Far-right “Cyber Symposium” attended by Republican politicians promotes “stolen election” lies

Jacob Crosse
13 August 2021

For three days this week, MyPillow CEO and co-conspirator in Donald Trump’s January 6 attempted coup, Mike Lindell, hosted Republican lawmakers, at least one former state Supreme Court judge, state election officials, far-right media personalities and legitimate cyber-security experts at “Mike Lindell’s Cyber Symposium.”

Among the featured speakers at the event, held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, was Trump’s former White House adviser Stephen Bannon.

A significant number of Republican Party officials, from at least 17 states, attended the symposium. They include politicians who played an active role in conceiving and perpetrating the January 6 attack on the US Capitol, including:

* Amanda Chase, a member of the Virginia State Senate since 2015.

Describing herself as “Trump in heels,” Chase, like many Republican lawmakers, maintains close relations with fascist militia groups. She has been photographed marching with Boogaloo boys and posing in front of QAnon banners. She held a Facebook Live event with Oath Keeper founder Stewart Rhodes on January 5, during which she nodded in agreement when Rhodes suggested that Trump “call us up right now as a militia and put us to work.”

* Wendy Rogers, a retired lieutenant colonel who was elected to the Arizona Senate this past year.

Prior to the attempted coup, which she blamed on “Antifa,” Rogers claimed that the election was stolen and urged her supporters on social media to “buy more ammo.” In September of 2020, Rogers solidarized herself with fascist murderer Kyle Rittenhouse, stating that she was “used to being attacked by the far, far, far Left... that’s what happens when you stand and fight for what’s right.” She continued, “It happened to Kyle Rittenhouse, it happened to Senator Rand Paul, and now the extreme Left is doing it to me.”

This past July, Rogers tweeted her agreement with the fascist Great Replacement theory, writing: “We Americans who love this country are being replaced by people who do not love this country… Communists & our enemies are using mass immigration, education, big tech, big corporations & other strategies to accomplish this. The groups who are doing this undermine our families, our history, our faith, and our rights.”

Trump’s fascistic adviser Stephen Bannon declared from the stage that “what happened on 3 November is a lie and we’re about to find out that what happened on 1/6 is a lie.”

This line was echoed by Lindell, who called the January 6 fascist attack on Congress “a set-up.”

Joining Bannon on stage was the son of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, Eduardo Bolsonaro. During his forty-minute presentation, he repeated the same lies used by Trump, claiming that the only way his father could lose in the upcoming election was if it was stolen by the opposition. Eduardo Bolsonaro was in Washington D.C. on the eve of Trump’s attempted coup and reacted with dismay after its failure. “If they had been organized, they would have taken the Capitol and made demands that would have been previously established by the invading group,” he said. He added, “They would have had a minimal war power so that nobody (on their side) would have died—to have killed all the police inside or the congressmen they all hate.”

Other notable attendees included Ron Watkins, the site administrator of the image-board website 8chan, which was used to funnel and propagate QAnon conspiracy theories.

Also in attendance were Republican Wisconsin State Representative Timothy Ramthun, state Elections Commissioner Bob Spindell and former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Michael Gabelman. The latter, at the cost of $11,000 a month to the Wisconsin taxpayer, was hired in June by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos to “investigate” the 2020 presidential election. At a post-election rally held last November, Gabelman claimed that Trump lost due to massive election fraud.

In the lead-up to the event, Lindell, a serial liar, claimed that he had “irrefutable” and “objective” evidence that the 2020 election was stolen. He said he had proof in the form of “packet captures” or “pcaps”—essentially, intercepted network traffic—which he had secretly acquired and offered for analysis by network security experts. These pcaps would, according to Lindell, prove that hackers working for the Chinese Communist

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Party had switched votes from Trump to Joe Biden. This electoral fraud was alleged by Lindell to have been perpetrated in Dominion Voting System machines.

Lindell spent much of the event ranting about the various ways the election was allegedly stolen, and how "Antifa" was behind the numerous technical issues that marred several presentations. However, he never produced any "packet captures" from China, or anywhere else, indicating election fraud.

Robert Graham, a technology expert and author who attended and live-tweeted throughout the event, summed up his "final verdict," writing: "Number of 'packet captures' or 'cyber caps' seen = 0. Amount of 'Absolute Proof' seen = 0. Amount of any evidence seen = 0."

That there was no evidence of cyber manipulation was known from the start, but the fact that nothing was produced to lend so much as a veneer of credibility came as a shock even to some of Lindell's cyber team. Josh Merritt, a cyber expert on the "red team" hired by Lindell to go over his "pcaps," told the right-wing *Washington Times* on Wednesday that the data provided by Lindell for his team to analyze would not prove that China interfered in the election.

"So our team said, we're not going to say that this is legitimate if we don't have confidence in the information," Merritt said during the second day of the symposium.

"We were handed a turd," he concluded. "And I had to take that turd and turn it into a diamond. And that's what I think we did."

That same day, a federal judge ruled that a Dominion Voting Systems' $1.3 billion defamation case against Trump lawyers Sidney Powell and Rudy Giuliani, as well as Mike Lindell, could move forward. In his decision denying motions by Giuliani, Powell and Lindell to have the case dismissed, US District Judge Carl Nichols wrote that the multi-millionaire pillow salesman had "made his claims knowing that they were false or with reckless disregard for the truth."

Lindell is a former crack addict turned born-again Christian and an early supporter of Trump's presidency. Lindell was a guest at Trump's 2016 inauguration and went on to make several appearances alongside Trump at the White House. He spoke at rallies with Trump in South Dakota in 2017 and Minnesota in 2018, and at the 2019 Conservative Political Action Conference. There, Lindell declared that Trump was "chosen by God" to be president. Trump has repeatedly urged him to run for Minnesota governor in 2022.

After Trump lost the election, Lindell helped organize fascistic rallies in Washington D.C. in December and January, which served as dry-runs for the attack on the Capitol. At the December 12 "Jericho March" rally, heavily attended by the Proud Boys, Lindell declared: "The fraud is 100 percent and Donald Trump will be our president for four more years."

Lindell also spoke at the January 5, 2021 "Save the Republic" rally in D.C., where he claimed that "if the truth comes out" about the "Dominion machines," we could avoid a "civil war." He also attended a secretive January 5 meeting at the Trump International Hotel in D.C., during which members of the Trump family, Eduardo Bolsonaro and at least three Republican senators, including Tommy Tuberville, finalized their insurrection plans for the following day.

Lindell also spoke at the Women for America First's "March for Trump" event on January 6, where he repeatedly claimed the election had been stolen and said he had "been working with General Flynn," along with Sidney Powell and Giuliani, to "look into the fraud."

On January 15, 2021, Lindell was photographed outside the White House with notes appearing to urge Trump to declare martial law, invoke the Insurrection Act, fire high-ranking officials in the White House and the intelligence agencies and replace them with Trump loyalists, and refuse to accept the election results.

By February 5, Lindell was screening a two-hour propaganda piece titled "ABSOLUTE PROOF," which claimed that former Attorney General William Barr, who stated in December that there was no evidence of significant election fraud, was "corrupt" and had been "compromised." The film was played multiple times during the symposium and has been screened at local Republican Party functions around the country since its release.

This is the party with which Biden and the Democrats seek to unite and establish bipartisan harmony. Seven months after the January 6 attempted coup, not one of the political criminals and coup-plotters who attended Lindell's fascist event have been charged, or even forced to testify before Congress. This policy of cover-up is aimed at keeping the working class in the dark for fear of mass opposition from below. It directly benefits the fascistic forces being mobilized behind Trump and the Republicans.

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