

The Mark Meadows documents: The smoking gun of the January 6 coup plot

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This week's revelations from the House Select Committee investigating the events of January 6, 2021 have demonstrated conclusively that what took place in the storming of the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob was not merely a "riot" but the culmination of a systematic campaign to overturn the results of the 2020 election and keep Trump in office in defiance of the will of the American people. It was an effort to establish an authoritarian regime with Trump as dictator-president.

Confirming this assessment, among the 2,000 texts and 6,000 pages of documents turned over by former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows were messages to him from top media figures at Fox News and from Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, as the fascist mob stormed the Capitol, urging Meadows to prevail on Trump to issue a statement calling off the attack. These ultra-right figures, who today claim that an investigation into January 6 is a partisan witch-hunt, clearly regarded Trump as the instigator of the attack and the only one who could bring it to an end.

Among the documents turned over by Meadows is a 38-page PowerPoint presentation titled "Election Fraud, Foreign Interference & Options for JAN 6," that lays out the entire course of the campaign to overturn the election that began on November 4. Only hours after the polls closed, it became clear to top White House officials and congressional Republicans that Trump had lost the election. They immediately turned to Plan B, an effort to subvert the will of the American people and overturn the result of the vote.

They were aided by the refusal of the major networks to call the election for Biden for five days, even as the trend in the counting of mail ballots made it unmistakable that he would win by a comfortable margin, both in the popular vote and in the Electoral College.

On November 9, two leaders of the ultra-right House Freedom Caucus, Jim Jordan and Scott Perry, met with Meadows, top Trump adviser Stephen Miller, campaign manager Bill Stepien, and press secretary Kayleigh McEnany. They set into motion the campaign to declare the

vote counting suspect—even though it was supervised by Republicans in most of the "battleground" states—and the election stolen.

The most ardent supporters in Congress were a group of outright fascists in the Republican caucus, including Paul Gosar, Andy Biggs, Mo Brooks, Louie Gohmert, along with Jordan and Perry. They would be joined later by Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert, newly elected to Congress in the same election they would claim was stolen by the Democrats.

The Republican Party establishment provided indispensable political cover for this operation, with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell declaring smugly, also on November 9, "A few legal inquiries from the president do not exactly spell the end of the Republic." But Trump's campaign to overturn the election led to January 6, and nearly a year later a two-thirds majority of Republican voters tell pollsters they do not regard the election of Biden as legitimate.

The campaign included baseless lawsuits challenging vote results in the battleground states, all thrown out by the courts, and efforts to induce state legislatures in those states to substitute Republican electors for the Democrats elected on November 3. Trump met with groups of state legislators at the White House and also sought to induce state election officials, such as Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, to "find" enough Trump votes to overturn Biden's narrow victory in that state.

Another maneuver involved having the Department of Justice "investigate" groundless allegations of vote fraud in the closely contested states. After top DOJ officials refused, Trump threatened to install one of his loyalists as "acting" attorney general. He only pulled back when all the top DOJ officials threatened to resign in public protest.

Finally came January 6, when Trump pressured Vice President Mike Pence to stage an unconstitutional intervention during the counting of electoral votes—which he ceremonially supervised—to throw out enough Biden votes to assure Trump's reelection. Pence's refusal became the

focus of Trump’s speech to the rally of his die-hard supporters outside the White House, and they took his lead, marching to the Capitol and chanting, “Hang Mike Pence” as they overpowered the handful of Capitol police and stormed into the building.

Tuesday evening, the House of Representatives voted to hold Mark Meadows in contempt for his refusal to appear before the Select Committee and answer questions related to the thousands of documents and text messages he had turned over. The issue now goes to the Justice Department, where Attorney General Merrick Garland will make the final decision on whether to begin a criminal prosecution of the former top Trump aide.

Republican Representative Liz Cheney, who for her own factional reasons is more categorical in targeting Trump than any Democrat, asked during the debate on holding Meadows in contempt, “Did Donald Trump, through action or inaction, corruptly seek to obstruct or impede Congress’s official proceeding to count electoral votes?” This was a direct citation of the statute defining criminal obstruction.

Cheney suggested earlier that Trump himself could be subpoenaed by the committee to testify, either in person or in writing. “Any communication Mr. Trump has with this committee will be under oath,” she said. “And if he persists in lying then, he will be accountable under the laws of this great nation and subject to criminal penalties for every false word he speaks.”

There is considerable opposition at the White House and among top congressional Democrats to pushing forward with a prosecution of Meadows, let alone Trump. This was signaled by today’s editorial in the *Washington Post* urging Garland to hold off on any such action. The Justice Department “should ignore the hysteria of voices such as those that dominate the left-leaning branch of the Twitterati and their demands for immediate action against big names, including top Trump officials and the former president himself, whose role in instigating the violence happened at a remove.”

The last thing that the Biden administration wants is a public trial of Trump, Meadows & Co., which would expose the operations at the highest levels of the state, including the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security, and shed light, among other things, on the inexplicable 199-minute gap between when police officials called the Pentagon to appeal for military support, and when the Department of Defense authorized the D.C. National Guard to come to the defense of the U.S. Capitol.

Throughout this year, Biden has appealed to “our Republican colleagues” for bipartisan cooperation in enacting his policies, even declaring that he wants to maintain a “strong Republican Party,” while the party is

being transformed into the instrument of the would-be fascist dictator.

No section of the US ruling class has any commitment to the defense of democracy. There will be no serious effort from that quarter to oppose the subversion of the Constitution with the aim of installing Trump as a dictator-president, if not now, then after the 2022 elections, when the Republicans expect to take control of Congress, or in 2024, when Trump would be the likely Republican presidential nominee.

On January 7, one day after the failure of the coup attempt, WSWS editorial chairman David North wrote:

The fascist insurrection in Washington D.C.—which resulted in the storming of the U.S. Congress, the panicked dispersal of terrified senators and members of the House, the delay of the official validation of Joseph Biden’s Electoral College majority, and even the occupation of the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi—is a turning point in the political history of the United States.

The hoary glorifications of the invincibility and timelessness of American democracy have been totally exposed and discredited as a hollow political myth. The popular phrase “It Can’t Happen Here,” taken from the title of Sinclair Lewis’s justly famous fictional account of the rise of American fascism, has been decisively overtaken by events. Not only *can* a fascist coup happen here. It *has* happened here, on the afternoon of January 6, 2021.

The revelations of the past week are a vindication of the analysis by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the warnings we have made in the course of this year. They are a devastating refutation of the complacent claims by the Democratic Party and its supporters among the pseudo-left that what took place on January 6 was of no particular importance and that to call it an attempted political coup was an exaggeration.



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