

Speaking to the January 6 Committee

Former White House press secretary details “secret meetings” Trump held at White House residence before January 6 coup

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A report Thursday in the *Guardian* cites testimony from former White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham, as well as unnamed sources close to the House committee investigating the attempted coup of January 6, 2021, which revealed that in the days leading up to the attack, Trump held secret, off-the-record meetings at his residence inside the White House, not his office, which were only known to a few high-level staff members.

While the details of what was discussed or who attended the meetings are unknown at this time, the *Guardian* reported that Grisham, who testified before the select committee last week, said that former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and White House Chief Usher Timothy Harleth, a longtime Trump family loyalist, facilitated the secret meetings.

Grisham, who resigned in the wake of the failed coup, said the meetings were mostly scheduled by Meadows, while Harleth would lead the participants upstairs to Trump's private quarters, according to the *Guardian*.

Meadows has already been found in contempt of Congress for his refusal to cooperate with the select committee. Before accepting Trump's offer to work in the White House in 2017, Harleth, who has not yet been subpoenaed by the committee, worked as a rooms manager at the Trump International Hotel D.C.

In a November 13, 2021 interview with CNN's Jim Acosta, Grisham said the secret meetings helped the scheming and paranoid Trump keep track of “leaks” and allowed avoiding the visits from being recorded by the National Archives, which routinely archives all White House logs.

Trump held the off-the-books meetings primarily “so that he could keep track of who was in there and that if it leaked out, he could try to figure that out,” Grisham explained.

“But number two, so that it was very much kept off the books and document and anything that was written down could probably be thrown in the trash where people can't come and retrieve them to put into the archives.”

She added: “That happened quite a bit and I'm sure the select committee is aware of that and is looking into that.”

While Trump no doubt intended that the meetings remain secret, the *Guardian* reported that Grisham told the select committee that Trump's movements would still be logged by the U.S. Secret Service in a database referred to as the presidential line-by-line.

These logs, Grisham explained, would also show Trump's intentions regarding his decision not to join his supporters in marching down to the Capitol on January 6, after telling them during his speech that he would.

“We're going to walk down, and I'll be there with you, we're going to walk down ... we're going to walk down to the Capitol,” Trump told the right-wing crowd, which included far-right militia members, white supremacists and other fascists, at the January 6 “Save America” rally held outside the White House.

The *Guardian* also reported that Grisham explained to the committee the high-level coordination that took place between the Trump White House, the Secret Service and the organizers of the “Save America” rally.

This was done apparently to ensure Trump's appearance.

The former Trump aide told the committee that Trump was "constantly on the phone" with organizers of the rally. He apparently took great interest in the "optics" and was "determined to speak at the rally," the paper reported.

Grisham's closed-door testimony demonstrates that there is much more to be learned about the events leading up January 6, evidence not covered in the latest legal battle between Trump and the House Select Committee, which ended in a comprehensive defeat for the ex-president on Wednesday at the Supreme Court.

In an 8-1 ruling, the high court, including the three far-right members Trump personally appointed, refused his request to block the release of White House documents related to the attack on the Capitol sought by the select committee. The ruling covers hundreds of pages of logs, memos and notes taken by top White House aides during the January 6 attack and the days leading up to it.

Whatever the significance of the specific items, the substance and timing of the court's ruling are a major blow to Trump. He had hoped either for an affirmation of his right to withhold documents and block testimony by aides and former aides, through a sweeping assertion of "executive privilege."

Since the creation of the select committee, Trump's lawyers have essentially been arguing that all communications Trump had with anyone during his time in office, whether it dealt with matters of national security or overthrowing the election of Joe Biden, were protected by "executive privilege."

Even if he did not win outright, Trump had hoped that the Supreme Court would proceed so slowly that the process would be delayed until after the November elections, when the Republican Party may win control of the House. In that event, the new majority would dissolve the select committee, end the investigation and quash the subpoenas. Instead, the court ruled quickly, issuing a one-paragraph ruling that left him without any legal recourse. The National Archives is expected to turn over the documents soon.

The court did not even address the conflict between Trump's claim of executive privilege and Biden's decision to waive executive privilege for all official documents relating to January 6. Previous court

precedents suggest that the sitting president has a near-absolute priority over an ex-president in such claims of privilege.

In their brief order the court declared that since "President Trump's claim would have failed even if he were the incumbent, his status as former president necessarily made no difference to the court's decision." Only arch-conservative Clarence Thomas sided with Trump, and he issued no opinion to explain his vote.

The court's ruling came shortly after the House Select Committee announced its latest batch of subpoenas, this time targeting "America First" fascists Nicholas Fuentes and Patrick Casey. Leading an anti-Semitic grouping calling themselves "Groypers," the pair were at the Capitol on January 6, along with roughly 50 other associates. Fuentes and Casey also participated in the "Stop the Steal" rallies in the leadup to January 6.

Fuentes has repeatedly boosted and in turn been promoted by fascist Arizona Republican politicians, Representative Paul Gosar and State Senator Wendy Rogers, with the former speaking at a Fuentes-sponsored event last spring following the coup.

In his letter to Fuentes, Mississippi Democrat and Chairman of the committee Bennie Thompson pointed to the fascist's appearance outside the Capitol on January 6: "You called on your followers to continue occupying the Capitol until the election results were overturned, and proclaimed a 'Glorious day' on your Twitter ... The next day, you wrote on Twitter, 'The capitol Siege was f***ing awesome and I'm not going to pretend it wasn't.'

Thompson also drew attention to a \$250,000 donation Fuentes received from a French neo-Nazi less than a month before the attempted coup. In his letter to Casey, Thompson wrote that Casey had received \$25,000 in Bitcoin from the same neo-Nazi.



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