

Washington D.C. law enforcement warns of armed violence ahead of Saturday's fascist "Justice for J6" rally

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It is more than eight months since former president Donald Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol in an attempt to block congressional certification of Joe Biden's victorious Electoral College vote. That fascist coup attempt, directed from the White House by Trump himself, led to the deployment of thousands of National Guard troops to protect the January 20 inauguration of Biden and the installation of a security fence around the Capitol, which remained standing until early July.

Now the nation's capital is once again being transformed into a fortress, ahead of Saturday's "Justice for J6" rally, organized by former Trump campaign staffer and long-time Republican operative Matt Braynard. The organizers are demanding the release of several hundred Trump supporters, whom they label "political prisoners," charged and imprisoned for participating in the violent assault, which led to the death of five people and the wounding of 138 police officers. Many of those being held are members of fascist militias such as the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers and the III Percenters.

At previous rallies organized by Braynard, far-right Republican lawmakers Matt Gaetz (Florida), Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia), Paul Gosar (Arizona) and Louie Gohmert (Texas) have spoken in support of the arrested militia members, describing them as "patriots" who have been wrongly imprisoned simply for exercising their First Amendment rights.

While it is unclear how many, if any, Republican lawmakers will speak at the event, the fascist rally has the tacit support of many of the party's leaders. When asked by the Associated Press this week if Senator Josh Hawley, one of seven Republican senators who voted to overturn the election results in the aftermath of the failed coup, would be attending the rally, his office refused to answer, instead issuing a comment on his behalf.

"Joe [Biden] should resign," Hawley's statement read.

On Wednesday, the official Twitter account of the Capitol Police posted the following statement: "The USCP has asked the Department of Defense for the ability to receive National Guard support should the need arise on September 18."

US Capitol Police Chief Tom Manger released a statement on Monday claiming he was "aware of concerning online chatter" regarding the event. "We are here to protect everyone's First Amendment right to peacefully protest," said Manger. "I urge anyone who is thinking about causing trouble to stay home. We will enforce the law and not tolerate violence."

In the same statement, Manger announced that the Capitol Police Board, the body charged with overseeing the security of the Capitol complex, had approved the deployment of security fencing.

The statement also noted that the police board met last week to issue an emergency declaration allowing the US Capitol Police to deputize police outside the department as "United States Capitol Police Special Officers."

Speaking to reporters Monday after hosting a security briefing with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Manger said the fencing will start going up a "day or two" before the rally, and if "everything goes well," come down "very soon" after.

Pelosi spoke to reporters after the meeting Monday, commending Manger for his plan ahead of the rally, which she said "seems much better" than the one hatched by ousted former Capitol Police Chief Steve Sund in advance of January 6. Pelosi said she did not "have anything to compare [Manger's plan] to, because we weren't briefed before."

When asked by CNN if the National Guard would be deployed ahead of the rally, Pelosi responded, “You’ll have to ask the police board.”

CNN and the Associated Press both reported Monday that the Capitol Police, along with federal and local law enforcement, are preparing for the possibility that some of those in attendance will be armed.

Speaking to *Forbes* on Monday, Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin said he was “very concerned” about a repeat of the January 6 attack. During a floor speech, Durbin described the impending rally as “another gathering of violent white nationalists.”

Eric Harris, a top aide to Democratic Representative Jimmy Gomez (California), told *Forbes* that he heard from several Republican staffers that their bosses might “make an appearance at this demonstration.”

Democratic Representatives Tim Ryan (Ohio) and Rosa DeLauro (Connecticut) released a joint statement on Monday concerning the rally, which read, in part: “Given the violent tendencies of the right-wing extremists who plan to attend, it is obvious that this rally poses a threat to the Capitol, those who work here, and the law enforcement officers charged with protecting our democracy.”

Omitting mention of the fact that the Capitol Police leadership purposefully sabotaged the defense of the Capitol last January, Ryan and DeLauro added they were “pleased that the Capitol Police... appear to have developed a clear plan, based on careful intelligence analysis, to maintain order and protect public safety.”

As with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the claim that a lack of “intelligence” facilitated the January 6 assault has already been proven a lie. Last week, *Politico* reported that on January 4, at least 300 law enforcement officials participated in a conference call “to talk about the possibility that Donald Trump’s supporters would turn violent on January 6.” *Politico* wrote that the officials, including Mike Sena, president of the national Fusion Center Association, discussed the possibility of the impending rally called by Trump turning into “a mass-casualty event.”

Law enforcement officials “were so prepared” for this distinct possibility, wrote *Politico*, that on the FBI’s private communication service, agents and police began circulating the hashtag #CERTUNREST2021

“Reporting indicates a significant number of individual [sic] plan to or are advocating for others to travel to Washington, DC to engage in civil unrest and violence,” read a summary of the call, obtained by the transparency

group *Property of the People*, which has previously released sensitive law enforcement documents .

Even now, as the Republican Party en masse embraces Trump’s whitewash of January 6 and his lying claims of a “stolen election,” and most Republican officials either openly or tacitly encourage fascist rallies in defense of the coup, Pelosi, in comments made last week at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, called for “ a big, strong Republican Party. ”

As the Democrats appeal to “good Republicans” like war hawks Adam Kinzinger and Liz Cheney, the threat of fascist violence lingers over the Capitol. Early Monday morning, Capitol Police announced they had arrested a California neo-Nazi, 44-year-old Donald Craighead. Craighead was arrested near the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington D.C.

According to a statement put out by the Capitol Police, officers noticed a black Dodge Dakota truck without legal license plates parked near the same headquarters where a still unidentified person placed one of two active pipe bombs the evening of January 5.

Upon approaching the vehicle, police observed “a swastika and other white supremacist symbols.” In photos released by the department, one can see the Othala rune carved into Craighead’s dashboard. The rune is popular among US Special Forces and neo-Nazis. The photos also show a machete and knives in the cabin of the truck, which are prohibited in D.C.

Police claim that when they began speaking to Craighead, he ranted about “white supremacist ideology and other rhetoric pertaining to white supremacy.”

In an interview with NBC San Diego, Joanne Craighead, Donald’s grandmother, described her grandson as “always in trouble” and “heading in the wrong direction his whole life.” Craighead allegedly told police he was outside the Democratic Party building because he was “on patrol.”



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