

# As trial goes on, he hunkers down

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The government's case against a Plainfield couple who refused to pay income taxes for more than a decade has drawn the ire of tax protesters and militia members from around the country, including some who have pledged to defend the couple with firearms if necessary.

Ed Brown has invited sympathizers, both armed and unarmed, to join him in an ongoing protest at his home in Plainfield. Brown has been holed up in the house for five days and says he has no plans to leave while his trial continues without him.

Several supporters -- including one who brought a gun -- have already come to his aid, vowing they will stand guard against government agents who would come for Brown.

"If they're coming, we will do what we've got to do," said John Miller of Farmington, one of about a half-dozen supporters at Browns' house yesterday.

U.S. Marshal Steve Monier dismissed talk of an impending confrontation, saying he has spoken with Brown several times and is keeping the line of communication open.



Ed Brown stands in the barricaded doorway of his Plainfield home yesterday, saying he is prepared for an armed standoff as he fights tax evasion charges. (AP)

"Our discussions with him have been very low key, amicable, non-threatening," Monier said. "And I can tell you any discussion as to an armed standoff, some kind of siege at Mr. Brown's residence, is not even on the table for discussion."

Brown, who keeps a handgun tucked in his waistband, has said he is prepared for an armed standoff but maintains he hopes that can be avoided.

"I've threatened no one. They're threatening me," he said. "Doesn't anybody get that?"

Authorities say Brown and his wife, Elaine, did not pay income taxes for 11 years. Both Browns are charged with conspiring to evade taxes, conspiring to disguise large financial transactions and disguising large transactions. Elaine Brown faces two other charges, also related to tax evasion.

The Browns maintain the U.S. Constitution does not require them to pay taxes and challenged federal authorities to prove otherwise.

Elaine Brown, who works as a dentist, had been considering a plea deal with the U.S. Attorney's Office. She rejected the deal and has since returned to court, where she took the stand before resting her case yesterday. Jury deliberations are now under way.

Brown is being tried in absentia.

"Most Americans," Brown told The Associated Press yesterday, "would cower and cringe and raise their hands and surrender like a good little slave."

"I won't. Under no circumstances. I do not tolerate cowardness, oppression, bulliness, and I certainly don't tolerate a federal agency that has absolutely zero jurisdiction in my state, never mind in my county, in my town."

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Anti-government crusaders throughout the country have taken an active interest in the Browns' case. Last week, an Internet radio host from Denver called on his listeners to descend on Plainfield, "armed to the teeth" with firearms and video cameras.

Those who plan to make the trip have said they would not initiate any violence, but would arm themselves "for defensive purposes only," said radio host Rick Stanley.

Other sympathizers have suggested a violent standoff may be imminent.

One letter writer, a New Hampshire man who calls Brown a close friend and mentor, says a standoff is

developing and "like Waco, will result in the deaths of innocent people."

The writer, 41-year-old William Miller, also called for the judge in Brown's case, the U.S. attorney in New Hampshire and other officials to be "hanged for treason."

Miller -- whose brother, John, and mother, Marie, stood by Brown's side in Plainfield yesterday -- now says his letter was more inflammatory than it should have been, but maintains he does not regret writing it.

"Somebody's got to do it," he said, "otherwise nothing's going to change around here."

Some supporters, such as Fred Smart, have urged non-violence. Smart is the national volunteer coordinator for the America: Freedom to Fascism network, a group that believes the government is imposing illegitimate taxation on its citizens.

Most people following the case want a peaceful resolution, Smart said.

"I think it could easily go in the other direction," he said. "But I'm very hopeful, and I'll remain hopeful, that it doesn't have to."

A retired exterminator, Brown has been a prominent figure in anti-tax and anti-government circles for more than a decade. He is the founder of an organization called the Un-American Activities Investigations Commission, whose members purportedly seek out criminal elements within the government, "from the President on down."

Brown is also a former head of the U.S. Constitution Rangers, a national organization that looks to defend citizens against perceived encroachments by the government. He still ranks among the group's leaders.

The Constitution Rangers were formed in Arizona in the 1980s, although the group frequently claims to take authority from the U.S. Constitutional Convention, according to Mark Pitcavage, director of investigative research for the Anti-Defamation League. Members wear badges and claim to be officers in a legitimate law enforcement agency, he said.

Pitcavage has been researching Brown and other suspected militia leaders since the mid-1990s, when the movement gained steam in the United States, he said. Brown, he said, was one of the most prominent New England militia leaders in the 1990s.

U.S. Marshal Steve Monier said the Constitutional Rangers do not have a history of violence in New Hampshire.

Monier said his office does not plan to confront Brown. That might not be the case if Brown was charged with a violent felony, he suggested. This case, he noted, is about income taxes.

"You've got to keep this in perspective," Monier said.

*Kristen Senz and New Hampshire Union Leader Staff Writer Paula Tracy contributed to this report.*

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