

# Pentagon approves deployment of National Guard soldiers as fascist pro-Trump caravans set sights on Washington D.C.

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The threat of a fascist occupation of the Capitol, a week before President Joe Biden is slated to give the State of the Union address, prompted the Department of Defense on Tuesday to approve the deployment of 700 National Guard soldiers and 50 large trucks to the Washington D.C. area.

In the last week the Pentagon has received two different requests for National Guard support, the first coming last Wednesday from the District of Columbia (DC) Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. The agency requested 400 members of the DC National Guard and 50 large tactical vehicles. Some of the unarmed soldiers and vehicles have already been deployed around Washington D.C., creating militarized traffic control points.

The second request, for some 300 soldiers, came from the U.S. Capitol Police department this past Sunday. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin approved the deployment of soldiers from West Virginia, New Jersey and Vermont who will arrive “no later than February 26,” according to CBS News.

The approval of troops follows an announcement last week that the U.S. Capitol Police will be installing security fencing around the Capitol complex and the White House, as was done for much of 2021 following Trump’s failed coup.

Earlier this month the Department of Homeland Security leaked a security bulletin warning that the proposed convoy was seeking to emulate the far-right “Freedom Convoy” occupation of downtown Ottawa.

As with the Ottawa occupation, the proposed US convoy is not an organic expression of the working class but a top-down far-right operation, with extensive ties to the Republican Party and former advisers of

would-be dictator Donald Trump. Its purpose is to eliminate the few remaining public COVID-19 health measures in the US and undermine, even overthrow, the Biden administration.

The figures organizing the nascent convoys include many who participated in and organized Trump’s failed January 6 coup, including Republican Party operatives, fascist paramilitaries and other far-right elements, some of whom have already begun their trek to Washington D.C.

In California on Wednesday, local reports estimated that some 300 vehicles aligned with “The People’s Convoy” left Adelanto Stadium in Adelanto, California. The vehicles were afforded a police escort by San Bernardino County Sheriffs onto US Route 395. In a press statement dated February 20, 2022, the group wrote that the goal of the “transcontinental movement” was to “restore accountability and liberty—by lifting all mandates and ending the state of emergency—as COVID is well-in-hand now, and Americans need to get back to work in a free and unrestricted manner.”

According to the *New York Times* data tracker, as of February 22, 2022, some 939,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began. On Tuesday alone, 2,726 people died of the virus in the country. The 7-day average death rate is just under 2,000, and with new cases still averaging 125,000 a day, the US will cross over 80 million cases later this week.

In a Wednesday article on the California convoy, the *New York Times* reported: “Darrel Courtney, the chief executive of the Adelanto Stadium and Event Center,” said he “received a call last Tuesday from Leigh Dundas, an Orange County lawyer and Republican

activist.” Dundas—“a lawyer for an anti-vaccine group whose leader was charged with entering the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6” and who “was videotaped the day before the riot rallying pro-Trump crowds with calls to kill any ‘alleged Americans’ who might have helped undermine the 2020 elections”—called to rent the parking lot.

At the Capitol on January 6, 2021, Dundas was seen screaming at Trump supporters to give their lives in furtherance of the coup.

The *Times* reported that a list of organizations supporting the convoy “included those led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. ... and Gen. Michael Flynn, the former Trump administration national security adviser.” One of the listed organizations supporting “The People’s Convoy” is The America Project, which is run by former Overstock.com CEO Patrick Byrne. In December 2020, both Flynn and Byrne implored Trump to deploy the military in order to seize voting machines and rerun the election at gunpoint.

Byrne has continued to galvanize fascist forces under Trump’s stolen election lies. In addition to lending the bulk of the money to fund last year’s Arizona recount, Byrne, Flynn, MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell and Trump lawyer Sidney Powell played key roles in organizing Trump’s failed coup.

Demonstrating the support the convoy has in far-right media circles, the “People’s Convoy” press released notes that Newsmax and the *Epoch Times* will be providing “live daily updates” and have “embedded journalists” in the convoy. The *Epoch Times*, funded by the far-right Falun Gong movement, has promoted the conspiracy theory that the coronavirus was purposely created and disseminated by the Chinese Communist Party. The movement also provides funding to fascist former Trump adviser Steve Bannon.

Another notable supporter of the “People’s Convoy” is personal injury attorney and aspiring Nevada Republican gubernatorial candidate Joey Gilbert. Like Dundas, Gilbert also participated in Trump’s January 6 attempted coup. In this video (34 seconds) he can be seen calling to fascist *InfoWars* host Alex Jones to “Come up here!” and join him on the steps of the Capitol.

In a Tuesday interview on *Pushing the Limits* with Brian Shapiro, Gilbert reiterated Trump’s central claim that the 2020 election was stolen and that Biden was

not the legitimate president. “I do not believe President Joe Biden was dutifully elected by the American people,” Gilbert declared. He also claimed that the coronavirus was a “pandemic” conceived by “Dr. Anthony Fauci ... the Democrats and establishment Republicans.”

Emulating the same militia groups that participated in Trump’s coup, participants in the California convoy can be seen in videos wearing black and yellow shirts, the traditional colors of the Proud Boys. The shirts, according to this interview, were given to “volunteers” by the convoy organizers.

A report in the *Chicago Free Media* detailed a Sunday meeting of the “People’s Convoy” in Round Lake Beach, Illinois. The report noted that “[w]itnesses reported seeing at least three men in Proud Boy-branded gear. One picture taken of the event shows a person wearing a “Proud Boys’ Core Tenets” sweatshirt and waving a flag that read “F\*ck Biden.”

Speakers at the event denounced COVID-19 vaccine mandates, protesters against police violence and the “antifa.” The roughly 100 attendees waved American and pro-police flags and carried signs reading “Let’s Go Brandon” code for “F\*ck Joe Biden” and “vaccine mandates is (sic) communism.”

Asked about the potential fascist convoy coming to D.C. on Tuesday, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki advised that the White House was “closely monitoring” and “closely watching” the situation.

Despite the fact that those planning to descend on Washington D.C. include many of the same people who participated in the January 6 coup, Psaki did not comment on the political character of the convoy or the organizers’ connections to the Republican Party. This is in keeping with the Democratic Party and Biden administration’s policy of blinding the working class to the threat of fascism in order to protect the capitalist system and protect their increasingly fascist “Republican colleagues.”



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