

The unanswered questions about Trump's January 6 coup

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The two hours of testimony Tuesday by former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson provided an indelible picture, from an inside source, of the effort by Donald Trump to stage a political coup on January 6, 2021, stop the congressional certification of his election defeat, and remain in office as a fascist dictator-president.

Along with top aides like his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani and his chief of staff Mark Meadows, Trump expected that after he addressed a rally outside the White House and told the crowd of supporters, including hundreds of armed fascists, to march on the Capitol, he would accompany them, place himself at the head of the mob, enter the House chambers where the counting of electoral votes was underway and seize control.

Vice President Mike Pence and the assembled legislators would be given two choices: Either ratify Trump's overturning of the 2020 election results and his remaining in power, or be killed. As Trump said, hearing the "Hang Mike Pence" chants from his supporters, "He deserves it."

There is little doubt what the congressional Democrats would have done. They would have capitulated, seeking some face-saving operation like a referral of the "disputed" election to a vote by the House of Representatives, conducted according to the procedure of one vote for each entire state delegation, thereby guaranteeing Trump's victory.

Afterwards, the Democrats and the corporate media would have portrayed the outcome as being in accordance with the Constitution, and any legal challenge would have been rejected by Trump's stooges on the Supreme Court.

That the coup failed owes not at all to opposition from the Democratic Party, and certainly not to Democratic President-elect Joe Biden, who was appealing for the would-be dictator to go on national television and call off his own coup.

It seems clear, however, that large sections of the military-intelligence apparatus were watching and waiting, aware of the coup plot but not joining in until it became clearer who would prevail. Trump's failure to reach the Capitol—under circumstances that remain to be clarified—deprived the mob of on-the-spot leadership and led to its energy being dissipated until police reinforcements arrived, after long delays, to clear the building.

There are vital questions posed by the latest revelations, and all of the information brought forward by the six televised hearings held so far by the House Select Committee on the January 6 attack.

Who were Trump's accomplices and co-conspirators?

An action as far-reaching as a coup d'état in the United States

could not be the work of an individual, even a president. Trump required dozens, if not hundreds and thousands of co-conspirators, willing to break the law and trample on the Constitution. Hutchinson's testimony identified Meadows, Giuliani and seven Republican representatives as inquiring about or actively seeking presidential pardons for their actions on January 6, a clear indication of consciousness of guilt. But there must be many more.

What was the role of the military-intelligence apparatus?

No coup can succeed without the active support or passive consent of the armed forces. For more than three hours, the Pentagon delayed approval of the dispatch of National Guard troops to defend the Capitol. No credible explanation has been given for this delay. Neither acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller nor any high-ranking uniformed officer has given public testimony about their actions on January 6. What were they doing? Who were they in contact with? What discussions were held?

What was Trump doing in the Oval Office as the attack unfolded?

According to Hutchinson, chief of staff Meadows told her several times during those hours that Trump wanted to be alone in his office. Who was he calling, and what did they discuss? He was certainly speaking to members of Congress who were inside the besieged Capitol. What did they discuss? Was he in direct contact with elements in the crowd who had attacked the building? Was he in contact with leaders of the military-intelligence apparatus? What did they discuss?

Why was the Capitol so lightly defended, and who ordered the stand-down?

The threats of violence on January 6 were not made in secret but widely publicized on the internet and even in the corporate media. There had been previous incidents of violence, including dress-rehearsal attacks on state capitols and the fascist plot to kidnap and kill Michigan's Democratic governor. Yet the Capitol Police were under no extraordinary alert, and there was no preemptive mobilization of the police and military, as there certainly would have been if Trump had won the election and there were threats of a left-wing protest against the certification of his victory.

What was the Democratic Party doing before the attack?

It was clear to the Democrats what Trump's intentions were. He had made no secret of his defiance of the election results, and Biden had said, months before the election, that Trump's possible rejection of an election defeat was his greatest concern. But after

the election Biden and the Democrats spread complacency, suggesting that there was no substance to Trump's refusal to concede, only his psychological inability to admit defeat. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top official in Congress, took no action to fortify the Capitol before the certification vote, which Trump was publicly targeting for attack.

What was Biden doing on January 6?

As president-elect, Biden began to receive national security briefings from November 30 on (after an initial delay due to Trump's refusal to concede defeat). Biden was privy to all the information available to the intelligence apparatus about the threatened violence on January 6, which could not have come as a surprise to him. Yet he said nothing for hours. Why not? Why didn't he go on television as soon as the dimensions of the attack became apparent and denounce it? Was he in contact with the military-intelligence leadership and, like them, biding his time? Why, when he finally did speak out publicly, was it in the form of an appeal to Trump rather than to the American people?

The comments of House Select Committee members after the hearing and the press coverage which ensued combine to bury these vital political questions, reducing everything to the small change of Trump's personal conduct—Did he grab the wheel of his protective vehicle, or attack his Secret Service bodyguard, or smash his dinner plate against the wall?

The leading press voices trivialize the hearing, with the *Washington Post* editorializing, "Jan. 6 testimony shows that Donald Trump is unhinged. Voters must listen." And the *New York Times*, which did not even write an editorial, published a news analysis headlined, "A President Untethered: In the final, frenzied days of his administration, Donald J. Trump's behavior turned increasingly volatile as he smashed dishware and lunged at his own Secret Service agent."

At most, the commentary revolves around whether Trump can be or will be criminally indicted for his actions or about the impact of these revelations on the upcoming midterm elections.

Neither the media nor the Democrats care to discuss what the consequences would have been if Trump's coup had been successful. What would America have looked like on January 7, 2021? Or on January 20, 2021, with the "peaceful transition of power" forestalled? Or today?

The revelations about January 6 cannot, however, be put back in the bottle. The majority of Americans now believe, according to most polling, that Trump should be indicted and prosecuted for his actions. The Socialist Equality Party fully embraces that sentiment.

The Democratic Party is fearful that in the event of a trial of Trump, there would be evidence coming out of the vast extent of the conspiracy, including large sections of the Republican Party, those whom Biden declares to be his "colleagues" and "friends." That is why the investigation into January 6 has been dragged out over nearly 18 months, with the most explosive revelations delayed until now. Even the latest exposure seems due to the desire to weaken Trump and his political faction in the November elections, not to alert the American people to the mounting danger to their democratic rights.

But in every capital around the world, capitalist governments understand very well that the United States, the most powerful and

heavily armed country in the world, came within minutes of a successful coup, which was forestalled only by bad luck and incompetence on the part of the coup plotters—and that the coup plotters are all at liberty to try again.

The latest revelations are a powerful vindication of the contemporaneous warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party. In the months leading up to the election, and with increasing force afterwards, we sought to alert the working class to the threat to democratic rights from Trump's open preparations for authoritarian rule. Within hours of the coup, David North, editorial chairman of the WSWS and national chairman of the SEP, wrote:

What occurred yesterday was the outcome of a carefully planned conspiracy. It was instigated by Donald Trump, who has been working with a gang of fascist conspirators strategically positioned within the White House and other powerful institutions, departments and agencies of the state.

The conspiracy utilized the well-known techniques of modern coups. The plotters identified the meeting of the Congress to ratify Biden's Electoral College majority as the propitious time for action. The assault was prepared by weeks of lying claims by Trump and his minions that the 2020 election had been stolen.

North noted the weak defenses of the Capitol, the lack of response by the military, the pathetic spinelessness of the Democratic Party, and Biden's remarkable appeal for Trump to call off the insurrection, which North aptly characterized as Biden's "Hitler, do the right thing" speech.

The next day, the Socialist Equality Party issued a statement calling for "an open, public, televised, live-streamed investigation into all aspects of the events of January 6, 2021, the first-ever attempt by a president to overthrow the American government and establish a dictatorship." Eighteen months later, this political demand must be raised with redoubled force.



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