

Court documents detail fascist groups' advanced planning for seizure of US Capitol

Alex Findijs**20 January 2021**

On Tuesday, federal prosecutors filed conspiracy charges in relation to the January 6 storming of the US Capitol in Washington D.C. The unsealed complaint alleges that three members of the pro-Trump paramilitary group Oath Keepers planned in advance of the fascist insurrection to break into the building, seize and likely kill elected officials as part of an attempt to prevent Congress from certifying the election victory of Joe Biden and block his inauguration.

A leader of the Oath Keepers, Thomas Caldwell, a 65-year-old Navy veteran from Virginia, was taken into custody early Tuesday morning. Caldwell has been charged with four counts, including conspiracy to commit an offense, unlawful entry of a restricted building and attempting to disrupt the activities of the US Congress.

An affidavit submitted to the US District Court of the District of Columbia accuses Caldwell of organizing a group of eight to 10 people who led the crowd's charge through barricades manned by Capitol Police to force their way into the building.

These individuals were captured on camera and observed to be wearing Oath Keeper patches. In the video they "move in an organized and practiced fashion and force their way to the front of the crowd gathered around a door to the US Capitol," the affidavit states.

The video also identifies Army veteran Jessica Watkins, a commanding officer in the so-called Ohio State Regular Militia, a dues-paying arm of the Oath Keepers. Also identified and charged is Donovan Crowl, a former Marine who is also a member of the Ohio State Regular Militia. According to the affidavit, Crowl sent a Facebook message to Caldwell on January 1 referring to him as "Commander" and saying he would call the next day to discuss their plans.

Caldwell was instrumental in booking a hotel room in

the capital for Oath Keepers to stay. He noted that the location would "allow for us to hunt at night."

Court documents include communications between Watkins and an unnamed man, who tells her, "Arrest this assembly, we have probable cause for acts of treason, election fraud."

In the charging papers, the FBI asserts that during the storming of the Capitol, Caldwell received Facebook messages updating him on the location of lawmakers. When he posted a single-word message, "Inside," he received directions concerning tunnels, doors and hallways. This strongly suggests that Caldwell was receiving insider information from sources linked to either the police or Republican lawmakers, who were complicit in the attempt to overturn the election and impose a presidential dictatorship under Trump.

One message read, "All members [of Congress] are in the tunnels under capital seal them in. Turn on gas."

In the course of the insurrection, Caldwell sent a Facebook message describing how the Proud Boys had forced the Capitol Police back into the building, adding, "We need to do this at the local level. Lets [sic] storm the capitol in Ohio. Tell me when!"

"This is the first step toward identifying and understanding that there was some type of concerted conspiracy here," a senior official in the US attorney's office for Washington D.C. told the *Washington Post*.

Over the weekend, federal authorities arrested several other people with alleged ties to far-right groups, including the Oath Keepers, the Proud Boys and the Three Percenters. In his September debate with Biden, Trump called on the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by" should Biden be declared the winner of the November 3 vote.

Of these fascist paramilitary groups, the Oath Keepers is known for seeking to recruit former military

personnel and police. On January 16, founder and leader Stewart Rhodes published a statement on the Oath Keepers' website calling for Trump to "invoke the Insurrection Act and lets [sic] get to work arresting and removing them all, and putting them all on trial for their crimes."

The information provided by federal prosecutors is part of an ever expanding body of evidence demonstrating that the Capitol assault was not a spontaneous event, but rather a planned and coordinated coup attempt. The conspiracy is not limited to the mainly middle-class and lumpen elements facing economic ruin who have been whipped into a frenzy by Trump and his co-conspirators, but also high-ranking forces within the state, the corporate-financial elite, the Republican Party and Trump's inner circle.

Ali Alexander, a leader of the pro-Trump "Stop the Steal" campaign, said in several live stream videos that he planned the January 6 rally with Republican congressmen Andy Biggs of Arizona, Paul Gosar of Arizona and Mo Brooks of Alabama. The latter preceded Trump at the speaker's rostrum on January 6 and declared, "Today is the day that American patriots start taking down names and kicking ass."

Alexander has also been in close contact with Trump's fascistic ally Roger Stone, stating on "Periscope" that "This is something Roger and I have been planning for a long time. And finally he's off the leash."

Stephen Bannon organized 400,000 automated text messages encouraging people to attend the rally, according to the *Daily Beast*. On his "War Room" podcast of January 5, Bannon told his listeners, speaking of the following day's events in Washington, "All hell is going to break loose."

He elaborated: "It's not going to happen like you think it's going to happen. OK, it's going to be quite extraordinarily different. And all I can say is, strap in... You have made this happen and tomorrow it's game day. So strap in. Let's get ready."

This unprecedented political crisis and breakdown of American democracy will not end with the inauguration of Biden on January 20. It will continue and intensify. The crisis within the state is indicated by the fact that Army National Guard commanders have thus far removed 12 members of the massive armed force occupying large parts of Washington D.C. for the

inauguration and beyond due their connections to far-right organizations.

The response of Biden and the Democratic Party is to step up their efforts to cover up the scale of the conspiracy and the danger to the democratic rights of the population. Biden calls for compromise and unity with the Republicans, a party that serves as the incubator for the growth of a fascist movement. Neither Trump nor his co-conspirators in the Republican Party, the police and the military are prosecuted and thrown into jail where they belong.

The Democrats are instead putting together a right-wing government that will continue the drive to reopen the schools and businesses in the midst of an out-of-control pandemic, provide no serious relief for the millions who are unemployed, hungry and facing eviction, continue the bailout of Wall Street, and intensify the economic and military confrontation with China and Russia. These anti-working class policies, sugar-coated with empty talk of "healing" and "decency," will only create more favorable political conditions for the growth of fascism.



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