

HATEWATCH

Long-time Militia Leader Mike Vanderboegh Has Died

August 10, 2016

by Bill Morlin

Michael Brian Vanderboegh, who rose from the 1990s militia ranks to become the angry, vocal co-founder of the extremist, pro-gun III Percent movement, using an Internet blog to promote his antigovernment views, has died.

Vanderboegh, 64, who described himself as a “Christian libertarian,” died Wednesday after a lengthy battle with cancer that he discussed frequently on his blog, “Sipsey Street Irregulars,” which he started in 2009.

His death was reported by [The Kansas City Star](#) and confirmed by his friend and ally, [David Cordea](#).

The Sipsey blog was his ticket to notoriety, as well his unbridled soapbox to blast the Obama Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, Bill Clinton or any supporter of tougher gun-control laws.

“If you try to take our firearms we will kill you,” Vanderboegh wrote in 2013 when a “gun safety” advocate suggested that only police and the military should have firearms.

As for proposed bans on semi-automatic assault rifles and federal control of all private transfers, Vanderboegh said he and his III Percent believers “will not obey such laws and [would] defy the federal government to do anything about it.”

His firebrand approach didn’t end there.

He used his blog to fire salvos at the ATF for its bungled gun-trafficking operation known as “Fast and Furious,” later claiming the mainstream media largely ignored the story he broke. He also vocally opposed the Affordable Care Act, which he contended “carried the hard-steel fist of government violence.”

Vanderboegh boasted that he had “been on the enemies lists of the last THREE White Houses, irrespective of party.” “I am at least an equal opportunity gadfly. But despite the name calling by the other side, I am not seeking an ‘insurrection’ nor soliciting civil war but I am trying to prevent one,” he claimed.

His passing already is lighting up social media communications between various pro-gun, antigovernment, III Percent and militia groups.

His passing was noted with a quick online posting by his friend and fellow anti-gun law associate, David Cordea. “I received the sad news this morning. Our friend passed away this morning at around 1 a.m. Central,” Cordea posted.

Wednesday, August 10, 2016

A Patriot has passed on today.



Mike Vanderboegh, husband, father of three, and founder of the III% movement passed peacefully in his beloved Alabama home today.

^ Screenshot of Sipsey Street Irregulars blog August 10th, 2016

"A Patriot died today. But his work will live on in the everyday push for freedom," a brief post on Sipsey Street Irregulars read. "His was a voice that was made silent, but his work will continue to echo so long as men and women have the means to resist. The future doesn't belong to the craven: it belongs to the brave."

Another Vanderboegh associate, Bob Wright, the commander of the New Mexico Militia, told the [Kansas City Star](#) that Vanderboegh "was a voice that this movement needed." "Already, we're feeling the loss of that voice," he said.

The Connecticut Citizens Defense League immediately posted a brief Facebook comment about Vanderboegh's passing.

"Mike Vanderboegh, husband, father of three, and founder of the III% movement passed peacefully in his beloved Alabama home today," said the CCDL posting, linking to a YouTube video of a speech Vanderboegh delivered in 2013 to a "gun rights" rally in Connecticut.

Even while in failing health during the past year, Vanderboegh continued writing almost-daily on his blog that helped make him a national celebrity, of sorts, in far-right, antigovernment, pro-gun circles.

Between 2013 and 2015, he accepted occasional invitations for public appearances at pro-gun rallies in various states where state gun control laws had passed or were pending. He called it "going behind enemy lines," which he said was not "comic exaggeration" because some gun transaction laws would lead to registering gun owners.



His last known public appearance was in mid-March at the Alabama Gun Collectors Show in Birmingham, not far from his home in the rural community of Pinson, Ala. "Drop by for some dynamite sales on military surplus," Vanderboegh posted on his blog. He didn't sell the piles

of military surplus gear, so his family members held a "garage sale" on May 21 at his Alabama home.

In mid-April, in one of his last blog posts, Vanderboegh wrote: "My apologies for no posts, but I'm in the end stages. The docs give me about 4 weeks and I still have a lot to get done before I check out."

The following day, April 16, there was a "change of command" announcement on the blog informing followers that Vanderboegh's son, Matthew Vanderboegh, would take over producing the Sipsey Street blog. In his introduction, Matthew Vanderboegh said he had served in the U.S. Army for 14 years and did tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He pledged to follow his father's footsteps in the III Percent movement.

"As many have observed, it would be a tragedy to simply let this blog go to archive," Matthew Vanderboegh said in his first post in April. "This blog was the first of its kind dedicated to the principles of the Three Percent. Mike, my father, started this blog with the intention to give himself a platform to educate and proselytize a very simple and profound message that no one should to bend a knee."

The younger Vanderboegh said his father's blog "has given a voice to a community of the last free men and women in this country."

While his father's presence may have diminished, "his message will not," Matthew Vanderboegh wrote, promising the "voice on this blog will not go silent."

On April 25, as Mike Vanderboegh was gifting the last of his possessions, the blog said he was attempting to find homes for his collection of "Freedom Fighter-grade"

ammunition magazines “for distribution in armed civil disobedience actions” to challenge gun-control laws in New York and Connecticut.

“I would like to see if there are any volunteers to publicly distribute these in defiance of those laws, but there is little likelihood that I can participate myself. I’m simply running out of time,” Vanderboegh said. It wasn’t made clear if someone took him up on one of his last in a long history of antigovernment activism.

In 2013 and 2014, Vanderboegh sent emails to Connecticut State Police, warning of bloody scenarios if they tried to enforce a new state gun control law. He also published the home addresses and phone numbers of state legislators who voted for the measure. He said he had lined up “reporters for a major news organization” to cover the ammunition-clip giveaway to garner public attention.

Vanderboegh first appeared on the national antigovernment scene after the bloody 1993 siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. He claimed as a younger man he was sympathetic to ideals of Communism, but had done a 180-degree conversion to fully believe that the U.S. Constitution and, particularly the 2nd Amendment, guarantees gun ownership unrestricted by any federal or state laws.

Initially identified with a militia-style group called “Sons of Liberty,” Vanderboegh later got involved with the anti-immigrant crusade. In the mid-2000s, he participated in patrols on the U.S.-Mexican border with his small Alabama Minuteman Support Team. But his national standing in antigovernment circles really blossomed when he became one of the first Patriot mouthpieces to coin the “III Percent” term, claiming that during the American Revolution the “active forces in the field against the King’s tyranny never amounted to more than 3% of the colonists.”

“Three Percenters today do not claim that we represent 3% of the American people, although we might,” Vanderboegh wrote in 2014. “We DO claim that we represent at least 3% of American gun owners, which is still a healthy number somewhere in the neighborhood of 3 million people.”

He and other III Percenters, Vanderboegh said, “are gun owners who will not disarm, will not compromise and will no longer back up at the passage of the next gun control act. Three Percenters say quite explicitly that we will not obey any further circumscription of our traditional liberties and will defend ourselves if attacked.”

Vanderboegh said the “hallmarks” of the III Percent movement are “moral strength, physical readiness, no first use of force and no targeting of innocents,” but his blog postings were frequently laced with threats of violence.

He summarized those hallmarks and philosophies of the movement in a 2014 blog posting he entitled the “Three Percent Catechism.” Those in the movement, he said, “are the citizens the Founders counted on to save the Republic when everyone else abandoned it.”

At another point, he challenged the credibility of another antigovernment activist, Christian Allen Kerodin, who attempted to build a marketing scheme around the III Percent concept. Kerodin, a Maryland contractor and convicted extortionist, collected money in 2013 to promote a walled “Citadel” city, complete with a firearms factory, in North Idaho – a plan that went nowhere, just as Vanderboegh predicted.

Although he claimed to denounce violence and use of force, in 2010 Vanderboegh urged his followers to break the law to send a message to then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats who supported national health care legislation.

“If you wish to send a message that Pelosi and her party cannot fail to hear, break their windows. Break them NOW,” Vanderboegh wrote. “Break them and run to break again. Break them under cover of night. Break them in broad daylight. ... Break them with

rocks. Break them with slingshots. Break them with baseball bats. But BREAK THEM. ”

As he became more visible in antigovernment circles, Vanderboegh’s activities were described in articles on Hatewatch and SPLC’s quarterly magazine, Intelligence Report. Vanderboegh steadfastly refused interview requests from various journalists working for the Center’s publications.

“Piss on you lying bastards and the fact-challenged horse you rode in on,” he angrily responded to an interview request in 2010.

While not singling out specific errors of fact he claimed the Center had made about him and his activities, Vanderboegh responded, “by all means, you lying, conflationist bastards, have at it. Just don’t expect me to assist you. Oh, yeah. Thank you in advance for all the free publicity.”

Much of his anger, it seems, was directed at Mark Potok, a senior fellow and editor at the SPLC, who was among the first to draw national attention to Vanderboegh’s rise to prominence in antigovernment, Patriot ranks. At one point, while continuing to refuse interview requests, Vanderboegh mailed Potok a plastic human skull. The unsolicited gift may well have been a reference to Vanderboegh’s frequent use of the term “100 Heads Life and Casualty Company,” depicted on T-shirts with a mound of skulls in the center.

Vanderboegh wrote that he coined the meme in 2009 when he received an anonymous note from a former U.S. Marine sniper who wrote: “One day the ATF will come to count coup on you & take your head. I promise to take One hundred heads for yours.”

Vanderboegh apparently loved the metaphoric symbolism of “100 Heads Life and Casualty Company,” writing on his blog: “I also had no doubt that a Marine scout/sniper had the skills to take a hundred heads if, God forbid, this should come to guns.”

After one of his followers produced “100 heads” T-shirts, Vanderboegh wrote, “stranger still, I would go places, speeches, rallies, gun shows, even the NRA convention, and people would come up to me, shake my hand and say, ‘One hundred heads, sir,’ and then walk away. It wasn’t a discussion they were seeking; it was a declaration of intent.”

As his blog developed a national following in recent years, Vanderboegh was invited to be the featured speaker at a handful of anti-gun control rallies.

In February 2015, he showed up at a demonstration in Olympia, Wash., where antigovernment protesters unsuccessfully attempted to defy a state law by carrying their guns into the capitol building.

Three months later, Vanderboegh returned to the Pacific Northwest for a rally in Salem, Ore., where various militia groups, III Percenters and Oath Keepers and anti-gun control proponents protested the Oregon Legislature’s approval of a law requiring background checks for most gun purchases.

Vanderboegh, appearing weak, began the Oregon rally in 2015 by unfurling his III Percent flag that he said had been everywhere “from Connecticut to the Bundy Ranch,” a reference to the 2014 armed confrontation with federal agents at Cliven Bundy’s ranch near Bunkerville, Nev.

In 2013 and 2014, Vanderboegh warned of bloody scenarios if Connecticut tried to enforce a new state gun control law. He sparked outcry when he published the home addresses and phone numbers of state senators who voted for the measure.

“I can tell you from personal experience that the powerful don’t like to have the truth told to them,” Vanderboegh told the Oregon crowd, later posting the video to YouTube as a fund-raising gimmick. He repeated his often-sung message that like-minded 2nd Amendment advocates should use “armed civil disobedience” to challenge any new gun

control – even expanded background checks for buyers.

Vanderboegh boasted about his involvement at the 2014 standoff at Bunkerville, where government agents – facing the gun barrels of hundreds of militia followers – abandoned attempts to roundup Cliven Bundy’s cattle herd for nonpayment of grazing fees on federal land.

“It is impossible to overstate the importance of the victory won in the desert today,” Vanderboegh said. “The feds were routed -- routed. There is no word that applies. Courage is contagious, defiance is contagious, victory is contagious.”

When there were no immediate arrests following that incident, Ammon Bundy and others in the antigovernment movement moved on to Oregon last year to support two cattle ranchers battled the Bureau of Land Management. But when Ammon Bundy, the son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, and others involved with the III Percent movement took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon in early 2016, Vanderboegh backed off. He was critical, calling the illegal occupation a “premeditated action.”

Bundy and the other occupiers, Vanderboegh wrote in January, “are writing checks that they expect the rest of us to cash in our blood.”

Vanderboegh said Bundy’s supporters included government “snitches” and “every other ‘tiger-talking’ fruit, nut and federal provocateur previously identified” from the 2014 Cliven Bundy standoff in Bunkerville, Nev.

Vanderboegh had begun writing, but never published a “cautionary novel” called “Absolved,” which he said would describe a fictional, forthcoming civil war involving the III Percent movement and an “evolved form of insurgency” called “Fourth Generation Warfare.” He published book excerpts on his blog and rewrote the introduction at least once.

The book’s title, he explained, came from English philosopher John Locke who said citizens are “absolved from any further obedience” if government attempts to take away or destroy their property, which Vanderboegh said includes the constitutional right of gun ownership.

Referring to advocates of tougher gun-control laws in the United States, Vanderboegh wrote that “arbitrarians believe that they can continue to encroach upon the liberty and property of their fellow Americans without consequence to them. They cannot.”

“When democracy turns to tyranny, the armed citizen still gets to vote -- with his rifle. Any grasping would-be tyrant who ignores that truth does so at his or her own peril.”

“I pray, then, that ‘Absolved’ is viewed as a useful dire warning in time to prevent the Fourth Generation Civil War it describes,” he wrote on his blog in 2013.

In the final days of fighting cancer, Vanderboegh was still “tinkering” with his unfinished novel, his son posted on April 22.

“With a bit of luck, the Old Man will live to see this book become a reality,” Matthew Vanderboegh wrote, saying his father wanted “nothing more than to be able to make good on his promise to put a copy of the book personally in your hands.”

“If he cannot, that will fall on the family,” Matthew Vanderboegh wrote. “As the final work of Mike Vanderboegh, I vow to you that I will make this a reality. It will go out first on Kindle and then on paperback. ‘Absolved’ will not be an unfulfilled dream.”

In his last blog post, which he entitled “Valediction of a Three Percenter,” Vanderboegh described himself as a “Christian libertarian who believed in God, free men, free

markets, the rule of law under the Founders' Republic, and that the Constitution extended to everyone regardless of race, creed, color or religion."

But, he said, the Constitution "is now or soon will be dead -- killed by corruption and collectivism and mostly by our own sloth and moral cowardice in opposing its enemies."

Yet the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights can never die "as long as there remain free men and women who believe in the Founders' vision," Vanderboegh wrote.

"This is the essence of the Three Percent," he said, "that no matter how small our numbers are -- if we remain armed and determined -- we may yet preserve the flickering flame of liberty."

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