

A Few of Our Newsmakers of 2011



Attacks

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Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Spokane; and a former militia member who opened fire on deputies in Montana and vanished into a forest.

To be sure, the perpetrators are by no means representative of the broader, law-abiding population in the Pacific Northwest. But they are part of a trend that has seen extremist activity on the rise nationally. The region has also been the base for some of the highest-profile ones, including the Aryan Nations and the Militia of Montana.

Travis McAdam of the Montana Human Rights Network said the reasons for the trend include the election of a black president, growing distrust with the federal government, the downturn in the economy and the continued growth of minority groups in the population.

"All of this has created a perfect storm of anger, fear, and resentment that white supremacists are trying to tap into and capitalize upon," McAdam said.

The number of hate groups and patriot groups, which do not all share the same beliefs and conduct, has been growing across the country since President Barack Obama was elected in 2008, according to an annual report by the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala., which

though he was a Christian, according to court documents. Clark was black.

Grigsby and Pedersen were arrested outside Yuba City, Calif., when a police officer spotted them in Myers' car.

Grigsby told officers "the couple was on their way to Sacramento to 'kill more Jews,'" court documents said.

In another high-profile incident, a man planted a pipe bomb along the planned route of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Spokane. The shrapnel-packed bomb was found and disabled before it could explode, but the FBI said it had the potential to kill or injure many of the 2,000 marchers, who included children.

White supremacist Kevin Harpham, 37, was arrested in March and has pleaded guilty to attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction, and the hate crime of placing the bomb in an effort to target minorities. He faces 27 to 32 years in prison when he is sentenced by a federal judge on Dec. 20.

Another violent incident occurred June 12 outside of Missoula, Mont., when former militia leader David Burgert opened fire on two Missoula County sheriff's deputies on a remote logging road in the Lolo National Forest.

Burgert disappeared into the forest after the gunbattle, in which no one was injured. He has yet to be found, despite an extensive manhunt.

Burgert is a longtime patriot activist who spent eight years in prison on weapons charges and authorities charged him at the time with trying to spark a revolution. He was released in 2010.

Another outrageous incident occurred in July when a skinhead told a black man he did not belong inside a bar in Bayview, Idaho, and was knocked out with one punch. Daren C. Abbey, 28, woke up to find he was under arrest.

"What, you're arresting the white man?" he told deputies, according to court documents.

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tracks extremists.

SPLC's 2010 compilation of active hate groups found 1,002 nationwide. Of those, 15 were located in Oregon and 13 each in Washington, Idaho and Montana, the SPLC said. The group counted 888 hate groups in 2007, before Obama's election.

Obama is also seen as someone who would curtail individual rights such as gun ownership, said Rich King, a professor at Washington State University in Pullman who studies hate groups and teaches a class on white power movements.

Meanwhile, the financial woes sparked by Wall Street have fed anti-Semitic sentiments, King said.

It has been a busy year for extremists in the Northwest.

In the most violent incident, a young couple was arrested and charged in connection with a murder spree that claimed four lives in three Western states.

David "Joey" Pedersen, 31, and his girlfriend, Holly Grigsby, 24, were arrested in California in October. They have expressed white supremacist beliefs.

They are charged in Washington with aggravated first-degree murder, accused of killing Pedersen's father and his wife in Everett sometime around Sept.

26. They are also suspected of killing 19-year-old Cody Myers in Oregon and Reginald Alan Clark, 53, in Eureka, Calif.

They shot Myers because his name sounded Jewish, even

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