

House Sergeant-at-Arms ordered security barricades moved the day before January 6 attack on the Capitol

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During a House Administration Committee hearing on Wednesday, it was revealed that those attacking the Capitol on January 6 were aided by what were described as “illogical” security decisions from then House Sergeant at Arms (SAA) Paul Irving.

The revelation came in the course of a question-and-answer session between the ranking Republican on the committee, Rodney Davis of Illinois, and Capitol Police Inspector General Michael Bolton. Davis told Bolton that an email was uncovered “this week” that revealed, “a US Capitol Police directive initiated by then House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving to the Architect of the Capitol sent on January 5.”

Davis said the email from Irving asked the Architect of the Capitol, J. Brett Blanton, “to move approximately 500 bike racks serving as security barricades away from 1st Street Northeast and Constitution Avenue to the east front.”

Davis asked Bolton if he was aware of this extraordinary request, to which Bolton replied that he was not aware and that he had not “delved into that.”

Davis continued his line of questioning, stating that, “this week we’ve uncovered emails from the Architect of the Capitol where it is clear that this was directed by the House sergeant at arms against the legitimate security concerns from the AOC [architect of Capitol] where the AOC Blanton called it ‘illogical.’”

“This is yet another example of the dysfunction of the security decision-making process of the Capitol Police Board,” Davis added.

This is a stunning revelation. Irving demanded that security barriers be repositioned less than 24 hours before a mob of Trump supporters and fascists would descend on the Capitol from the very direction where the barriers were removed. There is no innocent explanation. It adds

further evidence of the active role of highly placed security officials in facilitating the security stand-down of the Capitol in support of Trump’s coup attempt.

The email recalls similar memos issued by highly placed officials in the Department of Defense to District of Columbia Guard Commander William Walker, in the days leading up to the coup, which effectively prevented Walker from deploying his troops. In both cases the effect of the “unusual” (Walker) and “illogical” (Blanton) requests was to clear a path for Trump’s mob to attack Congress.

The day of the attack the Capitol Police Board was comprised of Irving, Blanton, Steven Sund, then Capitol Police chief, and then Senate Sergeant-at-Arms Michael Stenger. The board oversees the Capitol Police and has final say over security matters, including when to declare an emergency and request National Guard support. After the attack, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi requested the resignation of Sund and Irving; Stenger also resigned after Senate leaders of both parties demanded it.

In congressional testimony in February, Sund alleged that the Police Board had prevented him from seeking National Guard support prior to the attack. Sund alleged that the Police Board denied his request for Guard support on January 4 and delayed subsequent requests the day of the attack.

Sund testified that he had spoken to Irving specifically on January 6, and requested he declare an emergency and request Guard support at 1:09 p.m. Sund’s request would not be honored by the Police Board until 2:10 p.m. However, further delays at the Pentagon meant that Gen. Walker would not be granted permission to deploy his soldiers until 5:09 p.m., well after the worst of the siege had ended and Trump’s objectives failed.

During the February 23 hearing, Irving disputed Sund’s

timeline and alleged that he did not receive a call from Sund until “around 1:28, 1:30.” In a follow-up hearing with the House Appropriations Committee, acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman confirmed through telephone records that Sund actually first called and spoke to Irving to request Guard support at 12:58 p.m. the day of the attack.

In another revelation further implicating the Capitol Police leadership in facilitating the attack on the Capitol, Committee Chair Zoe Lofgren, a Democrat, alleged that radio communications made during the morning of January 6 by an unnamed Capitol Police officer, recently found by the Office of Professional Responsibility, advised “all outside units” to not look “for any pro-Trump in the crowd.” Instead the voice said, “We’re only looking for any anti-Trump who wants to start a fight.”

Lofgren did not identify the Capitol Police officer who issued the directive. Neither the Capitol Police nor Congress have released audio of the broadcast despite requests to do so from major media organizations.

The Capitol Police department, which has yet to hold a public news conference since the attempted coup over three months ago, issued a statement on Thursday attempting to refute Lofgren’s allegation, stating that the radio call, “has been misquoted and is lacking ... necessary context.”

In their statement, the department included what it says is the transcript of the broadcast, which reads: “With regards to pedestrian traffic on—on the grounds today, we anticipate a—a large presence for pro-Trump participants. What we’re looking for is any anti-Trump counter protesters,” the transcript reads, according to the Capitol Police statement.

As the Capitol Police department’s own statement makes clear, the police were looking for “any anti-Trump counter protesters.” This is despite the fact that the department’s own intelligence report issued on January 3 warned that unlike previous “Make America Great Again” rallies held in November and December in D.C., the pro-Trump mob assembled on January 6, comprised of fascist militias and white supremacists, would be targeting “Congress,” not antifa or anti-Trump protesters. The intelligence report even said that those gathered on January 6 saw the stopping of the congressional certification of the Electoral College vote as “the last opportunity to overturn the results of the presidential election.”

The latest revelations come on top of a mountain of evidence of state complicity in the attempted coup that

was revealed during last week’s House Administration Committee hearing. It was revealed that:

- Capitol Police were directed by at least one “assistant deputy chief of police” not to use “heavier” crowd-control devices, such as 40 mm launchers or sting ball grenades, out of concern that their misuse could cause “life-altering injury and/or death.”

- Rank-and-file police were not briefed on intelligence reports that warned that “Congress itself” would be the target on January 6.

- Capitol Police were woefully unprepared for the crowd. Inspector General Bolton found that unlike previous protests, Capitol Police failed to preposition ammunition caches within the Capitol or set-up a “decontamination area” for officers who were attacked with chemicals.

- The Capitol Police’s equivalent of “riot police,” the Civil Disturbance Unit, did not have access to riot shields which were apparently locked on a bus.

The latest revelations conclusively demonstrate that the attack on the Capitol on January 6 was not simply an “intelligence failure” compounded by unprepared police and exuberant Trump supporters duped by Trump’s “big lie” of a stolen election. It was a deliberate attempt to stop the certification of electoral votes, seize hostages and maintain Trump in power as a dictator-president.

The growing evidence of the complicity of elements of the state with Trump’s coup has been met with deafening silence in the corporate media, which has reported very little from the House Administration Committee hearings. Nor have the Democrats who run the committee sought to highlight this evidence or draw public attention to it.



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