THE ARIZONA BONEYARD WHERE OLD WARPLANES GO TO DIE

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A large, lonely tract of land belonging to Davis-Monathan Air Force Base is what they call the Boneyard, a sun-baked retirement ground where old aircraft sit and wait until the military decides what to do with them. There Pentagon has way too many retired warplanes to store indoors, so they come here to be parked in the warm, dry Arizona desert to avoid rust and corrosion. Approximately 1,000 aircraft sit on 2,600 acres.

The Boneyard was established in the wake of World War II, when tens of thousands of surplus airplanes needed a place to wait in limbo until disposal. Today the facility is the responsibility of the Air Force's 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group, or AMARG. Although an Air Force facility, it also takes in Navy and Marine Corps aircraft.

Planes go to the Boneyard for a variety of reasons. Some planes are retired early and kept on hand in case their service needs them again. In 2006, for examples, the Marines brought three CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters back into active duty after an 11-year stint at the Boneyard.

Many Boneyard planes are stripped of useful parts to service active duty aircraft, a process that's increasingly common as the U.S. military's aircraft fleet ages. Other planes, such as the F-16 Fighting Falcon, are taken up from the Boneyard and turned into drones for aerial target practice—in this case the QF-16. Still others loiter until their fate is determined. They're either sold off or given away to foreign countries, or cut up and sold to scrap merchants.

The Boneyard is an ever-changing place, with new planes showing up all the time. Here's a link to

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the facility in Google Maps. Can you find the black-painted F-4 Phantom, RB-57 Canberra Cold War-era reconnaissance jet, and the RQ-2 Pioneer drones?

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