

Former Pentagon chief: Trump approved National Guard troops on January 6 to protect fascist “demonstrators”

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The House Oversight and Reform Committee convened the first hearing Wednesday at which the former heads of the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice testified about “unexplained delays and unanswered questions” regarding the attempted coup of January 6.

Testifying before the committee, more than four months after the siege, were former acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, former acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, and current Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department Chief Robert Contee.

In response to questions primarily from Democratic members of the committee, the two officials appointed by Trump, Miller, and Rosen, steadfastly defended their actions before and during the attempted coup. In the case of Miller this took the form of defending the delay of three hours and 19 minutes before National Guard soldiers were deployed to the Capitol after first being requested at 1:49 p.m. by the commander of the D.C. National Guard, William Walker.

“I stand by every decision I made on January 6,” Miller told California Representative Ro Khanna, who demanded that Miller “apologize to the American public for what happened on your watch,” which Miller refused to do.

In an opening statement and subsequent comments, Miller defended the speed of the Pentagon's deployment of troops, telling Florida Republican Representative Byron Donalds that “historians” will agree that it “will go down as one of the fastest” and “most expedient National Guard deployments in modern history.”

This lie was too big to ignore even for the feckless Democrats, prompting New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to contrast Miller's testimony with a previously released Pentagon timeline. Miller claimed in his written testimony that, after learning that “demonstrators had entered the Capitol ... between 1:00

and 1:30 p.m.,” he met with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley and Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy at “approximately 2:30 p.m.,” during which time he discussed urgent requests from Walker and Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser to deploy the National Guard.

Miller then claimed that at 3:00 p.m. he approved the activation and mobilization of the Guard, and that this approval was transmitted to Walker at 3:04 p.m. However, under questioning from Ocasio-Cortez, Miller admitted that while he “gave full authorization to deploy” at 3:00 p.m., no troops were deployed until Walker drew up a “concept of operation.”

Miller refused to explain why this took an hour and a half to materialize, even after he fielded calls from Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pleading for help at 3:19 p.m. or even after Vice President Mike Pence called Miller at 4:08 p.m. and demanded he “clear the Capitol.”

The former Pentagon chief testified that waiting for the supposed construction of this plan meant that the official order for deployment of the Guard did not come until 4:32 p.m., which is the time noted on the official Pentagon timeline. Walker and other high-ranking Defense officials have previously testified that Walker did not receive the approval for another 36 minutes, at 5:08 p.m., with the first troops arriving some 20 minutes later.

Miller refused to answer repeated questions from Khanna as to why there was a 36-minute gap, repeatedly feigning ignorance as to what Khanna was talking about. In testimony given in March, tight-lipped Robert Salesses, a senior official with the Department of Defense, who claimed to have “seen all the timelines,” agreed with Missouri Senator Roy Blunt's assessment that the 36-minute delay was, “a significant problem for the

future.”

Speaking on the alleged involvement of Trump in the events of January 6, Miller attempted to cover for the coup plotter, testifying that the reason Trump was not in the loop on January 6 was that he had delegated all the authority to deploy troops to the Capitol to Miller and therefore it was unnecessary for him to contact the president on January 6. Miller also revealed that he never actually spoke to Walker on January 6.

However, in comments that have been completely ignored in media reporting of the hearing, Miller also told Donalds that on January 3, when discussing the requested deployment of National Guard soldiers that had been submitted on December 31 by D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, Trump was concerned not with protecting Congress, but in ensuring that the “rights” of the pro-Trump mob were “protected.”

“What was the President’s response to you, with regard to the request made by Mayor Bowser?” inquired Donalds.

“Fill it and do whatever was necessary to protect the demonstrators that were executing their constitutionally protected rights,” replied Miller.

No Democrat questioned Miller further as to why the National Guard was deployed on January 6 to “protect the demonstrators” instead of Congress, which as multiple intelligence reports created by the various police and intelligence agencies acknowledged, would be the “target” on January 6.

In a filthy equivocation, Miller claimed the reluctance on the part of the Pentagon to deploy troops to the besieged Capitol was rooted in fear of causing a repeat of the deadly 1970 Kent State massacre in which Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire on unarmed college students protesting the Vietnam War, killing four.

“Historically, military responses to domestic protests have resulted in violations of American civil rights, and even in the case of the Kent State protests of the Vietnam War, tragic deaths,” he said. “I fervently believe the military should not be utilized in such scenarios, other than as a last resort, and only when all other assets had been expended on January 6.”

As for the Department of Justice (DoJ), several Democratic representatives questioned former acting Attorney General Rosen on the failure of the department to prepare intelligence reports and threats analysis prior to the attack. Democratic committee chair Carolyn Maloney noted that despite repeated requests, DoJ officials, including in the FBI, have refused to turn over any

documents in the last four months, while FBI Director Christopher Wray has refused to appear as a witness for the committee.

Rosen also refused to answer questions from Democratic Representative Gerry Connolly of Virginia about whether Trump ordered him to take any action to bolster his false claims of election fraud. Connolly specifically asked Rosen if Trump had instructed him “to advance election fraud claims or to seek to overturn any part of the 2020 election results.”

Rosen claimed that “ground rules” and executive privilege prevented him from providing an answer, which in itself is a tacit admission that Trump had sought legal advice from Rosen. While it is unknown what specific authority Trump was inquiring about, there is a distinct possibility Trump was seeking legal authority from Rosen to reject and overturn the presidential vote.

While Democrats spent most of the hearing reiterating their disdain for Trump and relitigating the attack on the Capitol, Representative Paul Gosar of Arizona, one of the leaders of the pro-Trump “Stop the Steal” campaign, used his time to defend QAnon supporter and former Air Force veteran Ashli Babbitt, who was shot and killed by a Capitol policeman as she attempted to break into the Speaker’s Lobby. Gosar provocatively asked Rosen why Babbitt was “executed.”

Solidarizing himself with fascist militia members currently being investigated by the Department of Justice, Gosar claimed that the department was “harassing peaceful protesters and veterans” and that it was a “conspiracy theory” that Republican legislators aided militia members prior to the coup.

Despite the fact that a majority of the Republican Party continues to spread Trump’s fascist lies, Democrats on the committee, including chairperson Maloney, repeated their calls for the formation of a “bipartisan 9/11 style commission” with their “Republican colleagues,” which in her words would identify the “root causes of the insurrection and prevent similar attacks in the future.” As the WSWs has previously explained, the purpose of such a commission is not to expose the coup plotters but to politically rehabilitate the Republican Party, in order for both parties to pursue their shared class agenda.



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