

# EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2016

140th Year, No. 57

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

## Standoff in Harney Co.



Brand Thorton, 63, of California, blows into an African spiral horn Sunday at the Malheur National Wildlife headquarters near Burns after protesters took over the building Saturday.

### Wildlife refuge occupation part of long-running lands fight

By REBECCA BOONE and BRIAN MELLEY  
Associated Press

BURNS — The small group of armed anti-government activists occupying a remote wildlife preserve in Oregon's high desert gave visitors free access to the snowy site Monday, allowing some local residents and ranchers in to satisfy their curiosity or show support.

The group also appeared to be trying to keep the site tidy, picking up cigarette butts from the ground and keeping vehicle and foot traffic primarily to roads and pathways. Federal authorities made no immediate attempt to retake the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which about two dozen activists seized over the weekend as part of a decades-long fight over public lands in the West.

There appeared to be no urgent reason for federal officials to move in. No one has been hurt. No one is being held hostage. And the refuge is a bleak and forbidding stretch of wilderness. It's also the middle of winter.

Some have complained that the government's response to the situation in Oregon would have been more severe had the occupants been Muslim or other minorities.

But others said from a tactical standpoint, the government's cautious response would make sense no matter who was holed up in the government building in the reserve.

Meanwhile, the group said it wants an inquiry into whether the government is forcing ranchers off their land after the father and son



Mark Graves/The Oregonian via AP

Established in 1908, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, seen here Monday is one of the premier migratory bird habitats in the U.S., featuring Malheur Lake. Armed protesters took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday after participating in a peaceful rally over the prison sentences of local ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond. No workers were on duty when the armed activists arrived.

who were ordered back to prison for arson on federal grazing lands reported to a federal facility in California Monday.

They demanded a government response within five days related to the ranchers' extended sentences.

Ammon Bundy — one of the sons of rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a 2014 Nevada standoff with the government over grazing rights — told reporters that Dwight Hammond and his son, Steven Hammond, were treated unfairly.

The Hammonds were convicted of arson three years ago for fires on federal land in 2001 and 2006, one of which was set to cover up deer poaching, according to prosecutors. They said they lit the fires to reduce the growth of invasive plants and protect their property from

See REFUGE/9A

## Feds weigh options at refuge

By GENE JOHNSON  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — The armed takeover of a remote Oregon nature preserve has put federal officials in a tough spot: Should they confront the occupiers or lay off, given that the public faces no imminent harm?

The former risks bloodshed. The latter risks emboldening anti-government groups and possibly giving the impression that authorities treat the white armed anti-government activists with more deference than, say, young black men in the city.

A look at some of the key issues surrounding the federal response to the takeover at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge south of Burns:

### Race and religion

About 20 people are occupying the refuge in the frigid high desert to protest the prison sentences of two ranchers who set fire to federal land. They want the property turned over to

local authorities so people can use it free of U.S. oversight.

President Barack Obama said Monday that federal authorities were monitoring the situation, but agents made no apparent moves to surround the property or confront the group — an approach that reflected lessons learned from bloody standoffs at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, in the early 1990s.

But it also prompted complaints from many observers who suggested the government's response would have been swifter and more severe had the occupants been Muslim or other minorities.

"Every time something like this occurs, we use the phrase, 'If a Muslim had done it,' and we imagine the completely different response that would follow," said Ibrahim Hooper, spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "You don't have to stretch your imagination to

See RESPONSE/9A

### The characters



D. Hammond



S. Hammond

### Dwight and Steven Hammond

Father and son ranchers from Harney County who were convicted in 2011 of arson for starting fires that spread to federal land on which they had grazing rights. Dwight, 74, and Steven, 46, had served shorter sentences that were overturned by an appeals court and the men were later forced to serve the full five-year minimum sentence. The men reported to prison in California on Monday, but not before the protest in Burns on Saturday.

### Ammon Bundy

Son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy who was at the center of an armed standoff with federal agents in 2014 over grazing rights. Ammon, 40, is the spokesman for the group of about 20 armed protesters who splintered off from the Hammond demonstration to occupy a federal wildlife refuge at Lake Malheur. He said the group's goal is to redistribute the land to the people of Harney County.



Ammon Bundy

### Sheriff Dave Ward

The Harney County Sheriff has been an outspoken critic of the armed protesters, saying Sunday they had come to overthrow local and federal government and spark a national movement. He told the group Monday in a press conference to "go home, be with your own families and end this peacefully." The FBI and Oregon State Police are also on scene.



David Ward

## Eden, Edgar first Umatilla County babies of 2016



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

New mother Hannah Hiltz holds her newborn daughter, Eden Elizabeth Adele Stewart, on Monday at her home in Pendleton. Stewart was born on Friday, Jan. 1, making her Umatilla County's first baby of the year.

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

It's not uncommon for multiple mothers to be in the running for the first baby of the new year in Umatilla County, but 2016 had a clear winner.

Eden Elizabeth Adele Stewart was born at 5:58 p.m. on New Year's Day in St. Anthony Hospital to Hannah Hiltz and Tyler Stewart of Pendleton. She was the only baby of the day at St. Anthony, and Good Shepherd Medical Center's first baby of the year didn't come until Jan. 3.

"We were the only ones in the birthing center that night, so that was really exciting," Hiltz said.

Eden made her entry into the world Friday night weighing in at seven pounds, four ounces. Hiltz said after nine months of pregnancy and 12 hours of labor she was incredibly

excited to meet her firstborn child, and Eden did not disappoint.

"She's just wonderful and I love her so much," she said.

Stewart had already gone back to work on Monday, but Hiltz said he couldn't stop staring in wonder at his daughter when he was home.

"He's in love with her," Hiltz said. "He was excited before, but now he's so excited."

She said Eden's first name is in reference to the Garden of Eden, the paradise where Adam and Eve dwelled in the opening chapters of the Bible. Her parents couldn't decide between Elizabeth and Adele for her middle name, so decided to use both.

So far the baby makes lots of "goofy faces," Hiltz said, and is a "fantastic sleeper."

See BABIES/10A

