THEY ARE HERE EXACTLY WHERE THEY LEFT THEM: THE STARSHIP VISITORS. 

The top-secret Area 51, in a remote area of Nevada, is supposedly where the government stores captured alien spacecraft and autopsies the victims of UFO crashes.

So when newly declassified CIA documents — released last month in response to a Freedom of Information Act request submitted eight years ago — officially acknowledged the existence of Area 51, conspiracy buffs everywhere took notice.

But as Peter Merlin writes for Roadrunners Internationale, a website documenting the history of Cold War-era aircraft: "The biggest secret about Area 51 is that it was never secret."

WHAT THEY DO THERE

The Groom Lake facility has been used by the CIA and the Air Force for the development of airplane technology. The idea was that this remote site, attached to the US Air Force Base, would be constructed, including a runway and dormitories.

The first official designation for the Groom Lake facility was "Waterlawn." It was reportedly named for Watertown, N.Y., home of then-CIA director Allen Dulles.

In July 1957, a civilian pilot made an emergency landing on the Watertown landing strip. He was detained and the incident was reported in a news release. It wasn’t until June 1958 that 38,400 acres of land around Watertown was withdrawn from public access and the site designated "Area 51." And it wasn’t until September 1978 that Area 51 disappeared on official maps of the area designated by the Department of Energy.

A 1994 lawsuit by former employees harmed by improper disposal of chemical waste at Area 51 ran into a legal brick wall until September 1978 when Area 51 disappeared on official maps of the area designated by the Department of Energy.

WHY IT MATTERS

Believe it or not, when Area 51 opened in May 1955, the Atomic Energy Commission issued a news release announcing an "essentially temporary" facility would be constructed, including a runway and dormitories.

INCREASING SECRECY

The Air Force took over Area 51 in May 1955, the Atomic Energy Commission issued a news release announcing an "essentially temporary" facility would be constructed, including a runway and dormitories.

A 1994 lawsuit by former employees harmed by improper disposal of chemical waste at Area 51 ran into a legal brick wall until the government finally admitted there was "an operating location at Groom Lake."

The documents released last month acknowledge the existence of Area 51 and detail its history as a location of flight testing of experimental aircraft. It should be noted: The CIA made no reference to alien autopsies facilities or reverse-engineered spacecraft.