



Oregon Standoff - Rancher LaVoy Finicum Shot Dead by Police

LaVoy Finicum (shown) was shot to death by law enforcement officers Tuesday, January 26 at around 4:30 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time). Was he “murdered” while his hands were extended in the air, as one eyewitness has claimed? Or was he “charging” the police, as another witness claims. There are still many unanswered questions and conflicting stories concerning many details of the shooting. *The New American* has been interviewing people who have been involved in various capacities in the standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which began on January 2nd, in protest over the sentencing of Oregon ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond to five years in prison. The Hammonds were prosecuted as “terrorists” for starting controlled burns that spread to a small area of federal Bureau of Land Management land.



We have not, at this point, interviewed any eyewitnesses to the shooting, but have talked with people who were standing vigil on the perimeter near the roadblock where the shooting occurred. According to the information available at this time, LaVoy Finicum, an Arizona rancher who had served as a spokesman for the protesters that are occupying the Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon, was driving his pickup truck with four passengers, including two women, to the town of John Day, Oregon, for a meeting there with the sheriff and area ranchers. Another vehicle driven by Mark McConnell included Ammon Bundy (son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy) and Brian Cavalier, both considered leaders of the occupation.

Although various news accounts have referred to the shooting as a “gunfight,” according to the eyewitness testimony of Victoria Sharp, an 18-year-old woman who was in the back seat of Finicum’s truck when the shooting occurred, no occupants of the vehicles fired any weapons; the only shooting that occurred was on the part of the police and FBI. Miss Sharp’s audio account of the shooting has been posted on a number of websites and social media. After being arrested with the other survivors of the shooting and taken to Burns, Oregon, for questioning, she was released.

The two vehicles were stopped at a police/FBI roadblock on U.S. 395 outside of Burns. They were ordered to put their hands out of the windows, Sharp says, and also claims that Finicum put his hands out of the car window and asked the police to allow the women to leave the car. (Another woman, Shawna Cox, was in the vehicle, along with Ryan Bundy and Ryan Payne.)

“They shot at him, but they missed him,” said Sharp, adding that Finicum then said, “They mean



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business; they're going to shoot us." He then attempted to drive away in the truck, while taking fire from the police, but crashed into a snowbank. According to Sharp, the police "were riddling the car with bullets."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wA18O_6dgw

"When we crashed and stopped for a second, he got out of the car, he had his hands in the air, he's like 'just shoot me then' ... and they did, they shot him dead," said Sharp.

"He was just walking, with his hands in the air," said Sharp. "I saw it, I swear to God, he was just walking with his hands in the air. And they shot him dead and after he was down on the ground, shot him three more times." Then, she says, they "bombarded the vehicle with bullets" and tear gas, as she and the other passengers laid on the floorboards praying and screaming for them to stop.

She says they tried to "find something white" so they could hold up a white flag to show they were trying to surrender.

Ryan Bundy (another son of Cliven Bundy) was, apparently, the only passenger to be wounded in the barrage.

Miss Sharp, along with her mother and seven siblings comprise the Sharp Family Singers, a family choir from Kansas that is becoming well-known in patriot circles for singing Gospel, patriotic and country songs at various events. A video of the family singing at the Bundy ranch in Nevada during the 2014 standoff with federal authorities can be seen below.

According to people who know the family, the Sharps were in Oregon to support the embattled ranchers. However, Victoria was the only one to be included in the trip for the meeting in John Day.

Dueling Witnesses

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 official FBI



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narrative and neutralize the eyewitness testimony of Victoria Sharp.

Who Was LaVoy Finicum?

Much will be written about LaVoy Finicum in the days and months ahead. The 54-year-old Arizona rancher and his wife of 23 years, Jeanette, have 11 children and 19 grandchildren. Like his friend, Cliven Bundy, he has had his share of troubles with the Bureau of Land Management.

Over the past couple of years, Finicum has posted a number of videos on YouTube explaining the illegal actions and harassment by the BLM, aimed, he says, at driving him off his ranch. He was a plainspoken but articulate and intelligent spokesman for many of the farmers and ranchers that are engaged in constant fights with federal agencies.

In the video below, Finicum recounts how BLM employees “stole” his water, leaving his 100,000 gallon tank — which he needs for cattle to survive — empty. Other water tanks and water lines were sabotaged.

In the same video, he insists that he is not “anti-government” or even “anti-federal government.” We need the federal government, he says, for national defense, trade relations between the states and foreign countries, border control, and other limited functions delineated in the Constitution. However, he charges, the federal government is now out of control and regularly violates the law.

In another video (above) posted on September 23, 2015, LaVoy Finicum again insists he wants to avoid any kind of violence, saying, “I’ve never pointed guns at anyone, and don’t intend to. But let’s get some of the history straight. Because they (the feds) have pointed guns at me — and have promised to shoot me, so let’s get the history straight.... There’s only one side that has pointed guns when it comes to me, and it hasn’t been me.” He also tells of his meeting with the Mojave County Sheriff Jim McCabe, whom he describes as a man of integrity. In other videos he details his meetings, which he says were very cordial, with state, county, and federal elected and appointed officials. Over and over again, he presents the picture of a reasonable, law-abiding citizen who is trying to work through the legal system to obtain redress of grievances against an increasingly hostile federal leviathan.

What pushed LaVoy Finicum to take the desperate and misguided course that has now ended in his death? Many of the people we have interviewed who are friends and admirers of Finicum say they tried to convince him and Ammon Bundy that the occupation of the wildlife refuge — or any other similar confrontational action — would end up badly (in either death or prison) and would, ultimately, be counterproductive.

There are still many questions to be answered in the case of LaVoy Finicum’s death. And there is still the larger issue of the federal government’s strangling grasp on so much of the land and lifeblood of the western states, that is driving hardworking — and otherwise law-abiding — citizens to ruin and desperation.

Photo of LaVoy Finicum: AP Images

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