

FBI reveals contact between Proud Boys and “Trump associate” days before assault on US Capitol

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According to a March 5 report by the *New York Times*, an FBI official has confirmed that a “Trump associate” was in contact with a member of the Proud Boys in the days leading up to the January 6 fascistic assault on the US Capitol. The *Times* article does not reveal the name of the FBI official.

The report follows an FBI announcement on Thursday that the Justice Department filed multiple charges against a former State Department official who was appointed by former President Donald Trump. The individual, Federico Klein, is a Marine Corps veteran who participated in the US invasion of Iraq. He has been indicted and arrested for assaulting police with a stolen riot shield as he stormed the Capitol.

The FBI confirmed that Klein has held a “top secret” security clearance since 2014. He is the first person thus far charged in the attempted coup who is directly connected to the Trump White House.

According to the *Times*’ March 5 article, the unnamed FBI official told the newspaper that the communications gathered by the agency include “location, cellular and call data” showing back and forth communication between the Proud Boys member and the Trump White House. No details on the identity of the Proud Boys member or the White House official involved, or the content of the communications, are given in the article.

The *Times* reports that the FBI official told it the information was obtained via a “geofence” warrant that included all Android devices Google recorded in the Capitol as the assault was ongoing. In congressional testimony last week, FBI official Jill Sanborn claimed that all data collected by the FBI in connection with the January 6 attack on the Capitol had been obtained

through legal search warrants and subpoenas.

Sanborn also made the improbable claim that the FBI was not able to prevent the assault on Congress because it had not been monitoring publicly available social media posts by militia groups on websites such as Facebook and Twitter in which they discussed their plans. Sanborn argued that this demonstrated the need for the FBI to have more “tools,” such as legal license to break encryption, to prevent future attacks.

The connections between Trump, the Republican Party and the Proud Boys are well known. At a Trump campaign rally in Miami, Florida, on February 18, 2019, the chairman of the Proud Boys, Henry “Enrique” Tarrío, was given a prime seat directly behind Trump. Moreover, during the presidential debate last September, Trump refused to condemn “white supremacists militias” and instructed the Proud Boys, by name, to “stand back and stand by” in the event Biden was declared the winner in the November 2020 election.

In its March 5 article, the *Times* states that the data revealed to it does not show any communications between insurrectionists and members of Congress on the day of the attempted coup. This, however, does not contradict earlier claims by Democratic representatives such as Mikie Sherrill who stated that they saw Republican representatives giving “reconnaissance tours” on the eve of January 6 to outside “groups” believed to be far-right militias, such as the Oath Keepers, the III Percenters and the Proud Boys, all of which have had members charged connection with in the assault.

In a separate interview the *Times* published Friday with Tarrío, the Proud Boys leader claimed that the FBI

might be referring to communications between himself and Roger Stone that occurred on January 2. Tarrio said he had put Stone on speakerphone to address a crowd that was protesting outside the home of Florida Republican Senator Marco Rubio, urging him to reject the Electoral College results. However, the *Times* said that the communications in question were not related to that interaction.

Tarrio was arrested on January 4 as he entered Washington D.C., ostensibly in connection with his role in the burning of a Black Lives Matter banner during a violent December 12 Proud Boy/Trump rally in D.C. that ended with dozens of injuries, including 4 stabbings. Tarrio admitted to the *Washington Post* after the rally that he had burned the banner.

Stone has been involved with the fascist group for at least the last three years, an association that assumed a more prominent role after the group's founder, Gavin McInnes, stepped down as chairman in 2018, to be replaced by Tarrio. In one of the first appearances Stone and the Proud Boys made together, Stone enlisted the group to provide security during the annual Dorchester Conference, held in Salem, Oregon, in March of 2018.

In a February 2019 Washington D.C. federal court appearance, Stone admitted that he worked closely with the fascist group, enlisting "volunteers" such as InfoWars reporter Jacob Engels, Florida Proud Boys chapter founder Tyler Ziolkowski, and Tarrio. Stone admitted that Engels and Tarrio regularly spent time at his home in Florida, along with "five or six volunteers," who, he claimed, had access to his phone and email accounts.

In an interview with CNN following the attempted coup, Ziolkowski claimed that he was not in D.C. on January 6, but that Engels was with Stone that day. The day before the attempted coup, Stone had spoken at the "One Nation Under God" prayer rally hosted by Virginia Women for Trump in front of the US Supreme Court. During that appearance, Stone was flanked by Oath Keeper militia members, some of whom served as security for him as he left the Willard Hotel the morning of January 6, and later participated in the storming of the Capitol.

On February 23, the Clark County Republican Party in Washington state voted to formally censure Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler over her vote to

impeach Trump. The *Columbian* reported that at that meeting, Proud Boy Tusitala "Tiny" Toese served as the sergeant-at-arms. Toese has been a fixture at far-right and Proud Boys protests in the Pacific Northwest, where he could be spotted wearing a black t-shirt reading "Pinochet did nothing wrong."



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