



# **The Second Wave**

## Return of the Militias

*A Special Report from the Southern Poverty Law Center  
Montgomery, Alabama*

August 2009

MEDIA AND GENERAL INQUIRIES  
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This report was prepared by the staff of the Intelligence Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

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# Introduction

BY MARK POTOK

The 1990s saw the rise and fall of the virulently antigovernment “Patriot” movement, made up of paramilitary militias, tax de ers and so-called “sovereign citizens.” Sparked by a combination of anger at the federal government and the deaths of political dissenters at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, the movement took off in the middle of the decade and continued to grow even after 168 people were

left dead by the 1995 bombing of Oklahoma City's federal building — an attack, the deadliest ever by domestic U.S. terrorists, carried out by men steeped in the rhetoric and conspiracy theories of the militias. In the years that followed, a truly remarkable number of criminal plots came out of the movement. But by early this century, the Patriots had largely faded, weakened by systematic prosecutions, aversion to growing violence, and a new, highly conservative president.

They're back. Almost a decade after largely disappearing from public view, right-wing militias, ideologically driven tax de ers and sovereign citizens are appearing in large numbers around the country. “Paper terrorism” —

# The Second Wave

Around the country, evidence accumulates of a return of the militias and the larger antigovernment ‘Patriot’ movement

BY LARRY KELLER

In Pensacola, Fla., retired FBI agent Ted Gunderson tells a gathering of antigovernment “Patriots” that the federal government has set up 1,000 internment camps across the country and is storing 30,000 guillotines and a half-million caskets in Atlanta. They’re there for the day the government finally declares martial law and moves in to round up or kill

American dissenters, he says. “They’re going to keep track of all of us, folks,” Gunderson warns.

Outside Atlanta, a so-called “American Grand Jury” issues an “indictment” of Barack Obama for fraud and treason because, the panel concludes, he wasn’t born in the United States and is illegally occupying the office of president. Other sham “grand juries” around the country follow suit.

“You’re seeing the bubbling [of antigovernment sentiment] right now,” says Bart McEntire, who has infiltrated racist hate groups and now is the supervisory special agent for the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Roanoke, Va. “You see people buying into what they’re saying. It’s primed to grow. The only thing you don’t have to set it on fire is a Waco or Ruby Ridge.”

Another federal law enforcement official knowledgeable about militia groups agrees. He asked not to be identified because he is not authorized to speak publicly about them. “They’re not at the level we saw in ’94-’95,” he says. “But this is the most significant growth we’ve seen in 10 to 12 years. All it’s lacking is a spark. I think it’s only a matter of time before you see threats and violence.”

#### Shots, Plots and ‘Sovereigns’

In fact, threats and violence from the radical right already are accelerating (see last section of this report, a list of 75 domestic terrorist plots and rampages since 1995). In recent months, men with antigovernment, racist, anti-Semitic or pro-militia views have allegedly committed a series of high-profile murders — including the killings of six law enforcement officers since April.

Most of these recent murders and plots seem to have been at least partially prompted by Obama’s election. One man “very upset” with the election of America’s first black president was building a radioactive “dirty bomb”; another, a Marine, was planning to assassinate Obama,



with Weaver's sale of an illegal weapon — Weaver's son, stresses and strains, from the seemingly inevitable rise and wife were killed, along with a U.S. marshal. The following year, some 80 members of the gun-loving Branch Davidian cult died in a re that ended a 52-day standoff with federal agents in Texas. Thousands of Americans saw these events as proof that the federal government was prepared to murder its own citizens in order to enforce a kind of liberal orthodoxy — a so-called “New World Order” (NWO) that re ected the economic and political globalization that militia backers felt was robbing their country of its independence and unique culture.

The movement was animated by a welter of conspiracy theories, the bulk of them decrying NWO plots that were said to be aimed at imposing socialism on the United States, sending patriotic Americans to prison camps, destroying farmers with secret weather machines, and so on. Most militia enthusiasts also blamed the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing on the government — it was a “false ag” operation carried out by the Clinton Administration, they contended, and designed to soften up the American public to accept draconian anti-terrorism legislation.

But the movement of the '90s ultimately wound down, almost petering out after the turn of the millennium. That was for a variety of reasons, including the arrests of many militia backers in terrorist plots, the jailing of hundreds of others on weapons violations, and the violence the movement continued to produce even after 168 people, including 19 children, were murdered in Oklahoma City by men steeped in the ideology of both militias and racist hate groups. The failure of any of the many dire Patriot predictions or conspiracy theories to come true also hurt the movement, as did the 2000 election of a conservative president, which had the effect of defusing militia backers' anger. Apocalyptic warnings from militia leaders about an expected “Y2K” collapse on Jan. 1, 2000, also turned out to be entirely without merit, becoming a kind of nal nail in the cof n of the movement.

Now, it seems, they are back. Every month, there are militia trainings announced around the country — and untold numbers that are not publicized. The Internet teems with training videos, information about meetings and rallies, far-fetched rumors and conspiracy theories. Joining 1990s militia stalwarts like Gunderson and Mack is a new generation of activists, as exempli ed in the case of Edward Koernke. Koernke's father, Mark Koernke, was a prominent '90s militia propagandist known as “Mark from Michigan.” The elder Koernke served nearly six years in prison on charges that included assaulting police. Today, his son hosts an Internet radio show devoted to all things militia.

The current resurgence has several apparent causes. In the largest sense, it is again a response to real societal

of multiculturalism to the faltering economy to another liberal administration, this one headed by a black man. Similar factors have driven the number of race-based hate groups, as distinct from Patriot groups, from 602 in 2000 to 926 in 2008, according to research by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

“This frequently happens when elections favor the political left and the society is seen as moving toward greater social equality or away from traditional societal hierarchies,” Chip Berlet, a long-time analyst of the rad-

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A good illustration of antigovernment Patriot movement paranoia was the reaction to a National Guard exercise planned for April in the little town of Arcadia, Iowa. The guardsmen had intended to conduct a four-day mock search for an arms dealer that would include patrolling the town's streets, distributing photos of the fictional bad guy and knocking on doors of residents who agreed to participate in the drill.

Alex Jones, the radio host and conspiracy theorist, got wind of the plans and interviewed a National Guard

# Nativists to 'Patriots'

As evidence of a militia resurgence mounts, nativist vigilantes are increasingly adopting the ideas of the 'Patriot' movement

BY DAVID HOLTHOUSE

CAMP VIGILANCE, Calif. — A call to arms from ResistNet blares through this makeshift camp near the small community of Boulevard: “We all know what happens when you back an animal into a corner — it ghts back. The way I see it, that’s exactly the direction this country is heading. They’re backing us into a corner. It’s getting to be time to ght back.”

Located two-and-a-half miles north of Mexico in the high, rugged desert of unincorporated eastern San Diego County, Camp Vigilance, known colloquially as “Camp V,” is a sizable Minuteman border vigilante compound situated amidst 170 privately owned acres.

Adjacent to active human and narcotics smuggling corridors, Camp V consists of roughly 100 tent camping sites, a half dozen or so full RV docking bays, a bunkhouse, a radio communications center, a mess hall and meeting grounds, all within a gated and well-guarded security perimeter.

On this night in late May, a dozen or so Minutemen are checking their weapons, testing batteries in their night-vision goggles and thermal-vision scopes, donning body armor and making other preparations for sundown-to-sunup reconnaissance patrols. A public address system plugged into



**July 28, 1995**

Antigovernment extremist Charles Ray Polk is arrested after trying to purchase a machine gun from an undercover police officer, and is later indicted by federal grand jury

December 18, 1995

Barbee, Robert Berry and Jay Merrell are eventually convicted and sentenced to life terms. Brian Ratigan, a fourth member of the group arrested separately, draws a 55-year term; he is scheduled for release in 2045.

### October 11, 1996

Seven members of the Mountaineer Militia are arrested in a plot to blow up the FBI's national fingerprint records center, where 1,000 people work, in West Virginia. In 1998, leader Floyd "Ray" Looker is sentenced to 18

conceived as a protest against the tax system. Ringleader James Cleaver, former national director of the anti-government Sons of Liberty group, is accused of threatening a witness and eventually sentenced to 33 years in prison, with a release date of 2030. Accomplice Jack Dowell receives 30 years and is scheduled to be freed in 2027. Both are ordered to pay \$2.2 million in restitution. Dowell's cousin is acquitted of all charges, while two other suspects, Ronald Sherman and Thomas Shafer, plead guilty to perjury charges in connection with the case.

### July 4, 1997

Militiaman Bradley Playford Glover and another heavily armed antigovernment activist are arrested before dawn near Fort Hood, in central Texas, just hours before they planned to invade the Army base and slaughter foreign troops they mistakenly believed were housed there. In the next few days, several other people are arrested in several states for their alleged roles in the plot to invade a series of military bases where the group believes United Nations forces are massing for an assault on Americans. All seven are part of a splinter group from the Third Continental Congress, a kind of militia government-in-waiting. In the end, Glover is sentenced to two years on Kansas weapons charges, to be followed by a five-year federal term in connection with the Fort Hood plot. The others draw lesser terms. Glover is released in 2003, the last of the seven to get out.

### December 12, 1997

A federal grand jury in Arkansas indicts three men on racketeering charges for plotting to overthrow the government and create a whites-only Aryan People's Republic, which they intend to grow through polygamy. Chevie Kehoe, Daniel Lee and Faron Lovelace are accused of crimes in six states, including murder, kid-

napping, robbery and conspiracy. Kehoe and Lee will also face state charges of murdering an Arkansas family, including an 8-year-old girl, in 1996. Kehoe ultimately receives a life sentence on that charge, while Lee is sentenced to death. Lovelace is sentenced to death for the murder of a suspected informant, but because of court rulings is later resentenced to life without parole. Kehoe's brother, Cheyne, is convicted of attempted murder during a 1997 Ohio shootout with police and sentenced to 24 years in prison, despite his helping authorities track down his fugitive brother in Utah after the shootout. Cheyne went to the authorities after Chevie began talking about murdering their parents and showing sexual interest in Cheyne's wife.

### January 29, 1998

An off-duty police officer is killed and a nurse terribly maimed when a nail-packed, remote-control bomb explodes outside a Birmingham, Ala., abortion facility, the New Woman All Women clinic. Letters to media outlets and officials claim responsibility

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he heads home to Kentucky from



major terrorist attack. Noster was first arrested as part of a car theft ring investigation, but officials who found incendiary devices in his stolen camper continued to probe his activities. Eventually, they find in various storage facilities three pipe bombs, six barrels of jet fuel, five assault weapons, cannon fuse, a large amount of ammunition and \$188,000 in cash. Law enforcement officials, who describe Noster as an “antigovernment extremist,” allege at a press conference that he “was definitely planning” on an attack but do not elaborate. In addition to prison time in that case, Noster draws another five years in 2009, after pleading guilty to two weapons charges.

#### October 10, 2003

Police arrest Norman Somerville after finding a huge weapons cache on his property in northern Michigan that includes six machine guns, a powerful anti-aircraft gun, thousands of rounds of ammunition, hundreds of pounds of gunpowder, and an underground bunker. They also find two vehicles Somerville calls his “war wagons,” and on which prosecutors later say he planned to

of the Ku Klux Klan, is indicted in Chattanooga, Tenn., on federal weapons charges for allegedly making seven pipe bombs and selling them



