

Six US Air Force personnel indicted for stealing thousands of rounds of ammunition from air base

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According to federal court documents filed last week as part of an ongoing investigation into an alleged ammunition theft ring centered at Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington state, federal agents recovered over 14,000 rounds stolen from the base by at least six US Air Force members.

The indictment claims that the ammunition ring was uncovered after one of the airmen became the subject of an FBI investigation after posting on social media his belief that the 2020 presidential election was “fraudulent,” that the US Capitol had to be stormed and that “people have to die.”

The six airmen are facing multiple charges, including conspiracy to steal government property, possession of stolen ammunition and possession of an unregistered firearm. So far, Staff Sergeants John Sanger, 30, Eric Eagleton, 29, and Nathaniel Richards, 25, along with three other airmen—Austin Limacher, 28, Shawn Robson, 40, and Jonah Pierce, 25—have been charged in relation to the conspiracy.

The indictment is written in such a way that it leaves open the possibility of more charges being filed against still unnamed co-conspirators.

In addition to finding thousands of 5.56 mm rounds, the standard round used by the US and NATO-aligned militaries, the government claims to have recovered other stolen military equipment from the soldiers’ homes.

Equipment allegedly recovered by the government includes M68CCO red dot sights and PEQ-15 target illuminators, both of which are typically mounted on rail systems found on M-4/AR-15 military-style rifles. The PEQ-15 includes a visible laser and an infrared laser. The latter is used with night vision goggles to allow operators to “paint” targets in dimly lit areas and illuminate a bullet’s likely trajectory.

The indictment claims that searches executed on the basis of warrants found stolen ammunition at all six military members’ residences. In its searches, the government claims to have also found two unmarked suppressors belonging to Limacher and a “gold and bronze in color firearm suppressor” belonging to Eagleton. The latter, despite facing multiple serious charges, was released from state custody at the end of April over the objection of federal prosecutors.

In the indictment, the government asserts that the six men, all part of the 92nd Security Forces Squadron Combat Arms Training Management section at Fairchild, were “part of the conspiracy that the Defendants, and their known and unknown conspirators, would steal military ammunition, property of the United States to which the Defendants had access by means of their military service, and provide the stolen ammunition to the known and unknown conspirators for their personal use and possession.”

The government claims that Sanger became the subject of an FBI investigation after he posted online his support for former President Donald Trump’s fascistic conspiracy theory that the 2020 election was stolen and that the Joe Biden presidency was illegitimate.

According to federal prosecutors, in a December 2, 2020 online exchange, barely a month before the US Capitol was overrun by fascist militia members in furtherance of Trump’s coup attempt, Sanger was asked “what ‘taking our government back’ looked like.” Sanger is alleged to have responded, “I think the capital [sic] need to be seized... No trial or chance to escape.”

In another post cited by the government, on December 9, 2020, Sanger, allegedly writing under the social media handle “problematicpatriot,” wrote, “They defrauded our election system and are still getting away with it.”

He continued, “That means this system has run it’s [sic] course. People have to die.”

The government does not offer a precise explanation as to why Sanger and his accomplices were stealing thousands of rounds of ammunition and high-end military equipment commonly used by soldiers performing close quarters combat operations and night-time assassination raids. But there is no question that current and former military members and police officers played an outsized role in the failed coup of January 6, 2021.

Six of the 11 members of the Oath Keepers militia group who have been charged with seditious conspiracy for their actions on January 6, including the leader of the group, Stewart Rhodes, have prior military experience.

A *USA Today* analysis from earlier this month found that at least 70 of the nearly 800 people charged in connection with the January 6 coup have military backgrounds. The same report found that at least 19 current or former police officers have also been charged in the attack.

Despite Sanger having access to high-end military equipment while making multiple comments expressing his desire to violently overthrow the government, an investigation into Sanger was not opened up by the government until August 2021. In a criminal complaint filed in April 2022 and reviewed by *The Spokesman-Review*, an undercover Air Force Office of Special Investigations agent who was assigned to investigate Sanger claimed to have worn a wire during multiple interactions with Sanger and Eagleton beginning in September 2021.

The agent claims that he ingratiated himself with Sanger by discussing “Sanger’s dislike of minorities and his vehement opposition to vaccines.”

In one of his meetings with Sanger and Eagleton, the agent allegedly recorded Eagleton discussing “his anti-Semitic views and dislike for Jews.” At the same meeting, held on March 12, 2022, Sanger said he enjoyed meeting like-minded individuals who “hated the government and the military.”

The court documents allege that the undercover agent, Sanger and Eagleton that same day went to the shooting range at Fishtrap Lake and shot ammunition that had been stolen from the base. The agent claims that after the shooting practice, Sanger gave him dozens of rounds of ammunition in a zip lock bag.

A couple of weeks later, according to the indictment, Sanger texted the undercover officer saying that more ammo was

available. He wrote that “Eagle can hook us up with some rounds. Dude’s awesome.”

The agent allegedly replied, “Really? How much does he want for them?”

“Nothing,” replied Sanger. “It’s stolen.”

After another trip to the firing range, according to the undercover agent, Sanger provided him “green-tip” rounds, which can penetrate ballistic armor.

The indictment reads: “After providing the (undercover agent) with the stolen munitions, Sanger stated if the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] knocked on his door, he knew which rounds to load up first since they were armor-piercing.”

The fact that Sanger and his accomplices were able to steal thousands of rounds of ammunition and expensive combat optics, apparently undetected for months or even years, speaks to the freedom with which far-right elements are allowed to operate within the US military.

The emergence of fascistic groups and neo-Nazis within the military and police apparatuses is an international phenomenon, expressing the ongoing and global breakdown of bourgeois democracy.

The *World Socialist Web Site*, has written extensively on fascist terror networks that have been cultivated by the German state, including the neo-Nazi terrorist group National Socialist Underground and networks within Germany’s Special Forces Command.

The proliferation of these networks is a sign of the immense crisis of bourgeois class rule. Terrified by a massive growth of working class opposition, frightened ruling classes the world over are cultivating fascistic layers and sects within the military and police forces to be used as shock-troops against the threat of revolution.



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