

January 6 committee court filing reveals intimate involvement of Republican lawmakers, Trump chief of staff Mark Meadows in attempted coup

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New evidence presented in a court filing by the House committee charged with investigating the January 6, 2021 attack on Congress highlights the direct involvement of leading Republican lawmakers in the Trump White House plot to overturn the November 2020 election.

Late Friday night, the House Select Committee filed a motion in federal court for summary judgment against a suit by Mark Meadows, Trump's former White House chief of staff, backing Meadows' refusal to comply with a committee subpoena ordering him to provide documents and testimony.

The committee's motion, containing excerpts of testimony from a former top aide to Meadows, leaves no doubt that the siege of the US Capitol was not a spontaneous riot by over-zealous Trump supporters. It was the implementation of a plan worked out between Trump, Meadows, other Trump aides and a group of Republican lawmakers, with either the active or passive support of the entire Republican leadership.

The 248-page motion details in-person meetings, text messages and phone calls held between Meadows and Republican representatives Scott Perry (Pennsylvania), Louie Gohmert (Texas), Jim Jordan (Ohio), Matt Gaetz (Florida), Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia) and Lauren Boebert (Colorado) in furtherance of Trump's coup. The court filing cites testimony given by a top aide of Meadows, Cassidy Hutchinson, who spoke to the committee in February and March of this year.

In her testimony, Hutchinson said that the above-mentioned representatives, as well as other members of the far-right House Freedom Caucus, which Meadows had co-founded before becoming Trump's chief of staff, discussed with the White House Counsel's Office the legality of having then-Vice President Mike Pence reject the electors of states Trump lost in the November 2020 election. As vice president, Pence was designated by law to preside over the official counting of previously certified electoral votes from all of the states on January 6 of 2021, two weeks before the inauguration of the winner and president-elect, Joe Biden.

That scheme, advanced by Trump coup lawyer John Eastman, had the support of well connected Republican operatives such as Virginia Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

This was discussed at a December 21, 2020 meeting at the White

House attended by Jordan, Greene and Gaetz, as well as representatives Jody Hice (currently running with Trump's endorsement for Georgia secretary of state), Paul Gosar (Arizona), Debbie Lesko (Arizona), Andy Biggs (Arizona), Mo Brooks (Alabama) and "other Republican politicians," according to Hutchinson.

"They felt that he [Pence] had the authority to—pardon me if my phrasing isn't correct on this, but—send votes back to the states or the electors back to the states, more along the lines of the [John] Eastman plan," Hutchinson testified.

Citing one of the over 2,000 text messages turned over by Meadows to the committee last year, before he announced that he would no longer cooperate, the court filing notes the support Meadows gave to the far-right lawmakers seeking to pressure Pence to unilaterally reject the votes of millions of people.

"I have pushed for this," Meadows texted Ohio Rep. Jordan on January 6 regarding Pence. "Not sure it is going to happen."

In addition to documenting the pressure campaign against Pence advanced by Trump and his congressional co-conspirators, the Select Committee released new text messages between Pennsylvania Rep. Perry and Meadows about replacing then-acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen with Trump stooge Jeffrey Clark. The latter, unlike Rosen, was willing to use the Justice Department to advance Trump's claims that the 2020 election was fraudulent and have the department launch bogus "investigations" in states such as Georgia, Arizona and Pennsylvania, in order to give Republicans the necessary pretext to reject certification on January 6.

"Mark, just checking in as time continues to count down. 11 days to 1/6 and 25 days to inauguration," Perry texted Meadows on December 26, 2020. Urging Meadows to get Clark installed at the Justice Department, Perry wrote, "We gotta get going!"

"I got it," Meadows replied. "I think I understand. Let me work on the deputy position."

A week later, Perry was one of several Republican lawmakers

present for a contentious January 3, 2021 meeting at the White House, in which Rosen, his deputy Richard Donoghue, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone and other leading members of the Justice Department threatened to resign en masse if Trump fired Rosen and appointed Clark.

In a report on the filing, *Politico* noted that the committee revealed it had interviewed Steven Engel, “the former head of the Justice Department’s Office of Legal counsel.” Engel was present during the January 3, 2021 meeting at the White House. He told the committee that Clark proposed having the Justice Department issue a “legal advisory opinion” regarding “the Vice President with respect to his authority when it comes to opening the votes as the President of the Senate on January 6th.”

“And I shot down that idea,” Engel told the committee. “But I said—I said: ‘That’s an absurd idea. The—you know, the Vice President is acting as the President of the Senate. It is not the role of the Department of Justice to provide legislative officials with legal advice on the scope of their duties.’”

Perry, like Meadows, has refused to testify before the committee, describing the committee as “illegitimate” in a December 2021 statement.

Separate reporting from CNN last week has corroborated the role of Utah Senator Mike Lee in Trump’s plot to delay certification. In a January 4, 2021 text to Meadows, Lee wrote: “I’ve been calling state legislators for hours today, and am going to spend hours doing the same tomorrow. I’m trying to figure out a path that I can persuasively defend... Even if they can’t convene, it might be enough if a majority of them are willing to sign a statement indicating how they would vote.”

Disproving claims by Trump and Meadows that they had no idea January 6 could turn violent and that the plan was always for a peaceful rally at the White House, Hutchinson told the committee that that in the days before January 6, Meadows was told the “Stop the Steal” rally could turn violent.

Hutchinson told the committee that Anthony Ornato, a senior Secret Service official who was also a political advisor to the Trump campaign, warned Meadows about the potential for violence, especially if Trump supporters marched from the White House to the Capitol. According to Hutchinson, Ornato said he had “intel reports” pointing to a violent attack, and “Mr. Meadows said: All right. Let’s talk about it.”

“I know that there were concerns brought forward to Mr. Meadows,” Hutchinson said. “I know that people had brought information forward to him that had indicated that there could be violence on the 6th. But, again, I’m not sure if he—what he did with that information.”

In its account of the court filing, the *New York Times* highlighted details refuting attempts to present Trump’s call on the morning of January 6 for protesters to march from the White House to the Capitol as an unexpected change in plans.

Citing testimony by Hutchinson, it wrote: “On a planning call that included Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff; Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mr. Trump’s personal lawyer; Representative Jim Jordan,

Republican of Ohio; and other Freedom Caucus members, the group discussed the idea of encouraging supporters to march to the Capitol, according to one witness’s account.

“The idea was endorsed by Representative Scott Perry, Republican of Pennsylvania, who now leads the Freedom Caucus, according to testimony by Cassidy Hutchinson, an aide to Mr. Meadows, and no one on the call spoke out against the idea.”

Hutchinson added that “in a casual conversation,” Meadows said, “Oh, we’re going to have this big rally. People are talking about it on social media. They’re going to go up to the Capitol.”

Hutchinson’s testimony further explodes claims advanced by FBI Director Christopher Wray and the rest of the police-intelligence apparatus that there was no “intelligence” warning of an attack on the Capitol.

In seeking Meadows’ testimony, the committee explained that in addition to serving as Trump’s White House chief of staff, Meadows was Trump’s de facto campaign manager. In the weeks leading up to January 6, Meadows was in contact with Trump’s campaign staff, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and coup lawyer Cleta Mitchell, discussing bogus claims of election fraud.

The committee also revealed that Meadows met in his office with retired Army Colonel Phil Waldron to discuss invoking martial law in order to seize voting machines and rerun the election at gunpoint.

Through documents and interviews conducted by the committee, including with former Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller, former Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, former acting Attorney General Rosen and his deputy Richard Donoghue, it revealed in the same filing: “It is also now clear that Mr. Trump never telephoned his Secretary of Defense that day [January 6] to order deployment of National Guard, and never contacted any federal law enforcement agency to order security assistance to the Capitol Police.”

The latest damning revelations underscore all the more the role of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party, including the Democratic-controlled January 6 Committee, in shielding Trump and his major co-conspirators from prosecution. The Committee has yet to issue a criminal referral against Trump or any Republican lawmakers, and the Biden Justice Department has to date refused to indict any of the plotters, with the exception of Stephen Bannon, who has been cited for contempt of Congress.

Meadows himself was cited for contempt of Congress months ago, but no action has been taken by the Justice Department.



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