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Jacob Crosse
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Audio confirms Republican House leader McCarthy discussed Trump's role in failed coup with lawmakers following attack

In the last 48 hours, *New York Times* reporters Jonathan Martin and Alexander Burns have released previously unheard audio conversations confirming that immediately after then-President Donald Trump's failed coup, Republican lawmakers, including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, acknowledged Trump's culpability in the attack on the Capitol and discussed efforts to remove him from office.



House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., speaks to reporters at the Capitol in Washington, March 18, 2022. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File)

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afgazad@gmail.com

“I’ve had it with this guy,” the *Times* reported McCarthy telling Republicans in a January 10, 2021 phone call, four days after the Capitol was besieged by Trump supporters, far-right paramilitaries and Republican operatives in an attempt to stop the certification of electoral votes for Joe Biden.

“What he did is unacceptable. Nobody can defend that, and nobody should defend it,” McCarthy added.

Senate Minority Leader McConnell expressed his hope that the Democrats would “take care of the son of a bitch for us,” according to an excerpt from the upcoming Burns and Martin book, *This Will Not Pass: Trump, Biden and the Battle for America’s Future*.

McConnell, speaking to two colleagues two days after the failed coup, added: “If this isn’t impeachable, I don’t know what is.” McConnell was one of 43 Republicans who voted against convicting Trump in the February 2021 Senate impeachment trial. He did so on the spurious grounds that since Trump was no longer president, the process was illegitimate.

In a January 10, 2021 House Republican leadership call, McCarthy, speaking to the third highest ranking Republican in the House at the time, Wyoming Representative Liz Cheney, discussed the possibility of the 25th Amendment being invoked against Trump. In the call, McCarthy insinuated that such a move might not be necessary because Trump might resign before then.

“Are you hearing that he might resign? Is there any reason to think that might happen?” Cheney asked McCarthy.

“My gut tells me no,” replied McCarthy, and then added, “I’m seriously thinking of having that conversation with him tonight.”

After discussing the upcoming impeachment votes in the House and Senate, which McCarthy believed would pass, he told Cheney that “the only discussion I would have with him [Trump] is that I think this [the impeachment vote] will pass, and it would be my recommendation you should resign. I mean, that would be my take, but I don’t think he would take it. But I don’t know.”

The next day, McCarthy, speaking to the Republican House conference, left no doubt that he understood Trump was the architect of the attack on the Capitol, which led to at least five deaths and hundreds of injuries. McCarthy said that in a recent conversation he had held with Trump, the president had admitted he was responsible for “some” of “what happened.”

“Let me be very clear to all of you, and I have been very clear to the president: he bears responsibility for his words and actions. No if, ands or buts,” McCarthy told his Republican colleagues, the vast majority of whom had voted to overturn the election results hours after the siege of January 6.

McCarthy continued, “I asked him personally today, does he hold responsibility for what happened? Does he feel bad about what happened? He told me he does have some responsibility for what happened, and he’d need to acknowledge that.”

While the audio files show that leading Republicans were initially receptive to the idea of impeaching or removing Trump immediately after the failed coup, within three weeks they had shifted. On January 26, 45 of the 50 Republican senators, including McConnell, voted to quash the Senate impeachment trial on the legally false grounds that it was unconstitutional because Trump had already left office, Biden having been inaugurated on January 20.

Roughly a year later, the Republican National Committee, which is chaired by Ronna Romney McDaniel, niece of former Republican presidential candidate and current Utah Senator Mitt Romney, not only endorsed Trump’s failed coup as “legitimate political discourse,” it voted to censure Representatives Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger for participating in the House Select Committee investigating the January 6 insurrection.

In the more than 15 months following the attack, Trump has never publicly acknowledged his role in the assault on Congress. Far from Biden and the Democrats holding him and his co-conspirators accountable, the aspiring dictator is laying the groundwork for his next coup attempt.

In campaign-style fascist rallies around the country, Republican lawmakers, attorneys general, governors and aspiring state and federal candidates have pledged their fealty to Trump. They have repeated his lies that the election was stolen and that Biden is an illegitimate usurper, and made clear that, if elected, they would, unlike Vice President Mike Pence, “show strength” and do their part to ensure Trump’s victory in 2024, regardless of vote totals.

Trump and his Republican co-conspirators in Congress, such as Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Florida Representative Matt Gaetz and Arizona’s Paul Gosar, none of whom have been charged for their role in the attack, have defended the QAnon, Oath Keeper and Proud Boy militia elements who sought to kidnap and possibly kill lawmakers on January 6 as “patriots” seeking to uphold “election integrity.”

The corporate press has presented the McCarthy and McConnell revelations as just another example of Republican hypocrisy. This superficial and selective analysis ignores the political responsibility of the Democratic Party in covering up the scope of the coup conspiracy and, in particular, the role of the Republican Party.

Before examining the roughly month-long period between the failed coup and the conclusion of the second impeachment trial, it is important to note that McCarthy and McConnell, along with then-Attorney General William Barr, provided political legitimacy to Trump’s plotting in the months prior to the election.

They echoed Trump’s bogus claims that mail-in ballots were inherently fraudulent. As the election drew closer, Trump, as he had in 2016, asserted that the only way he could lose was if the election were rigged. Among other things, he demanded that mail-in ballots not be counted after election day.

Following the election and Trump’s clear defeat, McConnell defended Trump’s refusal to accept the result and his flood of meritless lawsuits, all of which were rejected by the courts, thereby providing Trump with a cover to prepare his far-right supporters in Congress and his fascistic paramilitary backers for direct and violent action, should his pseudo-legal efforts to overturn the election fail.

Speaking on the Senate floor following Biden's victory in November 2020, McConnell said Trump was "100 percent within his rights" to pursue any number of bogus recounts and litigation claims.

With the coup having failed—not because of any serious opposition from the Democrats—and the Republican Party in disarray, Biden played the key role in assuring the plotters that they would face no consequences from the Democratic Party.

On January 8, Biden declared, "We need a Republican Party. We need an opposition that's principled and strong."

In his January 20 inauguration address, Biden repeated the theme of "unity" while refusing to name Trump or the political and social forces behind his coup.

At Trump's Senate impeachment trial in early February, Biden, seeking to cement ruling class "unity" with his "Republican colleagues," intervened on behalf of Trump through his intermediary, Delaware Senator Chris Coons.

Biden, through Coons, urged the Democratic House impeachment managers to forgo calling witnesses. At the time, Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler (Republican, Washington state) had released a statement confirming that McCarthy spoke with Trump during the attack on the Capitol and that Trump expressed sympathy for the insurrectionists, telling McCarthy they "cared more about the election" than McCarthy did.

The Democrats' cowardice, rooted in their fear that a full accounting of the fascistic threat from Trump and the Republican Party would trigger a mass response from the working class, has played the key role in strengthening Trump and facilitating the drive to dictatorship by the ruling class.

Just this past Monday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi once again urged Republicans to "Take back your party," adding, "The country needs a strong Republican Party."

Speaking at an event Thursday, Maryland Representative and Democratic member of the January 6 House Select Committee Jamie Raskin said the committee planned to hold

public hearings on its findings to date in June and not release a report until the end of summer or early fall.

Since the committee was formed last year, it has held one public hearing and repeatedly delayed any further hearings. It has refused to subpoena any Republican lawmakers involved in the coup. Since a federal judge ruled last month that it was “more likely than not” that Trump “attempted to obstruct the Joint Session of Congress” held to certify the election result, which is a felony, the committee has flip-flopped on sending a criminal referral to Attorney General Merrick Garland.

As of this writing, no hearings or business meetings are listed on the committee’s website.

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