

Wisconsin militia member in Whitmer plot extradited to Michigan, released on bond

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One of the 14 men charged in last year's pre-election plot to kidnap and execute Democratic Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer dropped his extradition appeal in Wisconsin, was taken to Michigan and was briefly booked into the Antrim County Jail last Tuesday.

Brian Higgins, 52, is facing a 20-year felony charge after being charged last October with providing material support of an act of terrorism. Higgins is one of a group of right-wing militia supporters who have been charged in the plot to kidnap and kill the governor over her actions in enforcing an initial coronavirus lockdown a year ago.

Higgins' attorneys had been fighting the extradition request up until last week. After Higgins was extradited on Tuesday, Magistrate Noren Kastys granted his lawyers' request for a \$100,000 bond with the option to post 10 percent. Kastys agreed that as long as Higgins wore a GPS tracker and turned over his passport, he would be free to leave the state. Higgins is not required to appear for a May 12 probable cause conference.

According to the FBI, Higgins is a member of the Wisconsin Patriot Three Percenter Militia and was an "intel guy" for the fascist group. At least two members of the Three Percenters, Guy Wesley Reffitt of Wylie, Texas and Robert Gieswein, from Woodland Park, Colorado, have been arrested for their role in the attack on the US Capitol on January 6.

In an affidavit filed last year, Michigan State Police (MSP) alleged that Higgins, along with previously indicted Wolverine Watchmen militia members Shawn Fix, Eric Molitor and twin brothers, William and Michael Null, conducted "surveillance" of Whitmer's family vacation home in Antrim County. The MSP alleged that during an evening reconnaissance mission, Higgins provided night-vision goggles for the group to

use. Higgins is also alleged to have used a mounted dash camera to record and survey the governor's home.

As with the January 6 attempted coup, the plot against Whitmer was not simply the result of a conspiracy between a few fascists, but was supported by significant sections of the police and Republican Party. Dozens of militia members, displaying semi-automatic weapons, filled the halls of the Lansing Capitol on April 30, 2020.

The action was coordinated with the Republican Party establishment and backed by Trump, and was one of a series of actions at state capitols around the country that served as dress rehearsals for the main event on January 6.

It was followed less than three weeks later by the "American Patriot Council Rally," organized by Republican Allendale Township planning commissioner, real estate agent, and aspiring 2022 Michigan gubernatorial candidate Ryan Kelley and his friend Jason Howland. At least seven of the 14 men who were arrested in the plot against Whitmer attended this rally, including the Null brothers, who provided "security."

It should be noted that Kelley and Howland were also photographed on US Capitol grounds on January 6. Neither have been charged as of this writing.

Speakers at the May 18, 2020 rally included Kelley, Howland and Barry County Sheriff Dar Leaf, a member of the fascistic Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA). The CSPOA was founded by former Arizona Sheriff Richard Mack, who along with Stewart Rhodes is a founding board member of the Oath Keepers. A dozen members of this fascistic group have been charged for their roles in the siege of the US Capitol.

Leaf has repeatedly defended the kidnapping plot

against Whitmer, claiming it was legal and a justifiable response to Whitmer's allegedly unconstitutional actions in imposing pandemic-related health restrictions.

Another prominent speaker at the rally was state senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey. Shirkey appealed to the fascist militia members, telling the crowd of roughly 350 people to "Be ready to test and challenge government when they get it backasswards and they think they're the ones who have the rights to give us, when really the government is to provide and protect our rights."

In a photograph from the rally, Shirkey is seen standing next to William Null, a smile across his face. The photo was shared by Howland on the right-wing social media site Parler approximately two weeks ago. Shirkey has previously admitted to meeting with militia groups to give them "advice" on "optics."

The *New York Times* reported in February that after the April 30 storming of the Lansing Capitol, Shirkey thought the "optics weren't good" and advised the militia members "not to bring guns," according to an organizer of the April 30 event. However, Shirkey changed his tune shortly thereafter; in a social media post, Howland claimed that Shirkey, "To his credit," came around and "spoke at our next event," which was the May 18 rally.

Despite the now obvious, and ongoing, connections between fascist militias and the Republican Party, the Democrats, led by President Joe Biden, continue to downplay and cover for their "colleagues," in order to carry out the bipartisan class agenda of "herd immunity" at home and imperialist war abroad.

Demonstrating that the Democrats would rather make deals with, instead of expose, the fascists within the state apparatus, Whitmer called for "unity" with the Republicans and maintained that she was "ready to work with our legislative leaders" during an April Cadillac Area Chamber of Commerce meeting.

This comes one month after Michigan Republican Party Chairman Ron Weiser "joked" about assassinating Whitmer, along with Democratic Attorney General Dana Nessel and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. The Democrats refuse to draw public attention to the ties between the fascist militias and the Republican Party because it cuts across their drive for "bipartisanship" and would undermine the legitimacy

of the entire two-party political setup.



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