

Gunman kills Wisconsin judge, had Whitmer, Evers on list

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A retired Wisconsin judge was shot and killed at his home early Friday morning in what Justice Department officials say was a targeted act of murder. The 56-year-old accused shooter, Douglas K. Uhde, had been sentenced by Judge John “Jack” Roemer in 2005 to six years in prison for burglary.

In a statement published on Saturday, the Wisconsin Department of Justice said it was investigating what it called a “critical incident” where the Juneau County Sheriff’s Office received a call about a shooting at 6:30 a.m. on Friday at a residence in the Township of New Lisbon.

The statement said that following failed attempts to negotiate with Uhde, “at approximately 10:17 a.m. the Juneau County Special Tactics and Response Team entered the residence and located retired Judge John Roemer, a sixty-eight-year-old male, deceased.” It continued, “Uhde was located in the basement with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound,” life-saving measures were taken, and he was transported to a hospital where he is in critical condition.

Later on Saturday, Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul spoke at a news conference and said that the tactical team negotiated with Uhde for four hours going into the residence. Kaul told the news media, “So far, the information that’s been gathered indicates that it was a targeted act, and the targeting appears to be based on some sort of court case or court cases.”

Kaul went on to say that Uhde was apparently targeting other government officials but did not say who they were. He added that those who were targeted had been notified, “but we are not aware of any active threats to individuals.”

Zack Pohl, deputy chief of staff for the Democratic Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer, told the *Washington Post* that the police had notified the

governor’s office that she was on the accused Wisconsin shooter’s target list. Pohl said, “While the news reports are deeply troubling, we will not comment further on an ongoing criminal investigation.”

Other prominent public officials who were among those on the target list were Democratic Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, and Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, according to WISN-TV.

Uhde was originally sentenced by a different judge in 2002 to ten years in prison and seven years of extended supervision for an armed burglary conviction. Uhde won an appeal in a lower court, but the conviction was upheld by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. When the case was reopened, Judge Roemer was assigned the final sentencing.

Uhde then escaped from prison in 2006 but was rearrested, sent back to prison, and not ultimately released until April 2020. Roemer, a former prosecutor first elected to a nonpartisan position on the Wisconsin bench in 2004, had retired in 2017.

The early-morning emergency call on Friday was made by someone who left the residence and contacted authorities from a nearby home in New Lisbon, about 80 miles northwest of Madison, Wisconsin. According to a recorded audio dispatch from Juneau County Public Safety, the “caller says his neighbor’s son from across the street is banging on the door, stating that someone murdered his father.”

At the present time, it appears that Uhde acted alone. There is as yet no evidence he was part of a wider politically motivated murder conspiracy involving any groups or organizations. But the news that the accused shooter had a list that included Whitmer comes less than two months after the end of the federal trial of four

men accused of plotting to kidnap and kill the Michigan governor in 2020.

In that case, in which the jury acquitted two men and could not reach a verdict on the other two accused conspirators, recorded statements and testimony from two confessed co-conspirators demonstrated that the members of a far-right militia group called the Wolverine Watchmen were plotting for months to kidnap the governor. They were hostile to even the limited pandemic mitigation measures she ordered in the spring of 2020, and wanted to send a fascist political message prior to the 2020 elections.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that a kidnapping conspiracy was underway, including the fact that the men had staked out Governor Whitmer’s summer residence and elaborated a plan to seize her and engage in a gun fight with her security team, the jury drawn from rural northwest Michigan refused to convict them, even on an illegal gun possession charge.

The death of Judge Roemer also takes place within a political environment in which, according to a Washington Post-University of Maryland poll, one in three Americans say that violence against the government can at times be justified.

Far-right and fascistic individuals and groups in and around the Republican Party and former President Donald Trump have continued to promote the false narrative that the 2020 elections were stolen by the Democrats. They also participated in and are defending the mob violence at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, aimed at preventing the certification of Joe Biden as president as “legitimate political discourse” in the US.

It was Trump who called on supporters to “liberate Michigan” in the months leading up to the plot to kill Whitmer. Trump has also frequently denounced Republican Senate Leader McConnell for conceding the 2020 election was won by Biden and refusing to back Trump’s claims of a stolen election.



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