



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on March 17, 2016

## Finicum Shooting: Was Bundy Driver/“Bodyguard” an FBI Agent Provocateur?

There is a startling omission in a newly released official [“Incident Report”](#) on the shooting death of LaVoy Finicum that has reopened controversy over a key figure in the Oregon standoff with federal authorities. Recent Facebook postings by supporters of the occupation point to the conspicuous exclusion of this individual’s name in the 360-page report released last week as further evidence that he is “the informant and rat” who betrayed Finicum, Ammon Bundy, and the other occupiers.



He has been described in numerous news stories as Ammon Bundy’s “bodyguard.” He was regarded by many inside and outside of the 41-day occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Sanctuary in Oregon as one of the activists in charge of “security” for the occupiers. On the afternoon of January 26, he was the driver of the lead vehicle carrying Ammon Bundy and another fellow occupier, Bryan “Buddha” Cavalier, to a meeting with the sheriff of neighboring Grant County. Accusers say he was knowingly leading Bundy and Cavalier, as well as the following vehicle driven by Arizona rancher LaVoy Finicum into a deadly trap.

His name is Mark McConnell (shown). He is identified in various news accounts as a 37-year-old truck driver from Buckeye, Arizona. After LaVoy Finicum was [shot to death](#) at an Oregon State Police/FBI roadblock, McConnell was arrested, along with the other surviving occupants of the two vehicles: Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy, Brian Cavalier, Ryan Payne, Shawna Cox, and Victoria Sharp. However, shortly after being taken into custody, Sharp and McConnell were released. Sharp’s early release is understandable: She is an 18-year-old minor and was involved only as a member of the Sharp Family Singers, who briefly provided moral support to the occupiers by singing hymns and patriotic songs. McConnell, however, is a different story.

McConnell was considered a “ringleader” of sorts by various witnesses/supporters who had been to the Oregon occupation and were interviewed by *The New American*. He had been deeply involved in all of the activities for which his fellow occupiers are being charged with multiple felonies and federal conspiracy crimes. And, according to one former occupier we interviewed, who has asked to remain anonymous, McConnell was the only occupant of the two vehicles who was wearing a loaded sidearm at the time of the arrest on January 26. This claim is reinforced by testimony from an arresting officer identified only as “Officer 7” in the recently released official report of the shooting conducted by a “Tri-County Major Incident Team” composed of investigators from three Oregon county sheriffs’ offices. Although Officer 7’s testimony concerns only McConnell’s vehicle, other statements released by officials thus far indicate that while there were firearms recovered from Finicum’s vehicle, none of the other occupants was carrying or wearing a firearm.

Officer 7 was asked by the incident investigator if any occupants of the lead vehicle, McConnell’s Jeep,



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were armed when arrested. Officer 7 responds (on page 211): “Yes, um ... the only person that I ... observed with a weapon — what I recall was the driver, uh, I recall seein — I believe he had a pistol on his right ... hip.”

That would be a reference to Mark McConnell, the driver. Yet, not only was McConnell released without charge, his name does not even appear among those arrested in the 360 pages of the report. It may have been redacted in some of the many portions of the report that are blacked out. However, there are other portions of the report where the arrestees are listed where there are no redactions, and, yet, his name is mysteriously absent. On page 358, for instance, we read: “Persons arrested at the scene were Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy, Ryan Payne, Bryan Cavalier, Shawna Cox, and a juvenile female.” Thus, all participants are mentioned (with even a reference to Victoria Sharp, a minor) except for key player McConnell.

This conspicuous absence from the official report reinforces earlier evidence that McConnell, while posing as a “patriot activist,” was actually working as an informant for the FBI and/or other federal agencies. His quick release following the initial arrest on January 26 was almost certainly intended to enable him to produce a video that would contradict and neutralize the testimony of Victoria Sharp, who was providing an up-close-and-personal eyewitness account of the Finicum shooting in [radio and video interviews](#) that were going viral on the Internet. And, according to some critics, contrary to McConnell’s claims that he independently filmed the video, the evidence is persuasive that it was actually filmed by/for the FBI (more on that below).

As we reported previously, the day after his arrest, [McConnell hastily posted a video](#) which supported the FBI/Oregon State Police version of the shooting, saying that LaVoy Finicum was “charging” the police when he was shot down.

We [reported](#):

A different “eyewitness” account of the shooting conflicts sharply with that of Miss Sharp. We put eyewitness in quotes because even though he has been referred to as an eyewitness in media and social media accounts, he was about a mile away when the shooting occurred, having already been stopped by the police roadblock. In his video posted on Facebook, McConnell disputes Victoria Sharp’s testimony, claiming Finicum was “charging” police when he was shot down. This is based, he says, on accounts he got from Ryan Payne and Shawna Cox, apparently either in jail or on the way to jail. However, McConnell’s testimony is merely third-party hearsay, and as some critics point out, from a suspect source at that. Individuals who have been close to the occupation — but who asked not to be identified at this time — note that:

- 1) McConnell was the only participant (other than Miss Sharp) to be released, and, unlike Sharp, he has been an active, armed participant in the occupation, and was the driver of the vehicle carrying Ammon Bundy;
- 2) McConnell was very hasty, after his release, to put up a video on his Facebook page backing up the story being given to the media by the federal authorities who had just carried out the “murder” of a suspect who is alleged to have had his hands in the air.

Both of these facts, say the McConnell critics, point to one of two probable explanations: Either he is a police informant/agent provocateur who was assigned to infiltrate the occupation, or; he was sufficiently leaned on by prosecutors and FBI, with threats of life imprisonment, if he didn’t “cooperate” — with one of his first tasks being to come out with a statement that would support the



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official FBI narrative and neutralize the eyewitness testimony of Victoria Sharp.

The McConnell video was a huge boon for the FBI and the other law enforcement agencies involved in the shooting death of LaVoy Finicum. It provided them with a “justified” use of deadly force alibi from a supposedly unassailable source: an “eyewitness” who was one of the occupation leaders, and who, therefore, would not be disposed to provide testimony favorable to the FBI, or unfavorable to his compatriots. Naturally, the establishment news media, which was overwhelmingly hostile toward the [Hammond ranching family](#) (the original objects of the occupiers’ support) and hostile as well toward the wildlife refuge occupation, ran with the McConnell video, citing it repeatedly as proof that LaVoy Finicum had left the FBI/Oregon State Police with no alternate than to shoot him down.

The absence of McConnell’s name from the recent Tri-County report has not gone unnoticed by friends and supporters of the Finicum, Bundy, and Hammond families.

In a widely circulated March 11 Facebook posting of portions of the report, activist Maureen Peltier writes of McConnell as “the informant and rat”:

Oh look, Mark McConnell is on my mind again, name is missing from this report.....looks like he wasn’t on their mind tho. Forgot to list him as one of those arrested? \*end sarcasm

Also, Budda and Jon both mentioned him today. As the informant and rat. They want you all to know.

The previous day, on March 10, Wesley Vance likewise posts portions of the report, with the note:

READ WHERE IT SAYS PEOPLE ARRESTED AT SEEN AND IT NAMES EVERYONE INCLUDING JUVENILE WHICH IS VICTORIA ,BUT NEVER MENTIONS MARK MCONELL NAME

The Peltier and Vance postings did not go unnoticed by McConnell, who reproduces them on his Facebook page — interspersed among lurid postings of sexually oriented photos endorsing “Cougars” (mature females) providing lessons to young males, and sado-masochism. McConnell derisively dismisses the Peltier and Vance accusations, suggesting that since both of them were also at the Oregon refuge and weren’t arrested that they must be federal informants as well. His logic is far from ironclad: Neither Peltier or Vance, to our knowledge, played the kind of central role he did and neither was a member of the entourage accompanying Finicum and Bundy on the fateful day, as was McConnell.

*Photo: Mark McConnell (from the video)*

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