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## LaVoy Finicum shooting

### Indictment: FBI agent lied about firing weapon during arrest attempt

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

An FBI agent pleaded not guilty to charges related to lying about firing his weapon during the attempted arrest of refugee occupier LaVoy Finicum.

W. Joseph Astarita, a member of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team, was indicted by a federal grand jury June 20 on three charges of making a false statement and two charges of obstruction of justice. He pleaded not guilty to all the charges Wednesday in Portland and was released

pending future appearances, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Astarita "falsely stated he had not fired his weapon" to FBI and Oregon State Police investigators when he actually fired two rounds, according to the indictment.

Neither round struck Finicum, who was fatally shot by OSP officers after refusing to stop his vehicle and attempting to run a roadblock on Highway 395 between John Day and Burns Jan. 26, 2016. Finicum was a vocal member of the group that occupied the Malheur National Wild-

life Refuge in early 2016.

Six shots fired by OSP officers, including three that struck Finicum, were determined to be justified by investigators from Malheur and Deschutes counties.

U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said in a statement, "Special Agent Astarita's alleged actions that led to this investigation and indictment do not, in any way, call into question the findings of the Major Incident Team's investigation of OSP's use of deadly force. OSP's actions were justified and necessary in protecting officer safety."

Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson said in a press conference Wednesday one of the two rounds fired by Astarita struck the roof of Finicum's pickup. He said the investigation is ongoing.

Finicum was en route to a meeting at the John Day Senior Center when law enforcement officers attempted to stop his vehicle, which contained several passengers including Ryan Bundy.

The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General in partnership with the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon investigated the case.



Eagle file photo  
**Refuge occupier LaVoy Finicum's widow, Jeanette Finicum.**



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs  
**Grant County People Mover**

## Rural veteran program logs 500,000 miles

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Oregon's Highly Rural Transportation Program, a federal, state and local partnership helping meet the transportation needs of veterans in rural areas, has logged over 500,000 miles in its first two years of operation.

Veterans who were served by this program were transported all over the Pacific Northwest to see doctors and receive medical care. The grants are implemented through local transportation entities.

Grant County is serviced through the People Mover, which goes to Bend, Redmond, Pendleton, Walla Walla, Burns, Baker City and Boise.

Angie Jones, the transportation manager at the People Mover, said the program has been extremely helpful for veterans all over the county.

"We've been able to get Grant County residents to any kind of medical appointment, including pharmacy, for free," she said.

The \$50,000 in grant funds is helpful, but it doesn't get the People Mover all the way there.

"Usually by the 10th month, we're using general funds," Jones said. "It's a limited amount of money, but

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## FEEDING THE RAINBOW

### Gathering serves as testing ground for disaster relief

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

**TOP: A banner welcomes people to the Rainbow Gathering July 1.**

**RIGHT: Miles Biddulph plays guitar at the Rainbow Gathering Saturday, July 1.**



Eagle photos/Rylan Boggs

The thousands of Rainbow Gathering attendees come from all walks of life, but they share one thing in common: the need to eat.

As of Saturday afternoon, the first official day of the 45th annual gathering on national forest lands, almost 7,200 people had set up camp for the seven-day event surrounding a July 4 prayer for peace.

Flagtail Meadows, the site of the gathering in the Malheur National Forest south of John Day, buzzed with activity as new arrivals carried supplies into the camp.

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## Death investigated at Rainbow Gathering

Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer is investigating the death of an unidentified man at the Rainbow Gathering.

Multiple officers from the Forest Service, Oregon State Police and Grant County Sheriff's Office responded to the gathering off of Forest Road 24, according to a July 2 press release from Palmer.

An unidentified man collapsed near a makeshift

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## Windstorm causes tens of thousands of dollars of damage to Prairie City

### Wastewater treatment facility struck by lightning

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A windstorm caused tens of thousands of dollars of damage in Prairie City on Monday, June 26, according to Mayor Jim Hamsher.

The city's water system was damaged, computers went down and a house and vehicle had trees land on them.

City and private property was damaged, Hamsher said.

Lightning struck the wastewater treatment facility in Prairie City and damaged the electronics controlling the water system, Public Works Director Chris Camarena said. No untreated water entered the system, and the city's million-gallon reservoir was used to supply the city with water.

Camarena said he worked 36 consecutive hours monitoring and repairing the system.

He said the two other public works employees had been "phenomenal," and both put in 18 hour days.

"We don't have catastrophes very often, but when we do, everybody steps up," Camarena said.

He was thankful there were no injuries, but was unable to put a dollar figure on the amount of damage done as cleanup efforts are ongoing.

City Recorder Taci Philbrook said trees were split, uprooted and knocked over, some on houses.

"Prairie City was hit pretty hard by it," Philbrook said.

However, the very next day residents were helping remove branches and cleaning up the

city, "neighbors helping neighbors," she said.

John Day was also affected by the storm, but not to the same degree as Prairie City.

No city property was damaged, but a tree was blown down on Ferguson Road. The west part of town lost power for a short period of time, according to Public Works Director Monty Legg. The storm hit around 1 p.m. and scattered debris and branches around the city.

"It was a pretty good little storm," Legg said.

Dayville, Seneca, Mt. Vernon, Long Creek and Canyon City all avoided serious damage.

"It really didn't hit us like it did John Day," Canyon City City Recorder Corry Rider said.



Contributed photo/Pam Woodworth

**A tree in Prairie City uprooted by a windstorm on Monday, June 26.**

