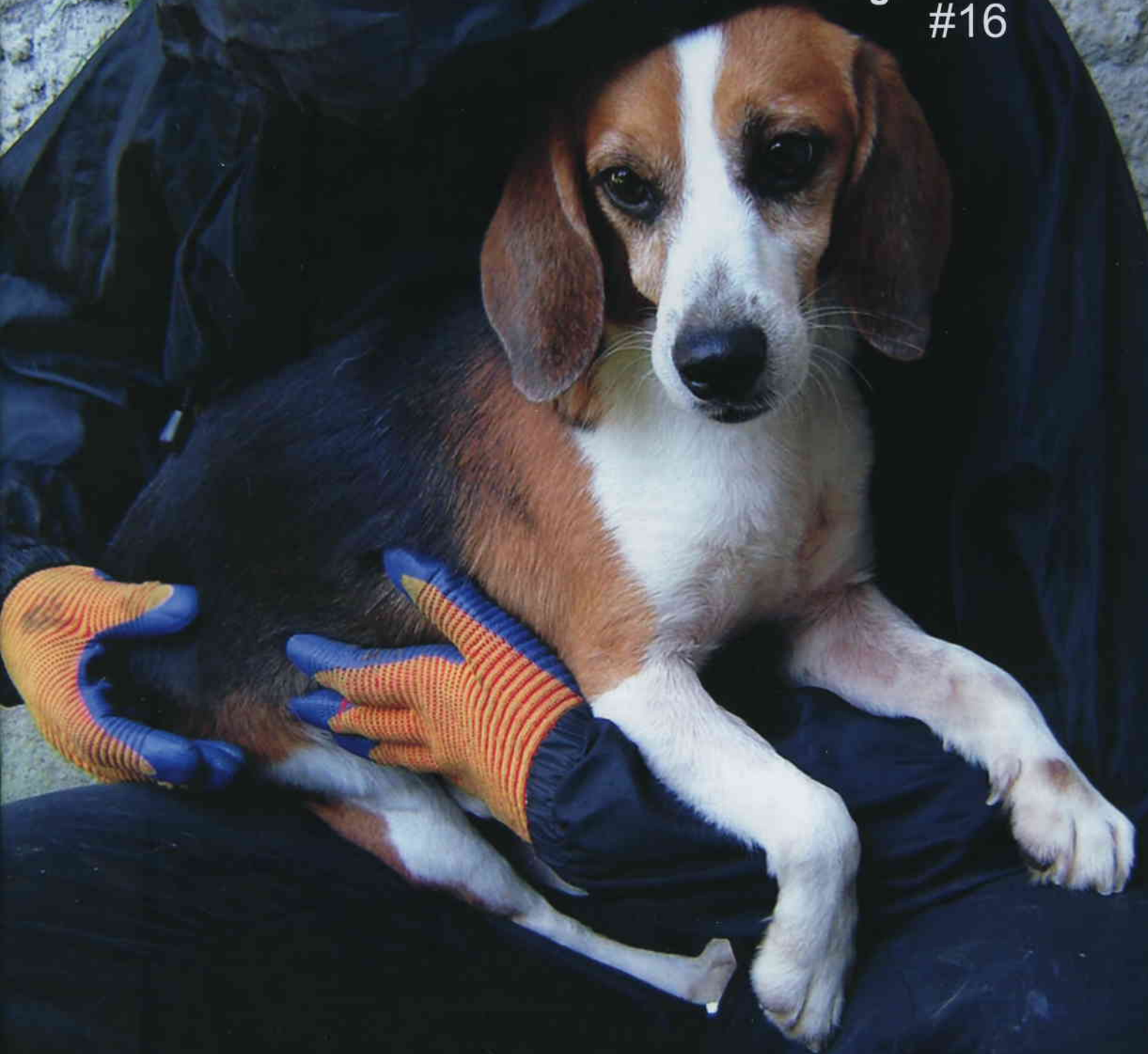


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movement under siege

Police clash with demonstrators outside Shamrock Farm in August 1999.

May 26, 2004

Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller are holding a press conference at the J. Edgar Hoover building in Washington, D.C. Mueller stands at Ashcroft's right side, hands behind his back. "Credible intelligence from multiple sources indicates that Al Qaeda plans to attempt an attack on the United States in the next few months," Ashcroft says slowly, laboriously. "This disturbing intelligence indicates Al Qaeda's specific intention to hit the United States hard."

The announcement is shocking because it confirms unspoken fears. Two months ago, as thousands of people commuted into Madrid just three days before the general elections, ten bombs full of nails and scraps of metal exploded on Spain's train system and killed one hundred and ninety-one people. Nearly eighteen hundred were injured. The Spanish Judiciary said the terrorist cell that coordinated the attack was inspired by Al Qaeda, but distinct

from it. It was the worst attack in Spain since Basque separatists bombed a supermarket in 1987, and the worst attack in Europe since Libyan terrorists bombed Pan American Flight 103 near Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988.

After the Madrid bombings, Spanish cops gave the FBI digital images of fingerprints found on plastic bags containing detonator caps. The FBI announced that the prints belonged to Brandon Mayfield, an attorney from Oregon. Agents held him for two weeks without charge.

In the press and in the courts, he was smeared as a terrorist. Two days ago, the government quietly admitted they got the wrong guy. Ashcroft and Mueller don't mention this, for there is already a new enemy of the hour.

Ashcroft steps away from the podium

to gesture to mug shots on easels. The photos and text look like WANTED posters from a post office. These seven are in their late twenties or early thirties, six men and one woman. They

are armed and dangerous. "The face of Al Qaeda may be changing," Ashcroft says.

His sound bite probably seems benign to the reporters in the room who have no idea what else the government has planned for the War on Terrorism today.

excerpt from "Green Is the New Red: An insider's account of a social movement under siege," by Will Potter. Available, April 2011 from City Lights Books.

Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty was born in a riot. On April 24th, 1997, World Day for Laboratory Animals, protest organizers arrived at Consort Beagle Breeders near Hereford in England. They had campaigned for a year to close the

breeder, which housed about eight hundred dogs—beagles sought for invasive experiments because of their small size, docile temperament and loving nature. The dogs would be sold to laboratories like Huntingdon. The organizers expected a few dozen activists, maybe a hundred. More than five hundred showed up.

The activists used this moment of surprise to swarm the facility. Police in riot gear kept most at bay, but somehow a few activists slipped inside the dog sheds. Muscles tensed. Did they make it? Were they arrested? Should everyone go back to chanting and holding signs? Moments later, two activists in masks appeared on the roof, cradling a beagle. They yelled to the crowd for help.

Riot cops were overwhelmed as people climbed over, and tore down, the razor-wire fence. More police arrived and swarmed the fields like locusts: reserves had been waiting inside the building, and others had been waiting in vans lining the streets. Dr. King once said, "A riot is at bottom the language of the unheard." One could argue that for too long the activists in this crowd—from students to "raging grannies"—had not been heard. Their leafleting, letter-writing, marching and protesting had earned some victories, yes, but not enough. Perhaps they felt they needed a new voice, a new language.

Police clubbed the protesters. They sprayed CS gas, a "crowd control" substance that burns tear ducts and mucus membranes and was famously used by Saddam Hussein against the Kurds. The clubs and gas knocked some protesters to their knees, but the sight of the masked activists with the dog had galvanized the crowd. They kept pushing. After an hour of the beating and pepper-spraying, the masked activists climbed onto an adjacent building and managed to lower the dog to a group of about forty people. Then they immediately ran back to the kennels for another. When word spread through the crowd, the fences came crashing down.

People rolled clothes into bundles under their arms as decoys. Hundreds

of police surrounded the crowd, and a helicopter circled the grounds as activists scattered like buckshot across the field toward their cars. Martin Balluch, an animal rights activist from Austria, found himself with a group of about ten protesters all running through the field with the dog, not a fake-bundle-of-jackets dog but the real thing. Police stopped the group and the activists could not escape.

Balluch was in good shape from "sabbing," or hunt sabotage—chasing hunters, and often being chased, through fields and woods with bullhorns and other distractions to scare the animals away. Someone distracted a police officer, and Balluch grabbed the dog and ran. "But a police car spotted me and set a police dog loose on me, who came and bit me and was clinging on to me till police caught up," Balluch said in an interview with *The Abolitionist*. "Some activists came, and we all held on to the dog and built a huge heap of bodies, by then surrounded by ever more coppers. When they were many more than us, they started to attack and arrest one by one, till I was left alone with the dog."

Balluch refused to hand over the dog, so police loaded him, beagle and all, into a squad car and hauled them to the police station. Eventually, police took the beagle away by force. They sent the dog back to the breeder, and most likely it ended up in a laboratory. "But it was also a powerful experience," Balluch said. "To realize that we are strong enough to break through police cordons with hundreds of riot cops, if need be, to liberate one beagle dog."

Three months later—after this riot and after daily protests, all-night vigils, national marches and three covert raids freeing twenty-six beagles—the kennels closed. About two hundred beagles were placed in new homes instead of in laboratory cages.

Activists wasted no time. They picked a new target, Hill Grove farm near Witney, Oxfordshire, and created Save the Hill Grove Cats. Hill Grove sold kittens as young as ten days old to laboratories around the world. About

ten thousand cats lived in windowless sheds on the farm. After just eighteen months of campaigning and a groundswell of public opposition, the farm owners acquiesced. About eight hundred cats were placed in new homes, and the only breeder of cats for animal testing in the United Kingdom was closed. Next came Shamrock Farm, Europe's largest supplier of primates to laboratories like Huntingdon. Shamrock was more fortress than farm, with sixteen-foot razor-wire fences, CCTV cameras and trip wires to keep animal rights activists away. Save the Shamrock Monkeys lasted fifteen months, until the lab closed in 2000.

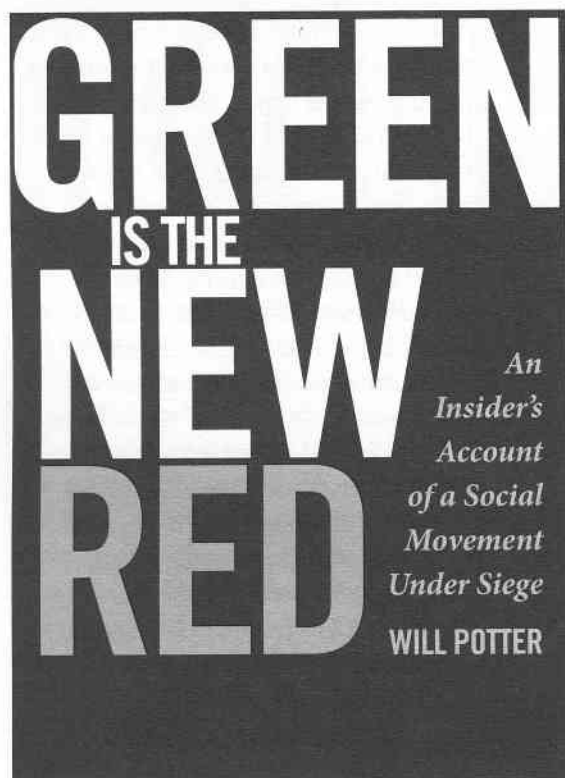
This is how it would work, the activists reasoned: one at a time, brick by brick, wall by wall, until the entire animal testing industry collapsed. They would build off the momentum of Consort, Hill Grove and Shamrock, applying a similar model of relentless protesting and unwavering support for both legal and illegal tactics, both bullhorns and black masks. For their next move, activists decided on a bigger, bolder target, and they formed Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty.

Huntingdon Life Sciences had become notorious in the animal rights movement. Five undercover investigations by animal rights groups, journalists and whistleblowers since 1981 had exposed repeated animal welfare violations. Employees had been videotaped punching beagle puppies and dissecting live monkeys. During her six-month investigation of Huntingdon's New Jersey lab in 1996, Michelle Rokke of PETA recorded abuses on video and in her diary. In one entry she wrote, "I saw him pick a dog up off the floor by his front leg and toss him in a cage. . . . When he tried to close the cage door one of the dogs tried to get out. He repeatedly slammed the cage door on the dog's head (a total of four slams) before finally getting the door closed." Huntingdon kills between 71,000 and 180,000 animals annually to test household cleaners, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, pesticides and food ingredients for companies like Procter

& Gamble and Colgate Palmolive.

Huntingdon was significantly larger than previous targets. Its razor-wire fences would be taller, its media campaigns and lawsuits more fierce. The campaign might take eighteen months, it might take years. That's fine, organizers thought. Huntingdon would buckle just the same.

As Ashcroft and Mueller warn that all law enforcement must be kept "operating around the clock" to keep Americans safe, FBI agents are working on another terrorism case. While the government warns the country about seven armed and dangerous twentysomething Al Qaeda terrorists, FBI agents storm the homes of seven unarmed twentysomething animal rights activists.



It's about six in the morning when two dozen FBI agents surround a suburban home in Pinole, California. Pinole is a commuter town, four square miles of cute homes and big box stores. More politely, it's a "bedroom community" about thirty minutes up I-80 from San Francisco. Less politely, it's dull. It's the kind of town that makes good fodder for

frustrated teenagers forming punk rock bands; Billie Joe Armstrong and Michael Dirnt of the band Green Day went to Pinole Valley High School. As the first wave of commuters sip their travel mugs of coffee, turn on NPR and head into traffic, a helicopter circles the house. Then FBI agents, many wearing bulletproof vests, with guns drawn, pound on the front door and threaten to break it down.

Could it be a mistake? The three activists who live here—Jake Conroy, Kevin Kjonaas and Lauren Gazzola—could pass as college students. They seem nice. They always keep to themselves: no parties, no loud music. Every day they walk the dogs, a beagle named Willy and a golden-retriever-looking mix named Buddy, and that is about all the neighbors have noticed.

As a helicopter circles the block, as cops in riot gear surround the house, the dogs bark.

Inside the house, Lauren Gazzola, twenty-six, is in her pajamas. Not necessarily because of the early hour, but because she's always in her pajamas. The campaign to close Huntingdon Life Sciences has consumed her life, and the lives of Kjonaas, Conroy and many others. Their house has been ground zero for Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty USA, or SHAC. Here they research investors, design fliers, organize protests, print newsletters and publish the website that will be used against them in court.

There's not much point in getting dressed every day, Gazzola often says, when you're just going to sit in front of your computer for eighteen hours, go to bed for a few, then do it all over again. When she's not working day and night on the campaign, she studies for her law school entrance exam. Besides, working on a grassroots animal rights campaign for the last five years has drained her bank account and the accounts of Kjonaas and Conroy too. There is no money for clothes. There is no money for food. The home has been donated, which is good

because there is no money for rent.

The incessant, successful campaigning has earned the group quite a few enemies.

Just one week ago, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing called "Animal Rights: Activism vs. Criminality." John E. Lewis, deputy assistant director of counterterrorism for the FBI, testified about the growing threat of underground groups like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and Earth Liberation Front (ELF), which have committed more than 1,100 crimes and caused \$110 million in damage. Most of the hearing was not about the ALF or ELF, though, it was about SHAC. Witnesses testified about the group's successes and law enforcement's failures. In an ominous statement of what would come in the next few years, Lewis and others argued that terrorism laws must be radically expanded to include the aboveground campaigns of groups like SHAC.

"The FBI's investigation of animal rights extremists and eco-terrorism matters," Lewis said, "is our highest domestic terrorism investigation priority."

Being named the government's top domestic terrorism priority was unsettling, but Gazzola and the others kept organizing. The hearing was just more political posturing, they thought. They were determined not to let it scare them. Gazzola had dealt with the FBI before. They all had. Their homes had been raided, their books, papers and computers taken. They had fought back criminal charges for years, sometimes representing themselves in court, and through it all they had continued undeterred.

But this time—with the helicopters, the guns, the multiple federal agencies—this time feels different.

Ashcroft offers the podium to Mueller, the head of the FBI. Mueller gestures to the mug shots and explains why each individual is a potential terrorist threat.

Adam Gadahn attended training camps in Afghanistan and is a translator for Al Qaeda leaders.

Amer El-Maati “is believed to have discussed hijacking a plane in Canada and flying it into a building in the United States.”

Fazul Abdullah Mohammed and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani both participated in the bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998. Two car bombs, detonated simultaneously in Tanzania and Kenya, killed two hundred people and injured more than five thousand. The bombings put Al Qaeda on the map, and put Osama bin Laden on the FBI’s ten most wanted list. They are fugitives, he says, and they have the skill to kill again.

Abderrauof Jdey was reportedly selected by Al Qaeda for training to fly more planes into more buildings and kill many more people.

Adnan Shukrijumah could be the ringleader. He has been scouting sites in the United States for a second attack, and he has been in communication with senior Al Qaeda operatives overseas.

Aafia Siddiqui, the lone woman, who has a doctorate in neurological science and has studied at MIT and Brandeis University, is an Al Qaeda “operative and facilitator.” She is not linked to any specific terrorist plots, but she is wanted for questioning.

“Now, in reissuing these ‘be on the lookouts for,’ also known as BOLOs in trade, we want to emphasize the need for vigilance against our terrorist enemies,” Mueller says. “Particularly Al Qaeda.”

If Ashcroft and Mueller were holding a press conference about the animal rights “terrorists,” sharing similar dossiers with reporters, it might look something like this:

Josh Harper is an independent filmmaker. His videos have included footage of activists releasing animals from laboratories and fur farms.

Darius Fullmer has volunteered for a variety of animal rights organizations. He now works as a paramedic.

Andy Stepanian started the first recycle-a-bicycle program in Long Island and helps distribute donated and “dumpster-dived” food to homeless people with Food Not Bombs.

John McGee . . . well, the government doesn’t know much about John McGee. The other six arrestees don’t know much about him, either. They’ve never heard of him, and they think they know everyone who has worked on the campaign. His charges will later be dropped.

Jake Conroy, from the Pinole house, is a graphic designer and an expert on website design and (admittedly) bad zombie movies.

Kevin Kjonaas could be the ringleader. He has been scouting corporations tied to animal testing and has been in communication with animal rights advocates overseas.

Lauren Gazzola, the lone woman, who graduated magna cum laude from New York University, is an aspiring law student. She wants to study Constitutional law.

Ashcroft and Mueller offer few details about the seven Al Qaeda operatives and their plans. Ashcroft says terrorists might find summer events—like the Democratic National Convention in Boston, the Republican National Convention in New York City, and the G- 8 Summit in Georgia—“especially attractive.” Mueller says he has no reason to believe the Al Qaeda suspects are working together. In short: they may or may not be in the country, they may or may not be working together, they may or may not have any plans for a terrorist attack and if they do, it may or may not be in the United States.

The conventions and G-8 Summit will come and go without a terrorist attack, but in a few years those three events will take on a special significance for the activists arrested today, and for the broader animal rights and environmental movements. Activists will learn that the FBI had paid a student, known only as “Anna,” to wear dirty clothes, dye her hair and infiltrate the protest scene. Her journey will start at the G-8 summit. It will include befriending and manipulating young environmental activists, supplying them with bomb-making recipes and bomb-making supplies, funding their travel, and prodding

them into action. It will end with Eric McDavid, who grew close to “Anna” and developed romantic feelings for her, sentenced to twenty years in prison as a terrorist. Activists will also learn that a lead organizer of the lawful protests against the Republican National Convention was Daniel McGowan. One of the key figures from the underground had stepped from the shadows into the spotlight. He had taken another name, another life, and while FBI agents were trying to piece together McGowan’s past with the clandestine ELF, he was being quoted about the protests in Rolling Stone and the New York Times.

The reporters are frustrated at the vagueness of Ashcroft’s information. “There are inevitably skeptics who say you’re overdoing it or you’re scaring people or you’re just protecting your behind, or what have you,” one reporter says to him. “Do you worry about those?”

“No,” Ashcroft says.

“You can’t overdo it, in other words.”

“Well, no. I just don’t think my job is to worry about what skeptics say.”

The timing of this terrorism warning, leading up to the November presidential elections, seems fishy. If these seven Al Qaeda terrorists warrant a press conference, one reporter asks, why not also raise the threat level? Ashcroft will not answer, deferring the question to Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge.

Ridge, meanwhile, makes the rounds on news programs and says there is no reason to raise the threat level. “We need Americans to just go about living their lives,” he says on CBS’s Early Show.

“America’s job is to enjoy living in this great country,” he says on CNN, “and go out and have some fun.”
