



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on April 27, 2017

## Bundy Ranch Trial: Hung Jury in First of 3 Planned Trials for Multiple Defendants

After a deadlocked jury failed a second time on April 24 to return verdicts in the Bundy Ranch standoff case, U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro in Las Vegas, Nevada, declared a mistrial. Each of the six defendants, all out-of-state men who had traveled to Nevada in 2014 to stand with [embattled rancher Cliven Bundy](#), have been charged with 10 felony crimes, including conspiracy against the United States, threatening a federal officer, assault on a federal officer, brandishing a firearm, and interstate travel to aid extortion. Federal prosecutors characterized the six defendants as dangerous “gunmen” in a massive conspiracy aimed at intimidating and endangering federal law enforcement officers. A big surprise in the trial was the revelation that one of the defendants, Gregory Burleson of Phoenix, Arizona, was a paid informant for the FBI. As it turned out, Burleson was the one defendant that the jury seemed to be convinced about, returning a guilty verdict on eight charges. He faces a minimum of 57 years in prison at sentencing July 26. Todd Engel of Boundary County, Idaho, was found guilty of obstruction and traveling across state lines in aid of extortion, and could face up to 30 years in prison.



Judge Navarro declared a mistrial in regard to the four additional men charged in the case — Richard Lovelien, Orville Scott Drexler, Eric Parker, and Steven Stewart — and set a new trial date for them for June 26. That date coincides with the previously scheduled start date for the second group of “ringleader” defendants: Cliven Bundy; his sons Ammon and Ryan Bundy; Ryan Payne; and talk radio show host Peter Santilli. A third trial for another six defendants is scheduled for August.

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“I think it should show the federal government that they have a much weaker case than they thought going into this, because we’ve now had two months of testimony from over 50 prosecution witnesses, and they couldn’t get 12 people to agree,” said Todd Leventhal, attorney for Scott Drexler, in a statement to members of the media outside court.



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This was another major defeat for federal prosecutors, who saw a jury [acquit seven defendants](#) in a similar trial over the related Oregon Standoff trial last October.

## **FBI Informant Mystery**

The conviction of Gregory Burleson has introduced several factors into the Bundy Ranch Standoff trials that have stirred considerable interest and alarm, including the FBI's use of informants as agent provocateurs and the use of agents posing as journalists or independent documentary film makers. During the trial, prosecutors played video excerpts of interviews of some of the defendants that had been recorded for the FBI's fake documentary, "America Reloaded." The most inflammatory statements in the film came from Burleson, who had aroused suspicions among many Bundy supporters due to his erratic behavior and wild, provocative statements. In a story titled ["Bundy supporter says he wanted to kill federal agents in fake documentary,"](#) Channel 8, the Las Vegas CBS television news affiliate, on March 23, 2017, reported:

Three men known as Cliven Bundy supporters thought they were being interviewed by a film crew. It turns out it was the FBI.

It's the new development in the federal trial against the supporters of the Bunkerville rancher.

On Thursday, interviews were played of three defendants recorded for what they thought was a documentary called "America Reloaded."

The interviews turned out to be a part of the federal case against them because the film crew was made up of undercover FBI agents.

During the interview with defendant Gregory Burleson, he said he was ready to kill federal agents, that he helped organize the standoff against them and showed up with guns and ammunition, and was disappointed things ended without blood.

Burleson was also recorded saying he wanted to put federal agents six feet under because he believed they were breaking the law and abusing their authority.

It was revealed in court earlier this week, Burleson had previously been a paid FBI informant.

Crucial questions that Burleson's co-defendants and their defense attorneys undoubtedly will be seeking answers to include: Precisely when was Burleson employed by the FBI (and possibly other agencies) as an informant? How much he was paid? Who directed/handled him? Under what instructions/directives did he operate? Why did they turn on him? There is also the very serious issue of potential violation of attorney-client privilege, since Burleson and his counsel were present at the defense planning meetings with the other defendants and their attorneys, and could have transmitted information from those meetings to the government prosecutors.

*Photo shows supporter of defendants outside federal courthouse in Las Vegas, April 24, 2017: AP Images*

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