

HARNEY COUNTY STANDOFF: DAY 19

Ammon Bundy is speaking with FBI

By GOSIA WOZNIACKA Associated Press

PORTLAND — The leader of an armed group that for nearly three weeks has occupied a wildlife refuge in eastern Oregon has begun speaking with the FBI.

Standing outside the municipal airport in Burns, Oregon, Ammon Bundy spoke by phone Thursday to an unnamed FBI negotiator. The federal agency has used the airport, about 30 miles from the refuge, as a staging ground during the occupation.

The FBI did not comment on the conversation, though it was streamed live online by someone from his group.

Bundy said he went to the airport to meet with FBI officials face to face, but they declined to meet him. Bundy said the FBI had called him 14 times in a row earlier this week, but he couldn't pick up the phone because he was in a meeting.

"We're not going to escalate nothing, we're there to work," Bundy told the FBI official, with reporters and supporters watching. "You guys as the FBI... you would be the ones to escalate. I'm here to shake your hands... myself and those with me are not a threat."

He also told the FBI the agency doesn't have "the



AP Photo/Gosia Wozniacka

Residents protest the occupation of a national refuge Tuesday in southeastern Oregon. The protesters chanted "Birds not Bullies" and said the government should arrest occupiers.

people's authority" to station at the airport. Earlier this month, officials said the FBI has jurisdiction over the armed takeover of the federal buildings in the refuge, as well as any crimes committed there.

"This occupation has caused tremendous disruption and hardship for the people of Harney County, and our response has been deliberate and measured as we seek a peaceful resolution," the FBI said Thursday in a statement.

On Wednesday, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said she was angry because federal authorities have not taken action against Bundy's group, which began occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Jan

2. The Democratic governor said the occupation has cost Oregon taxpayers nearly half a million dollars.

"We'll be asking federal officials to reimburse the state for these costs," Brown said.

Bundy did not address concerns about how much the occupation is costing authorities. He did rail against federal land management policies and reiterated that his armed group would not leave the refuge until federal lands — including the refuge — are turned over to local control.

"We will leave there if those buildings are turned over to the proper authorities... and never used again by the federal government to control land and resources

unconstitutionally in this county," Bundy said.

Bundy said that despite some negative sentiments against his group expressed at recent community meetings, he believes his group's work is appreciated by locals. He said the armed men have been "helping ranchers," doing maintenance on the refuge because "it's in a bad shape," and taking care of fire hazards in the refuge's fire house.

"It will turn a lot of things around if people have access to land and resources the way it was intended by our founders, the economy can turn around," Bundy said, adding that until that process is "well on its way," the group won't end the occupation.

Bundy also asked the FBI to let two ranchers sent to prison for arson go back home. Bundy agreed to speak with authorities again on Friday. He said he would again come to the airport and hoped to speak with someone from the FBI face-to-face.

Earlier Bundy also said his group plans to have a ceremony Saturday for ranchers to renounce federal ownership of public land and tear up their federal grazing contracts. The armed group plans to open up the 300-square-mile refuge for cattle this spring.

BRIEFLY

Men involved in Oregon crabbing boat collision identified

COOS BAY (AP) — The four men involved in the crash of a 40-foot crabbing boat on the Oregon coast have been identified.

The Coos County Sheriff's Office identified the captain on Thursday as 52-year-old Port Orford resident Glen Burkhaw.

Burkhaw survived the Tuesday night collision in which the commercial fishing boat, Eagle III, sank after hitting a jetty.

The Sheriff's Office says a man whose body was recovered Wednesday has been identified as 52-year-old Blane Steinmetz of Port Orford.

Officials say 37-year-old Daniel Matlock and 31-year-old Joshua Paulus, also of Port Orford, remain missing. A search conducted through Wednesday afternoon was suspended after a U.S. Coast Guard spokesman said the search area had been saturated.

Sheriff's Office personnel are continuing to travel their patrol area in search of the missing crew members.



Court backs defendants who want to travel while on probation

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals has issued two opinions favorable to defendants who challenged geographic restrictions placed on them while on probation.

One case involves Paula Bell, a former Oregon State Police employee who stole money from an evidence room to feed a gambling addiction. As part of her sentence, she was prohibited from leaving Lincoln County without permission while on five years of probation.

The Appeals Court said Thursday the restriction was overly broad and not reasonably related to her crime.

Also Thursday, the court struck down a requirement that a woman convicted of stalking be barred from Lincoln County north of Cape Foulweather. The judges said the woman is prohibited from having contact with the victim while on probation, and that should suffice.

Advisory group says ratepayers shouldn't pay for wind project

By HILLARY BORRUD Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon utility ratepayers should not be forced to subsidize an offshore wind pilot project near Coos Bay, according to a recent report by an advisory committee to Gov. Kate Brown.

Power from the project, proposed by Seattle-based Principle Power, would be more than four times as expensive as electricity from onshore wind turbines in the Columbia River Gorge, according to the Jan. 15 report obtained by the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital

Bureau. The governor formed the WindFloat Pacific Offshore Wind Advisory Committee in August, to help Principle Power secure a long-term power purchase agreement with Oregon utility companies. The guaranteed revenue stream would help the company to secure private financing.

Principle Power also needs a commitment by May 2016 that Oregon ratepayers will purchase the electricity from the 16- to 24-megawatt project, in order to qualify for the remaining \$40 million in a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. "(Committee) members

indicated that the Northwest's historically low-cost electricity would make it difficult for any utility to engage in a (power purchase agreement) with an offshore wind resource, given that utilities are generally required to procure the lowest-cost and lowest-risk resources on behalf of their customers," the governor's staff wrote in the report, which they described as a summary of the committee recommendations.

The advisory committee held just two meetings and the Governor's Office originally said the meetings would be closed to the public. In the end, the

Governor's Office allowed the public to attend the meetings but did not advertise their times or locations. Utility representatives said during the second meeting, in November, they did not want to purchase power from the project.

Kevin Banister, Principle Power's vice president of business development in the Americas and Asia, said the company was still considering how to proceed following the committee's recommendation.

"I think we need to take some time to digest what it all means," Banister said. "But it certainly doesn't make it easier for the project

to move forward."

As for whether Principle Power might give up on building a pilot project in Oregon, Banister said the company has not made any decision but has projects under development in other countries. "We've seen a lot of interest in the technology in other places in the United States, too," Banister said. "It is something that we have to take into consideration."

After the committee's

final meeting, Oregon Wave Energy Trust executive director Jason Busch said the project seemed doomed by the skeptics Brown selected for the advisory committee.

"We brought the state an opportunity, a deal in Principle Power," Busch said. "It's pretty much in a neat little box with a bow on top." The Oregon Wave Energy Trust is largely funded by the state.

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