is like an article from the *National Enquirer* being printed in the *New York Times*.

It looks like an obvious piece of book marketing – and it worked: the story of the commie aliens was reported all over the world. If it was just publicity-generation, Jacobsen has not admitted so. In interviews she has been trying to defend the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horten\\_brothers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horten_brothers)>

material and does not seem to grasp that all she can say is 'Well, he told me this', or that a little thought about its plausibility might have been in order.

Paul Lashmar's *Spy Flights of the Cold War* (1996), still available on Amazon, is the place to start on the book's main subject.

*Robin Ramsay*