

DHS leadership failed to issue threat assessments ahead of January 6 despite receiving intelligence warnings

Jacob Crosse
18 May 2021

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing Tuesday concerning the failure of the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to warn law enforcement agencies and Congress of the impending attack on the Capitol January 6.

The hearing demonstrated that I&A was receiving ample evidence of the plans to attack the Capitol in order to stop the congressional certification of the Electoral College votes and keep Trump in office as president. But none of the officials of the I&A and their supervisors in the DHS leadership were actually summoned to be questioned, rendering the entire hearing an exercise in futility.

The committee did not subpoena Chad Wolf, then the acting secretary of DHS, to answer for the blatant and obvious actions by the DHS to sabotage intelligence analysis concerning the threat of far-right militia groups attacking Congress in an attempt to overthrow the election.

Instead, the committee was heard testimony from officials who previously served in the DHS under the Obama administration, were in charge of other departments within the DHS, or were not in government positions at all. Therefore, none of the witnesses could truthfully answer why Wolf did not issue a threat assessment warning or designate January 6 as a “National Security Special Event” as has been done for previous high-level gatherings, like the 2020 Democratic and Republican conventions or even the Super Bowl.

In his opening statement, the chairman of the committee, Senator Gary Peters (Michigan), outlined that the purpose of the hearing was to probe the failure

of the “I&A and other intelligence agencies...[to]...identify the threat on January 6.” Peters noted that the previous administration, “reportedly, downplayed the threat posed by white supremacists and anti-government violence” and that intelligence information was censored “under pressure from former President Trump,” leading to “inaccurate analysis” that exaggerated the role of groups like antifa, while “developing intelligence” on journalists.

Peters ended his remarks with a plea to his “Republican colleagues,” many of whom supported Trump’s coup, so that the committee would “work in a non-partisan way to protect from all threats foreign and domestic.”

Despite the hearing focusing on the alleged “intelligence failures” of the DHS I&A in the lead-up to January 6, such as a January 5, 2021, national summary produced by the DHS I&A that declared “Nothing significant to report,” none of the witnesses testifying before the committee had ever worked in that department in the Trump administration.

Witnesses before the committee included retired General Francis Taylor, a former undersecretary for intelligence and analysis under Obama; Patricia Cogswell, a former deputy administrator with the Transportation Security Administration under Trump; Mike Sena, the president of the National Fusion Center Association; and Faiza Patel, the director of Liberty & National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law.

The most revealing testimony came in an exchange between Taylor and Democratic Senator Jacky Rosen of Nevada, who questioned him as to why the DHS did not issue a threat assessment or a joint intelligence

bulletin specific to January 6, given the abundance of intelligence products created by the New York Police Department, Capitol Police, and FBI prior to January 6, warning of imminent attacks on Congress.

“I wasn’t there” and could not “get into the mind of leadership,” said Taylor, a phrase he repeated multiple times throughout the hearing. However, he stated, “we have a process in this country, of producing threat assessments, that didn’t happen. I can’t say what was in the mind of leadership at the time. I find it difficult to accept that the process was not applied.”

Sena was the only witness who was actually in a DHS “fusion center” on January 6. These are joint federal–state–tribal entities that are supposed to gather, collate and disseminate threat-related information, created in response to supposed “intelligence failures” that led to the still unexplained September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

In his statement, Sena said he was “surprised” that the fusion centers did not receive any specific information prior to January 6. When asked by Rosen why that was the case, Sena was unable to articulate a reason, stating that “information was online, there are a lot of restrictions.”

Further demolishing claims by police and military leadership that there was “no intelligence” warning of an attack on the Capitol, Sena revealed that on January 4, the heads of the fusion centers around the country convened a rare national call to discuss the multitude of threats they were hearing about the upcoming Trump rally in Washington.

“We held a call,” said Sena, because “we were concerned, we were worried, we had DHS I&A on the call.” Sena testified that DHS I&A personnel would be “on site” at the DC fusion center on January 6. However, nothing came of this: “We tried to build that network, I was surprised that nothing was developed at the time,” said Sena.

While Democrats spent the hearing mostly focused on the failures of DHS I&A department and ways to “improve morale” and not “politicize domestic terror threats,” Republicans on the committee, including ranking member Rob Portman (Ohio) and Senator Ron Johnson (Wisconsin) used the hearing to scapegoat immigrants and downplay the fascist threat.

“Now we are supposed to focus on domestic extremism as the number one threat, it’s not,” Johnson

proclaimed. As Republicans have frequently done since January 6, Johnson, disgustingly, tried to equate the fascist coup attempt with the thousands of peaceful protests against police violence held last year. “I condemn January 6, but there were 500 riots throughout the summer,” said Johnson. Appealing to fascists and racists, Johnson declared that “border security is our number one threat and we are ignoring that.”

No Democrat on the committee sought to challenge Johnson’s fascist lies.

The hearing was held the same day the Atlantic Council issued a report authored by the former head of intelligence at the New York Police Department, Mitch Silber. The report, titled *Domestic Violent Extremism and the Intelligence Challenge*, makes clear, despite assertions from Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike, that January 6 was not a failure to gather intelligence but that leadership within the Capitol Police, FBI and DHS, “failed to act” on the “more than sufficient” intelligence collected.

Silber wrote that “intelligence collection” was “robust” and that the failure was “in the analysis of the intelligence and the failure of senior government officials to issue warnings based on that intelligence.” In an interview with National Public Radio, Silber said it was, “a clear failure from the DHS.”

Todd Rosenblum, a former deputy undersecretary of intelligence at DHS, who according to NPR still has contacts in the department, said that the Trump administration focused on “antifa,” the amorphous group of left-wing and anarchist protesters, at the exclusion of known right-wing threats.

“[Administration officials] were insisting on a narrative that wasn’t true, which made it far harder for I&A,” Rosenblum said. “You had the president screaming: ‘Antifa, antifa is behind all this,’ and anyone who’s actually doing the analysis of this knew that was an utter falsehood. ... And DHS was very much aligned in accommodating the president.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact