

Arrests of Oregon standoff leaders leaves 1 person dead

KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BURNS, Ore. (AP) — Federal and state officials were restricting access to the Oregon refuge being occupied by an armed group after one of the occupiers was killed during a traffic stop and eight more, including the group's leader Ammon Bundy, were arrested.

The group, which has included people from as far away as Arizona and Michigan, seized the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Jan. 2. They want federal lands turned over to local authorities.

The confrontation came amid increasing calls for law enforcement to take action against Bundy for the illegal occupation of the wildlife refuge.

Details of the fatal encounter were sparse. It happened as Bundy and his followers were heading to a community late Tuesday afternoon in John Day, about 70 miles north of Burns.

Arianna Finicum Brown confirmed that her father, Arizona rancher Robert "LaVoy" Finicum, was the man killed, the Oregonian reported. The 55-year-old was a frequent and public presence at the refuge, often speaking for the group at news conferences.

Brown told the paper, "he would never ever want to hurt somebody, but he does believe in defending freedom and he knew the risks involved."

The FBI and Oregon State Police would only say the man killed in the police shooting was wanted by federal authorities, and said no more information would be released pending identification by the medical examiner.

Jason Patrick, one of the leaders of the occupation, told Oregon Public Broadcasting that five or six group members remain inside the refuge.

The FBI and Oregon State Police said they were setting up checkpoints in the refuge Wednesday. According to the statement, only ranchers who own property in specific areas will be allowed to pass.

Brand Thornton, one of Bundy's supporters, said he left the refuge Monday and wasn't sure what those remaining would do.

"The entire leadership is gone," he told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "I wouldn't blame any of them for leaving."

Thornton called the arrests "a dirty trick" by law enforcement.

In addition to Ammon Bundy, those arrested were: his brother Ryan Bundy, 43; Brian Cavalier, 44; Shawna Cox, 59; and Ryan Payne, 32 - apprehended during the traffic stop on U.S. Highway 395 Tuesday afternoon. Authorities said two others — Joseph Donald O'Shaughnessy, 45, and Peter Santilli, 50 — were arrested separately in Burns, while FBI agents in Arizona arrested another, Jon Eric Ritzheimer, 32.

Each will face a federal felony charge of conspiracy to impede officers of the United States from discharging their official duties through the use of force, intimidation or threats, authorities said.

Law enforcement previously had taken a hands-off approach, reflecting lessons learned during bloody standoffs at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho, during the 1990s.

Many residents of Harney County, where the refuge is located, have been among those demanding that Bundy leave. Many sympathize with his criticism of federal land management policies but opposed the refuge takeover.

"I am pleased that the FBI has listened to the concerns of the local community and responded to the illegal activity occurring in Harney County by outside extremists," Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley said in a statement.

The Bundys are the sons of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a high-profile 2014 standoff with the government over grazing rights.

The group, calling themselves Citizens for Constitutional Freedom, came to the frozen high desert of eastern Oregon to decry what it calls onerous federal land restrictions and to object to the prison sentences of two local ranchers convicted of setting fires.

Associated Press reporters Rebecca Boone in Boise, Idaho, Gene Johnson and Lisa Baumann in Seattle and Terrence Petty and Kristena Hansen in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

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