

# Oregon occupiers pulled one heck of a veil over the jury's eyes

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**Anthony Kuipers/Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

It has been a full week, and we are still awaiting some logical explanation as to why members of an armed militant group were acquitted of charges stemming from a takeover of an Oregon wildlife refuge in January.

We may never get it. All that's been explained is that the jury felt the prosecution failed to prove conspiracy charges. The jurors apparently viewed the events as nothing more than a peaceful political protest not intended to put federal employees at risk.

The decision left many wondering just how badly the prosecution could have botched its case. The evidence, after all, was highly publicized during those 41 days the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge was under siege. People armed with serious firearms occupied and damaged federal property for more than a month. An FBI agent testified that 30 guns were seized, with 16,636 live rounds and nearly 1,700 spent casings found at the scene. Plus, the leaders were the same guys behind a similar standoff with authorities in Nevada.

Yet somehow this isn't considered threatening or intimidating to federal workers. Huh?

They were lucky the authorities chose to hold off on making arrests for more than a month, in hopes the situation could resolve itself peacefully. And it almost did, had occupier LaVoy Finicum not moved his hand toward a loaded handgun in front of an officer.

Now their luck continues.

Meanwhile, actual peaceful protesters around the country, including unarmed pipeline protesters in North Dakota, are the victims of violence at the hands of officers in riot gear. And we can't help but notice those protesters often have a darker skin tone than the Oregon occupiers.

The jury has unfortunately opened the door for other militants to get dangerous ideas in their heads.

Those heavily armed groups with misguided virtues, who see oppression when it isn't there, now have a precedent to follow.

We hope juries presiding over their cases are not swayed by dubious definitions of protest and conspiracy, but instead see them for the criminals they are.