

Fascist Trump foot soldier receives slap on the wrist in sentencing for January 6 coup

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In the first felony sentencing hearing related to Donald Trump's attempted coup on January 6, US District Judge Randolph Moss, an appointee of President Barack Obama, sentenced Paul A. Hodgkins, 38, to eight months in prison after he pled guilty to a single count of obstructing an official proceeding.

The sentence is less than half of the 15–21 months recommended by federal prosecutors and a mere fraction of the 20-year maximum allowable under the law. As part of Hodgkins' guilty plea last month, prosecutors agreed to drop four misdemeanor counts of trespassing and disorderly conduct. He had previously been released on bail after posting a \$25,000 bond.

In a stark example of class justice, earlier this month a 62-year-old African American man, Hervis Rogers, was arrested in Texas for voting while on parole and faces a possible 40-year prison sentence. Crystal Mason, an African American woman also from Texas, is serving a five-year prison term for the same "crime" of voting.

Hodgkins' sentence will likely serve as a benchmark for the more than 200 other defendants charged with the same felony of obstructing an official proceeding. The sentencing comes less than a week after the *Washington Post* revealed that a new book by reporters Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker quotes Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, comparing Trump's plot to overturn the 2020 election to the coming to power of Adolf Hitler, telling his aides, "This is a Reichstag moment, the gospel of the Führer."

Hodgkins was one of some 50 far-right Trump supporters and militia members who broke into the Senate chamber on January 6. In a *New Yorker* video, Hodgkins appears at the 7:48 mark in the chamber along with Proud Boys and other militia members. He

is standing next to the rostrum, wearing a Trump T-shirt and waving a "Trump 2020" flag.

Standing behind Hodgkins, on the dias where Vice President Mike Pence was overseeing the counting of the Electoral College vote less than an hour before, prior to being evacuated as Trump supporters breached the Capitol shouting, "Hang Mike Pence," is Jacob A. Chansley, also known as Jake Angeli, or the "QAnon Shaman."

Chansley, after denouncing Pence as a traitor, recites a fascistic prayer over a bullhorn as police, Trump supporters, militia members and Hodgkins form a circle around him. Chansley begins by thanking God for "being the inspiration needed to these police officers to allow us into the building," saying the storming of the Capitol on behalf of Trump sends a message to "all the tyrants, the communists, and the globalists."

After Chansley concludes his prayer, again invoking God for "allowing us to get rid of the communists, the globalists and the traitors within our government," Hodgkins lifts his Trump flag in a fascist salute and nods in agreement, as others in the room shout "Amen."

Far from planning for a "normal tourist visit" or a "peaceful protest," as Republican Party politicians have asserted in the months following the failed coup, Hodgkins admitted to prosecutors in his plea agreement that he boarded a bus to Washington D.C. from his hometown of Tampa, Florida with a rope, protective goggles and latex gloves, all of which he brought within him to the Senate floor.

Despite Hodgkins appearing in the Senate chamber alongside Proud Boys militia members, 37 of whom have been charged in the assault on the Capitol, and participating in a fascist prayer with one of the most prominent progenitors of the QAnon conspiracy theory,

Hodgkins claims he was not part of any organized group, a claim evidently accepted by federal prosecutors and the Biden Justice Department.

In arguing for an 18-month sentence, Assistant US Attorney Mona Sedky noted that Hodgkins “came prepared for confrontation,” and that he “had donned his protective eye goggles before he entered the Senate chamber.” She said a tough sentence was needed in order to deter others from “planning a sequel” to the attempted coup.

“He was part and parcel of an act of domestic terrorism that was going on around him,” she added.

Hodgkins’ lawyer, Paul Leduc, a colonel in the Army Reserve, rejected Sedky’s characterization. “All of this commentary about January 6 being an act of domestic terrorism, I find it to be offensive, and I think it is gas-lighting the country and it needs to stop,” he demanded.

Repeating the same lies that have been promoted by Trump’s accomplices in the Republican Party, such as Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson, who described the attempted coup as a largely “peaceful protest,” Leduc argued that “it was a protest that became a riot,” comparable to last summer’s historic protests against police violence.

Judge Moss countered Leduc’s argument, saying, “I don’t think that any plausible argument can be made defending what happened in the Capitol as an exercise of First Amendment rights.”

He continued: “There were people storming through the halls of the Capitol, saying, ‘Where’s Nancy?’ People were threatening the lives of members of Congress. That is more than a simple riot.”

However, Moss was not moved by the prosecution’s argument, referring to future prosecutions and an ongoing threat, that a message needed to be sent. “I come back in my mind to the question of this case and how this case fits into the larger puzzle,” he said, adding that “there will be cases likely in which the government will have the opportunity to make that point.”

While Hodgkins will spend eight months in prison, those who conspired with the coup plotter-in-chief Trump—including his lawyer accomplices Rudolph Giuliani, Lin Wood and Sidney Powell, and Republican co-conspirators such as Arizona Representatives Paul Gosar and Andy Biggs, Alabama Representative Mo Brooks, Senators Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley and Tommy

Tuberville—will not sniff the inside of a jail cell if it is left to the Democrats to decide.

The ruling class’ desire to move on from the coup and shield those elements in the state responsible for the sabotage of the defense of the Capitol—including the FBI, the US Capitol Police, and the Pentagon leadership—was evident from the start of Hodgkins’ prosecution.

Even though video footage of Hodgkins in the Capitol was posted by the *New Yorker* on January 16, it took a call-in tip to the FBI office for Hodgkins to be arrested on February 16. The tipster, who personally knew Hodgkins but claimed to have not spoken to him for several years, called the FBI after seeing a “selfie” photo Hodgkins took inside the Capitol that had been posted on the right-wing social media network Parler.

Despite being the targets of the fascists that day, Democratic Party politicians were for the most part silent on the lenient sentencing. Not a single member of the “Squad”—the nominally “left” members of the Democratic House caucus, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—issued a statement. Nor did Senator Bernie Sanders.



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