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## THE APPALACHIAN OATH KEEPERS SUMMIT IN WEST VIRGINIA

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by Madalin Sammons – Gilbert Times

The Oath Keepers came to town this weekend for the Appalachian Oath Keepers Summit.

For those that may not be familiar with the Oath Keepers, it is a group that according to their website, is a non-partisan association of current and formerly serving military, police, and first responders, who pledge to fulfill the oath all military and police take to “defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

The summit began on August 28th and lasted until August 30th where participants camped out on a strip mine near Ben Creek.

Oath Keepers was founded in March 2009 by Stewart Rhodes. Rhodes is a Yale Law School graduate, a former U.S. Army paratrooper, and a former staffer of Congressman Ron Paul.

According to the Oath Keepers website, there is a “declaration of orders we will NOT obey because we will consider them unconstitutional (and thus unlawful) and immoral violations of the natural rights of the people. Such orders would be acts of war against the American people by their own government, and thus acts of treason. We will not make war against our own people. We will not commit treason. We will defend the Republic.”

Among these orders to not obey include any order to disarm the American people, conduct warrant-less searches, impose martial law, infringe on the right to free speech and more.

Oath Keepers have recently become well known due to their presence among the Ferguson rioting of November 2014 when members of the group kept armed guard on Ferguson’s business rooftops.

Stewart Rhodes, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, “We thought they were going to do it right this time, but when Monday rolled around and they didn’t park the National Guard at these businesses, that’s when we said we have got to do something.”

While the unrest in Ferguson allowed Oath Keepers to have a mainstream platform, it was the recent murders of the servicemen in Chattanooga, TN. that inspired the Logan County Sons of the Second to host the summit of five states including West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Kentucky.

Logan County Sons of the Second Sargent at Arms Mike Holbrook said the the summit was a huge success.

“We had Oath Keepers from as far away as Oregon and Connecticut. I heard nothing but compliments from all the campers about how they were welcomed to our Summit on top of a mountain in West “By God” Virginia,” said Holbrook. “We have been invited to do an information booth at the upcoming Trail-fest that Gilbert hosts every year and we will be honored to be a part of this event.

On another note, the land owners of the site we chose, were very gracious and understanding, I would like to give a big shout out to Pardee/Curtin land company for allowing us the opportunity to show people from 12 different states, that the people of West Virginia are down home, freedom loving, God fearing people. It made our Local Chapter of the OathKeepers proud to be West Virginians from Mingo and Logan County. I would also like to note that every person that was attending this event, exercised their 2nd Amendment Right to Keep and Bear Arms, and not a single one of those firearms jumped up and harmed anyone. Thank You, Gilbert, W.Va. for allowing us to show folks what West Virginia is all about. “God, Guns, Guts, and Glory”.

According to the promotional video for the summit, the idea was to form teams with others in your region so that people can bring stability into their own communities. The summit was open to the public and to anyone who was a like minded individual.

“Now is the time for action,” said Lardieri in the promotional video. “Now is the time to get out there, be seen, be heard, learn, coordinate and communicate.”

Uniformed constitutional militias also attended the summit which included nine militias from six states. Although militias and firearms were among the crowd, the atmosphere was a relaxed one.

“The Summit was a great success. We made a lot of new friends in the Gilbert, West Virginia area,” said Holbrook. “The local cooperation was fantastic. The Mayor, Council, and Chief of Police are the best of the best. The founder of the Oath Keepers, Stewart Rhodes, had a meeting with the city leaders and both came away with a new understanding and a very positive attitude. The Mingo County Sheriff’s department officers, rode 4 miles out a very dusty road, to check on us and help keep us safe we cannot thank them enough for the understanding that they have shown for our Patriots. The people we met that ride the reclaimed strip mine area we used were the most generous and kind folks you could ever find anywhere in this Great Country of ours.”

Nicklaus Stepp was set up in the medical tent among others in the case that anyone over heated or needed medical attention.

“We will also be going over medical gear as needed and as the people filter in. We will also have some radio guys here to teach about radio communication,” said Stepp. “The summit’s purpose is basically to get people involved with preparedness for economic fall by way of teaching medical, getting people linked up with groups from their state to start assessing their own areas for strengths, weaknesses, threats, etc. It’s a fellowship weekend where people can share ideas, camp, hang out, learn some stuff, eat, listen to speakers from all over, enjoy live music and other activities.”

In a mission statement from Stewart Rhodes concerning the summit, Rhodes said that this was a critical, emergency summit for veterans and patriots.

“A critical part of this summit will be showing the participants how to do an area study, providing them an example of an analysis of a town, county and state. They will be given templates and checklists prepared by Sam Culper, of The Forward Observer Magazine, combined with the input of our Special Forces veterans,” said Rhodes. “They will need to go back to their own geographic location to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their communities, identifying critical needs, and then apply their newly acquired

knowledge to answer questions such as:

What are the major security threats?

What is in place to counter them?

What is missing?

Is there a constitutional sheriff backed by a real posse?

Is there a real militia?

Is there a neighborhood watch?

What is the condition of their power grid?

How resilient is it?

How can it be strengthened and protected?

How will people's basic needs be met if it goes down?

How many mouths do they have to feed and how much food is on hand?

Can their local farms feed the population in a grid down or long term emergency situation?"

The Oath Keepers and similar groups have been labeled as right wing extremists and in some cases domestic terrorists but Paul Pyles, Leader of the Pennsylvania Patriots for Freedom urges people to remember the tools given to the American people by our fore fathers.

"Protection of our homes, community, and constitution is by no means a form of extremism or terroristic," said Pyles. "A government for the people must be run by the people. When that does not happen that is tyranny."

Stepp encourages that anyone who might feel uneasy about the Oath Keepers to read more about them on their website before making a judgment.

"We are very open about what we do and our mission," said Stepp. "We do nothing illegal and we aren't here to make enemies. We are here to unite communities from Law Enforcement, Vol. Fire Dept, EMS, Crime Watch, churches, small businesses, etc to together and support each other and to have a plan in place for local and national disasters. We want communities to be able to sustain themselves during an economic collapse, and so forth.

Look at what the Oath Keeper's did in Ferguson. In order for the police to do their job they had to leave their families behind, all of which had a target on their back by the people who were sending death threats and rioting. The Oath Keepers stepped in and watched over businesses and families allowing these officers and others to feel safe knowing their families were being protected.

That was the point of the Summit. People from all over this great nation gathered here in Gilbert, to learn how to assess their neighborhoods for weak and strong points, gather skill sets, learn some basic medical from our med tent, learn some basic communication skills from our HAM's, and go back to their communities and reach out to those business, churches, and the people to get a plan together and work on being able to protect each other and sustain each other when the time comes.

We, as Oath Keepers, act in love, we have the highest integrity even in conflict, but we also know that when the time comes, we will be here to sustain and protect our communities in whatever means necessary."

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