

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

OREGON STATE CAPITOL

State Police warn against armed takeover

The Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon State Police said it is aware of “rumors” that armed groups are considering taking over the state Capitol and warned that anyone attempting that would be arrested.

The agency also asked Oregonians in a brief statement released late Wednesday to report anyone who may be planning an armed takeover to authorities.

Hundreds of supporters of President Donald Trump — many of them armed — gathered Wednesday at the statehouse and burned a life-size puppet of Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, in effigy. Police in riot gear declared an unlawful assembly and cleared the demonstrators by the late afternoon.

One person was arrested on suspicion of harassment and disorderly conduct during the protest. A second man was arrested on trespassing charges after the protest when state troopers found him after nightfall trying to enter the Capitol while armed.

The pro-Trump crowd was rallying around false allegations of election fraud on the same day that an angry mob stormed the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Some of those in attendance were members of Proud Boys, a far-right wing group.

Prior to the protests, state office buildings around the Capitol were closed as authorities prepared for crowds and potential damage.

Salem has been the site of weekly protests since the November election and has seen violent clashes between pro-Trump demonstrators who falsely believe the election was stolen from him and opponents.



Dave Killen/The Oregonian via AP

Supporters of President Donald Trump burn in effigy Oregon Gov. Kate Brown during a protest at the Oregon Capitol on Wednesday in Salem as Congress convened to confirm the Electoral College vote won by President-elect Joe Biden. The Oregon State Police said in a statement late Wednesday that the agency is aware of “rumors” that armed groups are considering taking over the Capitol and warned that anyone attempting that would be arrested.

Washington, Oregon, 29 tribes sue over plan to move archives

BY GENE JOHNSON

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Washington, Oregon, more than two dozen Native American and Alaska Native tribes and cultural groups from the Northwest are suing the federal government to stop the sale of the National Archives building in Seattle, a plan that would force the relocation of millions of invaluable historical records to California and Missouri.

The government is planning to sell the vast warehouse under a law aimed at unloading excess federal property, but the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court on Monday says the building is anything but “excess.” It contains irreplaceable documents dating to the 1840s and is used all the time for research about everything from tribal history to Japanese internment during World War II and fur seal hunts on remote Alaskan islands.

“This is the DNA of our region,” Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson told an online news conference Monday. “These are documents that are not digitized. Moving them a thousand miles away essentially and effectively eliminates public access to these critical documents.”

The National Archives building is one of a dozen properties around the country, collectively valued at \$500 million to \$750 million, identified for sale by the Public Buildings Reform Board. The



Alan Berner/The Seattle Times file

The National Archives on Sand Point, Washington, has about a million boxes of generally unique, original source documents and public records.

board initially intended to sell the properties individually, but has announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on the commercial real estate market, it will offer the buildings early this year for an expedited sale as a single portfolio.

The records would be moved to National Archives facilities in Kansas City and in Riverside, California.

The Seattle building has a reported \$2.4 million maintenance backlog and costs more than \$350,000 a year to operate, but sits on land that would be prime for residential development, with views of the Cascade Mountains and Lake Washington.

The sale is opposed by all eight U.S. senators and many representatives from Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

“The records stored in Seattle's Federal Archives are vi-

tal to telling the story of the Pacific Northwest's history,” Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the third-most-senior Democrat in the Senate, said in an emailed statement Monday. “I look forward to working with the incoming Biden-Harris Administration to explore every option available, including the appropriations process, to ensure that they remain accessible to local stakeholders.”

The lawsuit says the Seattle archives is ineligible for sale under the Federal Assets Sale and Transfer Act, which exempts buildings used for research in connection with federal agricultural, recreational or conservation programs. Among other things, the lawsuit noted, the archives are used for research under federal historical preservation programs and to litigate land use, water rights and conservation issues.



Reed Saxon/AP file

A sea otter in Morro Bay, California, in 2010.

Pacific sea otter reintroduction gets a nudge from Congress

The Associated Press

PORTLAND — President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed this year's federal budget, which includes a directive to study sea otter reintroduction in the Pacific Northwest.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley for Oregon added the paragraph to the federal budget bill that directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to study the feasibility and cost of reestablishing the marine mammals where they were once hunted to near-extinction along the Pacific Coast in Oregon and Washington, the Northwest News Network reported.

“I'm very pleased. This is very timely,” said Bob Bailey, who leads the Elakha Alliance, a group that wants to bring wild sea otters back to Oregon. His organization, named after the Clatsop-Chinookan word for sea otter, prompted

congressional action and already launched its own feasibility study based in Oregon.

He said the directive will help the government devise a strategic approach to conserving and protecting sea otters on the Pacific Coast.

Sea otters were hunted to local extinction as part of the fur trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, but small populations survived off the coasts of central California and western Alaska, officials said.

The mammals were successfully reintroduced to Washington, Canada and southeast Alaska about 50 years ago, but the ones reintroduced in Oregon have not repopulated the region. The Elakha Alliance is now collaborating with coastal tribes and researchers to reexamine why previous efforts failed in Oregon.

Some have said sea otters

could boost tourism and bring ecological benefits. Others, in the fishing industry, have argued that their return could mean less Dungeness crab, Oregon's most valuable commercial fishery, and one of the mammals' food options.

The signed directive to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service did not include any additional funding to conduct the federal feasibility study to produce a report by next December. The Elakha Alliance said its own feasibility study could provide “significant technical support” for the federal effort.

“A feasibility study will gather needed scientific information that will help make the best possible decision for sea otter recovery,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife spokesperson Jodie Delavan said. “It is purely exploratory and does not imply a decision on whether to reintroduce sea otters.”

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