

Six more Oath Keepers indicted on conspiracy charges for assault on US Capitol

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On Friday, the Justice Department indicted six more members of the far-right Oath Keepers militia, seven of whom were seen in a “stack” military formation attempting to breach the Capitol on January 6.

This indictment follows a previous January indictment of three other Oath Keepers, charged with conspiracy for their roles in the assault.

The previously charged Oath Keepers include Jessica Watkins, 38, Donovan Ray Crowl, 50, both from Ohio, and Thomas E. Caldwell, 66 from Virginia.

Those indicted Friday include siblings Graydon Young, 54 and Laura Steele, 52, and married couples Kelly and Connie Meggs, 52 and 59, and Bennie and Sandra Parker, 70 and 60. Young and the Meggs are from Florida, Steele lives in North Carolina, while the Parkers are from Ohio.

The indictment alleges that the accused “did knowingly combine, conspire, confederate, and agree with each other and others known and unknown” to break into the Capitol and obstruct Congress from certifying the election of Joe Biden as president.

Conspiracy charges indicate that members of the group coordinated their actions prior to committing the crimes. If convicted, they each face a possible 20-year prison sentence.

In their affidavits, federal prosecutors alleged that the Oath Keeper group communicated using a walkie-talkie application called Zello, under a user-created channel labeled “Stop the Steal J6.” The government alleges that those charged relayed messages to each other before and during the siege on the Capitol.

The indictment alleges that Kelly and Connie Meggs, Young, Steele and Sandra Parker donned paramilitary gear and joined in a military-style “stack” formation that was video-taped marching up the east side of the Capitol. The indictment asserts that Kelly Meggs is the

self-described leader of the Florida chapter of the Oath Keepers, of which Connie Meggs, Young and Steele also are alleged to be members.

In their indictment, the prosecutors allege that Bennie Parker messaged Watkins prior to the attack requesting to join her militia because his group was not very “active.” The indictment asserts that Watkins coordinated with the Parkers on their trip to D.C. and that Watkins and Bennie Parker also discussed what sort of weapons they should bring with them.

Audio recordings obtained by the FBI and reported by the *Washington Post* allege that Watkins, an Army veteran who was deployed to Afghanistan, claimed to be leading a group of 30 to 40 others as they forced their way into the Capitol.

In announcing the new charges, prosecutors included social media postings from the defendants in which they articulated their support for then-President Donald Trump. The postings demonstrated that the accused were heading to D.C. in response to Trump’s calls to “Stop the Steal” by preventing congressional certification of the Electoral College vote.

In a Facebook post written on December 22, two weeks before the attempted coup, Kelly Meggs responded to Trump’s call to come to D.C., stating, “Trump said It’s gonna be wild!!!! It’s gonna be wild!!!! He wants us to make it WILD that’s what he’s saying. He called us all to the Capitol and wants us to make it wild!!!! Sir Yes Sir!!!! Gentlemen we are heading to DC pack your sh*t!!”

Prior to the attempted coup, the domain name WildProtest.com was broadcast and promoted by Trump, local Republican parties and Trump-aligned representatives, all of whom urged their supporters to sign up and make a pledge to attend.

The charging documents include new information and

messages allegedly sent between previously charged Caldwell and other members of the fascistic group. Caldwell, a retired Navy commander, claimed roughly two weeks ago that he worked for the FBI as a section chief and has held a “top secret” security clearance for decades.

The court filings allege that Caldwell used his previous training in the military and law enforcement to plan the attack, including suggesting posting snipers as well as a weapons cache on a boat along the Potomac River. Prosecutors allege that Caldwell began coordinating with the Oath Keepers a week after the election, beginning with a meeting at his Virginia home prior to a November 14 pro-Trump protest in D.C.

In response to a message from Oath Keeper co-founder and leader Stewart Rhodes calling on members to “stand tall in support of President Trump,” Caldwell allegedly responded: “Next time (and there WILL be a next time) we will have learned and we will be stronger.” In a later message to the group, Caldwell wrote, “I think there will be real violence for all of us next time... I am already working on the next DC [operation.]”

According to a tally from the *New York Times*, of the over 230 people charged so far for their role in the assault, 31 have ties to “militant extremist groups,” with 26 of those affiliated with the Oath Keepers or the Proud Boys.

Of the 22 people who have been charged with conspiracy, 18 are affiliated with the Proud Boys or Oath Keepers. Eleven of the 18 are confirmed to have previously served in the US military.

While it is clear that far-right militia groups such as the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys led the assault on the Capitol, questions remain as to who was coordinating with the groups, which were under the impression that they were taking orders from Trump himself.

In an extraordinary claim, defense attorneys for Watkins claimed over the weekend that she was not an insurrectionist and had, in fact, met with Secret Service agents prior to the rally on January 6. They also claimed their client was issued a VIP pass to the rally. Watkins’ attorneys allege she was on the grounds providing security for legislators and others during the march on the Capitol.

The US Secret Service denied Watkins’ claims, telling CNN on Sunday that “any assertion that the

Secret Service employed private citizens to perform those functions is false.”

Several members of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys were employed by and/or photographed with high-level Republican operatives and Trump allies. These include InfoWars owner Alex Jones and Trump political crony Roger Stone.

Over the weekend, it was confirmed by anonymous sources within the Justice Department to the *Washington Post* that Jones, Stone and “Stop the Steal” organizer Ali Alexander are under investigation for their role in the attempted coup.

Jones and Stone enjoy close connections with the fascist militias. Several photos and videos have already been released showing Stone surrounded by Oath Keepers militia on the day before and day of the assault on the Capitol. Stone has also endorsed Proud Boys for Congress, shared his cell phone and social media information with certain members, and launched an online store with Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio through which Tarrio promoted Stone’s legal defense fund and sold Proud Boys merchandise.

Likewise, Jones had business connections with the Proud Boys.

Previously indicted Proud Boy leader Joe Biggs began appearing as an on-air personality for InfoWars beginning in 2014, as the protests in Ferguson, Missouri against the police murder of Michael Brown began. Biggs also reported favorably on the right-wing militia occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2016.



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