

Two business owners arrested for assaulting Capitol Police officer who died following January 6 attack

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On Sunday, two restaurant owners were arrested and charged with assaulting Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick and two other Capitol Police with bear spray during the January 6 assault on the US Capitol. Sicknick died the following evening. However, the cause of death has not yet been determined.

Julian Elie Khater, 32, of Pennsylvania, and George Pierre Tanios, 39, of West Virginia, are each facing nine charges, including assault with a deadly weapon, civil disorder and obstruction of a congressional proceeding. If convicted, the pair could spend up to 20 years in the prison.

While the federal complaint identifies Khater as the one who deployed the bear spray, Tanios is similarly charged because the pair worked together, according to US prosecutors, who cited social media and body-worn camera video of the incident. The criminal complaint filed on Monday alleges that the online and visual evidence reveals “that the two were working in concert and had a plan to use the toxic spray against law enforcement.”

Khater was allegedly recorded asking Tanios at 2:14 p.m. to “Give me that bear sh*t,” while the two were seeking to storm the Lower West Terrace of the Capitol. They faced off with Sicknick and two other officers, identified as Capitol Police officer C. Edwards and D.C. Metropolitan Police officer B. Chapman, who were standing side by side behind bicycle racks.

The video allegedly shows Khater reaching into Tanios’ backpack and Tanios saying, “Hold on, hold on, not yet, not yet... it’s still early.” Khater angrily retorts, “They just f*cking sprayed me,” and is seen holding a “white can with a block top that appears to be a can of chemical spray.”

Court documents cite officer Chapman’s body-worn camera showing that at 2:23 p.m. the “rioters begin

pulling on a bike rack to Chapman’s left, using ropes and their hands to pull the rack away.” The documents continue: “Seconds later, Khater is observed with his right arm up high in the air, appearing to be holding a canister in his right hand and aiming it in the officers’ direction while moving his right arm from side to side.”

Immediately thereafter, the three officers are seen reacting “one by one, to something striking them in the face,” according to the affidavit, which notes that the police were standing only “five to eight feet away.”

Khater allegedly continued to release the spray toward the cops as they retreated, prompting D.C. Metropolitan Police Lt. Jason Bagshaw to spray Khater. The affidavit states that Sicknick, Edwards and Chapman all required medical attention, with Edwards reporting scabbing under her eyes for weeks after the exposure.

A review of Tanios and Khater’s social media accounts reveals both to be ardent Trump supporters and small restaurant owners. The affidavit states that the two “knew each other and grew up together in New Jersey.”

Tanios owns a fast-food restaurant in Morgantown, West Virginia called Sandwich U. The FBI cited photos and video taken on January 6 of Tanios wearing a black hooded sweatshirt with the logo of his business prominently displayed on his chest.

A LinkedIn page tied to Khater says that he is the general manager and co-owner of a company called Frutta Bowls in State College, Pennsylvania.

Nearly 350 arrests have been made to date related to the January 6 assault on the Capitol, with the most serious charges leveled against fascists affiliated with the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys militia groups, whose membership is dominated by current and former police and military members. Republican Representatives Matt Gaetz (Florida), Lauren Boebert (Colorado) and Marjorie

Taylor-Greene (Georgia) have boasted of using members of both right-wing groups for “security” at campaign events.

The leadership of both groups, Henry “Enrique” Tarrio, chairman of the Proud Boys, and Stewart Rhodes of the Oath Keepers, have both been named in court documents related to the assault on the Capitol. They both have close relations with Trump associates such as Roger Stone and Alex Jones, both of whom have enlisted members of the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers for “security.”

Last Friday, FBI agents arrested 49-year-old Christopher Worrell of East Naples, a member of the Proud Boys, for his role in the Capitol assault. Prosecutors allege that Worrell traveled to DC on January 6 armed with pepper spray, which he used against police. Worrell was also photographed near the Capitol wearing a tactical vest and a radio piece, along with other members of the Proud Boys.

Worrell is facing five federal charges, including obstructing congressional proceedings, disorderly conduct and violent entry onto Capitol grounds. After the Justice Department appealed and won a decision to halt the release of Worrell on Friday, Worrell’s lawyer, Landon Miller, told CNN in an email that his client was “overcharged.” Miller claimed that his client had come to D.C. only “at the direction of former President Trump.”

The criminal complaint includes pictures of Worrell wearing Proud Boy gear and appearing in videos with Tarrio in a shopping mall in Naples, Florida.

The ease with which the far-right crowd, led by members of the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, III Percenterers and other fascistic forces, was able to breach the Capitol is attributable to a stand-down of security forces directed by the Trump White House and carried out by the highest levels of the Pentagon, beginning with then-acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller.

Trump installed Miller on November 9, 2020, shortly after Democrat Joe Biden was declared the winner of the November 3 election. A former Green Beret and Trump loyalist, Miller was installed as part of a purge of top Pentagon officials that included the firing of Defense Secretary Mark Esper. Esper had drawn Trump’s ire for publicly opposing Trump’s threat to invoke the Insurrection Act and deploy active-duty soldiers against anti-police violence protesters on June 1.

On that day, Trump gave a speech in the White House Rose Garden in which he declared himself the “president of law and order” and mobilized military police to violently clear demonstrators who were peacefully

protesting across from the White House. It was an attempted coup, thwarted only by the top military brass, who at that time considered such a step premature and ill-prepared.

On March 3, D.C. National Guard Commander Gen. William Walker gave testimony before the Senate in which he detailed how in advance of the January 6 congressional certification of Biden’s election victory, Miller and then-Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy had stripped him of his authority to deploy his troops to protect the Capitol, and on the day of the fascist insurrection, as Trump’s mob was overrunning the Capitol and threatening to take hostage and/or kill lawmakers, Miller and McCarthy delayed approving his requests to send forces against the invaders for more than three hours.

As of yet, neither Miller nor McCarthy has been called by the Democratic leadership of the House and the Senate to explain their rejection of desperate pleas from Walker and the head of the Capitol Police to send forces to protect Congress from the mob.

Last week, in an interview with *Vice*, Miller defended his actions surrounding January 6, denying that there was anything suspicious or questionable about the 99-minute gap between the requests from Walker and the Capitol Police for National Guard reinforcements and their ultimate deployment—well after Trump had issued a call for the insurgents to vacate the Capitol.

“It comes back to understanding how the military works,” Miller declared. “This isn’t a video game, it’s not ‘Black Ops Call of Duty.’” Miller went on to claim that he did not speak to Trump at all on January 6, and called any suggestion of an attempted coup “hyperbole.”



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