

Amidst ongoing threats of fascist violence, National Guard soldiers to remain deployed around Capitol

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Demonstrating the ongoing threat of fascistic terrorist violence and persistent concerns of an “insider” attack, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on Tuesday evening approved a request from acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman to keep 2,300 National Guard soldiers deployed around the Capitol complex for another 60 days, through May 23.

National Guard soldiers have been deployed to the Capitol grounds since the evening of January 6 after a far-right mob on the orders of former President Donald Trump attacked the Capitol in an attempt to block Congress from certifying the Electoral College vote and keep Trump in power.

The decision to keep over 2,000 soldiers in D.C. is a reflection of the unprecedented ongoing political crisis within the capitalist state and ruling class as details continue to emerge exposing significant sections of the state—namely the police, military and intelligence agencies in conjunction with the Republican Party—in organizing and planning the attempted coup.

Speaking to CNN, an anonymous defense official said that there was no specific threat to report, but that the decision to keep soldiers in place was made in response to persistent threats, “especially if President Joe Biden were to address a joint session of Congress.”

The same official told CNN that the request for an extension of the deployment was met with resistance from “some governors,” while others refused to commit any troops to the Capitol.

“During this extended period, DoD officials will work with the U.S. Capitol Police to incrementally reduce the National Guard footprint as conditions allow,” read part of a statement from the Department of Defense announcing the extension.

Currently there are about 5,100 troops protecting the Capitol, down from over 25,000 that were deployed in the aftermath of the January 6 assault.

There is no firm date for when troops might be leaving the Capitol. In a leaked email provided to Fox5 dated January 20, Robert Salesses, a Defense Department official who testified in front of Congress last week, discussed plans to keep National Guard personnel around the Capitol “for an extended period, at least through Fall 2021.”

The Capitol Police department released a brief three-sentence statement on the continued National Guard support, thanking the Guard, but omitting any reason as to why they were needed. Acting Chief Pittman has previously acknowledged in congressional testimony that 35 Capitol Police officers were under investigation for “code of conduct” violations related to January 6, with six of those suspended for their actions. The department has not released any further information concerning the cozy relationship between the police and the pro-Trump fascists.

Due to threats received related to a possible QAnon-inspired attack on March 4, last week the House of Representatives adjourned a day early. In an interview with the Associated Press (AP), Michigan Representative Elissa Slotkin said that many of her colleagues “don’t feel totally secure” in the Capitol.

Freshman pro-Trump Republican representatives who propagated the fascist QAnon conspiracy theory enjoy close relations with far-right militias, and remain in Congress, including Colorado Representative Lauren Boebert and Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene.

On Wednesday, Democratic Representative Pramila

Jayapal of Washington state sent a letter to the House Committee on Ethics requesting an investigation into Boebert's "involvement in instigating and aiding the violent riot at the Capitol Building" and to submit any findings to the Department of Justice.

Jayapal cited tweets from Boebert on January 6 in which Boebert disclosed the location of Congressional members as the attack was in progress, including tweeting at 2:18 p.m. that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi "has been removed from the chambers."

The only other representative to tweet the location of the Speaker that day, noted Jayapal, was Alabama Representative Mo Brooks, a chief organizer of the "Stop the Steal" rallies and opening speaker at the "Save America Rally" held on January 6.

Jayapal also cited Boebert's numerous connections to militia groups like the III Percenters, which is affiliated with the Oath Keepers as part of the "Patriot Network." One member of the group, Robert Gieswein, who was arrested in the assault on the Capitol, even posted a photo of himself in front of the restaurant Boebert owns, brandishing a long rifle.

Court documents have revealed the leading role veterans have played in organizing the attack, especially those in groups that recruit ex-military and former police like the Oath Keepers.

Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes, himself a former Army paratrooper and aide to former Texas Republican Representative Ron Paul, has been named in numerous court documents, including this past week, showing him offering advice to insurrectionists as to what weapons to bring and how to breach the Capitol.

Thomas Caldwell, a former Navy commander and Oath Keeper who is currently detained awaiting trial for his role in the January 6 assault, was part of an encrypted messaging channel with fellow Oath Keepers that included Rhodes. In one conversation cited by prosecutors between Caldwell and an unidentified person, Caldwell boasted of storming the Capitol with the "Oath Keepers and some other militia."

In a later text to the same person, Caldwell surmised, "If we'd had guns I guarantee we would have killed 100 politicians."

In response to the critical involvement of current and former military members in the attempted coup, the military took the unprecedented step of issuing a 60-day stand-down order to address the problem of

"extremism" in the ranks. In a February interview with Military.com, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby admitted that the numerous arrests of current and former military members in the siege has been a "wake-up call."

Kirby added that it is "no longer debatable" that extremists are in the ranks, "It's really just about to what degree," he said. Kirby's comments were echoed by head of US Central Command General Kenneth Frank McKenzie Jr.

"A commander who tells you that there's no problem really doesn't know what's going on in his own unit," McKenzie said in a recent interview with the *Washington Post*.

Of the over 300 people that have been charged in the attack, those facing the most serious charges, including conspiracy and assault with a weapon, have been far-right militia members, many of whom are former or current police and/or military. An analysis by CBS News found that in at least 33 of the 282 cases they reviewed, the accused are current or former military, with two still in the Army Reserve and another in the National Guard.

There is no telling where the loyalties of the Pentagon are. In congressional testimony last week, D.C. National Guard Commander William Walker said that it took three hours and 19 minutes after he had requested permission to deploy his troops to protect the Capitol to receive a response from acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller. Miller was installed after Trump fired Secretary of Defense Mark Esper on November 9.

Former Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy, who Walker testified was "unavailable" when he tried to request permission from the Department of Defense to deploy his troops, confirmed in the aftermath of the attempted coup that service members "from across the military" were at the January 6 rally.



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