



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on April 11, 2014

Last Man Standing: Nevada Ranch Family in Fedgov Face-off

Tensions are rising and the potential for violence is escalating in Nevada's Mohave Desert. Last week more than 200 armed federal agents from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other agencies, many decked out in camouflage uniforms, descended on the area around Bunkerville, a small town 70 miles northeast of Las Vegas, near Nevada's borders with Arizona and Utah. According to coverage one is likely to see from the Establishment media, the show of force is necessary to remove Cliven Bundy's cattle from "public lands" where they are, allegedly, damaging the "fragile" habitat of the protected desert tortoise. That is the story that is being dispensed by the BLM and retailed in most media accounts.



Cliven Bundy (shown) and his family, friends and neighbors, as well as some legal scholars, tell a different story. According to Bundy, whose family has been ranching in the area since the 1800s, the BLM's armed invasion and occupation of Nevada has nothing to do with protecting the tortoise and everything to do with running him off the land, as it has already done to all of the other ranchers in Clark County. He notes that more than 50 other ranchers have been bankrupted, intimidated, and forced to give up their land and legal property rights. He is, he points out, "the last man standing"; and now that generations of ranching families have been driven out, federal officials have dropped the pretense that it is all about saving the "endangered" tortoise and have actually been killing the reptiles by the hundreds.

Yes, that is true; [as reported by the liberal Huffington Post](#) and other media outlets last year, the BLM began "euthanizing" the tortoises, claiming the agency did not have sufficient funds in its budget to manage the habitat. How then, critics point out, can the BLM justify the \$1 million or more that it will spend rounding up the Bundy family's cattle. And if the tortoise habitat is so precious and sensitive that the sparse cattle population — which had co-existed with the turtles for generations — had to be removed, why has the BLM been selling the former ranch land to developers?

The World is Watching

On a closer examination, the case against Cliven Bundy is not the open-and-shut case the federal government, the media, and the environmental activist groups, such as the Center for Biological Diversity, make it out to be. As California State University criminology professor Jason Kissner pointed out in a [column for American Thinker](#) yesterday, it is the Obama administration's BLM and Attorney General Eric Holder that are engaged in "brazen lawlessness." Federal officials are exploiting the fact that few Americans understand the legal complexities of the "split estate," "prior appropriation



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doctrine,” and other principles governing water rights, grazing rights, and other land use/property rights on “public” and private lands, that are different in the arid West than in other parts of the country.

The current battle between the Bundys and the Feds is a replay of the decades-long confrontation between various federal agencies and the late Wayne Hage, the Nevada rancher/liberty activist/scholar who won multiple court victories and landmark decisions against federal overreach. In an [interview with *The New American*](#) in 2002, Hage explained the important legal distinctions that govern property rights in the West, particularly as they apply to so-called public lands.

For years, the Hage family had been subjected to threats, intimidation, and fines, and — like the Bundys — had their cattle illegally confiscated by federal agents. And, as with the Bundys, the Hages were portrayed by the Feds and their compliant media shells as scofflaws and environmental criminals who deserved to be thrown into the slammer. Last year, [as we reported](#), a federal court once again vindicated the Hages, although by that time Wayne Hage and his wife, former Congresswoman [Helen Chenoweth-Hage](#), had both passed away six years earlier.

Chief Judge Robert C. Jones of the Federal District Court of Nevada issued a blistering decision that charged officials of the BLM and other agencies with malicious and criminal conduct, and actually engaging in a decades-long “conspiracy” against the Hages.

Judge Jones said he found that “the government and the agents of the government in that locale, sometime in the ’70s and ’80s, entered into a conspiracy, a literal, intentional conspiracy, to deprive the Hages of not only their permit grazing rights, for whatever reason, but also to deprive them of their vested property rights under the takings clause, and I find that that’s a sufficient basis to hold that there is irreparable harm if I don’t ... restrain the government from continuing in that conduct.”

“In the present case,” declared Judge Jones, “the Government’s actions over the past two decades shock the conscience of the Court.”

The findings of Judge Jones in the Hage case should be borne in mind as tensions mount in Clark County, where the actions of the BLM are shocking the conscience of the entire nation. Thanks to hundreds of the Bundy family’s friends, neighbors, and relatives who are posting videos of the federal “occupation” on social media, as well as the widespread attention being focused on this case by independent media, the actions of the BLM and the Obama administration cannot remain hidden behind the barricades, road blocks, and armed agents.

The angry face-offs between the federal agents and outraged residents and supporters evoke images of the deadly confrontations at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992 and Waco, Texas in 1993.

Over the past week, federal agents were filmed using tasers against 39-year-old Ammon Bundy, one of Cliven’s sons, setting their K-9 unit dogs on other supporters, and manhandling others, including tackling one of Cliven Bundy’s sisters. Another of Bundy’s sons, Dave Bundy, was arrested and cited for “failing to disperse” and “resisting arrest.” He was reportedly held overnight and released the next day.

(The article continues after the two videos below.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhJ6H9vIEDA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9pM_Rd-eLY

Cliven Bundy may be the last rancher standing in Nevada’s Clark County, but he and his family are not



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standing alone; patriots from across the country are rallying to their support. Many are being spurred to do so by the disturbing videos that have gone viral.

“Watching that video last night created a visceral reaction in me,” Arizona state Representative Kelly Townsend, a tea party Republican, told the Las Vegas *Review-Journal*. “It sounds dramatic, but it reminded me of Tiananmen Square. I don’t recognize my country at this point.”

Nevada Assemblywoman Michele Fiore (R-Las Vegas) called the footage “horrifying.”

“I’m highly offended by the feds coming in as aggressively as they have,” Fiore said in an interview with the *Review-Journal*.

Sheriff Richard Mack, who heads the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA), along with military and police members of Oath Keepers, as well as elected legislators from the states of Nevada, Arizona, Utah, and Washington, are headed to Clark County to stand with the Bundy family. With the growing presence of supporters and the increasing media attention this is causing, hopefully there will be less chance of federal police agencies escalating this standoff into another deadly “Waco” tragedy.

Photo: Cliven Bundy

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