

Armed fascists storm Oregon state Capitol building

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23 December 2020

Armed fascists led by Joey Gibson and Chandler Pappas of the Patriot Prayer group forced their way into the Oregon state Capitol in Salem on Monday morning, in an attempt to disrupt a special legislative session. Gibson and Pappas led the group, composed of roughly 100 people, in a six-hour standoff on the Capitol grounds to protest an \$800 million bill, which, among other things, would provide rental assistance to landlords and tenants, permit carry-out alcoholic beverages, extend an eviction moratorium and limit school liability for coronavirus claims.

The protest had been planned in advance by Gibson. On the ground footage from independent journalist Laura Jedeed shows protesters, some wearing body armor and others carrying semi-automatic rifles, shoving and spraying mace at police as they attempt to get inside. Protesters also shattered windows in the Capitol.

In contrast to the thousands of anti-police violence protests that have occurred over the past year, the police were more than accommodating, allowing the anti-lockdown protesters to occupy the capitol grounds for several hours even after an “unlawful assembly” was declared by Oregon State Police. After a section of the crowd managed to get into the foyer of the capitol, the cops reluctantly deployed mace and inert pepper balls against those inside the building, while a long-range acoustic device (LRAD) advised the crowd outside to disperse.

Protesters attempted to get into the building multiple times. By the afternoon, state troopers, including riot police with Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, were deployed outside the Capitol, prompting a brief stand-off before the crowd dispersed. While many of the protesters were shouting racist and fascist chants, advocating an end to any restrictions to stop the spread of the coronavirus, some in the crowd were simply demanding economic relief after their businesses or

workplaces had been shut down for months.

Inside the building, Republican state Senator Dallas Heard accused his colleagues of joining Democratic Governor Kate Brown’s “campaign of intimidation against the people and children of God,” signified by the requirement for legislators to wear a mask inside the building. Brown, along with Portland’s Democratic Mayor Ted Wheeler, have been repeatedly denounced by President Trump for being insufficiently brutal in repressing protests against police violence.

After storming out of the legislative chamber, Heard joined the demonstrators, telling them they had “a right to be in that building.”

Despite the violent nature of the protest, police confirmed that they made only four arrests, mostly for trespassing. Throughout the roughly six-hour protest, Patriot Prayer founder Gibson was seen conversing with police. In February 2019, *Willamette Week* reported that Portland Police Lt. Jeff Niiya kept in regular contact with Gibson, including passing along information about upcoming leftist protests and advising Gibson on how to avoid being arrested during protests. Niiya also tipped off Gibson when alleged “Antifa” protesters were nearby.

In September 2019, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw and Mayor Ted Wheeler announced the results of an “Independent Police Review” into Niiya’s communications with Gibson. The pair declared that the review did not find sufficient evidence to prove Niiya did anything wrong. Mayor Wheeler went out of his way to exonerate Niiya, telling reporters, “In retrospect, I wish I would have been more overt about giving [Niiya] the benefit of the doubt.”

Patriot Prayer member and Gibson friend, Aaron “Jay” Danielson, was killed in Portland on August 29 following a far-right riot through downtown, in which members of the group shot at anti-police violence protesters from speeding trucks with paintball guns and bear mace. The

killing of Danielson led to a multi-state manhunt for Michael Reinhoel, an anti-fascist activist. Reinhoel, on the orders of Trump, was assassinated by a US Marshal task force on September 3. Trump called the murder of Reinhoel “retribution” for his alleged role in Daneilson’s death.

While fascists continue to threaten officials and city workers attempting to stem the spread of the coronavirus, Trump has yet to concede the election and is continuing his efforts to nullify the victory of Joe Biden, overthrow the Constitution and stay in power. On Sunday and Monday, Trump held several hours-long meetings in the White House with lawyers Sidney Powell and Rudy Giuliani, as well as with trade adviser Peter Navarro and Vice President Mike Pence. Trump has also been strategizing with former White House senior counselor Steve Bannon.

These meetings followed a Friday Oval Office meeting with Powell, former Trump national security adviser Gen. Michael Flynn and other far-right Trump boosters, as well as White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and White House counsel Pat Cipollone. The meeting ended in a screaming match between Trump’s official aides and the open fascists when Flynn urged Trump to declare martial law and send troops into key swing states to rerun the elections there.

According to reports, Trump is considering naming Powell, who was dismissed from his legal team after spouting anti-Semitic and fascist conspiracy theories regarding the integrity of US election machines at a November 19 press conference, as a special counsel to investigate allegations of voter fraud. Navarro has acknowledged calling legislators in six states seeking to gin up support for Trump’s overthrow of the Constitution.

Meanwhile, Trump has continued to block Biden’s transition team from interacting with the Pentagon. The unprecedented conflict within the upper echelons of the government is prompting some senior military officers to speak out. In a recent CNN article, unnamed officers spoke of the uncertainty among the military brass, with several officers commenting that they had no idea what Trump might do before his term legally ends on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2021.

Several officers told CNN that if Trump issued legal orders, “even if distasteful,” they would be carried out, while illegal orders would “raise dire questions about whether senior military leaders feel they can stay on the job.” Others expressed concerns that Trump might launch a military attack on a foreign country to facilitate his coup

plotting.

Substantial sections of the Republican Party continue to back Trump’s plotting to overturn the election. Trump met Monday in the White House with members of the far-right House Freedom Caucus and later with other Republican law-makers to discuss plans to disrupt the January 6 joint session of Congress constitutionally tasked with ratifying the Electoral College victory of Biden. The first meeting included newly elected Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, a public supporter of the QAnon conspiracy who ran a racist and anti-Semitic campaign.

The second meeting included Alabama Representative Mo Brooks and several other Republican lawmakers who plan to contest the Electoral College vote at the January 6 joint session. In the Senate, incoming Alabama Senator Tommy Tuberville has indicated he will raise a formal objection as well. This would force a debate and votes in both chambers, each of which would have to give majority support to prevent the official ratification. That is virtually certain to fail, since the Democrats control the House, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has urged Republicans to oppose any such move, and at least 12 Republican senators, including McConnell, have acknowledged Biden’s victory.

However, Trump continues to incite his fascist supporters to carry out actions outside of official channels, including demonstrations on January 6 and a possible counter-inauguration on January 20. He has spoken of plans to appear at a rally in Georgia on the eve of two runoff elections in that state on January 5 that will determine which party controls the Senate.

All of this incitement is designed to foster the development of a fascist movement to continue after January 20 whether or not Biden, as appears likely, staggers into power. These operations are facilitated by the virtual silence of Biden and the Democrats on Trump’s unconstitutional actions, driven by their fear of unleashing mass popular opposition to Trump that could threaten the capitalist system.



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