

House Speaker Pelosi names D.C. National Guard Commander William Walker new Sergeant-at-Arms

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Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced Friday she would be recommending D.C. National Guard Commander Major General William Walker to be the next House sergeant-at-arms. Walker, a registered Republican who was installed by former President Donald Trump on Inauguration Day 2017 to lead the D.C. Guard, enjoys broad support among the Congress and is set to replace the current acting sergeant-at-arms, Timothy Blodgett, pending a vote.

Blodgett was appointed on January 7 following the resignation of Paul Irving, whom Pelosi had asked to resign following the deliberate stand-down of security forces during the attempted coup on January 6.

In making the announcement, Pelosi noted Walker's "great integrity and experience" and said he will bring "steady and patriotic leadership to this vital role." In ode to identity politics, Pelosi proudly noted he was the "first black American to serve as sergeant-at-arms."

Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy signaled his support for the nomination writing in a statement that, "every member, staffer, employee, and visitor to the Capitol should feel safe with Maj. Gen. Walker at the helm of Sergeant at Arms operations."

In a Friday statement, Walker, a former special agent with the Drug Enforcement Administration and a 39-year veteran of the military with previous deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, said he was, "honored and excited for the opportunity to continue to serve this great nation."

Earlier last week, the Senate swore in its new sergeant-at-arms, Karen Gibson, replacing Michael Stenger, also forced out after January 6. Gibson is a retired Army lieutenant general whose previous experience includes serving as the director of intelligence for US Central Command.

The appointments of Gibson and Walker mark the first

time two career military officials will be responsible for protecting the Congress. Previous sergeants-at-arms, such as Stenger and Irving, were drawn from the US Secret Service, part of the Department of Homeland Security, which is tasked with protecting top US political leaders.

In court documents filed last month, indicted Ohio Oathkeeper leader Jessica Watkins claimed that she met with Secret Service agents prior to the siege on the Capitol and was tasked with providing security for speakers at the rally. While a Secret Service spokesperson rejected her claims, Watkins insisted that she received a VIP pass from the White House.

Walker and Gibson were appointed to the posts following the release of a "Task Force 1-6 Assessment" that was commissioned by Pelosi and headed by retired Lt. General Russel Honoré. Gibson was part of that task force.

The Democratic chairperson of the House Administration Committee, Zoe Lofgren of California, said in a statement, "[Walker's] experience led him to be recommended by General Honoré who was charged with reviewing January 6." Lofgren wrote, "The responsibility of ensuring the security of the House of Representatives and examining our security apparatus moving forward is important, and I look forward to working with him."

The purpose of "1-6 assessment" was not to uncover the connections between the pro-Trump mob, the state and the White House. It served instead to whitewash politically the failure of security forces to protect the Capitol.

The report made no mention of the obvious "insider threat," including how it came to be that fascists had maps of the underground tunnels of the Capitol, knew where to find specific offices—such as that of South Carolina Representative Jim Clyburn, the third-ranking House

leader—or why rank-and-file police officers said they were left “on their own” by police leadership to fight back the mob. Instead, the report focused its recommendations on organizational issues and the need for hiring more police.

The appointment of two military members to head the security of the House and Senate speaks to the intense crisis still roiling the capitalist state and the ongoing lack of trust between security apparatus and the Congress. It suggests that congressional leaders are wary of placing their personal security under the control of the Secret Service, and prefer to rely on leaders drawn from the armed forces.

Irving, the former Senate Sergeant-at-arms Stenger, and Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund were all asked to resign following the attack on Capitol. In subsequent congressional testimony, none of the security heads have offered a plausible explanation for the “security failures.”

In congressional testimony earlier this month, they sought to explain how it was possible, given the ample security assets available to them, for a relatively small group of Trump supporters and fascists to manage to breach the one of the core buildings of the US government.

Irving, Stenger and Sund gave contradictory and incomplete testimony as to why it took so long for security forces to arrive at the Capitol as the Electoral College certification was ongoing and the top three officials in the line of succession to the president, including the vice president, the speaker of the house and the president pro tempore of the Senate, were all in danger.

Walker, in his explosive testimony that has been largely ignored by the mainstream press and dropped by the Democratic Party, confirmed that he and officials from the Capitol and D.C. Metropolitan Police Department pleaded for hours with Pentagon officials to send troops to defend the Capitol against pro-Trump insurrectionists.

Walker said that Pentagon officials on the call, including acting Secretary Defense Christopher Miller and Army Generals Walter Piatt and Charles Flynn, complained of the “optics” of having soldiers on Capitol grounds, causing a delay in the deployment troops leaving Walker, in his words, “stunned.”

During the hearing, Walker also testified to the difference in responses he received from top Pentagon officials on January 6 compared to peaceful protests outside the White House on June 1.

During the summer protests against police murder, Walker said that then Secretary of the Army Ryan

McCarthy was “right by my side,” facilitating the quick deployment of 5,000 Guardsmen and even two military helicopters. By contrast, during the siege on the Capitol, Walker testified that McCarthy was “unavailable,” which prevented him from getting the necessary approval in order to deploy his soldiers.

Walker testified that he had around “155 guardsmen,” including a 40-person quick reaction force, waiting to deploy to the Capitol in order to assist overwhelmed, understaffed and underprepared police forces.

“I believe that number could have made a difference,” Walker testified during the hearing. “We could help extend the perimeter and help push back the crowd,” Walker added during the joint hearing of the Senate Rules and Administration and Homeland Security committees on March 3.

Some Pentagon officials have pushed back on Walker’s claims that the military slow-rolled the deployment of troops to the Capitol. Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in comments to the *Washington Post* that the military moved at “sprint speed” to deploy troops and that their deployment to Capitol grounds, three hours and 19 minutes after being requested, was “very fast.”

Likewise, in a *Vice* interview earlier in March, former acting Secretary of Defense Miller disputed that there was delay in sending troops, and said that any insinuation that a coup was under way was “hyperbole.”

Nearly three months after the fascist coup attempt, neither Miller nor McCarthy nor any of the Pentagon generals who participated in delaying the deployment of troops to the Capitol have been subpoenaed by the Democrat-controlled Congress to answer for their actions.



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