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Fascist who attacked Paul Pelosi was targeting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Initial information from San Francisco, California authorities plus media reports establish that the assailant who attacked Paul Pelosi early Friday morning, sending the 82-year-old businessman to the hospital with serious injuries, was planning to attack his wife, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, second in the line of succession to the US presidency.

It is also clear that the attack was politically motivated.

At a brief press conference on Friday, San Francisco Police Chief William Scott identified the assailant, who was taken into custody at the Pelosi home, the scene of the crime, as 42-year-old David Depape. Scott said Depape faces charges of attempted homicide, assault with a deadly weapon, elder abuse, burglary and “several other additional felonies.”

Scott confirmed that a criminal investigation into the assault is being conducted jointly by the San Francisco authorities, the FBI and the US Capitol Police.

Scott and San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins refused to take any questions after Scott’s statement.

While Nancy Pelosi’s office issued a statement Friday morning that doctors expected the House speaker’s husband to make a full recovery, it was subsequently reported that he had suffered serious head injuries and injuries to his arm and hand. Late in the afternoon, Pelosi’s office stated that Paul Pelosi had undergone successful surgery to repair a skull fracture. Nancy Pelosi, who was in Washington D.C. at the time of the attack, was reported to be traveling to San Francisco, as were her five adult children.

According to White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, President Joe Biden called Speaker Pelosi Friday morning to express his support after the attack. She noted that the president “continues to condemn all violence.”

Campaigning in Philadelphia, where the toss-up race for US senator from Pennsylvania between Democrat John Fetterman and Trump-endorsed Mehmet Oz could determine control of the upper chamber, President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris both issued perfunctory statements condemning violence, while evading any mention of either Donald Trump or the Republican Party.

This followed media reports of social media posts by Depape echoing many of the fascist themes promoted by the former president and other Republican officials in midterm election campaign speeches, which have become increasingly violent and openly anti-Semitic in the run-up to Election Day on November 8.

The posts show that Depape is obsessed with the 2020 election and Trump's big lie that it was stolen, which is backed by more than half of the Republican candidates in the upcoming election, many of whom refuse to say they will abide by the result should they lose.

Moreover, Depape's posts, like Trump campaign events, invoke themes associated with the QAnon conspiracy theory: anti-communism, hatred of Jews, religious fanaticism, and the "Great Replacement Theory," which claims that an international Jewish conspiracy is underway to flood white Christian populations with "inferior" races as part of a Satanic plot to conquer the world.

A standard feature of Trump's speeches is an attack, by name, on Nancy Pelosi, along with Joe Biden, for deliberately opening the southern border to allow an invasion of migrants to destroy the US and its Christian inhabitants. Trump's rallies have featured far-right Georgia Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, a QAnon adherent who calls herself a "Christian nationalist."



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and her husband, Paul Pelosi, arrive at the State Department for the Kennedy Center Honors State Department Dinner, Dec. 7, 2019, in Washington. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, Paul, was bludgeoned with a hammer by David DePape, 42, who broke into their San Francisco home early Friday, Oct. 28, 2022. [AP Photo/Kevin Wolf]

Just last Sunday, in a speech in Robstown, Texas, Trump declared: "We are going to end crazy Nancy Pelosi ... We are going to end her political career. Her political career is going to be ended once and for all. Under Biden, Pelosi, Schumer and the radical Democrat Congress the Texas way of life is under siege..."

"Biden has allowed millions and millions of illegal aliens to storm across the border from 160 countries. ... They are storming our country. It includes Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Russia, China, Iran all of Africa. They are storming our country. They are storming our borders."

It has been widely reported that Depape demanded to know of his victim, "Where is Nancy?" Other sources say Depape planned to tie up Paul Pelosi and remain in the house until his wife returned home.

At the press conference, Scott said that San Francisco police arrived at the Pelosi residence at about 2:27 a.m. (local time) in response to what he called a "welfare call." There were subsequent media reports that Paul Pelosi, confronted by Depape, who had broken into the house, called 911 and left his cell phone on so as to alert the police to the attack.

Scott said: “When the officers arrived on scene, they encountered an adult male and Pelosi’s husband, Paul. Our officers observed Mr. Pelosi and the suspect both holding a hammer. The suspect pulled the hammer away from Mr. Pelosi and violently assaulted him with it. Our officers immediately tackled the suspect, disarmed him, took him into custody, requested emergency backup and rendered medical aid.”

He gave no explanation for the fact that there was no security detail at the house. Nancy Pelosi, as House speaker, is accompanied by a permanent detail of US Capitol Police, and the Capitol Police have established a satellite office in San Francisco since the January 6 attempted coup. However, according to press statements, there is no protocol for a security detail to guard the house when the speaker is away.

No doubt the absence of any protection, under conditions of escalating incitements by Trump and other Republicans against Democrats in general, and Pelosi in particular, and threats by fascist elements backing Trump to mobilize at polling places on November 8, would have been among the issues raised by reporters at Friday’s briefing.

This is the most serious fascist attack to date on a political figure since January 6. But it is by no means the only one.

- In July, Seattle police detained and then released an armed fascist who had camped out in front of the home of Democratic Congresswoman Primala Jayapal, shouting that she should go back to India and threatening to kill her. The gunman was rearrested three weeks later, but charged with only one felony count of stalking.
- In May of 2021, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene accosted New York Democrat and Democratic Socialists of America member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez outside the US Capitol and denounced her as a supporter of jihadist terrorism. In 2019, Greene and several accomplices attempted to force their way into Ocasio-Cortez’s congressional office. They then delivered a petition to Nancy Pelosi’s office accusing Pelosi of treason and suggesting that she be executed or imprisoned for her “crimes.”
- Over the past several months, five Trump supporters have been convicted in the 2020 plot to kidnap and possibly kill Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer in retribution for her partial lockdown of schools and businesses due to COVID. The plot followed Trump’s call to armed militiamen who occupied the state Capitol in Lansing to “Liberate Michigan.”

Last Sunday, the *Boston Globe* published an investigatory report showing that nearly one in three top county election officials in battleground states has quit since 2020 in response to threats of violence from Trump MAGA supporters. It also noted that one in six election workers has experienced threats, the total number of which are approaching 10,000 this year.

While Biden and the Democratic leadership sought to downplay the seriousness of the attack on Paul Pelosi and the political responsibility of Trump and the Republican Party, the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, National Counterterrorism Center and US Capitol Police issued a joint bulletin on Friday to law enforcement agencies nationwide warning of political violence surrounding the November 8 election.

“Potential targets of DVE (domestic violent extremism) violence include candidates running for public office, elected officials, election workers, political rallies, political party representatives, racial and religious minorities, or perceived ideological opponents,” the bulletin stated.

Friday’s attack underscores the fascistic transformation of the Republican Party under Trump and the danger to the working class of its promotion of far-right terrorism. The *World Socialist Web Site* condemns this attack and defends the right of elected officials to advance their views without fear of violence, notwithstanding our well-known and irreconcilable political differences with Pelosi.

But the attack, while shocking, cannot come as a surprise to those who have paid attention to the trajectory of US capitalist politics over the past several years. The January 6 storming of the US Capitol, led by paramilitary elements such as the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, and defended to this day by Trump and the vast majority of Republican officials, featured taunts of “Nancy, Nancy” by the insurrectionists, who planned to kidnap and/or kill lawmakers in order to block the certification of Biden’s victory and keep Trump in power as president-dictator.

Biden immediately pleaded for “unity” with the Republicans and declared the need for a “strong Republican Party,” while doing nothing to prosecute and jail the ringleaders of the coup conspiracy, beginning with Trump. In the run-up to November 8, Biden and Democratic candidates have dropped any reference to January 6 and played down the danger of right-wing violence, intimidation and refusal to acknowledge defeat at the polls.

The overriding concern of the Democratic Party was, and remains, preventing a collapse of the two-party monopoly through which the US ruling class has kept the working class disenfranchised and trapped within the framework of capitalist exploitation and war. For the Democrats, including Pelosi, the overriding concern has been twofold: maintaining a relationship with a section of the Republicans in order to prosecute the war against Russia in Ukraine and prepare for war against China, and shoring up the state machine to repulse the growing opposition of the working class to poverty, inequality, inflation and war.

The social force that can defeat the danger of fascism and defend democratic rights is the working class. To do so it must break with the two parties of big business, mobilize its industrial strength and carry out a struggle for political power and socialism.