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EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2016

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HARNEY COUNTY STANDOFF: DAY 40

FBI closes in on refuge



Lights are seen from the Narrows roadblock near Burns as FBI agents surrounded the remaining four occupiers at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Wednesday. The four are the last remnants of an armed group that seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Jan. 2 to oppose federal land-use policies.

Last holdouts say they will turn themselves in

By REBECCA BOONE and LISA BAUMANN
Associated Press

BURNS — The FBI surrounded the last four occupiers of a wildlife refuge in eastern Oregon as they yelled at law enforcement officers in armored vehicles to back off, prayed with supporters over an open phone line, and said later they would turn themselves in Thursday morning.

The tense standoff between law enforcement officers and the four occupiers played out on the Internet beginning Wednesday night via a phone line being livestreamed by an acquaintance of occupier David Fry.

Fry, 27, of Blanchester, Ohio, sounded increasingly unraveled as he continually yelled, at times hysterically, at what he said was an FBI negotiator. “You’re going to hell. Kill me. Get it over with,” he said. “We’re innocent people



AP Photo/Cathleen Allison, File
Nevada Assemblywoman Michelle Fiore, R-Las Vegas, spoke Wednesday to some of the four occupiers of a national wildlife refuge in Oregon.

camping at a public facility, and you’re going to murder us.”

“The only way we’re leaving here is dead or without charges,” Fry said, who told the FBI to “get

“You’re going to hell. Kill me. Get it over with. We’re innocent people camping at a public facility, and you’re going to murder us.”

— David Fry, refuge occupier

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Last holdouts come from diverse backgrounds
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the hell out of Oregon.”

Fry and the three others are the last remnants of an armed group that seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Jan. 2 to oppose federal land-use policies. The three others are Jeff Banta, 46, of Elko, Nevada; and married couple Sean Anderson, 48, and Sandy Anderson, 47, of Riggins, Idaho.

Fry said Wednesday the group was surrounded by armored vehicles.

A Nevada legislator, Michele Fiore, called in to try to get the occupiers to calm down. Fiore said she could help them only if they stayed alive.

“I need you guys alive,” said the Republican member of the Nevada Assembly who was in Portland earlier in the day to show support for Ammon Bundy, the jailed leader of the occupation. Fiore told occupiers Wednesday night she was driving to the refuge to try to help negotiate their exit from the refuge. The occupiers prayed with Fiore and others as the situation dragged on for hours Wednesday night.

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Umatilla County finds formula to pay for dispatch

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Local police, fire and ambulance agencies now have an idea of what they will pay for Umatilla County dispatch services.

The advisory committee for the dispatch center has more than a dozen members that haggled for almost seven months on how to charge for services. Tuesday they reached a consensus.

Police agencies will pay based on the county’s assessed values



Elfering

teams, which are not full ambulance services, will pay \$7.50 per call. Umatilla County Commis-

sioner Bill Elfering said there is no fair way to distribute the costs, but this was the most equitable and perhaps simplest tax to pay for a vital public safety service.

The police departments of Pendleton, Hermiston, Umatilla, Stanfield and Echo, Pilot Rock and the county sheriff’s office rely on the dispatch center to handle 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls. The center also fields calls for the Pendleton fire department, the fire districts of Hermiston, Stanfield, Pilot Rock and Umatilla, along

with most ambulance services in the county. Representatives from several agencies and cities serve on the committee.

Milton-Freewater, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Oregon State Police handle their own dispatch services.

The dispatch center has a budget shy of \$2.17 million, according to the county. State and federal sources cover about

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PENDLETON SeaPort stays afloat

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

SeaPort Airlines is trying to bounce back from Chapter 11 bankruptcy and wants Pendleton to stay in its longterm plans.

In the short term, SeaPort continues to shrink. The Portland-based airline announced Feb. 3 that it would cease service between Portland and North Bend, meaning its Pendleton-Portland route is its only air service in the Western United States.

A handful of recent flight cancellations at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, combined with the news of the bankruptcy filing, didn’t look like a good sign for SeaPort’s future in Pendleton. But Tim Sieber, SeaPort’s newly installed president, said the company has no intention of leaving the Round-Up City.

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PERS fund deficit grows 20 percent

By TED SICKINGER
The Oregonian

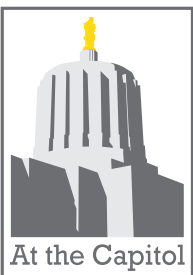
PORTLAND — Oregon Treasurer and Portland mayoral candidate Ted Wheeler issued a statement last week noting that the state pension fund’s investment returns were 2.1 percent in 2015.

That beat the Standard & Poor’s 500 index, and topped the performance of 88 percent of comparable institutional investment funds.

What Wheeler’s statement didn’t mention was that investment returns for the year still fell 5.6 percentage points below the system’s 7.75 percent assumed rate of return for 2015.

That’s terrible news for public employers and taxpayers. It means the pension system’s unfunded liability just increased by another

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Oregon economy on slow rebound
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‘Accelerated restoration’ proposed on 1.27M acres



AP file photo
The Blue Creek fire in the Blue Mountains glows in this view south of Walla Walla on July 20, 2015.

Project crafted over three national forests

By GEORGE PLAIVEN
East Oregonian

An interdisciplinary team of scientists has crafted an ambitious proposal to do “accelerated restoration” on 1.27 million acres of federal forests in the Blue Mountains.

The Forest Resiliency Project calls for a whopping 610,000 acres of tree thinning and prescribed burns to lower the risk of wild-fires within the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Ochoco national forests.

The Forest Service estimates more than 2.3 million

acres of dry forests across the Blues are overgrown and vulnerable to insects, disease and fire. It would take at least 30 years for the agency to catch up on the backlog, working at its current pace.

In response, the Eastside Restoration Strategy was launched in 2013 to accelerate the pace and scale of active forest management. Bill Aney, of Pendleton, was appointed program coordinator and hired a team of specialists to start identifying bigger, broader projects.

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