

# Locals stand in support of fallen Tennessee Marines

*Three members of "3 percent of Idaho" group show solidarity outside forces recruiting office*

**Ralph Bartholdt/Lewiston Tribune**

The three armed men stood in the shade of a small dogwood tree next to the armed forces recruiting offices in Lewiston's Nez Perce Plaza, surrounded by flags.

Old Glory ruffled in a breeze that drifted across the parking lot and bumped up against the U.S. Marine Corps standard flag and nudged the yellow field of a Gadsden flag - the one with the snake and the words "Don't Tread On Me" - they erected near their cooler and folding chairs.

Passers-by honked. Some, like Taniya Smith, came over to introduce herself.

"You out here protecting this?" asked Smith, a former U.S. Navy Seabee who served in Iraq.

The three men, Matt Dillard, Mike Dill and Josh Burns, affirmed they were part of a group whose members have flocked to recruiting depots across Idaho as a show of support and solidarity for the four Marines killed Thursday by a gunman at a Chattanooga, Tenn., military facility.

"They supported us, and now we're here showing them that we support them," Dillard, of Clarkston, said.

The small contingent belongs to a group whose members are known as "3 percenters," and technically calls itself the "3 percent of Idaho." The group's objective is to form an alliance across the state with members who prepare "for any situation, man-made or natural," according to the group's literature.

The men wore sidearms, Dillard said, as a show of their support for the Second Amendment.

"We're not anti-government," he said.

Dill, of Winchester, served with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan. Dillard and Burns don't have a military background. The group does not require military experience to join.

"We're not a military group, but we support the military," Dillard said.

Lewiston Marine recruiters could not comment on the record about the contingent, which sipped water from a cooler outside. They referred questions to Sgt. Reece Lodder with the Marine public affairs office, who said the Marine Corps discourages civilians from standing guard at recruiting offices.

"We greatly appreciate the support of the American public during this tragedy," Lodder said via email. "We ask that citizens do not stand guard at our recruiting offices. Our continued public trust lies among our trained first responders for the safety of the communities where we live and work."

Lodder said Marines at recruiting offices are not authorized to be armed and there is no plan by the Marine Corps to arm its recruiters.

Lewiston police have received no complaints about the armed group clustered at the plaza, and have no plans to prohibit the assembly.

"As long as they are peaceful, not obstructing traffic or harassing citizens, and as long as the people who own the property don't have issues," Lewiston Deputy Chief Roger Lanier said. "We've received no calls, no complaints."

Dillard said his group has been camped in front of the recruiting offices during business hours since Monday and plans to stay at the Nez Perce Plaza site through the week.

"We're on public property and we'll stay out here as long as we can to help these guys," he said.

---

*Bartholdt can be contacted at [rbartholdt@lmtribune.com](mailto:rbartholdt@lmtribune.com) or (208) 848-2275.*