

# A profile of the conspirators in the Michigan plot

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There are six men named in the federal indictment charging them with planning to kidnap and murder Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan. They face multiple charges that could carry life terms of imprisonment.

## **Adam Fox**

Adam Fox, 37, of Grand Rapids, is a contract worker at Vac Shack, a vacuum cleaner repair shop in Grand Rapids. Fox has worked there for 10 years and recently has lived on the premises, in a basement room where he hosted at least one meeting of the fascist group to discuss plans to attack Governor Whitmer.

Described in the federal indictment and many press accounts as the leader of the group, he is said to have appealed for 200 men to storm the state Capitol in Lansing and take hostages, before downsizing the plot to focus on kidnapping Governor Whitmer, putting her on “trial” for treason and then executing her. He purchased an 800,000-volt Taser for use in the kidnapping.

## **Barry Croft**

Barry Croft, 44, of Bear, Delaware, is a self-employed long-haul truck driver who, according to one report, owes \$35,000 to the IRS. He is now jailed in Delaware pending extradition to Michigan. Some press accounts portray him as a link between the Michigan conspirators and a nationwide fascistic milieu. The operation against Whitmer reportedly has its origins when Fox and Croft made contact over social media. Croft has a record of right-wing political views going back a decade, and he has been linked to far-right trends like the Three Percenters and QAnon on social media. He supported Trump in 2016, in large measure because he shared Trump’s anti-immigrant views.

Croft was convicted of a series of felonies, including assault, burglary, and possession of firearms during a felony, from 1994 to 1997, when he was 18 to 21 years of age. His longest prison term from those offenses, all in Delaware, was from December 1997 to November 2000, after which he apparently did not reoffend. At least that was the belief of the Delaware pardon board, which accepted his petition for a full pardon “for employment purposes,” which was issued by Democratic Governor John Carney last year.

Once engaged with the Michigan group, Croft was among the most active, attending weapons training sessions in Michigan and Wisconsin, planning meetings in Ohio, and developing a specialty as a bomb-maker. Using a commercial firework and what he called his “chemistry set,” he

built the improvised explosive device that the group tested in Luther, Michigan on September 12.

## **Ty Garbin**

Ty Garbin, 24, of Hartland in Livingston County, is an airplane mechanic, apparently now unemployed. He is now jailed in Kent County (Grand Rapids). He or his family own several rural properties, including a house and surrounding land in Luther in Lake County, which was the base of operations for surveillance of Whitmer’s vacation home. Garbin also owns another piece of property in Cadillac, Michigan, and a boat which was to be used to take Whitmer to Wisconsin.

Federal agents and state police staged a massive raid on the night of October 7 at Garbin’s manufactured home on Lansing Avenue in Hartland, arresting him, Fox, and other co-conspirators. Garbin shared the home with several older people, whose relationship to him has not been disclosed. (They are not his parents, who live in Wyandotte, Michigan, and they were not arrested.) The home has at least four vehicles, two of them pickup trucks, parked around it. The federal charging document claims Garbin was a member of a militia group and met Fox at a Second Amendment rally at the state Capitol in Lansing, presumably on June 18, where he agreed to take part in further direct action.

## **Kaleb Franks**

Kaleb Franks, 26, of Waterford Township, a northwest suburb of Detroit, is a mental health aide at Meridian Health who studied at Washtenaw County Community College. He is also now in Kent County Jail. According to the federal charging document, he initially expressed reluctance at joining an effort to kidnap and kill Whitmer, but then changed his mind and became an enthusiastic proponent, declaring, when the group met in Luther on September 13, “Kidnapping, arson, death. I don’t care.”

While he purchased his home on Holbrook Avenue in Waterford in 2018 for only \$11,660—an indication of straitened financial circumstances—he spent \$4,000 during the summer on a helmet and night-vision goggles for use in the surveillance of Governor Whitmer’s vacation home. Where this money came from has not been disclosed. He participated in several tactical training exercises in Munith, Michigan, where the two leaders of the Wolverine Watchmen, Peter Musico and Joseph Morrison, lived.

## **Daniel Harris**

Daniel Harris, 23, of Lake Orion, a northwest suburb of Detroit, was a Marine infantryman on active duty from 2014 to 2019, most recently stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. After discharge from the military, he returned to Michigan and was living in his parents' house while working in construction. He is now in Kent County Jail.

Harris attended a planning meeting in Ohio on July 18 which "discussed attacking a Michigan State Police facility," according to the federal charging document. Later that month the group decided to focus on kidnapping and killing Whitmer. After a tactical training session in Munith on August 9, Harris reportedly said of the plan to seize Whitmer, that the attack should be straight out execution: "Have one person go to her house. Knock on the door and when she answers it, just cap her...."

## **Brandon Caserta**

Brandon Caserta, 32, of Canton, in the western Detroit suburbs, lost his job at a Chipotle restaurant some time after Whitmer's March 16 order closing all restaurants and bars in the state due to the coronavirus, which was later lifted to allow take-out operations, and further lifted to allow limited in-house service. He is now in Kent County Jail.

Caserta had a very active presence on social media, including posts in support of Kyle Rittenhouse, the 17-year-old Trump supporter who gunned down two protesters in Kenosha, Wisconsin in August. He appeared on social media in a Hawaiian shirt, in the style of the fascist "Boogaloo Bois," and on at least one video attacked Trump from the right-wing anarchist standpoint, while depicting the COVID-19 pandemic as a conspiracy against America.

Seven men were named in state indictments charging them with 19 total counts of terrorism, material support for terrorism, gang membership, and various firearms charges, connected with planning an assault on the state Capitol and targeting individual policemen for attack. All are alleged to be members of the Wolverine Watchmen, a recently formed militia, after in some cases belonging to other militia groups previously.

## **Joseph Morrison**

Joseph Morrison, 26, of Munith, about 12 miles northwest of Jackson, was a Marine Corps reservist from 2014 until now, most recently assigned to a military depot in Battle Creek, Michigan. He is now jailed in Jackson County on \$10 million bail. He is allegedly the "commander" of the Wolverine Watchmen and uses the online title "Boogaloo Bunyan."

Morrison shares a house on Dunn Road in Munith with Peter Musico and is reportedly married to Musico's daughter. He has no apparent employment outside of his Marine reservist duties, which were terminated the day he was arraigned on state felony charges in Jackson. The Marine Corps claimed that the termination had nothing to do with the charges.

## **Peter Musico**

Peter Musico, 42, of Munith, shared the home on Dunn Road with his

daughter and Morrison. He is now jailed in Jackson County, held on \$10 million bail, and described as the other leading figure in the Wolverine Watchmen. The house is run down, surrounded by vehicles in various states of disrepair, and was recently subject to a tax lien of \$1,731, which Musico apparently paid off, although like Morrison he has no reported employment. There is a large Confederate flag visible near the house.

Neighbors have called the police in the past about the condition of the property and the firing of high-powered automatic weapons. By one account, there was a regular Sunday weapons exercise from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. involving dozens of men in military-style fatigues. Musico had a YouTube channel on which he regularly denounced Whitmer and praised President Trump.

## **Paul Bellar**

Paul Bellar, 21, of Milford, was in the Army, stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, until he was discharged last year with post-traumatic stress disorder. He was arrested in South Carolina, where his father lives, and now faces extradition to Michigan. He had lived in a mobile home park in Milford until he was evicted for non-payment of rent during the summer.

According to the state charges, in the Wolverine Watchmen, Bellar was "appointed the role of 'Sergeant,' had specific expertise in medical and firearms training and designed tactical exercises for training." He now faces charges of providing material support for terrorist acts (a 20-year felony), gang membership (a 20-year felony), and carrying or possessing a firearm during the commission of a felony (a two-year felony).

## **Shawn Fix**

Shawn Fix, 38, of Belleville, is a truck driver, employed at a local trucking company for the past seven years. He is now jailed in Antrim County, where Governor Whitmer's vacation home is located, with the court setting a \$250,000 cash bail on charges of providing material support for terrorist acts and carrying or possessing a firearm during commission of a felony.

Fix lived in an old house on a dirt road near the Lower Huron Metro Park, with two "Truckers for Trump" lawn signs, an American flag, and a flag with a coiled snake and the motto "Don't Tread on Me." He was apparently not active on social media but participated in weapons training exercises and in surveillance of Governor Whitmer's summer home.

## **Eric Molitor**

Eric Molitor, 36, of Cadillac, worked for Adelphia, a large telecommunications company, either as a contractor or direct employee. He is now jailed in Antrim County, also on \$250,000 bond. He was active on social media, posting about the QAnon conspiracy theory and the ultraright Three Percenters, and praising Kenosha gunman Kyle Rittenhouse.

Molitor is married and has extensive family ties in the Cadillac area in the northern lower peninsula. His residence was closer to Whitmer's vacation home than any other member of the conspiracy, and he

reportedly participated in the surveillance of it.

### **Michael Null**

Michael Null, 38, of Plainwell, was active in the Michigan Liberty Militia prior to joining the Wolverine Watchmen. He is now jailed in Antrim County on charges of providing material support for a terrorist act and felony firearms, with bail set at \$250,000 cash. No information has been made public on his occupation or social media activities, but he was photographed carrying an assault rifle on April 30 at the state Capitol in Lansing along with his twin brother William, and at a subsequent anti-lockdown rally in Grand Rapids in May.

### **William Null**

William Null, 38, of Shelbyville, also active in the Michigan Liberty Militia before the Wolverine Watchmen, is also jailed in Antrim County, with bail set at \$250,000 cash. He is believed to work for Long & Foster real estate, but in what capacity is not clear. He was photographed along with his twin brother Michael at the April 30 armed rally at the state Capitol, standing next to Barry County Sheriff Dar Leaf.

At a subsequent rally against the coronavirus lockdown in Grand Rapids, Sheriff Leaf was speaking to a crowd and pointed out Null, a large man wearing tactical gear and carrying an assault rifle, and declared, "This is our last home defense right here, ladies and gentlemen."

The crowd of several hundred chanted "USA! USA!" in response. At the June 18 "American Patriot" rally at the Capitol building in Lansing, William Null was photographed working on the security detail for the event, which was attended by Adam Fox, Ty Garbin, and several others of the future conspirators.



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