

# **Opinion: Modern sagebrush rebels recycle old Western fantasies**

**By Paul Larmer, High Country News**

Ammon and Ryan Bundy, sons of scofflaw Nevada rancher Clive Bundy, appear to have made an ambitious New Year's resolution: Force the federal government, which has managed more than half of the American West's lands for the past century, to relinquish them, at gun point if necessary, to the locals.

Over the weekend, the Bundy brothers and a group of a few dozen or so militiamen and their sympathizers took over the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon and declared it a safe haven for well-armed "patriots" who oppose federal land management.

The group is demanding that the federal government release local ranchers Dwight Hammond and his son, Stephen, who are scheduled to report to federal prison this week to finish serving time for intentionally setting fires in 2001 and 2006, burning up hundreds of acres of public lands. They also want the government to hand over the 1.7 million-acre Malheur National Forest. According to OregonLive, Ryan Bundy said, "many would be willing to fight – and die, if necessary – to defend what they see as constitutionally protected rights for states, counties and individuals to manage local lands."

**Read the whole story**