

Court documents in latest Oath Keeper seditious conspiracy plea deal reveal

Fascist militia leader Stewart Rhodes sought Trump's approval on January 6 for more violent attacks

Jacob Crosse
5 May 2022

In court documents filed Wednesday by the US Department of Justice (DoJ), federal prosecutors allege that in the early evening of January 6, 2021, far-right militia leader Stewart Rhodes called an intermediary of Donald Trump's and requested to speak with the then president. The Yale-educated lawyer and former US Army paratrooper, according to prosecutors, wanted Trump to "call upon groups like the Oath Keepers and forcibly oppose the transfer of power."

While fighting was still taking place on Capitol Hill, Rhodes and his armed paramilitaries were seeking permission from Trump to make more violent attacks. Rhodes allegedly had a high-level contact he thought could get him on the phone with Trump directly. This explodes claims advanced by Trump, his allies in the Republican Party and the pseudo-left that the January 6 coup was simply a "spontaneous riot" or a misplaced but organic expression of "working class" outrage. Rather, it was a pre-planned, multi-pronged attack, organized months in advance from inside the Oval Office of the White House in coordination between Republican politicians and their fascist supporters.

This damning revelation was included in a Wednesday plea deal unveiled by the DoJ. In the plea agreement, William Wilson, 44, a "military and law enforcement veteran and a member of the Oath Keepers since 2016," agreed to turn state's evidence and plead guilty to one count of seditious conspiracy and one count of obstructing an official proceeding. He could spend decades in prison but likely will not, given his cooperation with the government.

Wilson is the third member of the Oath Keeper militia group, comprised of current and former military members, police officers and far-right nationalists, to plead guilty to seditious conspiracy and obstruction charges. Joshua James, 34, of Arab, Alabama, and Brian Ulrich, 44, of Guyton, Georgia, both pleaded guilty earlier this year to the same crimes.

According to the court documents, Rhodes, Wilson and other

Oath Keepers, after the storming of the Capitol, gathered at a private suite at the Phoenix Park Hotel in Washington D.C. after 5 p.m. on January 6, where they continued to plot to stop the certification of Biden.

Wilson, "a county leader for the North Carolina chapter of the Oath Keepers," claims that he was present while Rhodes made the phone call to the close contact of Trump's. On the call, Rhodes demanded that Trump unleash his Brownshirts, telling his fellow fascists after the call ended, "I just want to fight."

The Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, III Percenter and Christian-fascist Moonie cult were among the far-right militia groups summoned by Trump and his Republican co-conspirators to violently block the certification of President-elect Joe Biden and overturn what remains of bourgeois democracy in the United States.

Prior to January 6, the above groups participated in and promoted far-right "Stop the Steal" rallies throughout the country, publicizing Trump's false claims that the election was stolen while building support among far-right elements for forcibly stopping the certification as the only way to prevent a "socialist takeover" of the US government.

The "Stop the Steal" movement was funded by right-wing billionaires and organized and promoted by "America First" fascist congressmen including Arizona Reps. Paul Gosar and Andy Biggs and Alabama's Rep. Mo Brooks, none of whom, like Trump, have been charged or arrested 16 months after the failed coup.

In addition to the aforementioned Republican legislators, it is possible that Rhodes was communicating with Trump's long-time political crony Roger Stone, an honorary Proud Boy member. In addition to working closely with admitted FBI informant and Proud Boy leader Henry "Enrique" Tarrio, Stone frequently employed Oath Keeper militia members as "body guards," including the aforementioned Joshua James.

That these fascist groups would be summoned by Trump in an attempt to overturn the election was revealed by Trump himself in a September 2020 debate with Biden. After moderator Chris Wallace asked Trump “to condemn white supremacists,” Trump refused, claiming that violence emanated from “the left wing.”

Biden, revealing that the Democratic Party was at the time, and still is, acutely aware of the innumerable connections between Trump and the Republican Party and fascist militia groups, offered the Proud Boys as an example of a racist street gang for Trump to condemn. Trump took the opportunity, instead, to issue a military order to his foot-soldiers, saying, “Proud Boys stand back and stand by.”

Following Trump’s declaration to the fascist paramilitaries, and the FBI revelation of a far-right assassination plot against Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer a week later, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned in an October 9 perspective: “The Michigan conspiracy, Trump, and the 2020 election”:

Trump’s plan for election day is no longer a matter of conjecture. In battleground states that support Biden, Trump will falsely proclaim himself the victim of election fraud, deploy violent groups to intimidate voters, seize statehouses and eliminate political opponents. Armed supporters will declare the vote invalid or compel state legislatures to certify pro-Trump slates of electors. Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have Democratic governors and Republican-controlled legislatures and will therefore be the central target of this plot.

This is very nearly what transpired less than three months later.

In his plea deal, Wilson admits that he, Rhodes and other unnamed Oath Keepers began planning to violently overturn the election in the event Trump lost, even before the election was declared for Biden.

In a Signal chat group titled “Leadership Intel Chat” which Wilson was a part of, Rhodes is alleged to have instructed the group on November 5, 2020, “We aren’t getting through this without a civil war. Too late for that. Prepare your mind, body, spirit.”

By December 31, 2020, Wilson was included in an Oath Keeper chat group titled “DC OP: Jan 6 21.” Over the next few days Wilson and other Oath Keepers plotted their trek to Washington D.C.

On January 5, 2021, on orders from Rhodes, Wilson drove to the capital and “brought with him,” per the DoJ, “...an AR-15-style rifle, a 9-millimeter pistol, approximately 200 rounds of ammunition, body armor, a camouflaged combat uniform, pepper spray, a large walking stick intended for use as

a weapon, and a pocketknife.” Wilson has admitted to being armed with the knife when he attempted to enter the House chamber inside the Capitol on January 6.

While driving to D.C., Wilson texted the “DC OP: Jan 6 21” Signal group, “It’s going to hit the fan tonight,” and that he had “all my gear with me.”

Upon arriving at the Hilton Garden Inn hotel in Vienna, Virginia, on January 5, Rhodes, Wilson and “other leading Oath Keeper members and affiliates” finalized their plans, the plea deal states.

Wilson said he met with Rhodes and other “Quick Reaction Force” teams that were “expected to participate on January 6.” Wilson, prosecutors write, “believed that, if called upon, the QRF would provide firearms or cover to co-conspirators (such as himself) operating inside of Washington D.C.”

Wilson claims he heard Rhodes “discuss the potential need for Rhodes and co-conspirators to engage in force, up to and including lethal violence, in order to stop the transfer of power. With this understanding, Wilson agreed to take part in a plan developed by Rhodes to use any means necessary, up to and including the use of force, to achieve this objective.”

Further revealing the intimate ties between the fascist militia groups and the Republican Party, two weeks ago, the January 6 House Select Committee “investigating” the attack on the Capitol requested voluntary testimony from three Republican House members, one of whom, Ronny Jackson, is the former White House physician under Trump and Barack Obama and a current Texas representative.

In their letter requesting Jackson’s voluntary testimony, which he has since rejected, the committee revealed text messages that were exchanged between Oath Keepers during the attack on the Capitol. In one message thread, the militia members discuss the urgency of protecting Jackson during their siege on Congress.

“Dr. Ronnie Jackson—on the move,” an unidentified Oath Keeper wrote during the attack. The message continued: “Needs protection. If anyone inside cover him. He has critical data to protect.”

The fascist Rhodes responded, “Give him my cell.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact