

One hundred and ninety-nine minutes in January

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The 1964 film *Seven Days in May*, based on a best-selling novel of the same name published in 1962, provides a fictionalized account of an attempted military coup in the United States. The book was inspired by the plotting and conflicts within the state during the administration of John F. Kennedy, who was assassinated before the film's release. Before he was killed, Kennedy, who was sufficiently concerned about the loyalty of the military even at that time, backed the film's production against opposition in the Pentagon and arranged for its director, John Frankenheimer, to shoot scenes outside of the White House.

A modern-day version of the film could be released under the title, *One Hundred and Ninety-Nine Minutes in January*. According to the Senate testimony of Washington, D.C. National Guard Commander William Walker on Wednesday, this was the length of time between his initial request to top military command for the deployment of National Guard troops on January 6, 2021 and its final approval.

Walker told the Senate Rules and Homeland Security committees that he asked senior Army leadership for approval to deploy the National Guard at 1:49 p.m., as fascist insurrectionists approached the Capitol building. He did not receive authorization from Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller, however, until 5:08 p.m.—that is, three hours and 19 minutes later.

The ostensible explanations for the delay of 199 minutes, to the extent that any have been provided, are beyond absurd. Walker testified that he was told by the Army command, in Walker's words, that "it wouldn't be their best military advice to send uniformed guardsmen to the Capitol because they didn't like the optics." They also said they did not want to "inflare" the protesters. As if anyone could believe that the military was concerned about "optics." Walker himself noted, in response to a question as to whether "optics" were ever a factor during the protests over police violence, that "it was never discussed" during the summer, when the National Guard was repeatedly mobilized "within minutes."

Let us consider what actually transpired. For three hours and nineteen minutes, the Pentagon, Joint Chiefs of Staff and high-level military officers were watching on CNN or from their command centers as the assault on the Capitol was unfolding.

These are individuals who are trained and go through drills on how to respond to nuclear and other attacks within minutes. No one can seriously believe that the military officials watching these events, even if they had no advance warning of the January 6 insurrection, did not have the ability to summon an emergency meeting to review and immediately deploy all available forces in the Washington, D.C. area.

To think that the military has not drawn up countless scenarios for such operations is beyond naïve. It is twenty years since the establishment of the "Department of Homeland Security" in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, ostensibly to respond to threats within the United States. One should also recall the response to the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, under the Obama administration, when National Guard troops were deployed in the thousands, armed with automatic weapons and armored vehicles, to put Boston and the surrounding communities under effective martial law.

Moreover, the events of January 6 were far from a surprise. For months prior to the insurrection, there was an ongoing political crisis during which the president of the United States made clear that he would not accept the peaceful transfer of power. The intelligence agencies and military were well aware of the plans and threats targeting the date of January 6, in particular.

Rather, a decision was made not to act as a definite political strategy was implemented. For more than three hours, the fascist groups had virtual free rein over the Capitol building. The militarily trained elements within the rioters knew that they were being given time to seek out hostages among the Senators and Representatives.

Trump, meanwhile, was prepared to declare a state of emergency, which would have been used to shut down Congress. This would have delayed indefinitely the formal certification of the electoral victory of Joe Biden, a delay that had the support of Trump's co-conspirators in the Republican Party. Discussions would have ensued with the Democrats over a "compromise," perhaps involving sending back disputed state election tallies to Republican-controlled legislatures, resulting in the continuation of Trump's presidency. The Democrats made a "compromise" of this sort in 2000, when they accepted the theft of the election through the intervention of the Supreme

Court.

In the end, the military only intervened on January 6 when it became clear that the operation had failed to achieve its objectives, and when any further delay would have obviously implicated those operating behind the scenes. It is not until 5:40 p.m., more than half an hour after the formal permission to deploy the D.C. National Guard, that 154 National Guard troops arrived at the Capitol Complex to assist Capitol Police in clearing the building. The standdown involved high-level figures within the Defense Department and military, some of whom had been recently appointed by Trump. This includes Miller, who was named by Trump as acting secretary of defense on November 9, 2020, six days after the election. A former US Special Forces “Green Beret,” Miller was previously the director of the National Counterterrorism Center.

Walker’s call at 1:49 p.m. was made to top generals in the US Army. Among those on the call was Lieutenant General Walter Piatt, who remains the director of the Army Staff. Piatt was formerly the commanding general of the US Army 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum and the deputy commanding general of the US Army Europe.

Also on the call was Lieutenant General Charles Flynn, the deputy chief of staff for Army operations, plans and training. Flynn is the younger brother of Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, a top Trump conspirator who had urged Trump to declare martial law in response to his electoral defeat. The Army initially lied about the younger Flynn’s presence on the call, before being forced to acknowledge that he participated. On January 25, three weeks after the fascistic insurrection, the Defense Department announced that Flynn was being transferred to command the US Army Pacific in Honolulu.

The full story of the discussions within the military is still to be uncovered. However, there was at least one meeting involving Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley with Miller and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy at 2:30 p.m.—that is, about 40 minutes after the initial request for National Guard deployment—to discuss the military’s response. According to the official Department of Defense timeline, Milley also met with Miller on the morning of January 6 to review the Department of Defense’s contingency plans for the day.

It should be recalled that Milley, who remains the top military official in the US, joined Trump on June 1 in the photo-op in Lafayette Park after the violent attack on peaceful protesters by federal police, and after Trump’s Rose Garden speech when he threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act to deploy the military throughout the country. That is, Milley marched alongside Trump during the first attempt to stage a coup.

In a further indication of high-level planning for January 6, Walker testified that he received two memos from the Department of Defense, one on January 4 and another on January 5, that limited his ability to deploy forces without explicit authorization. The first memo, he testified, “required

me to seek authorization from the Secretary of the Army and Secretary of Defense to essentially even protect my Guardsmen.”

If the events documented by Walker had occurred in any other country, they would correctly be seen as an attempted military coup. Walker’s testimony, however, has largely been ignored and downplayed by the media.

The *New York Times* buried its report on the hearings in its Thursday print edition on page 17. The newspaper’s editorial page has not commented on the revelations. The *Times*, the main voice of the Democratic Party, devotes far more time to its absurd sexual witch-hunting than it does to an attempt to overthrow constitutional rule in the United States.

The *Washington Post* published one editorial pointing to “the lack of any good explanation as to why, despite frantic and repeated pleas from officials on the scene as well as the live broadcast of the chaos on television, the Defense Department delayed in sending help.” It concluded with a meek call for “Congress to appoint a bipartisan commission to investigate the events of Jan. 6.”

The call for a joint investigation into the events of January 6, which has also been advanced by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, only guarantees that there will be no investigation, as it would include the party that was engaged in the conspiracy.

While they seek to chloroform the public, the Democrats took the extraordinary step on Thursday of cancelling sessions of the US House of Representatives in response to reports of possible protests by fascistic groups. Biden, meanwhile, has delayed the traditional annual speech to both houses of Congress, which usually occurs for a new president in February. The concern is not primarily over the right-wing demonstrators, which represent at this point an inconsequential force, but the ongoing conspiracies within the highest levels of the state.

No investigation carried out under the auspices of the Democratic Party will serve to expose the forces involved in the conspiracy. As a party of Wall Street and the military itself, the Democrats are terrified of the political and social consequences of the revelations.

The one hundred and ninety-nine minutes of January 6 are a warning. As serious as the event was itself, no less significant is the response. Democratic rights cannot be entrusted to any faction of the ruling class or its political representatives. The working class cannot be left unprepared for the next stage. It must organize itself independently, on the basis of its own program, in opposition to the capitalist system.



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