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Man ordered held for refusing to testify on May Day violence

Posted by Mike Carter

A federal judge in Seattle this afternoon ordered an Olympia man held in contempt of court for refusing to testify on what he knows about those who participated in this year's May Day protests.

Matthew Pfeiffer, 23, is the fourth witness who has refused to testify after being subpoenaed by the Seattle federal grand jury that is hearing evidence about a group of so-called "black bloc" anarchists, which law enforcement said was responsible for much of the violence and vandalism during the May Day protests. The other three went to jail rather than testify after being given immunity by the grand jury.

One, Leah Lynn Plante of Portland, has since been released. The others, Katherine Olejnik and Matthew Duran, remain in custody at the SeaTac Detention Center.

U.S. District Judge Richard A. Jones allowed Pfeiffer to remain free, but he must surrender to federal authorities on Dec. 26. Once he does, Pfeiffer will be held until he agrees to testify, or until the grand jury expires, which could take up to 18 months.

The group subpoenaed by the grand jury has been the target of a multi-state federal investigation into a group of anarchists in Portland which came to the attention of the FBI in April. According to a search warrant that was obtained by The Seattle Times before it was sealed by the court, the investigation was being run by the Seattle Joint Terrorism Task force and has involved at least five search warrants, and the review by law enforcement of hundreds of hours of video recordings made during the protests.

The investigation appears focused on a group that drove from Portland to Olympia, and then on to Seattle and were involved in vandalizing a number of downtown properties, including the William Kenzo Nakamura Federal Courthouse on 5th Avenue.

A statement attributed to Pfeiffer on the website

<http://nopoliticalrepression.wordpress.com/> said he was served with a subpoena on Oct. 25. He was scheduled to testify in November, but he refused

"I am being asked to testify before a grand jury," he wrote. "The vultures of the state will try to imprison my comrades and me until we give in. We will never give in," the statement says.

“I will never betray the people I care about, the ideas which I hold dear or the commitments I have made.

“The state is trying to use broken windows as a reason to ruin people’s lives,” he said. “This is absurd.”

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