

# MEETING

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promised the crowd there would be another meeting in the very near future.

"We're not going to stop," Hought said. "We're not going to take this anymore."

Bundy and the militia leaders had been occupying the wildlife refuge near Burns since Jan. 2. They demanded the 187,757-acre bird sanctuary be returned to the county for ranching, while criticizing the federal government's overall ownership and management of public lands.

The militia also protested the sentences of two Harney County ranchers, Dwight and Steven Hammond, who were convicted of arson and given five years in prison for setting fires on federal land. Bundy and supporters have called for the Hammonds' immediate release.

In John Day, the majority of people who approached the microphone during the town hall were supportive of Bundy and the armed protest. A smaller counter-protest was held outside the senior center, with roughly 30 people hold-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

**Jimi Soupier of Prairie City stands with a group of anti-occupation protesters in front of the senior center on Tuesday in John Day.**

ing signs directing their ire at both the militia and Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer.

Palmer, who appeared in uniform at the beginning of the meeting, declined to speak with media. When it became clear Bundy would not arrive, Hought told the crowd it appeared there had been an altercation somewhere between John Day and Burns. News later circulated about the arrests and gunfire.

One by one, residents came to the front of the room to speak their minds. Larry Lent, of John Day, argued the militants had every right to be in Oregon and said govern-

ment overreach has been going on for a long time.

"I support the Hammonds and the Bundys 100 percent," Lent said. "To hell with the FBI. They don't 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-protest-

ers 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."

In particular, Magden said it was irresponsible to invite the militia to John Day. 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. Jim Sproul, a fifth-generation resident of John Day, brought up the recent Canyon Creek Complex of wildfires that burned more than 100,000 acres last summer.

"That wasn't an act of God. It was an act of negligence," Sproul said.

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."

# Meeting comments

## Beverly Curtis Prairie City

"I thought it was interesting and informative. I'm glad I heard the different sides of the issue. I was glad it didn't turn into a riot. ... I never thought there would be a killing."

## Frances Preston Prairie City

"I think it was marvelous that people came out. I think the situation as it exists really spoke loudly. Even though we didn't have our speakers, individuals come forward and through their voices we heard their concerns and feeling of community."

## Dave Traylor John Day

"I thought the meeting went over well. There was no name calling, and everyone was respectful. Here in the West we show we can have varying differences, but we can act in a respectful manner. It was sad to hear that one of the speakers was shot and killed on the way over here. We were always hoping there wouldn't be violence."

# ARREST

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Anaconda, Montana.

Other people were also detained during the arrests on Highway 395 and have since been released.

In a separate event in Burns at about 5:50 p.m., Oregon State Police arrested Joseph Donald O'Shaughnessy, 45, Cottonwood, Arizona.

At about 6:30 p.m., the FBI arrested Peter Santilli, 50, Cincinnati, Ohio, in Burns without incident. Santilli is known for his coverage of the occupation on his YouTube show.

At 8:30 p.m., Jon Eric Ritzheimer, 32, was arrested by the FBI after turning himself in to the Peoria, Arizona, police department.



Submitted photo

**A member of the group occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge sits on Highway 395 north of Burns while being taken into custody. The leader of the occupation, Ammon Bundy, was also reportedly taken into custody.**

All of the named defendants face a federal felony charge of conspiracy to impede officers of the United States from discharging their official duties through the use of force, intimid-

ation or threats, according to the release.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley said in a statement he was pleased the FBI responded.

"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 so this community can begin to heal the deep wounds that this illegal activity has created over the last month," he said.

Harney County Judge Steve Grasty also urged the remaining occupiers to stand down.

"I am relieved this situation is coming to an end, however, I am saddened by the loss of life," he said in a statement. "I hope and pray that those who remain at the Refuge will stand down peacefully."

The Deschutes County Major Incident Team will be assisting the OSP and the Harney County District Attorney's Office with the investigation into the officer-involved shooting by OSP troopers.

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