

As Trump nominates ultra-right jurist

Biden downplays danger of election coup

Patrick Martin
26 September 2020

President Donald Trump pressed ahead with his plans for a court-ratified seizure of power in the 2020 elections, as White House officials made it known Friday evening that he will nominate ultra-right jurist Amy Coney Barrett today to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court created by the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Trump's intention is to block the counting of mail-in ballots—expected to overwhelmingly favor his Democratic Party opponent Joe Biden—by appealing for federal court intervention in many states based on bogus claims of vote fraud. He expects that if these cases reach the Supreme Court, a 6-3 right-wing majority, including three justices who owe their positions to him, will provide a reliable guarantee of success, on the model of the notorious 2000 decision in *Bush v. Gore* that installed George W. Bush in the White House.

When this political coup inevitably provokes mass protests, Trump will call on the police and various federal paramilitary forces, backed by the US Army and Marines, to restore “order” on the streets of America. On this authoritarian basis, he intends to consolidate a fascistic, anti-working class regime committed to far-ranging attacks on democratic rights, social benefits, jobs and living standards.

The response of Biden and his fellow Democrats to this imminent threat of dictatorial rule has been to dismiss it as nothing more than hot air from Trump, which the American people should ignore.

In an extraordinary interview on MSNBC with Stephanie Ruhle, Biden oozed complacency, dismissing the president's comments about not being committed to a peaceful transfer of power as “a typical Trump distraction.”

“I'm confident that [despite] all of the irresponsible,

outrageous attacks on voting, we'll have an election in this country as we always have had,” he said. “And he'll leave.”

This was followed by a nervous chuckle, as though the former vice president could not help conceding that this prospect was unlikely, even ludicrous.

His comment is diametrically opposed to what the Democratic candidate said only three months ago. In an interview with Trevor Noah on June 10, Biden said that his “single greatest fear” was that Trump would try to steal the election, but that he relied on the military to forcibly remove Trump from the White House on the day his successor is inaugurated.

When Ruhle pressed him on whether Trump was not a danger to democracy, because of the power of the presidency, Biden replied, “Well, I just think the power of the Oval Office depends on those in authority to enforce what he says. He already has six members of his administration who were four-star generals and major positions in homeland security and the like who said, ‘This guy's not fit to be president.’”

He continued, “I don't think he's going to get the FBI to follow him, get anybody else to enforce something that's not real. Now what I do—what I am concerned about, is whether he generates some kind of response, in a way that unsettles the society and causes some kind of violence.”

This exchange confirms that the real fear of the Democratic Party is not the threat Trump poses to the democratic rights of the American people, but the danger that Trump's bid for dictatorship “unsettles the society” and produces a massive rebellion from below, from the working class.

Asked by Ruhle, “But come November 4, we know all the votes won't be counted, and if they're not, and people are fired up, and they take to the streets, what

would you do?”

Biden declared, “I’m not going even to entertain that, because I’m not anticipating that [will] happen. What am I going to do? We’re assuming that even a Republican court would respond in an appropriate way based on what the law is, and that our Democratic and Republican friends in Congress would respond.

“The last thing we need is the equivalent of a coup. I mean, this is not who we are. No one’s going to back him when that occurs, if that were to occur. I think the whole notion of him talking about this ... to take our eye off the ball, not to talk about what’s happening to the people dying of COVID... It’s always about distraction with him, and I think that this is what it’s about.”

This argument is a deliberate attempt to blindfold the working class in the face of the great dangers now posed in an election that is less than 40 days away. Biden may place faith in “a Republican court” and his “Democratic and Republican friends in Congress,” but none of these worthies will lift a finger to defend working people from the savage violence of a fascist-backed Trump dictatorship.

Not a single leading Democrat has urged mass protests against Trump’s brazen effort to stay in power regardless of the votes of the American people on November 3. Instead, as Biden indicated, they call for intervention by “those in authority,” above all the military, to dismiss Trump and allow Biden and the Democrats to take office.

Leading Democrats are undoubtedly engaged in discussions with top military-intelligence figures to ascertain their attitude in the event that Trump goes ahead with his threats. The *New York Times* posted on its web site Friday a lengthy report headlined, “At Pentagon, Fears Grow That Trump Will Pull Military Into Election Unrest.”

The article said that concerns among Pentagon officials that “their commander in chief might order American troops into any chaos around the coming elections” had led to “an intensifying debate in the military about its role should a disputed election lead to civil unrest.”

The *Times* account continues: “senior leaders at the Pentagon, speaking on the condition of anonymity, acknowledged that they were talking among themselves about what to do if Mr. Trump, who will still be president from Election Day to Inauguration Day,

invokes the Insurrection Act and tries to send troops into the streets, as he repeatedly threatened to do during the protests against police brutality and systemic racism.”

The article suggests that if Trump issued such an order, there would be mass resignations among top civilian and uniformed officials, and concludes with the fact that General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had ended a video question-and-answer session with rank-and-file soldiers Thursday by urging them to “keep the Constitution close to your heart.”

It should go without saying that if American democracy is to be preserved by relying on the forbearance of the military, then it is a military dictatorship in all but name. A President Biden installed in the White House under such circumstances would be no more than a puppet of the Pentagon.

The political trajectory of such a Democratic administration was suggested by the final exchange in Biden’s interview on MSNBC, which turned, as usual with the corporate media, to the denunciation of alleged Russian interference in the election. Ruhle asked Biden, “what is your message to Vladimir Putin?”

The former vice president—an advocate and organizer of American imperialist aggression around the world for nearly 50 years—replied, “My message to Vladimir Putin is if I am elected, I am coming, because here’s the deal. It’s a violation of our sovereignty... I promise you there will be consequences, there will be consequences if I win.”

Here the alternatives provided by the capitalist two-party system are starkly posed: either authoritarian rule under the fascistic Trump, or a Democratic Party administration driving towards war against the country with the second-largest arsenal of nuclear weapons. The working class must reject this “choice” and prepare a genuine alternative, based on socialist policies to defend democratic rights, defeat the drive to dictatorship and prevent imperialist war.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)