

STANDOFF: Will investigate officer-involved shooting

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ening wounds and was treated at a hospital, the agencies said. Another man “who was a subject of a federal probable cause arrest” was killed, they said. The agencies said they would not release further information about the death pending identification by the medical examiner.

The Oregonian reported that Arizona rancher Robert “LaVoy” Finicum was the person killed, citing the man’s daughter. The 55-year-old was a frequent and public presence at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, often speaking for the group at news conferences.

Arianna Finicum Brown confirmed her father’s death to the paper, saying “he would never ever want to hurt somebody, but he does believe in defending freedom and he knew the risks involved.”

Ammon Bundy’s group, which has included people from as far away as Arizona and Michigan, seized the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Jan. 2 as part of a long-running dispute over public lands in the West. Law enforcement officers went to the wildlife refuge after the arrests and were expected to



Sgt. Tom Hutchison stands in front of an Oregon State Police roadblock on Highway 395 between John Day and Burns by Oregon State police officers Tuesday.

remain at the site throughout the night; it was unclear how many people remained in the buildings.

The confrontation came amid increasing calls for law enforcement to take action against Bundy for the illegal occupation of the wildlife refuge. They previously had taken a hands-off approach, reflecting lessons learned during bloody standoffs at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho, during the 1990s.

Many residents of Harney County, where the refuge is located, have been among those demanding that Bundy leave. Many sympathize with his criticism of federal land management policies of public lands but opposed the refuge takeover. They feared violence could erupt.

Ammon Bundy recently had begun traveling into Grant County to try to drum up more sympathy for his cause.

“I am pleased that the FBI has listened to the concerns of the local community and responded to the illegal activity occurring in Harney County by outside extremists,” Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley said in a statement. “The leaders of this group are now in custody and I hope that the remaining individuals occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge will peacefully surrender.”

The Bundys are the sons of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a high-profile 2014 standoff with the government over grazing rights.

The state police said it would investigate the officer-involved shooting, with help from the Deschutes County Major Incident Team and the Harney County District Attorney’s Office.

The militants, calling themselves Citizens for Constitutional Freedom, came to the frozen high desert of eastern Oregon to decry what it calls onerous federal land restrictions and to object to the prison sentences of two local ranchers convicted of setting fires.

Specifically, the group wanted federal lands turned over to local authorities. The U.S. government controls about half of all land in the West.

Local tea party leaders met with Bundy

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Eli Stephens, leader of the Pendleton Tea Party Patriots, and Rob Lovett, leader of the Greater Hermiston Area Tea Party traveled more than 200 miles to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Harney County earlier this week on a “fact finding mission” and came back impressed.

Stephens and Lovett traveled to the refuge Jan. 20 and were allowed to enter the compound.

One of Stephens’ first takeaways was the condition the refuge was in. Stephens, who works in property management, said he didn’t observe any broken windows or thresholds among the refuge’s buildings and the garbage was neatly collected.

Among the 50-75 he saw at the compound, Stephens estimated only 10 percent were armed.

“I would’ve sent my teenage daughter in there,” he said.

Stephens said he and Lovett spoke with ringleader Ammon Bundy, who told them there was no other viable alternative to occupation after decades of legal battles between his family and the federal government over use of government land.

Stephens and Lovett also traveled to Burns, 30 miles north of the refuge, to gather opinions from locals about the occupation. From those discussions, Stephens said some locals were more perturbed about the increased media and law enforcement presence than the militants.

Stephens compared the refuge occupation to the marches staged by Martin Luther King Jr. to end segregation, saying the disturbance in people’s everyday lives brought attention to an important issue.

Stephens said he hopes there will be similar occupations to raise the public awareness on federal overreach.

MEETING: ‘Grant County people don’t support this’

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belong here.”

Jerry Larkin, of Canyon City, said he spent a day with the militia on the refuge, describing them as “just like you and I.”

“The federal government has taken away ground that doesn’t belong to them. It belongs to the people,” Larkin said. “These people are genuinely trying to look out for these United States, just like the rest of us.”

Outside, counter-protesters held signs that read, “John Day does not support criminal action,” and “Bundy Bunch — not in Grant County.” Hans Magden, of John Day, held a sign that simply read “Impeach Palmer.”

“He’s not doing his job,” Magden said of the county sheriff. “He’s not abiding by the laws. He’s integrating his own personal beliefs ... I believe he should be removed from office.”



Anti-occupation protesters hold signs in the back of room during a town hall meeting at the senior center on Tuesday in John Day. A group of occupiers was supposed to speak at the meeting, including Ammon and Randy Bundy, before the FBI captured on Highway 395 outside of Burns.

He said he believes Palmer sympathizes with their cause. Kay Steele, who lives in Grant

County near the community of Ritter, said she and her husband do nature photography on the

Malheur refuge. She said they see the militia as law-breakers.

“These people do not speak for Grant County,” Steele said. “We want the world to know that Grant County people don’t support this. This is a very vocal minority.”

Back inside, militia supporters sat near the front of the room, with counter-protesters mostly in the back of the room.

Odalis Sharp, of Auburn, Kansas, got up with her children to sing songs during the meeting. She described Bundy and the militia as good people, and urged the crowd to defend their cause.

“You all are going to have to step up right now,” Sharp said. “Somebody was shot on the way here. They were coming over here to tell you the truth ... We’ll stand for you as long as we can.”

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DISPATCH: Police determined the noise was caused by a backfiring car

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staff safe in rooms and secure doors that access the school.

But no police came.

“What’s supposed to happen is when dispatch receives a call of that nature,” Rowan said, “it needs to be immediately broadcasted out to any officer that might be able to respond. And that did not happen.”

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said 44 minutes after the initial report, Pendleton police Cpl. Ryan Lehnert received a call on his cellphone from someone asking why law enforcement had not responded to the school. Lehnert is on assignment helping to police Pilot Rock while it hires a new chief and officer.

Lehnert was off duty and confirmed the school’s situation, then called Pendleton police, which sent four units. Lehnert also responded, as did two state troopers.

Rowan is running for a second term as sheriff, and Lehnert is running against him.

Roberts said police soon determined a backfiring car

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— Stuart Roberts, Pendleton Police Chief

made the racket and then reassured school staff they did the right thing. He also said dispatch took a call at 3:10 p.m. from the person working on the car who reported it was backfiring.

Even so, Roberts said, the initial 9-1-1 call should have been an “all call” to every officer that could have answered.

“Obviously this is a very concerning situation, no two ways about that,” Roberts said. “I think in the end no one can explain why this call wasn’t dispatched.”

On the same day, county law enforcement was handling a deadly assault outside Hermiston and a school lockdown in Weston, and plenty of first responders were at the safety summit in Pendleton.

“At that particular moment in time, all the deputies were tied up on something,”

Rowan said. Yet “at no time did anyone tell us they were on lockdown status.”

The sheriff’s office handles all 9-1-1 calls in the county and dispatches for almost all the local public safety agencies. Roberts said dispatchers have a stressful job, but they should not decide if the information they gather demands an emergency response. The police in the field, he said, should make that decision.

“We’re going to immediately dispatch it out and then kind of leave it up to the officers,” he said.

He also said he discussed that change Tuesday with the dispatch advisory group that includes Roberts and other local police, fire and government officials.

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FIRE: Cause was an electrical system overload or failure

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grabbed his grandson and pounded on the apartment next door, rousing at least four men there.

An ambulance took the mother and child to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton. Everyone got out, according to police and witnesses, and the nearby Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter opened its doors to care for dogs that were in the house.

Pendleton Fire & Ambulance responded at 9:41 a.m., according to a report from assistant chief Matthew Benedict. Fire crews extinguished the fire from outside before going in.

Lt. Ricky Scruggs

with The Salvation Army in Pendleton handed out some clothes on the chilly morning and brought fresh coffee and pastries. He said the occupants and others in emergencies can go to the Army’s headquarters, 150 S.E. Emigrant Ave., to receive vouchers for clothes and goods from the Army’s thrift store, 1805 S.W. Court Ave., Pendleton.

The American Red Cross in a written statement reported its volunteers provided assistance to the occupants so they could “address basic immediate needs, health/emotional health resources and information about recovery services.”

Kirby Miller said his daughter did not have renter’s insurance, so she is out everything she owned. Bernie Sackett of Pendleton said he inherited the house and others from his parents and has kept them up as apartments and one day would like to have the financial backing to tear them down and build better housing, akin to the newer apartments a block away at Goodwin and South Main Street.

Benedict also reported Pendleton Fire and the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Office determined the fire was an accident, and an electrical system overload or failure could be to blame.

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