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Trump reiterates support for January 6 Capitol siege

Former President Donald Trump doubled down on his support for the January 6 coup attempt in a Fox News interview on Thursday evening, declaring that those who took part in the violent assault on the Capitol “love our country.”

Trump falsely claimed that the fascist mob that stormed the Capitol posed “zero threat” to politicians hiding inside.



Members of far-right Oath Keepers militia group at Freedom Plaza Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021, in Washington [Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin]

Speaking on the attempted coup, which he orchestrated in concert with right-wing militias, sections of the Republican Party and elements of the state, including the Department of

Defense, the intelligence agencies and the police, Trump attempted to downplay the imminent danger posed by thousands of pro-Trump supporters, many of whom were chanting “Hang Mike Pence” as they broke into the building. Outside the building the insurrectionists set up a gallows.

“It was zero threat right from the start, it was zero threat.” Trump said on the Laura Ingraham show.

At least five people died during the siege on the Capitol, including Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick, who died after getting doused with bear spray during the attack. Capitol Police have reported that over 130 officers suffered injuries that day, including chemical burns, lacerations, broken bones and brain injuries.

A major reason the death toll was not higher was the failure of two pipe bombs to detonate and the timely apprehension of an Alabama man, Lonnie Coffman, who was found outside the Capitol with 11 Molotov cocktails in his vehicle, along with a loaded M-4 Carbine assault rifle and a pistol.

The pipe bombs were planted the evening of January 5 and were discovered at the Republican and Democratic National Committee headquarters, which are less than 3 blocks from the Capitol, as the siege was underway. The discovery of the pipe bombs prompted a wider search of the Capitol grounds, leading to the arrest of Coffman.

Despite the deadly intentions of the crowd, several of whom were seen carrying zip ties and clubs as they entered the Capitol and attempted to kidnap and assassinate lawmakers, Trump attempted to paint his supporters as good patriots. “They wave American flags,” he told Ingraham. “In many cases, they are waving the American flag, and they love our country.”

While Trump falsely claimed that the fascist mob posed no threat to lawmakers, many of whom were being ferried by police along underground tunnels as the attack was underway, Trump correctly noted the cordial attitude many of the Capitol Police officers displayed in dealing with the insurrectionists.

“Look—they went in, they shouldn’t have done it. Some of them went in and they’re hugging and kissing the police and the guards. They had great relationships,” Trump said.

The tight-lipped Capitol Police Department confirmed in previous congressional testimony that 35 officers are under (paid) leave while being investigated for their role in the siege, with six officers suspended with pay for “code of conduct” violations.

The stand-down of Capitol Police forces prompted the resignation of former Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund in the aftermath of the attempted coup, with many Democrats questioning the lack of police presence on the Capitol grounds. In an interview with the Associated Press on January 10, California Democratic Representative Maxine Waters claimed that lawmakers were “left naked” during the siege and that Sund was either “incompetent, or he was lying or he was complicit” in the coup.

During the Fox News interview, Trump emphasized the lax treatment many of his supporters received that day from the police. “A lot of the people were waved in and then they walked in and they walked out,” he said.

Defending his followers, Trump added, “They’re persecuting a lot of those people. And some of them should be—some things should happen to them, but when I look at Antifa in Washington even, what they did to Washington and what they do to other locations and the destruction and frankly the killing and the beating up of people... why aren’t they going after Antifa?”

As FBI Director Christopher Wray noted in congressional testimony earlier this month, there is no evidence that left-wing protesters masqueraded as Trump supporters to attack the Capitol. Of the over 320 arrests made so far, not a single person has been linked to any left-wing or anti-fascist organization.

Instead, as court documents revealed this week, the most dangerous and deadliest elements identified so far in the siege are members of the pro-Trump fascist Oath Keepers and Proud Boys militia groups, the latter of which Trump infamously told to “stand back and stand by” during a presidential debate last September with Joe Biden.

So far, at least 52 people who participated in the siege have been linked to right-wing extremist groups, while at least 37 have current or past ties to the military and 45 have been linked to law enforcement agencies.

In a filing early Thursday morning, federal prosecutors revealed what they called “substantial evidence” of a conspiracy among the Oath Keepers to stop congressional certification of the Electoral College vote. The alleged communications are between previously indicted Oath Keepers and the founder of the group, Stewart Rhodes, a former Army paratrooper and congressional staffer for former Texas libertarian lawmaker Ron Paul.

Prosecutors allege that Rhodes, identified as “Person One” in the documents, held a 97-second phone call with Florida Oath Keepers leader Kelly Meggs, approximately nine minutes before Meggs, along with fellow Oath Keepers Jessica Watkins, Donovan Crowl and others, proceeded in a military “stack” formation up the east side of the Capitol steps to breach the building.

The government alleges that Rhodes forwarded a Signal message to a group of Oath Keepers at 2:15 p.m. that discussed taking “ground at the capital.”

“We need to regroup any members who are not on mission,” the message said. It was followed by the 97-second phone call between Rhodes and Meggs.

Prosecutors allege that at approximately 2:41 p.m., nine minutes after the phone call between Rhodes, who was on the Capitol grounds, and Meggs, Rhodes posted a photograph in the chat captioned, “South side of US Capitol. Patriots pounding on doors.” At this time, Watkins, Crowl and Meggs were moving in a “stack” up the Capitol steps. Rhodes posted another photo in the chat with the caption, “Trump better do his damn duty,” a reference to Trump invoking the Insurrection Act.

Prosecutors also revealed a message Rhodes allegedly sent to the group later on January 6 after the siege had ended, in which he favorably compared their actions to the Boston Tea Party of 1773.

“The founding generation Sons of Liberty stormed the mansion of the corrupt Royal Governor of Massachusetts, and trashed the place. They also jumped on board a ship carrying East India Tea, and dumped it in the harbor,” Rhodes wrote. “We are actually in a far more deadly situation given the FACT that enemies foreign and domestic have

subverted, infiltrated, and taken over near [sic] every single office and level of power in this nation.”

Rhodes added: “We have one FINAL chance to get Trump to do his job and his duty. Patriots entering their own Capitol to send a message to the traitors is NOTHING compared to what’s coming if Trump doesn’t take decisive action right now. It helped to send that message to HIM. He was the most important audience today. I hope he got the message.”

The latest revelations underscore the Socialist Equality Party’s urgent call for public hearings and a full investigation to disclose the connections between the far-right militias that led the charge on the Capitol and the state and Republican Party.

This investigation cannot be left in the hands of Biden and the Democratic Party, who, above all, seek “unity” with their “Republican colleagues,” and have so far refused to subpoena top officials in the Department of Defense who facilitated the stand-down of security forces.

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