

Utah National Guard HISTORY HIGHLIGHT



November 2023

Communications Sabotage, May 28, 1961

"The facilities which were destroyed were located at critical points along the network and were well picked for the demolitions work... The guardsmen called on emergency duty were hand-picked for their training and experience in the fields of unorthodox warfare." Major General Maxwell Rich, 1961.

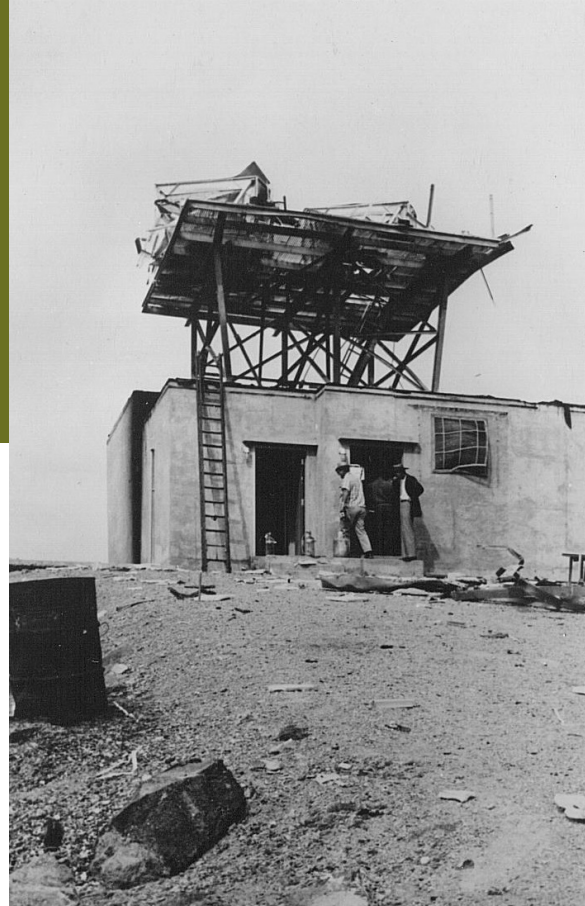
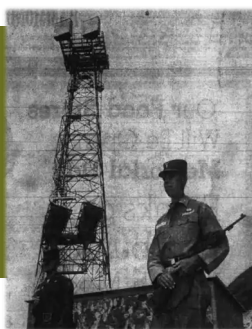
In the early morning of May 28, 1961, two men who associated themselves with the "American Republican Army" set timed explosives along critical communication lines in Nevada and Utah. The blasts started just before 5 a.m. and were roughly spaced an hour apart using an alarm clock type device.

The three separate detonations destroyed a microwave repeater station near Grant, Utah, a cable repeater station near Knolls, Utah and a microwave station just three miles west of Wendover, Utah. The damage to the sites effectively cut the cross-country relay system for a short time before emergency repairs could be implemented.

The state and national response was immediate. The FBI, in coordination with local and state police, began the search for those responsible. Under the direction of the governor of Utah, the Adjutant General of the Utah National Guard, Major General Maxwell Rich ordered more than 140 soldiers from the 19th Special Forces Group and military police to guard 17 additional communication sites around Utah. The Guard's effort was supported through the Ogden and Provo armories with a command post established in Salt Lake to coordinate the massive military response. The Utah Air National Guard was also activated to provide aerial support and patrol communication lines. The Guard provided security for those sites for several weeks until it was clear there would be no follow-on attacks.

The damage was estimated to cost more than \$850,000, however due to the recovery and security efforts, the communication interruptions were short lived and minor. *Salt Lake Tribune, 1961*

Two Utah National Guardsmen, John VanLeeuwen and Kenneth Alder stand guard at a microwave relay tower east of Salt Lake City. Towers over the state were placed under guard after explosions ripped apart other towers in western Utah. *Deseret News Photograph, May 29, 1961.*



Co-conspirators

Jerome Brous, a former New York real estate investor and Dale Jensen, a heavy equipment operator from Nevada, planned and conducted the attack.

Brous claimed to be the mastermind and told reporters that his motivations were to hurt big companies like AT&T who, according to him, were "taking too much money that belonged to the American people." Brous stated that the "American Republican Army" was suing AT&T and that he had been sending the newspapers propaganda for months, but nothing was being printed.

Brous and Jensen were arrested three weeks to the day after the attacks on board a yacht in Mexico. The pair said, "it was just a scare" and "we do not support violence." When they were captured, they were in possession of machine guns, grenades, pistols, and ammunition. *Salt Lake Tribune, 196*