



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

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Columnist

Apocalypse Never

The continuing occupation at the Malheur Refuge has spurred thousands of opinions and commentary at a national level. There are those who believe the FBI should immediately rush in and arrest everybody, those who decry the government in firm support of the Bundys, and virtually every position in between.

An awful lot of it is hot air, emotional declarations and condemnations, and wild accusations that if the circumstances were different, or the racial, religious, or political component consisted of this or that denomination, the outcome would have long since been decided.

Not so.

Tactical plans are created wholly without considerations of color or creed. They

are, however, created after very careful assessments of capability, risk, reward, and the potential for violence. The presence of children at the Malheur Refuge greatly complicates any potential plan for dynamic action, and it is likely the occupiers understand this fact.

Law enforcement responses have evolved dramatically since the highly criticized incidents at Ruby Ridge, Waco, and elsewhere. As well they should have. While those two debacles were highly charged and publicized, there have been many others — and no shortage of incidents in which the suspects lived, but law enforcement officers were killed because the tactics were terrible.

Over the last 15 years law enforcement nationwide — where it is diligent and good — has learned from those mistakes, and taken great pains to revolutionize, install, and train ways to resolve an issue without violence on either side of the equation. Often, that takes considerable time, but time isn't critical — getting it right is.

Most of this innovation is born at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, which serves more high-risk felony warrants than any other agency in the United

States, and exists firmly on the cutting edge of legal tactical intervention. Where SWAT teams — an absolute necessity in modern law enforcement practices — once routinely conducted direct action missions for even the slightest offense, the LASO pioneered and has largely perfected the surround-and-call-out. The premise of this tactic is based solidly in the question of exigency. In other words, in the absence of a direct threat to human life, what's the rush? Property damage doesn't count unless it rises to the level of a direct threat to life. Wait them out.

At the Malheur Refuge, where the FBI will ultimately decide the outcome, there currently exists ZERO exigency. Pathetic and desperate as they may be, the acts of stealing cars, rifling through files, and the bulldozing of sagebrush do not constitute a necessity to execute an immediate intervention. This is particularly true where there are children present, the subjects are heavily armed, and have insinuated a willingness to respond violently to law enforcement.

As a former SWAT team leader, I firmly believe that the more the public understands and appreciates the massive evolution that has taken place in law

enforcement tactics, and the intent behind them, the more likely they are to support the outcome, even if it takes a lot of time — and particularly if it avoids violence.

In today's world, every tactical team worth its salt trains to rigorous standards, usually established by the state in which they operate. They integrate negotiators, canines, gas teams, entry teams, security elements, and snipers. Most quality teams have trauma doctors qualified to triage and treat. They debrief incidents from around the country and learn from mistakes that have been made. And they practice at full speed the absolute necessity of patience and good judgment in extremely challenging scenarios.

The FBI, with its many regional teams, and its highly respected Hostage Rescue Team, is no different.

The FBI will wait. They will attempt to negotiate, and while they are negotiating they will wait for the U.S. Attorney's Office to seek search and arrest warrants. In the absence of warrants, which establish the legal foundation for action, they will do nothing at all. If and when the arrest warrants are filed, they will wait some more.

They will create opportunities to arrest the participants

off-site, where they can more efficiently control the outcome. They will jam cell phones. They will eventually cut the power. They will act like a giant anaconda, waiting for its victim to exhale and then tightening the coil. And if they are forced into a gunfight, which they absolutely do not want, they will utilize every means at their disposal, which means highly efficient long range and aerial platform snipers, armored rescue vehicles, the deployment of cold and hot gas — precisely calculated to the square footage, but which will likely burn the buildings down anyway — all while making continuous efforts to have the occupiers surrender peacefully.

They will go the extra mile to resolve the issue without bloodshed, no matter what the occupiers throw at them. That is the new standard.

It is an old maxim that no one wins a siege. It has taken law enforcement a long time to remember and absorb this lesson from history, but what is clear today is that the FBI is currently utilizing the most modern tactics practiced by law enforcement. They should do a better job of explaining that, but in the meantime their training, foresight, and restraint, should be applauded.



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