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Militia “Sheriff” to Appear in Montana Communities

Richard Mack, a former county sheriff in Arizona and a hero to the militia movement, is scheduled to visit four Montana communities over the next week. Mack became a rising star in the militia movement during the 1990s when he sued the federal government over the Brady Bill, a gun control measure. He began speaking on the anti-government, or “patriot,” circuit in the early 1990s and never stopped.

“For over a decade, Richard Mack has been the darling of the anti-government crowd,” said Travis McAdam of the Montana Human Rights Network. “He’s made a career out of appearing at events with notorious tax protestors, hardcore militia activists, and a laundry list of dubious self-styled ‘patriots.’ He’s coming to Montana, and we hope local law enforcement won’t be tricked into viewing him as some sort of national treasure.”

In Arizona, Mack was elected Graham County Sheriff in 1992 with 57% of the vote. After filing his lawsuit, it was consolidated with a similar one by a sheriff in Montana, Ravalli County Sheriff Jay Printz. The US Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in favor of the sheriffs who said it was unconstitutional for Congress to compel local law enforcement to conduct background checks on potential gun buyers. However, Mack’s lawsuit and speaking time on the “patriot” circuit became central issues during his 1996 re-election bid, and he lost in the primary. After losing, he moved his family to Utah.¹

Mack is scheduled to appear in Eureka (July 4), Bozeman (July 5), Polson (July 6) and Hamilton (July 7). He is touring the country and trying to get sheriffs to read his new book, *The County Sheriff: America’s Last Hope*, and to adopt his brand of county supremacy.

Mack’s version of county supremacy follows the tradition of the white supremacist Posse Comitatus. The Posse viewed the sheriff as the highest legitimate law officer in the land. It believed citizens were not subject to state or federal authorities. For the Posse, it was up to the sheriff to use force, if necessary, to prevent federal agencies from seizing property to pay taxes and to oppose any perceived encroachment by federal institutions.²

Mack's statements over the years reflect the Posse tradition. "The federal government doesn't have any jurisdiction to tell me what to do as sheriff," he told the press.³ While running for the US Senate in 2006, Mack stated he would "do everything in my power to abolish the income tax and its 'Gestapo' police, the IRS."⁴ In a 2009 interview, Mack said he "prayed for the day that a sheriff in this country will arrest an IRS agent" for enforcing tax law.⁵ For some additional information on Mack, please see below.

"Mack is touring the country and trying to get local sheriffs to uphold his personal interpretation of the US Constitution," McAdam stated. "By wrapping himself in the American flag, Mack hopes people won't critically examine his anti-government views. He is not the person our local sheriffs, and other leaders, should emulate."

The promotional flier for Mack's Eureka appearance illustrates the company he keeps. The other speaker at the event is Gary Marbut of the Montana Shooting Sports Association. Like Mack, Marbut has made a career out of bridging the gap between anti-government activists and more mainstream conservatives. He has offered organizing tips to the Militia of Montana, and the Militia of Montana has circulated membership appeals for the Shooting Sports Association, along with promoting weapons training classes offered by Marbut's group.⁶ Marbut has also been an advocate for Montana seceding from the union.⁷

"During legislative sessions, with the spotlight shining on him, Gary Marbut professes to be an advocate for public safety, hunters, and shooting sport interests," said McAdam. "In reality, he promotes anti-government ideology." For more information on Marbut, please see this recent [release](#) or the Network's [report](#) on the gun lobby in Montana.

The Eureka flier lists Paul Stramer as the contact for more information. He has supported both the Montana Freeman and the Militia of Montana. He sold radio equipment to the Montana Freeman and helped arrange the sale of weapons to the group.⁸ In 1995, Stramer, the Militia of Montana's John Trochmann, and others were arrested in Roundup after an altercation with law officers. It involved one of Stramer's cohorts trying to file documents supporting a Montana Freeman and an armed confrontation at the Musselshell County Jail.⁹

Like Mack, Stramer still defends his anti-government friends. In 2008, Stramer said bogus money orders created by the Montana Freeman were just as legal as Federal Reserve Notes. He also said the Militia of Montana was the "lawful militia."¹⁰ For more on Stramer, please see below.

"Mack's appearances and the various Tea Party events scheduled for the holiday weekend are part of something larger," said McAdam. "Anti-government activists are trying to mobilize fear and resentment in our communities due to the current financial crisis and a new presidential administration. We have repeatedly seen extremists hide behind erroneous interpretations of the Constitution and issue shallow calls to patriotism. They've given us the Montana Freeman and the Oklahoma City bombing. Montana communities should not be fooled again."

Richard Mack

- He has been called "one of the chief contact points between the NRA and the militias."¹¹
- In 1995 following the Oklahoma City bombing, Mack said, "People get all upset when they hear about militias, but what's wrong with it? I wouldn't hesitate for a minute to call out my posse against the federal government if it gets out of hand."¹²
- In 1996, Mack told the press, "What I support and what I see in most militias is the type of courage to stand for freedom as exemplified by the Chinese students in Tiananmen Square." This

quote was in an article about the arrest of 12 members of the Arizona Viper Militia who were accused of plotting to blow up buildings. Most of the arrested members pleaded guilty to conspiring to make and possess illegal explosives.¹³

- In 2003, he told a “patriot” publication, “I’m into freedom, so I hate the IRS.”¹⁴
- In 2004, he edited a book by Randy Weaver. Weaver’s standoff at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, was a seminal moment for the militia movement of the 1990s.¹⁵
- Earlier this year, Mack appeared on the radio show of “patriot” Alex Jones. He said, “There is one person who I believe can stop this New World Order. His name is your county sheriff... There is no question your sheriff has the responsibility to protect you from tyranny and international bankers....”¹⁶

Paul Stramer

The Montana Freeman

- When Musselshell County law enforcement arrested Stramer and the other “patriots” in 1995, they discovered plastic restraining devices, duct tape, video and radio equipment, \$80,000 in cash and coins, and numerous weapons. Stramer was charged with criminal syndicalism. He was later cleared of the felony charge due to insufficient evidence.¹⁷
- During a 2008 meeting of his Lincoln County Watch group, Stramer said the incident in Musselshell County began because he accepted a bogus check from Freeman leader LeRoy Schweitzer for radio equipment. He said he had planned to help the Montana Freeman set up a radio network all across the state. During his remarks, Stramer said he believes the bogus Freeman checks were valid. He also said the false liens placed by Freeman on the property of local criminal justice personnel were “lawful.”¹⁸

Militia of Montana

- Stramer tried to help the Militia of Montana set up a statewide communication network, and the Militia of Montana sold a video featuring him at a Eureka militia meeting.¹⁹
- The Militia of Montana referred to Stramer as “MOM’s [Militia of Montana] communications man.”²⁰
- As late as 1999, Stramer distributed information through the Militia of Montana’s e-mail list.²¹
- In 2008, he told Lincoln County Watch that John Trochmann, co-founder of the Militia of Montana, helped set up anti-government militias which were the “lawful militia.”²²

“Patriot” Agenda

- Stramer runs a website based on “patriot” conspiracy theories that the Federal Reserve System is unconstitutional and our current dollar bills should be replaced with gold and silver coins.²³

- His business has offered discounts on radio equipment to anti-government groups. One advertisement read, “We now have volume discounts which are very substantial for groups of you who are gearing up to defend our country from new world order tyranny.”²⁴
- At a Lincoln County Watch meeting, he encouraged attendees to subscribe to *American Free Press*. *American Free Press* is the latest incarnation of *The Spotlight*, which was started by Holocaust Denier and virulent anti-Semite Willis Carto. Stramer told the crowd that he had read it for 10 years, and it used to be called *The Spotlight*.²⁵

¹ Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door* (2002), pp. 309-310; Associated Press, May 26, 1999.

² James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face* (1991), pp. 109-141; Montana Human Rights Network and Coalition for Human Dignity, *Racist to the Roots: John Trochmann and the Militia of Montana*, 1995.

³ *Bismarck Tribune*, April 23, 1995.

⁴ Freedom’s Phoenix, www.freedomspheonix.com, March 22, 2006.

⁵ Oath Keeper Sheriff Richard Mack, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLJgPuNAh60>, April 19, 2009.

⁶ Militia of Montana, E-mail Alerts, Jan. 3, 2000; Nov. 23, 1999; March 20, 2002; Nov. 15, 2001; Feb. 21, 2003; and April 9, 2003.

⁷ *Ravalli Republic*, Sept. 6, 1994; *Missoula Independent*, June 1, 2000; Montana Shooting Sports Association, <http://progunleaders.org/Heller/argument.html>.

⁸ Paul Stramer/Lincoln County Watch, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkd-crs88K8>, Oct. 6, 2008; Lincoln County Watch – Paul Stramer,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvnmqHvrqr4>, Oct. 6, 2008.

⁹ *Billings Gazette*, March 7, 1995.

¹⁰ Lincoln County Watch – Paul Stramer, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvnmqHvrqr4>, Oct. 6, 2008.

¹¹ David Neiwert, *In God’s Country* (1999), p. 332.

¹² Jack Anderson, *Inside the NRA* (1996), p. 84.

¹³ Knight-Ridder News Service, July 3, 1996; Anti-Defamation League, “News About the Militia Movement,” March 5, 1997.

¹⁴ *Idaho Observer*, January 2003.

¹⁵ *Idaho Observer*, April 2004.

¹⁶ Alex Jones – Sheriff Richard Mack Pt , <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7lXhP20h6o>, Feb. 11, 2009.

¹⁷ *Billings Gazette*, March 5, 1995; *Billings Gazette*, March 7, 1995; *Tobacco Valley News*, April 6, 1995.

¹⁸ Lincoln County Watch – Paul Stramer, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvnmqHvrqr4>, Oct. 6, 2008; Paul Stramer/Lincoln County Watch,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkd-crs88K8>, Oct. 6, 2008.

¹⁹ Militia of Montana, <http://www.militiaofmontana.com>, Aug. 23, 2002; *Tobacco Valley News*, April 6, 1995.

²⁰ Militia of Montana, <http://www.militiaofmontana.com>, Aug. 23, 2002.

²¹ Militia of Montana, E-Mail Alert, Dec. 9, 1999.

²² Lincoln County Watch – Paul Stramer, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvnmqHvrqr4>, Oct. 6, 2008.

²³ Paul Stramer, <http://silverpatriot.com/>, June 29, 2009.

²⁴ *Billings Gazette*, Oct. 12, 1995.

²⁵ Anti-Defamation League, *Danger: Extremism*, ADL, 1996, pp. 21-25; Paul Stramer/Lincoln County Watch, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-26qUsm2VFs>, Oct. 6, 2008.