

Attorney General Barr resigns as Trump considers appointing special counsel to investigate Hunter Biden

Jacob Crosse
15 December 2020

On Monday, President Trump announced on Twitter that Attorney General William Barr would be resigning effective December 23, clearing the way for the appointment of Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen as the acting head of the US Justice Department. Rosen has already indicated that his own deputy, Richard Donoghue, a former soldier in the 82nd Airborne Division who has led the US government's attack on Chinese telecom giant Huawei, will replace him shortly thereafter.

Trump tweeted that he had “a very nice meeting” with Barr at the White House, adding that their relationship was “a very good one” and that Barr “has done an outstanding job!”

Barr's resignation is the latest in a series of firings and resignations that have occurred during the month since Trump's electoral defeat. In recent weeks, Trump has fired Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Director Christopher Krebs, who was sacked after he rejected Trump's claims of massive fraud and a stolen election and declared that the November 3 vote was the most fair and secure in US history.

In his resignation letter, Barr was effusive in his praise of Trump, expressing pride for the role he played in the “many success and unprecedented achievements” of the administration, including curbing “illegal immigration” and restoring “American military strength.”

Despite the mutual niceties, it had been widely reported that Trump was threatening to fire Barr in response to his public statement two weeks ago undercutting White House claims that the election results were fraudulent and the real winner was Trump. In a December 1 interview with the Associated Press, Barr said the Justice Department had found no evidence of fraud that “could have effected a different outcome in the election.”

Barr's announcement signaled a shift within the ruling class away from Trump's efforts to carry out an electoral coup and establish a presidential dictatorship. As Barr's own

authoritarian record makes clear, this was driven not by any commitment to democracy, but rather by repeated signals from Biden that he would pursue a right-wing, pro-corporate agenda and fears that a premature and ill-prepared coup would spark a massive eruption of popular protest that could not be controlled.

More recently, reports have proliferated that Trump was incensed over Barr's refusal to publicly announce an ongoing Justice Department investigation of Joe Biden's son, Hunter Biden. The investigation centers on Hunter's tax affairs and possible money laundering operations involving companies doing business in China.

Trump had pressured Barr and the Justice Department to announce the investigation in the run-up to the election, hoping to replicate the dynamic of the 2016 election, when then-FBI Director James Comey announced less than two weeks before Election Day that he was reopening an investigation into Hillary Clinton's email server. That extraordinary intervention on the eve of an election is believed to have damaged Clinton's campaign and contributed to Trump's victory.

Barr instead instructed Justice Department personnel to make no statements to the media on the investigation. In an interview with Fox News this past weekend, Trump scolded Barr for not making the investigation public, stating that he “should have stepped up,” and that Barr “frankly, did the wrong thing.”

Barr's resignation and the expected elevation of Donoghue could clear the way for Trump to have a special counsel appointed to continue the Hunter Biden investigation after he leaves office. In an opinion posted in the *Wall Street Journal* titled “A Special Counsel Christmas for Hunter Biden,” the *Journal* notes that Trump “wants his attorney general to name one.” There is also the possibility of other efforts to punish Trump's political opponents during the final weeks of his term.

Prior to Barr's announcement upholding the election

results, he had endorsed Trump's fraudulent claims surrounding mail-in voting and absentee ballots, characterizing the practice as "playing with fire" and "reckless and dangerous" in a September 2 interview with CNN.

Even after the election, Barr facilitated Trump's efforts to overturn the election, sending a letter to federal prosecutors around the country authorizing them to investigate "if there are clear and apparently credible allegations of irregularities."

As attorney general, Barr dutifully carried out Trump's unconstitutional and authoritarian orders, expanding the oppressive power of the capitalist state. Barr began his tenure, replacing the fired attorney general Jeff Sessions, on February 14, 2019. The next day, February 15, Trump declared a national emergency at the US-Mexico border and, in violation of the Constitution and Congress's "power of the purse," re-appropriated billions in previously allocated Department of Defense funds towards building his border wall.

Barr orchestrated the deployment of federal agents in major cities and the allocation of millions of dollars to police departments, flooding them with expensive surveillance equipment, lethal militarized weaponry and funding for additional police forces. In December 2019, Barr announced Operation Relentless Pursuit, which was followed this past year by Operation Legend. Both operations have led to thousands of arrests, but done nothing to curb violent crime, which has skyrocketed this past year with the onset of the coronavirus and the devastation of the economic and social position of millions of laid-off workers.

While Barr has claimed multiple times that these operations were for "classical traditional work that law enforcement does," and not to suppress "civil unrest," a recent article in the *Wisconsin Examiner* exposes these assertions as lies. The *Examiner* reports that US Marshals under the auspices of Operation Legend were working on the ground in conjunction with the Wauwatosa Police Department's Special Operations Group (SOG) during protests against Wauwatosa police officer Joseph Mensah. Mensah shot and killed 17-year-old Alvin Cole this past February, the third person he's killed in the last five years.

Barr's most infamous attack on democratic rights occurred this past June, with the mass assault on peaceful protesters in Washington DC's Lafayette Square on June 1. As Trump was launching his first coup attempt, threatening to invoke the 1807 Insurrection Act and deploy active duty military forces to suppress anti-police violence demonstrations around the country, Barr ordered DC police and federal forces to clear out non-violent demonstrators in the park with tear gas, baton strikes, gas grenades and physical

assaults.

Following Trump's lead, Barr also endorsed the federal prosecution of demonstrators under the auspices of the Joint Terrorist Task Force, a multi-departmental military-intelligence agency in charge of prosecuting combatants captured in imperialist wars in the Middle East and Central Asia.

In response to the wave of summer and fall protests against police violence, which were touched off by the police murder of George Floyd on May 25, Barr has supported Trump's deployment of federal paramilitary forces against protesters, including in Portland, Oregon. During a hearing before the House Judiciary Committee in July, Barr defended the use of these forces to quell the Portland protests, endorsing the use of tear gas and pepper spray against unarmed protesters as well as the kidnapping of demonstrators and supporters in unmarked police vehicles. Barr claimed this was a necessary response to "mob violence" orchestrated by "anarchists."

These fascist tactics are reminiscent of CIA-backed Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s. They have been replicated by police departments across the country, including in New York, Pittsburgh and Milwaukee. The increasing use of murderous and extra-legal state violence against protesters found chilling expression in the assassination of anti-fascist protester Michael Reinoehl, who was executed by a federal fugitive task force led by US Marshals on September 3.

The killing of Reinoehl was ordered by Trump in response to Reinoehl's alleged role in the death of far-right Patriot Prayer member and Trump supporter Aaron Danielson. Minutes before it was announced that Reinoehl had been gunned down by federal agents and police, Trump demanded on Twitter that police, "Do your job, and do it fast. Everybody knows who this thug is."

In a press release issued by the Justice Department after the assassination of Reinoehl, Barr gloated that the killing of an "admitted Antifa member" was "a significant accomplishment in the ongoing effort to restore law and order." While Barr at the time claimed that Reinoehl was armed and attempting to escape, subsequent interviews and investigations have revealed that to be a lie. This revelation prompted no response from President-elect Biden or his fellow Democrats.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact