

Missouri Republican candidate for US Senate and former Navy SEAL releases gun-toting ad urging violence against “RINOs”

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On Monday, aspiring US senator and disgraced former governor of Missouri Eric Greitens, a Republican, released a 38-second campaign ad in which he and a heavily armed squad of paramilitaries break into a home as part of a “RINO [Republican In Name Only] hunting” expedition.

The fascist campaign video, released as the House January 6 Select Committee continued to hold public hearings detailing the ongoing threat of political violence following Donald Trump’s failed coup, evoked mass anger on social media forums. Thousands of people denounced the video on Twitter, causing it to be temporarily suspended by the platform.

The violent content of the ad, and the outrage it provoked, led Facebook to remove it the same day it was published. Twitter said that while the ad violated “Twitter rules about abusive behavior,” it had reinstated Greitens’ tweet because it “may be in the public’s interest for the Tweet to remain accessible.”

The ad begins with a grinning 48-year-old Greitens carrying a shotgun and touting his military background as a US Navy Seal. “Today we are going RINO hunting,” Greitens says as he chambers a round into the shotgun he is holding.

After Greitens loads his weapon, the camera cuts to him and a squad of heavily armed men dressed in military fatigues, similar to a police SWAT team, in front of a residential house. Greitens comments, “The RINO feeds on corruption and is marked by the stripes of cowardice.”

As he finishes his sentence, one of the men uses a battering ram to smash open the door, followed by another masked paramilitary, who throws a smoke grenade into the home. Greitens and company enter the home through the smoke with rifles pointed up, ready to fire. Greitens tells his

viewers: “Join the MAGA crew. Get a RINO hunting permit, there is no bagging limit, there is no tagging limit and it doesn’t expire until we save our country.”

The “RINO hunting permit” is a sticker available for purchase on Greitens’ campaign website and requires a minimum donation of \$25.

This is the second advertisement issued by the Greitens campaign in the last two months in which he glorifies homicidal violence against his political opponents while wielding a firearm.

In a campaign ad released this past April, Greitens and Donald Trump Jr. are filmed shooting metal human cutouts with automatic rifles. As Trump Jr. and Greitens walk toward the camera, Trump Jr. says they are “striking fear into the hearts of liberals everywhere, folks.”

“Liberals beware,” Greitens adds over the sound of gunfire.

While ex-president Donald Trump has yet to make an endorsement in the Missouri primary, which will take place on August 2, Greitens is currently the front-runner to replace retiring Senator Roy Blunt.

Greitens is closely linked to the Trumps. His campaign chair is Don Jr.’s girlfriend, Kimberly Guilfoyle. Trump’s former personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani hosted a rally for him last year, and Greitens has already made at least one pilgrimage to Trump’s Mar-a-Lago resort this year.

Billionaire Richard Uihlein, who previously gave over \$4.7 million to pro-Trump groups that amplified Trump’s lies of a “stolen election” prior to the January 6 coup, created a pro-Greitens super PAC last year, seeding the political action committee with \$2.5 million. And while the organization has yet to officially endorse him, it was revealed in a March 2022 *Politico* article that David McIntosh, president of the

major conservative group Club for Growth, urged Trump to support Greitens.

Greitens is a highly trained killer who has deployed four times as a Navy SEAL in the service of US imperialism. He participated in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, where he was the commander of an assassination squad tasked with targeting alleged al-Qaeda elements. Greitens also deployed as a SEAL to Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Southeast Asia.

There is no doubt that Greitens has killed human beings using the methods, weapons and tactics he glorifies in his campaign ads.

Greitens' ad drew the standard milquetoast denunciations from Democrats. California Rep. Eric Swalwell on Twitter weekly condemned House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell for failing to "confront & condemn the MAGA radicals of their party." For their part, Greitens and many fellow Republicans are using the Democrats "outrage" to fundraise and bolster their far-right credentials.

In an appearance on the Steve Bannon "War Room" show on Tuesday, Greitens defended the ad, saying that anger against him was the "faux outrage" of "snowflakes." He called the images of him and heavily armed military elements breaking into a home only a metaphor, and said he stood behind the ad "100 percent."

Greitens was forced to resign as governor of Missouri in 2018, just over 500 days after assuming office, due to multiple criminal investigations at the time. There were allegations of campaign finance law violations, and he was also under investigation for felony invasion of privacy. The latter charge centered on allegations that Greitens blackmailed a woman with whom he was having an affair by taking illicit photos of her without permission and threatening to release them if she ever spoke out.

This past March, as part of an ongoing dispute over custody of their children, Greitens' ex-wife, Sheena Greitens, filed an affidavit alleging that her former husband, the one-time Navy SEAL and amateur boxer, was physically abusive and demonstrated "unstable and coercive behavior" during their relationship.

The Associated Press reported that in the affidavit, Sheena alleged that her ex-husband threatened to use his political connections to gain custody of the children. She said that prior to their April 2018 divorce, he physically assaulted her

and took away her "cell phone, wallet and keys so that I was unable to call for help or extricate myself and our children from home."

She detailed multiple incidents of alleged abuse, including an occasion when Greitens struck their three-old son across the face and pulled him by his hair. Sheena further alleged that after a visit to their father's home in 2019, one of her sons said Greitens had hit him. She said he returned from the visit with "a swollen face, bleeding gums and a loose tooth," which later had to be removed.

Sheena claims that in the spring of 2018, when Greitens was still governor but coming under increasing pressure to resign, his behavior deteriorated to the point that on three separate occasions "multiple people other than myself were worried enough to intervene to limit Eric's access to firearms."

"I started sleeping in my children's room simply to try to keep them safe," she wrote in the court documents.

The *New York Times* reported last month that so far this election cycle, over 100 Republicans have aired advertisements in which guns are featured.

The glorification of violence by far-right Republicans coincides with Trump's ongoing attacks against "weak" and "cowardly" Republicans, who did not have the "strength" to enforce his dictatorial strategy. Illinois Rep. Adam Kinzinger, one of two Republicans serving on the January 6 Select Committee, revealed a recent death threat he and his family received.

In a handwritten letter sent to his home and addressed to Kinzinger's wife, the anonymous writer warns "Sofia" that her husband will "be executed" for breaking "his oath."

"But don't worry!" the letter continues, "You and Christian (the Kinzingers' five-month-old child) will be joining Adam in hell too!"



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