

Oregon standoff figure Thorn gets sentenced to prison

By STEVEN DUBOIS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — A Washington state man who joined the Ammon Bundy-led takeover of an Oregon wildlife refuge sought and received leniency from a judge Tuesday after saying he's been through "two years of hell" since his arrest in February 2016.

U.S. District Judge Anna Brown cited Darryl Thorn's rough childhood and other factors in sentencing him to 18 months in prison — at least six months less than federal sentencing guidelines. Thorn will also get credit for time he has already served in jail.

Thorn performed armed guard duty, sometimes from a watchtower, during the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation that lasted Jan. 2 to Feb. 11, 2016. The group sought the release of two ranchers imprisoned for setting fires on U.S.-owned land.

Twenty six people were indicted in the case. Most accepted plea bargains and avoided prison. Bundy and six others were acquitted in a trial last year.

Thorn was twice on the verge of accepting a plea bargain before changing his mind and going to trial earlier this year. Jurors convicted him in March of conspiracy and possessing a firearm.

"This has been extremely difficult — mentally, physically, emotionally," Thorn told Brown. "I have a life. I have a family I would like to go back to." Thorn has been in jail since June, when Brown revoked his conditional, pre-sentencing release because of suicidal threats.

Thorn's lawyer, Jay Nelson, filed a sentencing memorandum that includes some details of his client's childhood after he was born to a drug-addicted mother. Thorn's abusive stepfather shackled him to a back porch for hours on end, securing his ankle with a heavy chain and padlock, the memorandum said.

Thorn was 12 when finally removed from the home and placed in foster care, Nelson wrote.

Prosecutor Ethan Knight agreed that Thorn's upbringing was a mitigating factor but sought a sentence of more than two years, saying Thorn's role stand-off role was "sustained and dangerous." Thorn encouraged others to stay and fight authorities after the fatal shooting by police of occupation spokesman Robert "LaVoy" Finicum, Knight said.

The judge urged Thorn to embrace mental health treatment while in prison and get an education. "You've got to find a way to live in this world that does not seem threatening to other people," she said.

Several supporters of Thorn were outside the courthouse during the sentencing hearing, including Duane Ehmer, a co-defendant who starts his one-year prison sentence in January. Ehmer showed up on the horse named Hellboy that he rode during the standoff.

Inside the courtroom, Thorn was excited to hear that Ehmer arrived on the horse.

"That's what I'm talking about!" Thorn told court spectators before the sentencing hearing started.



Darryl Thorn

Inmate dies after meth-laden kiss; girlfriend gets 2 years

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — An Oregon woman whose inmate boyfriend died from a meth-laden kiss after a prison visit was sentenced to two years behind bars Tuesday on a drug conspiracy charge.

Melissa Ann Blair and Anthony Powell shared a long kiss at the end of a visit last year at the Oregon State Penitentiary and she passed seven tiny balloons filled with methamphetamine into his mouth. Two of the balloons ruptured in Powell's stomach a short time later and he died of methamphetamine toxicity, prosecutors have said.

U.S. District Judge Marco Hernandez said Blair's actions were part of a scheme devised by Powell and others to get drugs inside the prison. There was a dispute as to whether



Danielle Peterson/Statesman-Journal

Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem is where an inmate died after a meth-laden kiss from his girlfriend

Blair participated of her own free will, but Powell shared responsibility for his own death, Hernandez said.

"It was tragic and sad but he shares responsibility for what happened," the judge said.

The 41-year-old was serving a life sentence for aggravated murder in the stabbing

death of his mother-in-law, according to court records.

Besides two years in federal prison, the judge also ordered Blair, 46, to complete three years of post-release supervision and participate in drug treatment and mental health programs.

She did not make a state-

ment in court. Her sister, who attended the hearing, declined to comment.

Blair felt coerced by Powell even though he was behind bars, her attorney, John Ransom, said outside court. She used methamphetamine but was not addicted, he said.

"It was a very Svengali-type situation where he had total control over her life," Ransom said. "She had to do whatever he said."

Powell's close friend, Brandy Pokovich, attended the hearing and said she became pen pals with him after he wrote to her husband — a former inmate — and she replied to him instead. Over a dozen years, Pokovich said, they formed a deep bond through letters, phone calls and visits.

She called herself Powell's "sister by choice" and believed he felt remorse for his crime, she told the judge.

Washington state panel outlines risk of oil-by-rail terminal

By PHUONG LE
Associated Press

SEATTLE — A major oil-by-rail terminal proposed on the Columbia River in Washington state poses a potential risk of oil spills, train accidents and longer emergency response times due to road traffic, an environmental study has found.

Many of the risks could be decreased with certain mitigation measures, but the study released Tuesday outlined four areas where it said the impacts are significant and cannot be avoided.

The study said what while "the likelihood of occurrence of the potential for oil spills may be low, the consequences of the events could be severe."

The state's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council has been evaluating the project

since 2013 and released its environmental review a week before it is scheduled to vote to support or oppose the project in a recommendation that will go to Gov. Jay Inslee. Inslee, a Democrat, will decide whether to approve the facility or reject it.

The proposed \$210 million terminal for the small city of Vancouver would receive about 360,000 barrels of crude oil by trains a day. Oil would temporarily be stored on site for Vancouver Energy, a joint venture of Tesoro Corp. and Savage Cos., and then loaded onto tankers and ships bound for West Coast refineries.

The study identified the four risks that could not be avoided as train accidents, the emergency response delays, negative impacts of the project on low-income communities and the possibility that an

earthquake would damage the facility's dock and cause an oil spill.

Measures could be taken to reduce the potential risk of oil spills by other causes, fires and harm to juvenile salmon, the study said.

Critics say the project is a risk to the environment and people while developers promote the terminal as an opportunity to bring crude oil from North Dakota and other areas to a western U.S. port and bring jobs and money to the region.

"Our initial assessment provides confidence that EFSEC's thorough evaluation of the facts will demonstrate our ability to build and operate the project safely and in an environmentally responsible way," Vancouver Energy spokesman Jeff Hymas said in emailed statement late Tuesday.

He labeled most of the impacts outlined in the report as "related to low-probability events not directly associated with our facility that have the potential to occur today, such as a major earthquake or impacts related to the transportation of products that move across the country on a daily basis."

Opponents said the report provided justification for the council to issue a recommendation against the project.

The review "clearly shows that the Tesoro-Savage oil train terminal is bad for Washington," said Rebecca Ponzio, director for the Stand Up to Oil Campaign.

The facility would produce more than 300,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually, with half of that from trains moving along the entire route in Washington state.

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