

US House of Representatives adjourns under threat of fascist violence

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The US House of Representatives canceled a session scheduled for Thursday morning, March 4, and adjourned for the weekend, after security agencies reported credible threats of right-wing violence against the Capitol set for that day.

March 4 has been widely cited on right-wing social media as the day for an attack on the Capitol, similar to what took place on January 6, 2021. In the latest convoluted conspiracy theory promoted in QAnon circles, March 4 was the day that former president Trump would return to power, displacing the “illegitimate” Joe Biden.

The date was chosen for its historical antecedents, since US presidents were inaugurated on March 4 until Franklin Roosevelt, whose second inaugural was set for January 20 under the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1933.

In an effort to downplay the extraordinary character of this surrender to fascist terrorism, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi held her regular Thursday morning news conference and repeatedly described the QAnon threats of a March 4 attack as “silly.”

She said that the House had always planned to adjourn at noon after a brief morning session, to allow House Republicans to hold an “issues conference” scheduled for later that day. The votes planned for Thursday morning were held on Wednesday evening instead, which Pelosi described as a “convenience” rather than a capitulation to threats of right-wing violence.

At the same time, Pelosi announced that retired General Russell Honoré would be submitting his review of Capitol Hill security later in the month, which would include an assessment of such issues as a permanent guarded perimeter around the Capitol and more aggressive use of Capitol Police to guard

members both in the Capitol and its adjacent office buildings and in their home districts.

Meanwhile, the Capitol Police have requested a 60-day extension of the deployment of some of the 5,200 National Guard troops activated in Washington in response to the January 6 attack and subsequent security threats. Acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman told a House hearing Wednesday that threats against individual members of Congress were up 94 percent compared to previous years.

The troop deployment was initially set to end on March 12, but the planned address by President Joe Biden to a joint session of Congress has been pushed back at least until mid-March, and that event is viewed as the next likely flashpoint for threats of fascist violence at the Capitol.

The Capitol Police had warned March 3 of a “possible plot to breach the Capitol by an unidentified militia group,” and National Guard troops were deployed more in larger numbers around the Capitol complex Thursday morning. The day ultimately passed without incident.

These actions follow the extraordinary testimony Wednesday at a joint hearing of the Senate Rules Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee by General William Walker, commander of the D.C. National Guard. Walker described the three hour and 19 minute gap between his first request for authority to deploy the guard at the capital, at 1:49 p.m. on January 6, and approval by the Pentagon, which was communicated to him at 5:08 p.m.

These three-plus hours were the time when the rioters were rampaging through the Capitol, threatening to hang Vice President Mike Pence and kill Speaker Pelosi, all in the name of stopping the certification of electoral votes showing that Joe Biden had defeated

Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

While the media has largely ignored Walker's testimony, the *Washington Post* published an editorial Thursday demanding to know the reasons for this delay, as well as why the Pentagon had imposed "unusual" restrictions on Walker's ability to act on his own authority in the event of an obvious emergency like the televised storming of the Capitol by the fascist mob. The editorial noted that the Pentagon witness at the hearing for General Walker had no role in the January 6 discussions, suggesting that those who did participate should be summoned to testify.

Post columnist Dana Milbank put the case more bluntly: "At worst, political appointees and Trump loyalists at the Defense Department deliberately prevented the National Guard from defending the Capitol against a seditious mob. The man ultimately responsible for the delay, Christopher Miller, had been a White House aide before Donald Trump installed him as acting defense secretary in November, as the president began his attempt to overturn his election defeat."

Milbank noted that Miller, the acting defense secretary, did not approve deployment of the National Guard until 4:32 p.m. on January 6, 15 minutes after Trump issued a video urging the insurrectionists to go home. "Was Miller waiting for Trump's blessing before defending the Capitol?" the columnist asked.

Even one of the Republicans on the Senate committee, Roy Blunt of Missouri, expressed incredulity over the Pentagon response, telling reporters afterwards, "Certainly we'll have questions for Secretary McCarthy and for acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller." He added, "It's definitely going to require an opportunity to ask them questions about their view from their perspective of why this decision-making process went so horribly wrong."

The Democratic chairs of the two committees, Amy Klobuchar and Gary Peters, indicated that further witness testimony on the events of January 6 would be required. Up to now, congressional Democrats have not sought the testimony of the top officials responsible for the delay in sending troops, including Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, acting Secretary of Defense Miller, and two generals who were involved in the decision-making, Walter Piatt and Charles Flynn.

Flynn is the brother of retired General Michael Flynn,

a top Trump ally who urged Trump to declare martial law and re-run the election in the battleground states under military supervision.

Neither Flynn nor Piatt was in the chain of command in relation to the National Guard deployment. Because the District of Columbia is not a state, control of the National Guard there is vested in the president—whose supporters were attacking the Capitol—and delegated by the president to the Army secretary and the secretary of defense.



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