

# Calls for violence, repression and war dominate day three of Republican Convention

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21 July 2016

The Republican National Convention staggered through its third day Wednesday in increasing political crisis, as Texas Senator Ted Cruz, the runner-up in the primary campaign, was heavily booed during his speech for refusing to endorse Republican nominee Donald Trump.

Hanging over the convention was the threat of open violence against political opponents, combined with continued homilies to the police and calls for a vast expansion of war abroad.

The fascistic atmosphere whipped up in support of the campaign of the billionaire real estate and casino mogul was given open verbal expression by Al Baldasaro, a Trump delegate, New Hampshire state legislator and adviser to the campaign on veterans' issues. He declared in an interview with the *Daily Beast* that Clinton should be executed for treason, citing her handling of classified information on a private email server.

"Anyone that commits treason should be shot," Baldasaro, said. "I believe Hillary Clinton committed treason. She put people in danger. When people take confidential material off a server, you're sharing information with the enemy. That's treason."

"I'm a military man first," he said, "and anyone who takes information about our CIA or Secret Service and people at our embassy and puts it out on a server where anyone can grab it, putting Americans in danger to be killed, should be held accountable. As far as I'm concerned it is treason and the penalty for treason is the firing squad."

Baldasaro is not a fringe figure in the Trump campaign. He was given a prominent role in Trump's efforts to push back against press reports that he had failed to deliver on his promise to give \$1 million to veterans groups. Baldasaro served as a public

spokesman and defender of the campaign against such criticism.

The US Secret Service confirmed Wednesday that it was investigating the statements of Baldasaro, which would be illegal if understood as a threat of violence against a presidential candidate like Clinton, who is under Secret Service protection.

Baldasaro was echoing comments made by another Trump delegate, Michael Folk, last Friday, when he tweeted: "Hillary Clinton, you should be tried for treason, murder, and crimes against the US Constitution ... then hung on the Mall in Washington, DC." Folk is a West Virginia state legislator and a pilot for United Airlines, which placed him on suspension after the Twitter death threat became public.

The comments of Folk and Baldasaro are only the most deranged expression of what has become the main theme of the Republican convention: that the Democratic Party is not merely a political opponent to be defeated in the November election, but an illegitimate and subversive organization whose leaders should be jailed, and in the most extreme version, killed.

The most popular chant from the floor of the convention, raised whenever a speaker on the rostrum criticizes the Democratic presidential nominee, is "Lock her up. Lock her up." Many delegates wear "Hillary for Prison" t-shirts along with their pro-Trump regalia.

Roger Stone, a close adviser of Trump and a longtime associate of Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, suggested this week that the election of Trump would lead directly to the prosecution and imprisonment of Clinton. He told the *Huffington Post*, "If Donald Trump became president, the Trump Justice Department could investigate her many crimes for which the statute of

limitations have not yet run.” He added. “And I suspect that Attorney General Chris Christie would be just the man for the job.”

Christie is actually governor of New Jersey. However, he auditioned for the role of chief federal prosecutor in a convention speech Tuesday where he presented a mock indictment of Clinton for a series of actions as secretary of state, including the use of the private email server, inviting the convention audience to shout “guilty” as he listed each “charge.”

The threats of repression and implicit violence have not been directed only at Democrats, but also against Republicans who came into conflict with Trump and his followers. After protests by anti-Trump delegates were quashed in a series of voice votes, with no balloting of the delegates, former US Senator Gordon Humphrey, a conservative Republican, denounced the Trump campaign in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*.

“The unruly, uncivilized spectacle we witnessed was the Trump presidency in prototype,” he said. “Many of his supporters, if they are not fascists, acted very much like fascists. They shouted us down, they allowed no debate, no points of order, no questions, no roll-call vote.”

These tendencies came to a head Wednesday night during the 15-minute speech delivered by Ted Cruz, who was the runner-up in terms of delegates won during the primary campaign. Cruz is himself an arch-reactionary advocate of a quasi-theocratic state, in which Christian fundamentalist dogma would become the law of the land.

However, he spoke as a representative of sections of the political establishment concerned that the too-open embrace of political thuggery by the Trump campaign could provoke a social explosion in the United States.

The bulk of Cruz’s remarks were a standard litany of ultra-right policies, couched in the language of “freedom.” The destruction of public education was presented as “freedom” to choose other forms of schooling for one’s children. Slashing taxes for the wealthy was “freedom” to enjoy one’s livelihood. Bigotry against gays and lesbians became the exercise of “religious freedom,” and so on.

But in closing his speech, after urging his audience to go to the polls in November, Cruz said, “Vote for candidates up and down the ballot who will stand for

the Constitution. Vote your conscience.”

This was clearly understood as a public refusal to call for a vote for Trump, and large numbers in the convention began to boo. Elements of the New York delegation, seated immediately in front of the platform, began to shout and gesticulate.

Cruz then declared, “We must protect the rights even of those we disagree with.” In the context of a convention devoted to the theme that Hillary Clinton is a criminal who should be locked up, this seeming repetition of a truism took on a definite significance. The booing increased, and at this point Heidi Cruz was rushed from the arena for her own safety.

What followed was an intervention to try to salvage the remainder of the evening, which was to be devoted to the introduction of the vice presidential nominee, Indiana Governor Mike Pence.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the last major speaker before Pence, delivered an apocalyptic speech declaring the United States was losing a war with “Islamic radical extremists,” listing every terrorist attack of the past month in gory detail, and claiming that only the election of Trump could prevent the nuclear annihilation of an American city by Islamists.

Pence, by contrast, made a low-key presentation, largely recycled from Republican boilerplate dating back to the Reagan administration, remarkable only for its unstinting and embarrassingly obsequious praise of the hitherto undiscovered virtues of Donald Trump.



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