

Biden hails police as dozens revealed to have joined fascist Oath Keeper militia group

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This past Saturday in front of the US Capitol, President Joe Biden, flanked by dozens of police officers, gave remarks hailing the US Capitol Police as saviors of “democracy,” while memorializing police officers lost “in the line of duty.”

“Because of you, democracy survived,” said Biden, while he avoided the obvious question posed in his remarks: what is the state of American democracy that a few hundred deliberately ill-equipped and unprepared Capitol Police officers were all that stood between the US Congress and a fascist mob.

While memorializing the 491 police who were killed in the “line of duty” in 2019-2020, Biden failed to mention the more than 2,000 civilians killed by police during that same period of time. That disparity is even greater considering that in 2020, a large majority of police officer deaths on duty were caused by COVID-19, and many others were due to traffic accidents and heart attacks during strenuous physical activity. Contrary to the media depiction, occupations like commercial fishing, truck driving, farming, lumber and construction are far more dangerous than policing.

Biden did not bother to explain the contradiction between the threat to democracy revealed on January 6, and the indifference and unwillingness of his administration and the Democratic Party to fight back against those responsible, or even conduct a serious investigation.

Nor did he address the fact that the vast majority of policemen—on whom, according to him, democracy depends—gave their political support to the would-be Fuhrer Donald Trump, who has deliberately pitched his appeals to policemen, Border Patrol and immigration agents, prison guards and other repressive personnel.

The event Biden was addressing was organized by the far-right Fraternal Order of Police, which endorsed Trump in 2016 and 2020, and would undoubtedly do so again in

2024, despite his effort to overthrow the Constitution on January 6.

Only the day before Biden’s appearance, Capitol Police officer Michael Riley was arrested. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on two counts of obstruction for attempting to help a January 6 insurrectionist obscure his involvement in the coup attempt. The charging papers allege that Riley, through social media, contacted and advised the coup participant to delete his incriminating social media posts, which showed him storming the Capitol and smoking marijuana inside the building.

In the indictment, the grand jury alleges that on January 1, 2021 Riley, through a Facebook fishing group, became friends with a “Person 1,” who while unnamed in the indictment is believed to be Jacob Hiles, “a Virginia Beach-based boat captain” who was arrested on January 19 and pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor offense for his actions, according to *Politico*. The charging papers allege that after becoming friends with Person 1 on January 7, Riley sent him a Facebook message in response to a “selfie-style” photograph Person 1 posted, along with video and other commentary in which Person 1 established they participated in the attempted coup, including storming the Capitol building.

“Hey [Person 1], im a capitol police officer who agrees with your political stance,” Riley allegedly wrote. “Take down the part about being in the building they are currently investigating and everyone who was in the building is going to [be] charged.”

“Just looking out!” Riley added.

The indictment alleges Riley and the insurrectionists exchanged “dozens” of direct messages following Riley’s initial outreach and at least one phone call. In one exchange, Riley invited Person 1 to “stay at my house ... for free” the next time he was in Washington D.C. and that: “If you want to see the capitol building, lets do it legally next time ... I know a guy who can get you a tour ...

lol. Its behind you now ... lesson learned! Just ask your attorney whats next.”

While Riley, it appears at this time, did not actively engage in Trump’s attempted coup, his attempts to protect this particular insurrectionist speaks to the wider sympathy Trump’s fascist politics have within not only the Capitol Police, many of whom were witnessed assisting or offering only limp resistance to the mob on January 6.

Trump, and the Republican Party as a whole, are specifically and deliberately cultivating a base of support among petty-bourgeois elements, the police and military. It was these forces, which included neo-Nazis, militia members, and current and former police and military members, who stormed the Capitol on January 6. An April analysis from ABC News identified 52 police as having participated in the attack on the Capitol.

The overlap between police and fascist militias was further brought to light with the hack of far-right web hosting service Epik by the Anonymous hacking collective last month. The hack included roughly five gigabytes of data from the Oath Keepers militia group. The data includes archived messages from members, state chapter leaders, as well as an email list containing more than 38,000 email addresses. Some of these addresses are tied to names, physical addresses, phone numbers, IP addresses and donation amounts. Official US military email accounts are also listed in the breach according to the *Daily Dot*.

As of this writing, at least 22 Oath Keepers have been charged for their role in the January 6 attack, with at least 18 Oath Keepers facing conspiracy charges for attempting to thwart the certification of the Electoral College vote.

On Friday, an analysis from Oregon Public Broadcasting found that “dozens” of “current and former police officers, sheriff’s deputies, corrections officers, and members of the military police have been members of the Oath Keepers since its founding in 2009.”

In September, online publication Gothamist , analyzing the same data, found dozens of email addresses linked to the New York Police Department. Last week, Gothamist reported that it linked emails in the Epik leak to Oath Keeper members whose data matched the names, phone area codes and addresses of “roughly 20” police and corrections officers who were “active” within the last two years. The same investigation found roughly 15 people who identified themselves as having prior military experiences while “three other people appear in a payroll database of federal government employees from 2020,

including one listed with the Department of Homeland Security,” according to Gothamist . The fascist Oath Keeper militia was founded by Yale-educated lawyer and former Army paratrooper Elmer Stewart Rhodes and former sheriff and fascist, Richard Mack. Mack is also the founder of the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, a fascist network of sheriffs that upholds a false reading of the constitution that promotes the notion that local sheriffs are the ultimate “constitutional authority” granted unlimited power to enforce laws as they see fit.

Last week, The LAist reported that Riverside Sheriff Chad Bianco was among those identified in the Epik leak as having been a member of the Oath Keepers. In an interview with the publication, Bianco defended the fascist group and claimed that the leading role the Oath Keepers played on January 6 was just the result of a “few fringe people.”

“They certainly don’t promote violence and government overthrow. They stand for protecting the Constitution,” Bianco claimed. When questioned by LAist if there was election fraud in the 2020 election, Bianco responded, “Do I know there is election fraud? Yes I do, and anybody that says there isn’t is naive or politically motivated. Do I know whether or not there was enough of it to affect the outcome? That I do not know.”

In the months following Trump’s coup, far from going after Trump and his accomplices or bolstering the democratic rights of the population through aggressive legislation meant to curtail Republican assaults on voting rights, the Democratic Party and Biden have pleaded for “unity” with their “Republican colleagues,” abandoned voting rights legislation entirely and any attempts at “reforming” the police, responsible for over 1,000 deaths a year.

Instead, Biden, pledged and encouraged more funding for the police, including, as he explained to the assembled cops on Saturday, his American Rescue Plan, supposedly to fight the COVID emergency, which included “\$350 billion in aid to cities, states, counties, Tribes, to hire and retain officers.”



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