

Michigan county sheriff coordinated with Trump advisers to try and seize voting machines

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A Michigan county sheriff with connections to far-right militia groups sought to seize Dominion voting machines in cooperation with the effort of Donald Trump and the Republican Party to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential elections.

In email messages obtained by *Bridge Michigan* through the Freedom of Information Act, Barry County Sheriff Dar Leaf tried late last year to enlist other county sheriffs in an illegal and unsuccessful bid to “investigate all acts of voter fraud” by seizing and inspecting voting machines manufactured by Dominion Voting Systems of Denver, Colorado.

Bridge Michigan said that the “trove of emails” indicates that “Trump had at least some law enforcement support in his bid to overturn the 2020 election won by Democratic President Joe Biden.” Among the top-level Trump contacts involved in the communications from Leaf were a liaison for former national security adviser Michael Flynn and White House attorney Sidney Powell, who was leading bogus legal filings alleging election fraud by Democrats across the country.

The messages show that Dar Leaf retained the services of Ann Arbor attorney Carson Tucker, who in turn sent requests to the Trump advisers asking for information that would justify the seizure of the voting machines. In a December 15 email to Carissa Keshel of the Fight Back Foundation—a nonprofit organization chaired by the fascist attorney L. Lin Wood—Tucker asked for information about “counties that have been potentially compromised” in the November 3 elections.

In his request, Tucker claimed that sheriffs in St. Joseph, Shiawassee, Lake and Jackson counties were “expressing interest” in the effort along with Leaf.

Tucker wrote: “My client Barry County Sheriff and several other county sheriffs in Michigan would like to consider issuing probable cause warrants to sequester Dominion voting machines if there is evidence of criminal manipulation.”

In her response to Tucker on December 15, Keshel provided a document that she said came from Michael Flynn. Flynn, who twice pled guilty to lying to federal investigators during the FBI’s Russia probe, was pardoned by Trump after the 2020 elections.

Keshel was referencing a report that asserted voter fraud in Antrim County, Michigan, writing, “Hi Carson and Dar, General Flynn wanted ya’ll to see the Antrim Forensics analysis, and we believe all 48 counties are affected the same. I am in contact with the team to be able to coordinate our next steps with these Dominion machines.”

Bridge Michigan also reported: “In an earlier, Nov. 20 email to Powell—who later filed failed lawsuits seeking to overturn Trump losses in Michigan and other swing states—Carson Tucker claimed Leaf had already seized voting machines and ballots in Barry County. But that did not happen, according to local election officials and Leaf, who told *Bridge* he did not recall why his attorney told Powell it had.”

When *Bridge Michigan* contacted Leaf about the emails, he claimed he worked with other Michigan sheriffs on an “ongoing” matter but would not discuss any details other than to say, “It is our job to investigate all acts of voter fraud.” However, of the four sheriffs mentioned in Tucker’s letter, only Lake County Sheriff Rich Martin confirmed that Leaf had spoken to him and told *Bridge* that he never agreed to the effort, saying he “didn’t want any part of it.”

Martin also told *Bridge* that Leaf “does ~~kinsh~~ ~~ow~~ ~~of~~ ~~fundam~~ ~~ental~~ disrespect for the rule of law.” own thing” and “I’m friends with him , so he usually calls me first on some of these things, but I don’t have anything to do with that.”

Leaf belongs to a group of self-described “constitutional sheriffs” that are connected with far-right and fascist politics including the racist and xenophobic Sheriff Joe Arpaio from Maricopa County, Arizona, who was convicted on criminal contempt charges and then pardoned by Donald Trump in August 2017. Members of the group contend that they are the highest level of government authority and have the authority to disregard laws they think are unconstitutional.

In his comments to *Bridge*, Leaf said that it is important for elected county law enforcement officers to “exercise their authority” so that it does not get “diluted.” He added, “It’s just a matter of us harnessing it and getting the office of sheriff back on track and where it’s supposed to be.”

As Tucker’s letter to Keshel explained, “Constitutional Sheriffs have a legal obligation and duty to ferret out criminal activity in the county on behalf of the citizenry. And they are the chief law enforcement officers.”

The Antrim County “forensic audit report” that Keshel provided to Tucker and claimed was from Flynn was prepared by a pro-Trump group called Allied Security Operations. The report claimed that Dominion voting machines had a 68 percent error rate and were “intentionally and purposefully designed with inherent errors to create systemic fraud and influence election results.”

These conclusions were denounced widely by various independent sources, including Trump’s former chief of the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Chris Krebs, who said during a Senate hearing in December that the report was “factually inaccurate.”

David Becker, executive director of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, described the attempt by Leaf to seize the voting machines with the support of Tucker and others within the Trump camp as befitting a “banana republic” and “tinpot dictator stuff.” Becker also said, “Every single person knew the rules of the election going into the election, and to try to seize voting machines in contravention of federal law

A profile of Dar Leaf was published here on the *World Socialist Web Site* last October that reviews his extensive connections with right-wing and fascistic organizations, including militia members who plotted to kidnap and murder Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer last fall. In an interview with Fox17 in Grand Rapids, when Leaf was asked about the kidnapping plot, he said, “a lot of people are angry with the governor, and they want her arrested.”

These new documents detail coordination between the Trump White House officials, Republican Party leaders and fascistic individuals in Michigan to overturn the 2020 presidential election and show a widespread and ongoing conspiracy against the US Constitution. Culminating in the assault on the US Capitol on January 6, the claim of a stolen election continues, while the Democrats are doing nothing to bring the conspirator Trump to account.



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