

After January 6 hearing

Republicans dismiss accounts of fascist violence, Democrats continue appeals for “unity”

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28 July 2021

Tuesday's hearing of the House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack provided harrowing first-hand accounts of the fascist attack on the U.S. Capitol directed by then-President Donald Trump. The witnesses, two Capitol Police and two D.C. Metro Police officers, were severely injured in the attempted coup. They described in graphic detail the violent assault by armed militia members and rabid Trump supporters unleashed by the White House in a bid to block the certification of the election result, overthrow the Constitution and maintain Trump in power.

Each of the four men—Capitol Police Sergeant Aquilino Gonell, Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, and Metro Police officers Michael Fanone and Daniel Hodges—described the homicidal violence of the insurrectionists as they experienced it, as well as the fascist and racist sentiments that inspired Trump's mob. They expressed the belief that the aim of the attackers was to kill Democratic lawmakers targeted by Trump, as well as then-Vice President Mike Pence.

Their testimony underscored how close the coup came to succeeding. It raised sharply the complete lack of preparation and de facto stand-down of police and military security, despite Trump's open calls for his fascist supporters to mass in Washington D.C. on the constitutionally mandated day for Congress to ratify Biden's election victory.

With far greater seriousness and passion than any of the Democrats on the committee, they condemned the complicity of the Republican Party—before, during and after the attempted coup—and demanded that all those in power who plotted and oversaw the assault be held accountable.

The response of the Republican Party was unambiguous. It was transforming itself into the fascist party of its would-be Führer Trump and his “stab-in-the-back” lie of the “stolen election,” and it would not turn back.

On Wednesday, the two top Republicans in Congress—House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell—both announced that they had not bothered

to watch the three-and-a-half-hour hearing, dismissing it as a partisan witch-hunt.

At a House Rules Committee hearing Tuesday evening, hours after the January 6 hearing, Republican Representative Andrew Clyde of Georgia defended his earlier characterization of the January 6 attack on the Capitol as a “normal tourist visit.” Challenged by Democratic Representative Jamie Raskin of Maryland, a member of the January 6 Select Committee, to state if he still maintained his position in light of the testimony of the police officers, Clyde said, “I stand by that exact statement, as I said it.”

The previous day, McCarthy staged a press conference in advance of the opening of the January 6 hearing. He and other top House Republicans, including five members he had pulled from the committee last week in an attempt to blow up any investigation of the coup, denounced the Select Committee as a partisan attack. They demanded that Congress instead investigate House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whom they declared to be responsible for the lack of security at the Capitol on January 6, ignoring the fact that Trump's insurrectionists had rampaged through the building for hours calling out, “Where's Nancy?”

Even more telling was a press conference and rally held on Tuesday following the hearing by the openly fascist faction of the House Republicans, led by QAnon advocate and Holocaust denier Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia. Greene was joined by four other House defenders of the January 6 coup attempt—Paul Gosar of Arizona, Matt Gaetz of Florida, Louie Gohmert of Texas and Bob Good of Virginia—who gathered in front of the Justice Department to defend the “political prisoners” jailed for their roles in the attack on the Capitol.

The Republican representatives were accompanied by a man in a giant Trump costume with the message, “TRUMP WON,” as well as a small number of supporters carrying American flags and signs saying, “Jan. 6 Was an Inside Job” and shouting, “Free the January 6 political prisoners!”

The press conference was cut short when hecklers, who outnumbered the supporters of the rioters, moved toward the microphone. However, Gosar had time to declare, “These are not unruly or dangerous, violent criminals. There are political prisoners who are now being persecuted and bearing the pain of unjust suffering.”

In the course of the House Select Committee hearing, the police who testified spoke of the large presence of heavily armed militia forces, including those with military or police connections, in the mob. Capitol Police Sergeant Gonell, an Iraq War veteran, said his battle with the Trump terrorists was worse than anything he had experienced in the war zones of Iraq.

“It appeared that many of the attackers had law enforcement or military experience,” he said and listed the weapons they were brandishing, including hammers, knives, shields, bear spray, pepper spray, sledge hammers and table legs.”

He described his hand-to-hand combat with attackers as a “medieval battle.”

“I could feel myself losing oxygen and recall thinking to myself, ‘This is how I’m going to die,’ ” he said.

He denounced Trump directly as well as all those who defended him and downplayed the events of January 6. “Instead of sending the military or telling his supporters to stop,” Gonell told the committee, “he egged them to continue. All of them were telling us that Trump sent us. Not Antifa, not Black Lives Matter. He could have told them to stop ...”

“It was a coup. ... If it was another country, the US would have sent help.”

He added, “We have people right now in front of the Justice Department asking that the insurrectionists be released. They should not be elected officials anymore.”

D.C. Metro Police Officer Fanone was repeatedly tasered and beaten unconscious, suffering a heart attack, a concussion and brain trauma. He disputed claims that the insurrectionists were unarmed.

“As for firearms, in the immediate days before, firearms were recovered from individuals who were planning to participate in January 6,” he said.

Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, an African American, described the racism of the mob. He said, “One woman in a pink MAGA shirt yelled, ‘You hear that, guys, this (N-word) voted for Joe Biden!’ No one had ever called me a (N-word) while wearing my Capitol Police uniform.”

On the role of the Capitol Police leadership, he said, “Our chain of command had not prepared us to deal with anything like this level of violence. We were not prepared for what we faced that day.”

Pointing to the role of Trump, Dunn was emphatic, saying, “When people feel emboldened by people in power, they think that they are right. That makes a scary prospect for the future...”

“I ask you to get to the bottom of what happened. If a hit man is hired and he kills somebody, he goes to jail. But not only

him, but the man who hired him.”

D.C. Metro Police Officer Hodges seconded the urgency of exposing the role of Trump and his co-conspirators in orchestrating the coup. “I need you to address whether anyone in power had a hand in this or tried to downplay it or prevent an investigation into this attack. A majority of Americans are looking forward to that,” he told the committee.

These sentiments, which are shared by the broad mass of the American people, stand, however, in the sharpest contrast to the cowardice and duplicity of the Democratic Party. In the hearing itself, not one of the seven Democrats could muster the courage to even utter Trump’s name. It was the right-wing war hawk Liz Cheney, one of two anti-Trump Republicans appointed to the committee by Pelosi, who stressed the need to investigate fully the actions of Trump and his White House prior to, during and after the attempted coup. Cheney as well was the only committee member to call for the aggressive use of subpoenas and their prompt enforcement.

At a brief press conference after the hearing, Chairman Bennie Thompson of Mississippi was asked when the next hearing would be held. He could not provide an answer, saying only that the committee would consult and consider whether to call a session before the end of Congress’s August recess. In other words, no decision will be made pending the outcome of backroom discussions with Trump’s fascistic co-plotters.

It is instructive to go to the Select Committee’s official website and click on “Committee Activity.” Under the heading “Hearings,” one finds “There are no upcoming hearings.”

As for the party’s so-called “progressive” wing, neither Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez nor Bernie Sanders so much as posted a tweet on the hearing or its surrounding events.

By Wednesday evening, in Democratic Party circles and aligned media, the January 6 hearing had been eclipsed (failing even to make the network evening news) by the Senate vote to begin debate on a bipartisan infrastructure bill, which will do little to reverse the decay of the country’s social infrastructure but will provide a windfall for private corporate contractors.



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