

# Trump held White House meeting on martial law plan to overturn election

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President Donald Trump and his top aides reviewed a series of proposals for overturning his defeat in the presidential election at a meeting Friday night in the White House. This included discussion of a proposal that he declare martial law and order the seizure of voting machines in key battleground states, according to numerous press accounts.

The *New York Times* first reported on the meeting, which involved Trump, White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone and two prominent advocates of an election coup, former Trump campaign attorney Sidney Powell and former Trump national security advisor Gen. Michael Flynn. Additional details were reported by CNN, ABC, NBC and other news outlets.

It was the first meeting at the White House for Flynn since Trump pardoned him on two counts of perjury for lying to the FBI during the investigation, in the early days of the Trump administration, that led to his firing as national security advisor. It was the first White House visit for Powell since she was dismissed by the Trump campaign after voicing a series of bizarre conspiracy theories in which Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (dead since 2013) was held responsible for manipulating the 2020 US presidential election.

Trump's welcoming such discredited figures into the White House undoubtedly expresses mounting desperation, but also an utter refusal to concede the result of the election, won by Biden with a margin of more than seven million votes. While acting like a cornered rat, Trump, as president of the United States for another month, still possesses immense powers, particularly over the US military-intelligence apparatus.

General Flynn visited the White House one day after suggesting, in an interview on the rabidly pro-Trump Newsmax network, that Trump should declare martial law, order voting machines in six key states seized by federal authorities, and conduct a second election in those states under military supervision. This would, of course, mean armed soldiers insuring that the voters of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin got it "right" this time, i.e., that the electoral votes of these states, officially delivered to Democrat Joe Biden on December 14 as a result of each state's balloting, were instead awarded to Trump.

According to the press accounts, Trump asked General Flynn

about his proposal for martial law and a second election. Meadows and Cipollone, and other unidentified White House officials, reportedly opposed Flynn and said the president did not have the authority to take the proposed actions. Powell, who was Flynn's lawyer in his perjury case before joining the effort of the Trump campaign to overturn the election results, was said to have denounced the White House officials for being insufficiently devoted to Trump's interests.

The meeting was characterized as ending in a "screaming" match, without a clear decision as to what course Trump would take. At one point, Trump suggested he might appoint Powell as a special counsel to investigate the presidential election, a proposal that was opposed by White House officials and even by Trump's principal election lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who is recovering from the coronavirus and participated in the meeting remotely.

Attorney General William Barr has resisted Trump's demand to name a special counsel to investigate Hunter Biden, son of the president-elect, and presumably would oppose a similar appointment of Powell to investigate the election, but he is leaving the department under pressure from Trump, effective Wednesday, December 23. His interim successor, the current deputy attorney general, Jeffrey Rosen, could well be asked to make such appointments after Barr's departure.

On Sunday, as details of the meeting and the illegal and unconstitutional proposals that were discussed became more widely known, Trump went on his Twitter account to denounce the press reports as "Fake News."

According to the *Times* account, one of measures discussed at the meeting was a proposal by Giuliani that Trump issue an executive order to seize control of voting machines in the contested states so they could be examined for "fraud." Giuliani reportedly discussed this option with the acting deputy secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Kenneth Cuccinelli, last week, but Cuccinelli said the DHS did not have the authority to do so. An executive order would supposedly remedy that, but the president, as head of the federal government, does not have the power to take such action against the states, which actually administer elections under the US constitutional structure.

It is remarkable that Cuccinelli, a rabid anti-immigrant bigot

and semi-fascist, who was a notorious law-and-order demagogue during his four years as state attorney general in Virginia, is now presented as a moderating force in the internal deliberations of the Trump administration.

In the only Sunday television interview program to take up the issue, CNN's "State of the Union" began with host Jake Tapper declaring: "For anyone wondering just how much damage an outgoing president can do in the final month in office, we're beginning to get something of an idea. On Friday in the Oval Office, the president reportedly discussed with disgraced pardoned former General Michael Flynn Flynn's deranged proposal to have Trump declare martial law to force new elections in states that Biden won, so as to overturn the election results.

"Trump is also reportedly talking about giving the powers of a special counsel to attorney Sidney Powell, whose crackpot conspiracy theories about the election have been laughed out of courtroom after courtroom."

Tapper asked a guest on the program, Republican Senator Mitt Romney, about the martial law plan, which Romney dismissed, saying, "It's not going to happen. That's going nowhere. And I understand the president is casting about, trying to find some way to have a different result than the one that was delivered by the American people."

The only representative of the Biden transition to discuss the issue Sunday, Pete Buttigieg, Biden's nominee for secretary of transportation, was far less categorical, merely stating that Biden would take office on Inauguration Day as scheduled, adding, "I just hope that, across the party and across the country, there's an understanding about how important it is that we remain committed to democracy."

Remarkably, there was no substantive discussion on any other Sunday television interview program about the White House discussions on martial law, nor did the Biden campaign issue any statement or comment on the issue of Trump's continuing refusal to concede the election. Biden's policy ever since November 3 has been to downplay Trump's threats to overturn the election while reaching out to the military-intelligence apparatus and Wall Street to reassure them that the incoming Democratic administration will uphold their interests.

Trump continued to rail against the election results over the weekend on Twitter, declaring Saturday that it was "Statistically impossible to have lost the 2020 Election," and calling for supporters to attend protests in Washington on January 6, 2021, when Congress officially counts the electoral votes cast by the 50 states and the District of Columbia. "Be there, will be wild," he tweeted, reiterating claims that he won a landslide victory in the election, and adding, "Now Republican politicians have to fight so that their great victory is not stolen. Don't be weak fools!"

A half-dozen Republican congressmen have said they will object to electoral votes being cast for Biden by states like Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia, and one senator,

incoming Alabama Republican Tommy Tuberville, said he would provide the support from at least one senator required to force a vote on the objection. The objection would still fail, both in the Democratic-controlled House and in the Senate, where more than a dozen Republicans have said they accept Biden's victory.

Meanwhile, the syndicated television program *Inside Edition* reported that Trump "has reportedly told his staff he's not leaving the White House, flat out refusing to accept the results of the 2020 election..."

During the summer, after he had clinched the Democratic presidential nomination, Biden told interviewers that his "greatest fear" about the election was that Trump would refuse to acknowledge the decision of the voters and would refuse to carry out a peaceful transfer of power. Since the election, however, Biden has remained virtually silent on the issue, entrusting the transition to the national security apparatus and avoiding any appeal to the American population, for fear of triggering a political upheaval the Democrats could not control.

One indication of the mood in Washington—where the prospects of a Trump coup are the subject of heated discussions on a daily basis—is a little noticed amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) introduced by Democrat Chrissy Houlahan, a former Air Force officer, with Republican support. It would require that if the president invokes the Insurrection Act of 1807, as Trump threatened to do last June during the protests against the police murder of George Floyd, military and paramilitary units will be required to wear their names and insignia so they can be identified as they take to the streets.

Trump has threatened to veto the NDAA, although not over this amendment, which does almost nothing to restrain the possible use of the military against the American people.



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