

Inspector General report whitewashes role of senior Pentagon leadership during January 6 Trump coup

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Acting Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General Sean O'Donnell has released a report on the Pentagon's response prior to and during the January 6 attack on the US Capitol. The report completely whitewashes the role of senior Pentagon leaders before and during the attack on Congress by Trump supporters, including the pivotal role of civilian and senior military officials at the Pentagon in delaying the dispatch of National Guard troops.

Excusing the lack of preparation by the military prior to January 6, O'Donnell, a Trump appointee who is also inspector general of the Environmental Protection Agency, wrote: "We looked for a role or responsibility for the DoD to act preemptively to prevent or deter what later happened at the Capitol. We found none."

Seeking to discredit one of the few military officials who has spoken out against the Pentagon's actions on January 6, the report cites anonymous witness statements to call into question congressional testimony submitted earlier this year by former D.C. National Guard commander and current House Sergeant at Arms William Walker.

This past March, Walker, speaking before a joint hearing of the Senate Rules and Homeland Security Committee, testified that acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy delayed urgent requests for National Guard support at the Capitol for three hours and 19 minutes, leaving him "stunned and frustrated." Walker testified in March that he had a 40-person quick reaction force, waiting to be deployed to the Capitol within "20 minutes," that "could have made a difference."

Miller was installed as acting secretary of defense on November 9 following Trump's electoral defeat. A 30-year veteran of Army special forces who participated in both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, Miller brought

with him to the Pentagon Ezra Cohen-Watnick, an extreme right-wing operative with prior connections to fascist Steve Bannon, and Kash Patel, a White House aide with an ultra-right background.

Interviewed for the IG report, Walker repeated his testimony from March, including the fact that his telephone request at 1:49 p.m., at the behest of US Capitol Police Chief Steve Sund, for authorization to deploy soldiers to the Capitol was delayed by Lt. General Walter Piatt and Lt. General Charles Flynn, who advised McCarthy against sending troops to the Capitol. Walker stated both generals expressed concerns to him and McCarthy about the "optics" of soldiers at the Capitol and that their presence could "incite the crowd."

The delay was caused in part because McCarthy, as is confirmed in the report, repeatedly asked Walker for a "concept of operation." As lawmakers were running for their lives and functional gallows was erected outside the Capitol, McCarthy was demanding detailed instructions for what exactly Walker's troops would do, where they would go, who they would report to and what their exact mission would be before he would bring Walker's request to Miller. Unlike US states, where governors command the National Guard, the D.C. National Guard operates under the direction of the Pentagon.

Asked by investigators about the DoD's preparations for January 6, both generals Flynn and Piatt told investigators that "protecting the Capitol is a law enforcement mission, not a DoD mission."

As to Walker's assertions that a quick reaction force could have been deployed much sooner and that troops were unnecessarily delayed, the report claims that the "3 1/4 to 3 1/2 hours" it took for D.C. National Guard soldiers to be approved to support the purposely outmanned and underequipped US Capitol police was "reasonable in light

of the circumstances that existed on that day” and that “DoD officials did not delay or obstruct the DoD’s response … on January 6, 2021.”

While claiming on the one hand that taking over three hours to deploy soldiers to the Capitol was “reasonable,” the report also claims that any delay on the behalf of the Pentagon was not the fault of senior leadership, but instead, that of Walker. According to the report, McCarthy first alerted Walker by telephone at 4:35 p.m., still two hours and 46 minutes after Walker’s first request for approval, that he had authorized troops to deploy to the Capitol. The report claims that McCarthy again called Walker at approximately 5:05 p.m. to “reissue the deployment order,” according to an unidentified Army witness. Walker had previously testified and reiterated in his statements to investigators that he did not get the initial approval until 5:08 p.m.

In a phone interview with the *Washington Post* on Wednesday, Walker told the paper he was “shocked” at the “inaccurate, uncorroborated statements by anonymous Army officials.” Justifying his pleas to McCarthy, Piatt and Flynn to send troops quickly, Walker said, “These were exigent circumstances. Rome was burning.”

“I came dangerously close to just saying, ‘Hey, we’re going,’ and then resign. But prudent people talked me out of that decision. It probably wouldn’t have been the right one.” Walker told the *Post* that the inspector general never asked him about the alleged 4:35 p.m. phone call from McCarthy. Characterizing the inspector general’s report as “sloppy” and inaccurate, Walker said his testimony puts him up against “the most powerful Army in the world.”

“And I believe in that Army,” said Walker, “but that Army failed on January 6th.”

The contradictory timelines provided by the Department of Defense underscore the massive cover-up still underway. A previous timeline released by the DoD in January showed no phone call taking place between Walker and any senior Pentagon officials at that time.

During the same March hearing in which Walker first testified about the delay, he made clear he did not get approval from McCarthy until 5:08 p.m. Robert Salesses, a senior Pentagon official who testified at the same hearing, said that McCarthy received approval for Walker’s request from Miller at 4:32 p.m. but that Walker was not told for another 30 minutes.

“In fairness to Gen. Walker, too,” said Salesses, “that’s when the [acting] secretary of defense made the decision—at 4:32.” He continued, “As General Walker has

pointed out, because I’ve seen all the timelines, he was not told that until 5:08.”

In a follow-up interview with the *Post* on Thursday, Walker reiterated that he never received a phone call from McCarthy at 4:35 p.m. and demanded the inspector general retract that from the report. Walker told the *Post* that the inspector general’s office did not “corroborate simple information and based its conclusion on errors of fact.”

“Why didn’t the National Guard launch immediately?” questioned Walker. “We had people on the street, and my plan was just to re-mission them, abandon the traffic control points, abandon the Metro stations, and get to the Capitol. I had the civil disturbance gear in the vehicles.”

Underscoring the role of the Trump loyalists at the Pentagon in delaying the deployment of troops to the Capitol, Jonathan Karl, in his book *Betrayal: The Final Act of the Trump Show*, reports on the frantic efforts of an aide to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell to enlist the help of Pentagon in assisting lawmakers being hunted on the orders of Trump.

“Across the hall on the Senate side of the Capitol, Mitch McConnell’s staff was barricaded inside his offices, located along the main corridor connecting the House and Senate. Rioters tried hard to break in, and as they tried, Robert Karem, a McConnell aide, called the Pentagon in a desperate appeal for help. Karem, who had recently served as an assistant secretary of defense, got ahold of Kash Patel, acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller’s chief of staff.

“Karem described the scene and pleaded with Patel to send help.

“According to two sources who told about the call, Patel brushed him off, suggesting the situation at the Capitol was not his responsibility.”



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