

Prosecutors use occupiers' words against them

By Terrence Petty & Steven DuBois
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — The main leaders of the armed occupation of an Oregon wildlife refuge have been denied pre-trial release as prosecutors used their own words on social media and videos against them to argue that they were a danger to the community.

Ammon Bundy, the principal leader of the group that seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge nearly a month ago, and others used the platforms to summon armed recruits to join their takeover of the refuge.

Court documents against the 11 occupiers under arrest show that FBI agents have scrutinized social media postings, interviews and online talk shows that were broadcast during the standoff that began January 2.

Bundy and several other jailed leaders appeared Friday in federal court in Portland, where a judge denied their release. U.S. Magistrate Judge Stacie Beckerman said Bundy, his brother Ryan Bundy and Ryan Payne pose a danger to the community, and she is concerned they would not follow orders to return to Oregon for criminal proceedings.

The only woman arrested so far in the standoff at an Oregon wildlife refuge, Shawna Cox, will be allowed to go home while her case makes its way through the court system. But Beckerman said that won't happen until after the armed occupation ends.

Four holdouts continued to occupy the refuge in the snowy high country near Burns, and they posted a YouTube video Friday demanding pardons for everyone involved in the occupation.

A speaker believed to be David Fry said he asked the FBI whether it was possible to "get out of here without charges," but "they keep saying that's not possible."

Ammon Bundy's lawyer, Lissa Casey, said her client is not aligned with those remaining at the refuge and wants to go back to his family in Idaho. "He is done in Harney County; his message has been sent," she said.

Bundy and his followers took over the refuge to demand that the federal government turn public lands over to local control. They have complained about what they say are onerous federal rules governing grazing and mining rights across the West.

Court documents detail

some of the evidence against the occupiers, including a memorandum filed by prosecutors Friday arguing against releasing defendants before trial. The charges against the defendants say the refuge's 16 employees have been prevented from reporting to work because of threats of violence.

"As the armed group's unrepentant leader, he (Ammon Bundy) has consistently and publicly expressed support for an armed occupation that has endangered, and continues to endanger, many people," the document states.

A criminal complaint filed earlier this week makes reference to an online video that showed Bundy saying the group planned to stay for several years. He called on people to "come out here and stand," adding: "We need you to bring your arms."

A video posted January 4 showed another defendant, Jon Ritzheimer, saying he was "100 percent willing to lay my life down."

In a video posted a day later, Ritzheimer talked about Robert "LaVoy" Finicum and other occupiers taking up a "defensive posture" at the refuge against a feared FBI raid.

Finicum was killed

Tuesday night in a confrontation with the FBI and Oregon State Police on a remote road. Bundy and four others were arrested during the encounter.

At one point, a couple of dozen ranchers and other protesters were holed up at the refuge, but they began clearing out after the arrests and killing.

The FBI on Thursday released a video showing Finicum's death, to counter claims he did nothing to provoke his killing.

“... based on the information currently available to us, we do not believe LaVoy's shooting death was justified.”
— Finicum's family

In the aerial video, Finicum is pulled over in his truck but then takes off in the vehicle and plows into a snowbank because of a roadblock. He gets out and has his hands up at first, then appears to reach toward his jacket pocket at least twice. He is shot and falls to the snow.

REFINANCE: Savings part of ongoing debt evaluation

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decline in the stock markets, which resulted in a decrease in municipal bond market rates.

A prior debt refinanced through Bank of the Cascades in fiscal year 2014/15 saved taxpayers approximately \$113,000. Combined, both debt refinancings have saved the City of Sisters approximately \$820,000 over the life of the loans, a sizeable savings for a town of 2,300 people.

City Manager Andrew Gorayeb and former finance director Lynne Fujita-Conrads had undertaken an ongoing debt evaluation with the goal of finding savings for the City.

New finance officer, Joseph O'Neill, had praise for both Gorayeb and Fujita-Conrads.

"Andrew and Lynne have both conducted a very professional review of the City's debt status leading to action that has created a great savings for the taxpayers and contributed to a strong financial position for the City," O'Neill said.

(See profile of O'Neill on page 3.)

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