

Republicans use hearing on domestic terrorism to defend Trump and promote far-right forces

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25 February 2021

On Wednesday, the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held a hearing titled "The Rise of Domestic Terrorism in America." The stated purpose of the hearing was to shed light on the "warning signs and signals prior to the [January 6] attack on the Capitol."

The Republicans at the hearing used the event to demonstrate their continued support for Donald Trump and argue that last month's fascistic attack on the US Capitol was the inevitable and understandable response to last year's mass protests against police violence, which they absurdly characterized as riots by left-wing terrorists led by Antifa.

The ranking Republican on the subcommittee, Arizona Representative Andy Biggs, set the tone in his opening remarks by showing a video of Donald Trump's infamous statement after the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which he praised the neo-Nazis who dominated the event as "fine people."

Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio, the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, put forward most explicitly the basic line of the Republicans, declaring at one point, "What was going on every day for 120 days in Portland was the same as January 6."

This was essentially an apology for the attempt by fascistic forces whipped up by Trump to seize and likely execute members of Congress in order to prevent the certification of Joe Biden's victory and establish a presidential dictatorship under Trump.

In response, the Democrats for the most part chastised their "Republican colleagues" and pleaded with them to act more responsibly.

They refused to point to the direct political complicity

of Biggs, Jordan and most other Republicans in Congress in the promotion of Trump's lies about a stolen election and their open or tacit support for the far-right militia forces mobilized in his effort to overturn the election results. Biggs not only voted against the certification of the Electoral College vote in the wake of the mob attack on the US Capitol, he was a prominent promoter of the "Stop the Steal" campaign that led up to the January 6 insurrection.

Jordan was also one of the 139 Republican House members who voted against certification.

Chairing the hearing was Texas Democratic Representative Sheila Jackson Lee. She set the tone for most of the Democrats on the subcommittee, defining the attempted coup and the growth of fascistic and white supremacist forces entirely in racial terms.

Throughout the proceedings, Jackson Lee repeatedly thanked her "Republican colleagues" for their "contributions."

The four witnesses who appeared were:

*Wade Henderson: Interim president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

*Michael German: A fellow with the Brennan Center for Justice's Liberty & National Security Program. German spent 16 years as a special agent with the FBI, where he worked undercover, penetrating far-right militias.

*Malcom Nance: The executive director of the Terror Asymmetrics Project. A frequent guest on MSNBC as an "intelligence expert," Nance spent 20 years in the US Navy specializing in counter-intelligence and naval cryptology.

*Andy Ngo: A disciple of the ultraright-wing founder of Project Veritas, James O'Keefe, and the author of

Unmasked: Inside Antifa's Radical Plan to Destroy Democracy. He gained prominence on Twitter by embedding himself within fascist groups, such as Patriot Prayer, and selectively editing and sharing footage of alleged “far-left violence” in the Pacific Northwest.

Of all the witnesses, former FBI agent German provided the most substantive testimony. He pushed back on suggestions that new domestic terrorism laws were needed, noting that there were already 52 laws on the books to deal with terrorism. The problem was not a lack of statutes or resources, he said, but the fact that the Justice Department and the FBI deliberately chose not to focus on white supremacist and far-right groups following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

In relation to the January 6 attack, German said it was obvious well in advance that far-right groups were planning to attack the Capitol. He noted that armed right-wing militias had stormed the Oregon capitol less than two weeks before.

With few exceptions, the Republicans at the hearing addressed their questions solely to Ngo, who served as a sounding board for the lies and libels against the hundreds of thousands of youth and workers of all races and ethnicities who marched peacefully in response to last May's police murder of George Floyd. He provided “expert” testimony, devoid of facts, as to the nefarious role of the nebulous Antifa in organizing the mass protests.

When Jackson Lee asked Ngo to name a single leader of Antifa, Ngo admitted that he could not.

What neither side seemed particularly interested in was bringing to light factual information about the fascistic groups involved in the January 6 attacks, such as the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, the III Percenters and the Boogaloo Bois, including their political and financial backers and their connections to the police, military and intelligence agencies.



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