

Bail denied for retired New York City cop charged with assault in January 6 attempted coup

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Thomas Webster, a 20-year veteran of the New York City Police Department (NYPD), now retired, was denied bail on Tuesday at a hearing in US district court in White Plains, New York on charges related to the January 6 storming of the US Capitol by a fascist mob.

Webster, a former US Marine, was once a member of the security detail at New York's City Hall. He is charged with violently assaulting a D.C. police officer during the storming of the Capitol.

The 54-year-old retired from the NYPD in 2011 and is now residing in Orange County, New York, about 65 miles from the city. He was wanted by the FBI for participating in the assault.

Webster is seen in a video attacking a Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department officer and storming barricades surrounding the Capitol building. He is one of the many members of the police and military, both veterans and active duty, who played a major part in the attempted coup aimed at nullifying the results of the 2020 election and installing Donald Trump as a presidential dictator.

In the video, Webster is shown screaming at the police guarding the Capitol to “turn around,” i.e., abandon their posts.

The prosecution accuses him of assaulting the D.C. officer, first with a dangerous weapon—an aluminum pole to which a Marine Corps flag had earlier been attached—and then with his bare hands, pinning him to the ground, straddling him and attempting to pull off his face shield and gas mask and choke him with his chin strap.

Webster claims that his actions were in self-defense and the officer had punched him. There is no video evidence to corroborate that claim.

He is described by the prosecution as having a “look of pure rage” and acting like a “junkyard dog.” Multiple videos introduced at the hearing show him calling the police officer a “commie piece of shit” and urging the mob to press forward with its attack and be “ready for more action.”

The charge of assault on a police officer with a dangerous weapon carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

At the hearing, the defense, which did not dispute Webster's participation in the assault, sought to portray him as an upstanding citizen and family man, with an exemplary record of service in both the military and the police. They emphasized as well that his actions were undertaken at Trump's urging.

Webster is the owner of the Semper Fi Landscape and Design business. (Semper Fi is the Marine Corps motto). He exemplifies the largely middle-class social layers—small business people, professionals, cops—that comprised the bulk of the insurrectionists.

It has become clear, as stated by Assistant US Attorney Benjamin Gianforte during the hearing, that “most of the violent ringleaders of the riot were people with military experience.” The military and police, in the US as elsewhere, are riddled with ultra-right and fascistic elements.

The judge at the bail hearing expressed his ambivalence in coming to a decision, referencing the middle-class credentials of the defendant. “He has been a productive and valuable member of society,” he said, pointing to Webster's police and military service and his role as a businessman. “My determination in favor of detention is based solely on the issue of danger to the community,” the judge stated.

He did not attempt to explain why such a model citizen chose to attack Congress in an attempt to overthrow the results of the election. The judge merely said that his ruling against letting Webster out on bail pending trial was based on the fear that unidentified “undercurrents of political hostility” might lead him to further attacks on police.



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