The Earth Liberation Front: A Social Movement Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Earth Liberation Front is a radical environmental movement that developed from the ideological factionalization of the British Earth First! movement of the 1990s. Its ideological underpinnings are based in deep ecology, anti-authoritarian anarchism highlighting a critique of capitalism, a commitment to non-violence, a collective defense of the Earth, and a warranted feeling of persecution by State forces. In its current form, the Earth Liberation Front is a transnational, decentralized network of clandestine, autonomous, cells that utilize illegal methods of protest by sabotaging and vandalizing property. The small unit cells are self-contained entities that can operate without the support of external entities such as financiers or weapons procurers. Tactical and operational knowledge is developed and shared through commercially available books written by the broader environmental movement throughout the last four decades, as well as inter-movement publications produced by the cells and distributed through numerous sympathetic websites. Membership can be understood as occurring on two levels, the covert cell level and the public support level, both of which operate

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in tandem to produce and publicize acts of property destruction. At the cell level, individuals conduct pre-operational reconnaissance and surveillance, develop and construct weapons systems, carry out orchestrated attacks, and announce their actions to support groups and media while maintaining internal security and anonymity. At the aboveground level, support entities help to publicize attacks carried out by cells, respond to media inquiries and other public engagements, identify and coordinate aid to imprisoned cell members, and develop and distribute sympathetic propaganda produced by, and in support of affiliated individuals. This case study uses the history of the Earth Liberation Front’s United States attacks as its unit of analysis, and seeks to outline the ideology, structure, context and membership factors that constitute the movement.

INTRODUCTION

October 14 is Columbus Day, a national holiday in the United States when citizens are reminded of their colonial roots. On this day in 1996, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) leapt into action in the US state of Oregon. In one night, individuals carried out three simultaneous attacks targeting a Chevron station, a public relations office and a McDonald’s restaurant. All three targets had their locks glued and their property painted with political messages including a three letter calling card, E.L.F. (Molland 2006, 55). For the US, this was the first salvo from the ELF, a clandestine, decentralized network of autonomous cells using sabotage and vandalism to cause financial hardship to targets thought to be abusing the Earth. From this small action, less than ten years later, the US would declare the ELF “the most active criminal extremist element in the United States” (Lewis 2004) and the “number one domestic terrorist threat” (Schuster 2005). While such rhetoric was mobilized with great strength in the decade following the millennium, the ELF remains active, transitory and for the most part, resistant to discovery and arrest.

2A lengthy analysis of the post-9/11 rhetoric of terrorism deployed against environmental and animal liberation activists is the subject of an article recent published by this author (Loadenthal 2013) entitled “Deconstructing ‘Eco-Terrorism’: Rhetoric, Framing and Statecraft as Seen Through the Insight Approach,” appearing in the journal Critical Studies on Terrorism, Vol. 6, Issue 1.
The ELF is often discussed in tandem alongside other environmental and animal liberation/rights-focused movements as the main actors engaging in “eco-terrorism,” defined as:

The use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally orientated sub-national group for environmental-political reasons, aimed at an audience beyond the target, and often of a symbolic nature. (Eagan 1996, 2)

Broadly, this definition fails to define the ELF as it does not employ violence against “innocent victims.” In the framing of “innocent victims” versus “property” noted above, one presumes that victims refers to humans, and as such, the ELF defies this definitional description as it has sought to damage property, not humans, and has managed to avoid injuring individuals accidentally. (Borum and Tilby 2005, 212; Leader and Probst 2003, 44; Taylor 1998, 3, 8) As one scholar familiar with the “eco-terrorist” history writes, “While the ELF has caused millions of dollars worth of property damage, it has not yet intentionally (or even unintentionally) brought harm to anyone”. (Ackerman 2003, 162) Such a casualty-free history should be noted as with nearly 300 attacks3 claimed globally from 1996-2009 (Loadenthal 2010, 81), not a single human has been killed or injured (Loadenthal 2010, 98). In its 290 attacks claimed at the ELF, and its 69 attacks (Loadenthal 2010, 81) claimed jointly with the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the target has always been property.

What follows is a case study analysis of the ELF movement as it operated (1996-2009) in North America. The majority of evidence presented is taken from centrist, state-affiliated, security-themed sources4 whose purpose is to identify, locate and

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3 All quantitate data of this variety are taken from a previously completed study (Loadenthal 2010) of the larger field of “eco-terrorism” completed in 2010 as part of the author’s MLitt dissertation completed while studying at the Centre For the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews. This research included an incident-based, quantitate analysis of 27,136 incidents of “eco-terrorism” occurring in over 40 countries from 1972-2010. Each incident was passed through a decision tree, and if included in the data set, coded for 22 variables and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program.

4 See for example (109th Congress 2005; Ackerman 2003; Anti-Defamation League 2005; Borum and Tilby 2005; Chalk 2001; FBI Counterterrorism and
capture activists. While many of these sources make specious claims regarding activists’ behaviors, they remain the most often quoted, ‘authoritative’ sources on the subject. For this reason the majority of the facts established herein will be adopted from such security-industry forces as to produce a descriptive social movement account that is both informed by a radical analysis, and triangulated with facts established by the State and its largess of resources and affiliated institutions.

Whereas the ELF is a global movement, with cells active in more than twenty countries, for the purpose of this analysis, cases will be limited to their North American attacks, the vast majority of which occurred in the continental US. Other affiliated radical networks and movements, such as the ALF and Earth First! (EF!) will be discussed as they relate to the history and developmental context of the ELF. This study is an attempt to paint a holistic picture of the ELF as a social movement, examining its ideology, structure, context, and multi-tiered membership that collectively constitute its ranks.

This study seeks neither to prove nor dispel a testable hypothesis, but rather to develop a detailed picture of the ELF’s praxis as developed via its US activity. The study utilizes the US ELF movement as its unit of analysis (Yin 2008, 22–23), and seeks to explore the movement’s philosophical underpinnings, networks, the context leading to its development, and the characteristics of its membership. The evidence presented herein is a synthesis of open source documentation, archival records and academic journals as well as numerous inter-movement publications authored by pro-ELF organizations. Whenever possible triangulation of data has been achieved and demonstrated through the multi-sourcing of findings via scholarly studies, government reports and inter-movement publications. (Yin 2008, 91–92)

A BRIEF HISTORY

Beginning in the 1960s, a political movement emerged advancing a radically new critique of environmental and animal use

practices. These new ideological tendencies were characterized by not only a shift in philosophical outlook, but also in language and collective practice. This time period is often associated with the founding of the deep ecology framework, authored by Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss in 1972 (Eagan 1996, 3), replacing the environmental protectionism of past, as well as ideas of animal liberation, inspired by a 1975 book of the same title by Peter Singer. Just as Singer’s notion of liberation replaced previously popular notions of animal welfare or rights, the groups which formed during this time replaced previously dominant strategies of collective popular protest with that of self-guided, autonomous units. These new revolutionary frameworks were quickly adopted by emergent groups, which began to utilize sabotage, vandalism and arson.

1963 saw the formation of the Hunt Saboteurs Association, dedicated to physically disrupting hunting expeditions, often taking the form of sabotage and provocation. After working with a group of hunt saboteurs in the early 1970s, several activists decided to shift their tactical focus. In 1972, the Band of Mercy (BOM) formed in England as the outgrowth of desire for a new praxis that prioritized taking animals out of harm’s way, as well as financially sabotaging companies and institutions contributing to animal exploitation. Within three years of its founding, the BOM morphed into what has historically been the most active, clandestine, direct action group, the ALF. Since its founding in England in 1976, the ALF has carried out thousands of attacks globally. Several years after the formation of the ALF, the movement witnessed a factionalization into smaller, more violence-prone splinter cells and experienced deterritorialization to over forty countries. By 1994, the ALF inspired the formation of an organizationally and tactically similar movement targeting institutions of ecological exploitation through methods of sabotage and vandalism—the ELF. Throughout thirty-eight years under examination, the BOM, ALF and ELF have further deterritorialized and led to the formation of at least three hundred similarly-styled groups. This global movement of movements which opposes violence (toward animals and the environment) has garnered the label ‘eco-terrorism’ from governments, media, and elements of the academic community.
In establishing the ELF’s ideology, we examine movement literature produced through aboveground support networks, such as the North American ELF Press Office5 (NAELFPO). In a 2001 pamphlet, the NAELFPO states that “if an individual believes in the ideology and follows a certain set of guidelines she or he can perform actions and become a part of the ELF” (North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2001, 3). In a similar fashion to the ALF, these “guidelines” are established by unknown persons and distributed through movement literature thus creating a discursive reality for subsequent action. While there is no central authority that then judges actions to be in agreement with or in violation of the guideline, movement debate and discussion serves as a vetting process. According to the NAELFPO pamphlet, “Frequently Asked Question About the Earth Liberation Front,” (2001) the group’s guidelines are:

1) To cause as much economic damage as possible to a given entity that is profiting off the destruction of the natural environment and life for selfish greed and profit,

2) To educate the public on the atrocities committed against the environment and life,

3) To take all necessary precautions against harming life.

Such broad-based guidelines serve a functional purpose allowing for great tactical and strategic diversity while avoiding the factionalizing function (Joosse 2007) of public debate regarding the legitimacy of every action taken under the ELF moniker. Thus is an action is carried out, it is up to the activists to decide to either adopt the ELF name or not.

The “ideology” of the ELF contains thematic trends collectively constituting a shared ethos. Firstly, “deep ecology”, often termed biocentrism, that teaches all living entities, human and non-human, have equal worth and value and an inherent

5 The NAELFPO has at times gone silent for larger periods. After being established in 1999, it maintained an active web presence for years before going offline, and the reestablishing itself in 2008. At present, in 2013, the site is once again offline.
right to exist and prosper. It is through this lens that the ELF understands its position vis-à-vis those understood to be destroying the Earth. Some of this influence comes from the ELF’s historical development alongside anarchism, and specifically its anti-civilization tendencies often termed Green anarchism, anarcho-primitivism or simply, Primitivism. (Taylor 2003, 181) At this juncture, the greening of anarchism extends its typically anthropocentric analysis towards deep ecology. (Ackerman 2003, 147; The Green Anarchy Collective 2009) Green anarchism advocates the creation of a collectivized, pre-industrial, “wild” civilization of loosely affiliated, village-sized communities, devoid of modern industry and technology. (Eagan 1996, 3–4; Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 4–5; Leader and Probst 2003, 40) The ELF ideology borrows heavily from anarchism, and as such, a great number of anarchists fill the ranks of the movement. (Borum and Tilby 2005, 208; Leader and Probst 2003, 40; Taylor 2003, 181) The philosophical teachings of anarchism and the ELF concur that all forms of oppression are inherently incompatible with human society and must be replaced with non-hierarchical, non-coercive methods of organization and collective responsibility. (Ackerman 2003, 147; Leader and Probst 2003, 40) This philosophical understanding opposing hierarchal structures, is reflected in the ELF’s organizational methods. (Chalk 2001; Eagan 1996, 2; Trujillo 2005, 146) Closely linked, the ELF shares a great deal with the broad leftist movements often termed, “anti-corporate/globalization,” or “anti-capitalist” (Ackerman 2003, 153; Leader and Probst 2003, 40; Trujillo 2005, 159). Radical environmentalists share ideology with these movements arguing that modern capitalism “represents the single most important threat to the…environment,” (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 5) and that Western-led individualism is predicated on the exploitation of the natural resources of the Earth. (Ackerman 2003, 146; Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 4)

Secondly, the ELF claims to act as the “voice of the voiceless,” the “defender of the defenseless,” arguing that the planet is the victim of attacks perpetuated by mankind, for which it

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6 The politics and philosophy of anarcho-primitivism have been developed and popularized by writers such as John Zerzan, Kevin Tucker, Bob Black, John Moore, Derrick Jenson, and infamously by Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the “Unabomber.”
cannot respond in voice nor action (Ackerman 2003, 146–147; Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 4). The inability of the Earth to speak for itself empowers the ELF to speak and act in its defense (North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2001, 4) despite such a anthropocentric protectionism being challenged\(^7\) by critical activists. Thirdly, the ELF advocates non-violence as it relates to all forms of life, simultaneously denying that non-living entities such as the property of eco-offenders, corporations, governments, etc. also have an inherent protection from violence (Eagan 1996, 9; Leader and Probst 2003, 41; North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2001, 27–28). This understanding and consistent injury-free practice allows the ELF to frame its acts of property destruction as non-violent sabotage, as such actions fail to target living creatures. (Jones 2006, 324)

Lastly, ELF ideology is tinged with accusations of unjustified attack by law enforcement. (Ackerman 2003, 146; Eagan 1996, 13) This theme is commonly cited in communiqués from ELF cells as many believe they are being maliciously persecuted by governments. Such accusatory posturing by the ELF in their criticism of the State is certainly deserved. Since the US began its Domestic War on Terrorism following the attacks of September 11, 2001, environmental and animal liberation activists have become the target of increased State repression (Loadenthal 2013; Lovitz 2010; Potter 2011; Slater 2011) in what activists have termed the Green Scare. Within this pursue to produce arrests, the State has utilized a host of repressive methods not typically deployed amongst non-violence social movements. Included in its arsenal targeting direct action animal and earth liberationists is the use of state\(^8\) and federal-level legislation (e.g. Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, Ag-Gag legislation), the placement of police informants and provocateurs (such as the case of Eric McDavid and Marie Mason), home raids and other militarized forms of overt policing, increased electronic surveillance, use of Grand Juries to coerce informa-

\(^7\) See for example (Loadenthal 2012) wherein this author challenges the human-centric notion of protectionism offered by animal/earth liberation activists who claim to be speaking for the oppressed non-human animals and ‘natural’ world.

\(^8\) Such as Pennsylvania’s “Ecoterrorism - 18 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 3311”
tion, and the use of anti-terrorist prison facilities to house inmates (such as the case of Daniel McGowan, Andrew Stepanian, Stanislas Meyerhoff and Walter Bond)⁹. The largess of the State’s targeted repression of such activists has been well established in activist scholarship and as such is not the focus of this investigation.

**Tactical Ideology**

The ELF extends its framework establishing tactical methodology melding philosophy with practice, creating a radical, anti-State, anti-capitalist, environmental praxis. This praxis advocates “direct action,” (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 12) to “remove the profit motive from killing the Earth” (North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2001, 28). Direct action, a key component of the anarchist tradition, is seen as the only way to achieve the ELF aims as traditional methods of politicking and lobbying have failed to achieve rapid success (Trujillo 2005, 146). For the ELF, direct action constitutes the use of illegal means of political protest such as sabotage, arson and other manners of property destruction to economically damage entities established as its enemies. In this sense, the ELF’s goal is the financially insolvency of its targets using economic sabotage. To this end, the ELF advocates the use of methods (termed ‘weapon technologies’ in the Terrorism/Security Studies literature) that cause financial harm while avoiding harming humans, animals and the environment. The weapons socio-political groups choose provide insight into their politics, as “the specific weapons technologies groups choose...[and]...define the scale and scope of their violence” (Jackson and Frelinger 2008, 583). For the ELF there is a focuses on improvised incendiaries (Jackson and Frelinger 2008, 597–598) self-manufactured from modified, off-the-shelf items (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 26), guided by instruction from movement publications distributed mainly through the internet. (109th Congress 2005, 44; Joosse 2007, 354) The decision to use incendiaries, as op-

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posed to firearms or projectiles, reflects ELF’s desire to damage property while avoiding causalities. (Jackson and Frelinger 2008, 598)

The ELF’s targeting ideology reflects its desire to cause financial hardship whilst avoiding causalities and generally, chooses target such as “facilities and companies involved in logging, genetic engineering, home building, automobile sales, energy production and distribution” (Leader and Probst 2003, 43). Targets chosen by cells are understood to be directly damaging the environment. Also contributing to the ELF’s targeting decisions is the amount of security their targets employ. The ELF tends to attack targets that are not hardened against attack such as those affiliated with commercial business, University research and residential housing as opposed to more heavily protected targets such as military sites, government facilities or heavy industrial or manufacturing facilities. Therefore homes under construction are targeted, not realtors. (North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2009b)\(^{10}\) Privately owned vehicles are targeted, not car manufacturers. (North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2009c)\(^{11}\) Genetically engineered organisms (GMO) are pulled from the ground, and research centers destroyed with fire. (North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office 2009a)\(^{12}\) In these examples, the targeting reflects the desire to directly target the perceived ills, not to remedy them through attacking intermediary or secondary target. When examined through a global incident-based, quantitative analysis, one discovers that the ELF’s main target types are construction and industrial equipment (14%), model homes and homes under construction (13%),

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\(^{10}\) September 19, 2003, an ELF cell burned down four luxury homes and damaged three others in San Diego, California’s Carmel Valley neighborhood. A banner was left at the scene of the arson that read, “Development destruction. Stop raping nature. The ELFs are angry.”

\(^{11}\) May 17, 2006 an ELF cell damaged six SUVs in Fair Oaks, California by slashing the vehicles’ tires and using spray paint to write “ELF” on the vehicles.

\(^{12}\) December 31, 1999 an ELF cell severely damaged a research center at Michigan State University’s Lansing campus because the University was conducting genetic engineering research in conjunction with GE-advocate Monsanto and the United States Agency for International Development. The fire causes $900,000 in damages.
business properties (12%) and automobiles most often sport utility vehicles (10%). (Loadenthal 2010) Other target types include (in descending order of frequency) phone booths, private business vehicles, farms, ranches and breeders, GMU crops and government property including vehicles.

**STRUCTURE—ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK**

The ELF functions as a networked movement, not as an organization. It is a decentralized collection of autonomously operating, small unit, clandestine cells without organizational hierarchy or command and control structure. (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 1, 8, 11) Thus, “ELF” is a name given to the sum total of attacks carried out by disconnected cells and ‘lone wolf’ attackers. It is an adoptable moniker for whomever wishes to use it. Whereas ELF cells may share a basic philosophical-political critique, generally cells have no communication or cooperation amongst themselves. In some isolated cases, operation coordination, or at least communication has likely occurred between cells. For example, on May 21, 2001, two ELF cells carried out simultaneous arsons targeting the Jefferson Poplar Farms in Clatskaine, Oregon and the horticulture research laboratory of the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), both ELF cell responsible for the arsons were part of a twenty person multi-cell unit of the ELF known as “the family.” Eleven members of “the family” were arrested by the FBI during “Operation Backfire” in late 2005 and early 2006, and linked to seventeen attacks in Oregon, Wyoming, Washington, California, and Colorado. From open source information, it is impossible to determine how common such multi-cell entities are within the greater milieu of the ELF movement. Law enforcement have found cells extremely difficult to infiltrate (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 11) reporting that most possess “sophisticated organization and operational security,” (Ackerman 2003, 151) including knowledge of forensics, signals intelligence, computer security, cryptography and police surveillance. (109th Congress 2005, 44; FBI Counterterrorism and Cyber Divisions 2004, 2–4; Immergut et al. 2007, 5, 35, 102, 117, 123, 134; Leader and Probst 2003, 42; Trujillo 2005, 154–155, 163) Cells operate with no known external support structure, existing self-suffi-
ciently, fulfilling their logistical, funding, intelligence and weapons acquisition needs. Unlike traditional terrorist organizations and violent non-State actors, there is no need for ELF cells to receive financial support from nation-states or smuggle weapons through secretive networks. Attacks are self-funded from the cell members as their cost is low. (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 27) Additional tasks traditionally assigned to externals are self-managed including pre-operational surveillance and reconnaissance, training and weapons acquisition. (Leader and Probst 2003, 42)

Beyond the level of the cell, the ELF is understood as a movement of “leaderless resistance,” a style of decentralization popularized by Louis Beam (1992), an American white supremacist, who describes a leaderless resistance model as:

...A fundamental departure in theories of organization...[wherein] all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction, as would those who belong to a typical pyramid organization. (1992)

This leaderless resistance, with no centralized authority or command and control, is seen in the workings of the ELF. The structure has great advantages for resisting infiltration by law enforcement, and provides a simple means of cell replication. The decentralized, autonomous, non-hierarchical network structure is also familiar to new members as it is the common organizational method within anarchist movements where many ELF members are active. (Borum and Tilby 2005, 212; Chalk 2001) Due to the autonomy of the ELF cells, cells are not aware of others, and existing cells cannot be joined. (Dishman 2005, 243) Because of their self-contained nature, new recruits are encouraged to form their own cell. (Joosse 2007, 354) This advice is given plainly in a NAELFPO (2001) pamphlet, where-in the author states:

Individuals interested in becoming active in the ELF need to follow the above guidelines and create their own close knit anonymous cell made up of trustworthy and sincere people. Remember the ELF and each cell within it are anonymous not only to one another but also to the general public. So there is not a realistic chance of becoming active in an already existing cell. Take initiative, form your own cell and do what needs to be done to protect all life on the planet! (2001, 15)
The leaderless resistance structure provides the ELF with a number of benefits, besides operational security, most notably, the ability to avoid protracted ideological debate leading to stagnation and factionalization. Paul Joosse (2007) addresses this, writing:

Leaderless resistance allows the ELF to avoid ideological cleavages by eliminating all ideology extraneous to the very specific cause of halting the degradation of nature...leaderless resistance creates an ‘overlapping consensus’ among those with vastly different ideological orientations, mobilizing a mass of adherents that would never been able to find unanimity of purpose in an organization characterized by a traditional, hierarchical, authority structure...[individuals can]...‘believe what they will,’ while mobilizing them to commit ‘direct actions’. (2007, 352)

Leaderless resistance prevents factionalization, allowing divergent activists to appear unified despite ideological differences.

The independence of leaderless resistance contains the potentiality to damage the movement if cells act outside of stated policy. For example “a particularly militant splinter cell, a peripheral individual or...ad-hoc group” could carry out an attack attributed to the ELF but via means breaking from group tradition. (Ackerman 2003, 153) The ELF movement lacks the ability to prevent cells from committing lethal actions and claiming them in the movement’s name, (Leader and Probst 2003, 42) other than arguing that its guidelines call for the taking of “necessary precautions against harming life”. Such a tension is of growing relevance with a sudden surge in eco-affiliated, primitivist-themed attacks in countries such as Mexico, where networks such as Individuals Tending Toward the Wild have reportedly killed and injured targets attacked do to their role in biotechnology and the larger “Techno-Industrial System.” This potential conflict for the ELF has yet to be tested, but provides a challenge for the network in preserving its records of avoiding human causalities. Despite this risk, the ELF’s structure allows cells and individuals to act independently to set the agenda for the larger transnational movement (Joosse 2007, 356), thus the global ELF campaign is simply the collection of attacks carried out by autonomous entities.
Due to the tendency for cells to act without support, the movement must uniquely develop tactical and operational skill sets. The ELF has addressed this, facilitating organizational learning through print text and internet. Many texts were the product of radical environmentalist movements led by EF! preceding the ELF’s founding. (Leader and Probst 2003, 38) From 1970-1980, numerous skills-based instructive texts, such as Ecodefense13, emerged wherein readers were taught tactics utilized by the modern ELF including sabotage, arson, and internal security. (Eagan 1996, 8; FBI Counterterrorism and Cyber Divisions 2004, 2–4; Laqueur 2000, 203) Following an increase in internet access, the focus was shifted to online resources for cataloging technical and training material. In his report for RAND, Horacio Trujillo (2005) writes:

Operational learning has been facilitated by...the movement’s use of published material, first in print and now via the Internet, to disseminate and store knowledge...Advances in information technology, particularly the Internet, have significantly increased the reach of these organizations’ materials and have provided the ELF with the ability to disseminate training and logistics information. (2005, 153)

The ELF’s main (now defunct) aboveground website, NAELF-PO, formally acted as a clearinghouse for individuals looking

13 A complete copy of the 3rd edition of Dave Foreman’s book Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching, is available online at http://www.omnipresence.mahost.org/inttxt.htm. In establishing the themes of this book, as discussed in the study, the text was accessed online, without page numbers, making item specific referencing impossible. The complete citation for the book can be found below:


14 These skills-based texts of the time include Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching, where readers are taught tactics utilized by the modern ELF including tree spiking, sabotage, arson, and internal security. Additional books also emerged at this time serving as guides to potential saboteurs including The Black Cat Sabotage Handbook, EF! Direct Action Manual, Earthforce! An Earth Warrior’s Guide to Strategy and Road Raging: Top Tips for Wrecking Roadbuilding. A complete version of Road Raging is available at: http://www.eco-action.org/rr/

15 Available at: http://www.elfpressoffice.org/
for links to sympathetic sites that host training materials. The NAELPO’s site has been offline often for extended periods of time, but when active, receives a great deal of traffic partially due to heavy referencing in media accounts of attacks. Brigitte Nacos’s (2006) discussion of terrorist groups’ use of the internet makes this claim stating:

Overblown media reports about arson attacks on new housing developments or gas-guzzling sports utility vehicles by the Earth Liberation Front familiarized the American public with the motives of this by and large negligible ‘eco-terrorist’ movement... the mainstream media helped interested persons to find the group’s Internet site that serves as a recruitment tool and a how-to-commit-terrorism resource. (2006, 43)

As of the time of writing, the NAELFPO website has been down for some time, but despite this barrier, movement communiqués can still be viewed at affiliated English language sites such as Bite Back Magazine16, the North American Animal Liberation Press Office17, and a host of direct action/insurrectionary anarchist themed websites such as 32518, War on Society19, Act For Freedom Now! and Contra Info20. Through these websites and others in a host of foreign languages, individuals can access semi-centralized resources for publicizing attacks, reading communiqués from previous attacks, and learning operational skills such as security,21 sabotage22 and weapons production.23

16 http://www.directaction.info/
17 http://www.animalliberationpressoffice.org/index.htm
18 http://325.nostate.net/
19 http://waronsociety.noblogs.org/
20 http://en.contrainfo.espiv.net/
23 For example see Arson-Around with Auntie ALF: Your Guide to Putting Heat on Animal Abusers Everywhere or Setting Fires With Electrical Timers:
The weapons technology of the ELF, consists of off-the-shelf materials with dual usage used to construct incendiaries. (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 1, 26) Typical designs for improvised incendiary devices utilize widely available items such as alkaline batteries, kitchen/egg timers, basic electrical components, matches, road flares, model rocket igniters, filament light bulbs, alligator clips, granulated sugar, liquid hydrocarbon fuels (gasoline, diesel, oil, kerosene, etc.), paraffin, sawdust, incense sticks, sponges, tampons, plastic jugs, cigarette lighters, solder and insulated wire. Through the guidance provided by online guides the ELF can develop organizational knowledge, distribute member instruction, and adapt new technologies as developments improve. Beyond technical training and development, the internet also serves a variety of functions to establish a collectively crafted history of attacks, analysis and critique. This trend is not unique to the ELF as it is increasingly common for political movements to utilize the internet as a source of intelligence and training. (Weimann 2006, 123–124)

**Context**

The ELF’s development was the product of philosophical shifts in the environmental movement, and practical issues that emerged throughout EF! leading to its factionalization. While

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*An Earth Liberation Front Guide.* These guides are available on numerous websites and file sharing services.


25 See for example the guides discussed (109th Congress 2005, 44, 75–76; Anti-Defamation League 2005, 10; Immergut et al. 2007, 134). The two most widely cited arson guides produced by the ELF and ALF respectively are *Setting Fires With Electrical Timers: An Earth Liberation Front Guide* and *Arson-Around with Auntie ALF: Your Guide to Putting Heat on Animal Abusers Everywhere*

26 It is interesting to note that the referenced ELF and ALF-produced incendiary guides are nearly entirely devoid of ideological or philosophical discussion or even the mention of animal rights. In his discussion of leaderless resistance in the ELF, author Paul Joosse (2007) writes that, “by not explicitly stating ideological precepts, the manual lends itself to use by anyone, regardless of the person’s ideological orientation” (2007, 361).
direct action, similarly-styled animal liberation networks such
as the BOM and the ALF began in the UK in the early 1970s,
the environmental militancy found its focus a bit later. In 1992,
following direct actions in England, EF! hosted a national meet-
ing in Brighton. (Leader and Probst 2003, 38) At this meeting,
segments of EF! expressed a desire for the movement to halt its
use of illegal tactics, and it was decided that as EF!, the move-
ment would refocus on demonstrations, in effect creating the
ELF as a new entity to continue producing illegal actions. The
ELF name was intentionally chosen because of its similarity to
that of the ALF, as the new Earth movement hoped to borrow
ALF structure, guidelines and tactics. (Molland 2006, 49)

The emergence of the ELF from EF!’s factionalization al-
lowed it to embrace leadless resistance, while avoiding further
ideological splits. It was understood as important to avoid
EF!’s mistakes wherein, “factionalization progressed…[and]…
energy was diverted towards debates about ideology and away
from performing the direct actions…envisioned as being Earth
First!’s *forte*” (Joosse 2007, 358). Four years after the ELF
emerged in England, it became active in the US, which would
quickly become the focal point of the movement’s attacks.
(Trujillo 2005, 151) On October 31, 1996, the ELF carried out
arson, its first major US action after four years of carrying out
small vandalisms.27

The ELF’s emergence was made possible via the broader
context of a growing radical environmental movement in West-
ern Europe and North America. (Walton and Widay 2006, 97–
99) Thus the emergence of the ELF can be seen as a reac-
tionary movement combating issues such as deforestation and a
loss of biodiversity at a time when government policies were
seen as disregarding or ignoring the problem. (Ackerman 2003,
155) Following global acknowledgment of such issues, knowl-
edge of GMO agriculture and climate change grew in promi-
nence as well, leading the ELF to execute a number of attacks
on GMO crops and research. (Leader and Probst 2003, 46)
Similarly, the 1990s saw the emergence of a “sprawl” critique,

27 Between 1992-1996 numerous attacks were carried out that shared tactical
and thematic traits with ELF actions. The attacks were carried out in
England, Holland, Australia, Germany and New Zealand. (Molland 2006, 52–
53)
criticizing the surge in construction of low-density, car-dependent, luxury, urban/suburban housing developments. (Sally and Peter 2006, 415–416) These larger conversations provided the context for an arson campaign targeting luxury home developments, and other large land uses including ski resorts and golf courses. (Ackerman 2003, 153) Following the arson of a “luxury home” under construction\(^\text{28}\) an ELF communiqué addressing “sprawl” was released:

Greetings from the front, The Earth Liberation Front claims responsibility for the torching of a luxury home under construction in Miller Place, Long Island on December 19\(^\text{th}\). Anti-urban sprawl messages were spraypainted on the walls, then accelerants were poured over the house and lighted…This is the latest in a string of actions in the war against urban sprawl. Urban sprawl not only destroys the green spaces of our planet, but also leads directly to added runoff of pollutants into our waterways, increased traffic that causes congestion and air pollution, and a less pleasing landscape… Unregulated population growth is also a direct product of urban sprawl. There are over 6 billion people on this planet of which almost a third are either starving or living in poverty. Building homes for the wealthy should not even be a priority. (Earth Liberation Front 2000)

The growing global environmental consciousness, with its critique of GMO-technology and sprawl, provided the context for the popularization of radical activism that drew support from the upsurge in complementary leftist movements that occurred in the late 1990s-2000s, following demonstrations opposing the World Trade Organization in Seattle. (Ackerman 2003, 154; starr 2006, 375; Trujillo 2005, 159)

Similarly the anti-globalization initiates of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) in the Mexican state of Chiapas, which peaked in 1994 with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), served to inspire leftist radicals globally as the movement spoke out strongly against Western capitalism and promoted a collective initiate towards environmental protection and sustainability. (Becker 2006, 76–77; Garland 2006, 68)\(^\text{29}\) Within this tradition, the

\(^{28}\) The arson occurred on December 19, 2000 in Long Island, New York and was claimed via a communiqué sent to the ELF Press Offices.

\(^{29}\) In at least two ELF communiqués the Zapatista movement was referenced as a source of inspiration. The first, issued in 1997 under the title, “Beltane, 1997” (Best and Nocella, 408-9) and the second, issued on 28 June 1998, and
ELF can be said to be enacting a form of revolutionarily defensive environmentalism advocated by the ELZN. For example, the establishment of the 1978 Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve by Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo, expropriated 940,000 acres of the Lacandon Jungle from largely indigenous communities, and led to the radicalization and militarization of the EZLN. Self-defense structures were established when the State attempted to move these individuals and in 1989, a ban on wood cutting and the establishment of a State-aligned security force to implement such measures led to one of the first offensive strikes by the EZLN. In this incident in March 1993, EZLN fighters killed two members of the Mexican security forces who had come upon a clandestine sawmill located near the city of San Cristobal. Less than one year later, when the EZLN led a largely bloodless uprising following the passage of NAFTA, one of their first achievements was to expel thousands of oil workers employed by PEMEX, US Western Oil and Geofisica Corporation. For both the ELF and EZLN, the active defense of the ecological realm is not a matter of long-term campaigning, but immediate, reactionary, needs-based maneuvers. Both movements act within the logic of an ever-shortening timeline for appropriate measures and resultantly, shun reformist methods that offer State-involvement, compromised negotiations and further entanglement with the legislative process.

**Membership: Clandestine**

Establishing membership is a difficult endeavor amongst a movement that does not have members, and as individuals do not join the ELF, membership status is tricky to discern. (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 9) There is a lack of open source material, provided by security services documenting or estimating numbers of ELF cells. (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 3) The only known ELF members or cells are the relatively few that have been identified and arrested. (Ackerman 2003, 151) NAELFPO (2001) addressed the question, writing that “it is next to impossible to estimate the number of ELF members internationally or even country by country.” The closest discernable figures concerning the size of the ELF may come from a 2001 estimate, reporting that the ALF, a similarly structured movement, has an

(available at http://www.elfpressoffice.org/comm062898.swf)
estimated “100 hardcore members” (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 2). Such a figure appears arbitrary and most likely erroneous. What is known however is that as activity has waned in the US in the latter part of the 2000s, it has resultantly risen in other countries such as Mexico, Russia, the UK and many parts of Western Europe and South America (Loadenthal 2010).

Despite the fact that the number of ELF members is unknown, a membership profile exists. From these records, the profile of the most typical ELF activist emerges indicating the individual is likely male, well educated, possessing a high technical capability (Ackerman 2003, 148, 151), under the age of twenty-five, Caucasian, middle to upper-middle-class, from an industrialized Western nation (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 3), supportive of environmentalism and animal rights (Walton and Widay 2006, 99), active in larger activist movements (Ackerman 2003, 145), and disenfranchised with mainstream environmental protest (Joosse 2007, 356). Sporadic arrests over the last ten years have shown these findings to be generalizable despite the arrest of numerous females and individuals acting in a host of non-Western countries from Indonesia to Bolivia. Recruitment and incitement propaganda produced by ELF-affiliated entities may also consciously attempt to engage youth subcultures through a positive portrayal of the movements as ‘instigators of violent action’ (Joosse 2007, 360).

This characterization is not surprising as Gary Perlstein (2003) writes that the ELF receives “a great deal of moral and perhaps even financial support from politically liberal urban… [and] academic settings” (2003, 171–172). Thus US universities may be a ‘recruitment’ setting as many attendees would share demographics characteristics. Thus if a movement seeks to ‘recruit’ twenty-one year old, privileged, well educated, politically liberal individuals from the industrialized West, the university setting is ideal. This ‘supportive’ university environment can also be seen in events held on campus supporting radical environmentalism generally, and the ELF specifically. (Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 26; Jarboe 2002) For example, pro-ELF and ALF speakers have given presentations at numerous leftist conferences and gatherings including the National Conference on Organized Resistance, the animal Animal Rights conference, the Liberation Now tour, as well as the Primate Freedom Tour.
which featured former ELF spokesmen, Craig Rosebraugh. In 1998, Rosenbraugh, and ELF arsonist Jonathan Paul, presented at the National Animal Rights Conference being held at the University of Oregon, urging unity between the ELF and the ALF.

From the available information, the most typical membership in the clandestine elements of the ELF would likely be filled by a Caucasian male between the ages of 18 and 25, from a middle/upper-middle class background, living in the US. He would likely be attending, or have graduated from post-secondary education, identify with anti-authoritarian leftist politics, and be involved in public, aboveground social change movements possibly related to environmentalism, animal rights or anti-globalization. Other indicators such as proficiency with computers or dietary choices may be instructive but are largely anecdotal.

**Membership: Aboveground**

Membership in the ELF is not limited to clandestine cells. A multinational, aboveground support structure exists to disseminate propaganda, support prisoners, publicize actions, provide legal support, and allow pro-ELF persons a venue to promote the aims of radical environmentalism. At present, there exists a host of explicitly pro-ELF print and online magazines in national distribution throughout the US. Two examples are *Bite Back* magazine,³⁰ (in print 2001-present) and *No Compromise* magazine,³¹ (in print 1989-2006). Both magazines focus on the ac-

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³⁰ *Bite Back magazine* is published irregularly since 2001 and available at: http://www.directaction.info/

³¹ *No Compromise* is published biannually since 1989. According to the *No Compromise magazine* website, the publication is “the militant, direct action publication of grassroots animal liberationists and their supporters,” with the aim of “unifying grassroots animal liberationists by providing a forum where activists can exchange information, share strategy, discuss important issues within the movement, network with each other in an open and respectful environment and strengthen the grassroots.” Website available at: http://www.nocompromise.org/ with a full archive made available at http://thetalonconspiracy.com/category/periodicals/nocomp/
tions of the ALF but also provide coverage of ELF attacks and prisoners.

*Bite Back* and *No Compromise* deal primarily with the ALF, addressing the ELF as a supportive ally, but in 2009, an explicitly pro-ELF magazine was created entitled *Resistance: Journal of the Earth Liberation Movement*. Currently in its third issue, *Resistance* (2009) plans to publish four issues a year with the stated goal of providing “a vehicle to inform, inspire, and energize the earth liberation movement.” Although *Resistance* appears to be a project independent of the NAELFPO, its former spokesmen Craig Rosebraugh, is the founder of Arissa Media Group which is the journal’s distributor. (Arissa Media Group 2009) Both *Resistance* and Arissa unequivocally embrace the ELF publicly, whereas *Bite Back* and *No Compromise* share tactical methods and a broad affinity. Additionally, there is *The Earth First! Journal* published since the early 1980s and often covering attacks associated with the ELF and other clandestine, pro-environment groups. Currently the *EF! Journal* is published six times a year containing:

…reports on direct action; articles on the preservation of wilderness and biological diversity; news and announcements about EF! and other radical environmental groups; investigative articles; critiques of the entire environmental movement…essays exploring ecological theory…(*Earth First! Journal* 2009)

The journal’s creators describe the periodical as “The voice of the radical environmental movement…[and] an essential forum for discussion” (2009) within the radical environmentalist movement.

Beyond these supporters there exist numerous periodicals that regularly praise radical environmentalism and green anarchism, often documenting ELF attacks. Examples published in the US include *Green Anarchy*,32 (in print 1999-2008), *Fifth Estate*,33 (in print 1965-present), and *Species Traitor*34 (in print 2000-2005). In total, there are more than eight periodicals, reg-

32 The complete title is *Green Anarchy: an anti-civilization journal of theory & action*. The magazine is published bi-annually since 1999. The *Green Anarchy* website is available at: http://greenanarchy.org/

33 The complete title is *Fifth Estate: an anti-authoritarian magazine of ideas & action*. The magazine is published quarterly since 1965. The *Fifth Estate* website is available at: http://www.fifthestate.org/
ularly published in the US that document and promote the ELF and sympathetically publicize ELF-affiliated prisoners, in effect allowing these organizations to act as an aboveground support networks facilitating the building and maintenance of a pro-ELF movement.

The aboveground support networks of the ELF extend beyond publications, and provide support to individuals arrested and imprisoned for attacks. This prisoner support network identifies and tracks ELF-affiliated prisoners around the world. (Anti-Defamation League 2005, 11; Helios Global, Inc. 2008, 26) This information allows supporters to learn about prisoners, and write letters to those incarcerated, broadening the public support network to peripheral, sympathetic individuals. At least four organizations are currently operating to meet the needs of ELF prisoners.35 Additional aboveground support networks for the ELF include the North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office (currently offline) which anonymously receives ELF communiqués from cells and publicizes them globally. Though currently the NAELFPO has no aboveground individual speaking on its behalf, in the past both Craig Rosenbraugh and Leslie James Pickering served as official spokesmen for the ELF through its Press Office. Rosenbraugh and Pickering have also both authored books documenting the ELF.36 Furthermore, Rosenbraugh’s project, Arissa Media group (now managed by the Institute for Critical Animal Studies and not Rosenbraugh) distributes books, magazines and CDs promoting the ELF. In 2008, the National Lawyers Guild, established the “Green Scare hotline,” in response to a series of

34 *Species Traitor* is published irregularly since 2000 and has no website at present.

35 The English language prisoner support groups which specifically track ELF-affiliated prisoners include the North American Earth Liberation Prisoners Support Network (http://www.ecoprisoners.org), the Anarchist Black Cross Federation (http://www.abcf.net) and the currently offline Earth Liberation Prisoners Support Network (http://www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk).

36 In 2003, as part of a Master’s thesis, Craig Rosebraugh wrote *The Logic of Political Violence: Lessons in Reform and Revolution* and later, in 2004 he wrote *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet: Speaking for the Earth Liberation Front*. In 2006 Leslie James Pickering wrote *Earth Liberation Front 1997-2002* and has also written articles in the newly formed, pro-ELF magazine *Resistance*. 
arrests targeting ELF cells. The purpose of the hotline is to provide support to individuals arrested or accused of involvement with environmental or animal rights motivated attacks. The hotline will assist the individual in locating a lawyer. The Guild has also published a guide, entitled Operation Backfire: A Survival Guide for Environmental and Animal Rights Activists (2009), explaining activists’ legal rights and anti-terrorism laws as they have been applied in prosecutions of ELF-ALF members.

The functions of aboveground support entities are crucial for clandestine members to function effectively. The separation allows cells to remain unseen and unheard while supporters act as their voice and promoters. In this model, the cells carry out attacks, and the supporters document and disseminate propaganda the movement creates but is not able to distribute for fear of discovery. (Joosse 2007, 353) Under this model, based on the leaderless resistance structure, both the clandestine and public actors are necessary participants as both operate within complementary spheres of involvement predicated on a shared ideology and divergent tactics.

**CONCLUSION: NEO-GUERILLAS & NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

The ELF is a network of clandestine, autonomous cells, organized via a decentralized and broad ideology based in deep ecology, primitivist-themed anarchism, collective defense of the natural world, and a critique of environmental policy, genetic engineering, residential development, and globalized capitalism. The success of ELF cells avoiding discovery and arrest has limited the available data concerning the identity of participants, but a broad profile does exist as it pertains to sex, race, age, class, nationality, political affiliation and education. The ELF network emerged as support grew for the use of illegal protest tactics within the British radical environmental movement, modeling itself after the ALF as a leaderless resistance movement choosing sabotage, arson and vandalism as its main tactics. These attacks are carried out by tactically proficient, highly secure, small unit cells, using easily accessible weapons technologies and online instruction. This underground network of attackers is aided by aboveground support structures which help to promote and publicize the aims of the clandestine units.
The popularity and deterritorialization of the ELF in the US has served as a tactical and strategic inspiration to a host of movements who have drawn from the ELF’s methods for a variety of goals. In this sense, the ELF, despite its decline in domestic activity, must be understood as an instrumental social movement in the post-millennial period of radical, direct action, anti-State politics. Its praxis of insurrectionary-styled direct attack and unmediated offensive strikes offers inspiration to activists; inspiration which is aided by the network’s relative imperviousness to disruption, arrest and infiltration. Despite being established as a ‘number one domestic terrorist threat’ by the US intelligence community, and despite malicious prosecutions and egregious sentencing of activists, the network remains.

Since around 2007 when to so-called anti-globalization, counter-summit movement declined in the US, a large number of activists were left with a time vacuum. Hours that had once been dedicated to planning outreach, recruitment, logistical preparation and infrastructure building (e.g. housing, food, legal support networks) were now freed. While it is too early to make such determinations, it is entirely possible that with the decline of such mass-based protest movements, some individuals shifted their modus operandi towards what the military would term ‘small unit tactics.’ In other words, when regional and national mobilizations proved to be a resource-intensive, short victory producing avenue of resistance, attack histories such as that of the ELF may have led the charge for a multitude of movements to embrace lone wolf, leaderless resistance and urban guerilla tactics which had declined in domestic popularity with the disbanding of the United Freedom Front, George Jackson Brigade, Black Liberation Army (BLA), May 19th Communist Organization and others in the 1980s. Just as the decline of the anti-Viet Nam revolutionary groups (e.g. Weather Underground, Black Panthers) led to the establishment of the more vanguardist ‘Peoples Armies’ such as the BLA, so too may have the latter’s decline left a void filled by the rise of clandestine property destruction networks in the early 1990s. In this sense, the ELF should be understood historically as an instrumental tactical and strategic tendency in North American protest as it offered a model of outright resistance at a time
when aboveground movements were gaining publicity and momentum.

At present, in 2013, the North American environmental justice movement is once again experiencing a period of growth and diversification. Popular movements utilizing non-violence civil disobedience are prominent in their position of the transnational Keystone Pipeline for transporting oil and the more generalized use of hydraulic fracturing (often called hydrofracking) for extracting natural gas and petroleum from subterranean areas. Continued logging campaigns in the Pacific Northwest has led to the reinvigoration of forest defense and encampment campaigns such as those being fought by Cascadia Forest Defenders. These movements, while adopting self-sacrificial civil disobedience (e.g. lock downs, tree sits, tripods) as their main tactics, will also likely include the use of clandestine, ELF-inspired property destruction. Previous campaigns around the world have witnessed such a hybridized campaign, often with great success. To cite but one example, in 2010, activists in Scotland were able to derail the construction of numerous open cast coal mines (i.e. strip mines) through the use of forest defense in conjunction with the anonymous sabotage of machinery at sites like the Mainshill Solidarity Camp. The company building and managing the mines, Scottish Coal, financially collapsed in early 2013, likely pushed into ruin by the costly and frequently sabotages it experienced during the anti-open cast campaign. Following one particularly costly construction equipment sabotage by anonymous monkey wrenches, the activists released this statement to Scotland’s Indymedia:

In the early hours of this morning machinery at Mainshill open cast site was sabotaged. Two Caterpillar D9T’s and a 170 tonne face scrapping earth mover, an O&K RH90, were targeted, both will be inoperable today, and will cost Scottish Coal greatly…The machinery at the Mainshill site, and any other coal site in Scotland, are extremely vulnerable. Sabotage against the coal industry will continue until its expansion is halted. This action was done by autonomous environmentalists in solidarity with the people of South Lanarkshire [Scotland] who are fighting to save their community and their health from the coal industry. This is also in solidarity with people around the world, including Columbia and India, who are fighting for their lives against the coal industry. (Anonymous 2010)
From this short communication one can see broad affinity with the ELF in its methods as well as its politics. The use of clandestine sabotage in defense of the Earth did not begin nor end with the ELF, but the network has been key in the invigoration of a sense of possible victory. The production of spectacular, multimillion-dollar strikes time and again has had a catalyzing effect on those that stand in the shadow of foreboding multinational giants such as Monsanto, Exxon and the likes.

Since the US made its largest arrests during Operation Backfire in 2005, it touted the end of the ELF with ‘key’ members in custody and jailed. Despite this great loss to the movement, the international growth of the ELF since that time has been remarkable. What started as a small attack tendency in mid-90s Oregon is now a history of ELF-claimed attacks in a host of countries including Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Sweden and the UK. In the past two years in particular the ELF name has been partnered in numerous attacks claimed by the Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI) and the International Revolutionary Front (IRF) in attacks throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas.

The ELF is not an organization in the traditional sense and is more akin to a movement of informal networks. Names such as the ELF, ALF, EFL, FIA, IRF are freely adoptable political markers providing little more than an articulation of a shared politic and recognizable name. The usage of such names to claim attacks allows disparate actors to present themselves as a global movement, linking isolated cells and individuals through a central meaning. Thus, the adoption of the ELF moniker in conjunction with newly established clandestine attack networks such as the FAI and IRF speaks to the draw of the ELF as an idea more than a collectivity of individuals or single, isolated actions. In the end, the ELF may die as a domestic network and live on as an idea—an idea to be included in the signatory line of communiqués claiming responsibility for attacks in perpetuity, serving to carry the ELF moniker far beyond its original horizons and into the annuls of radical history.


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