In run-up to prime time hearing

Secret Service defies January 6 Committee subpoena for text messages

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On Tuesday, the United States Secret Service turned over a grand total of one text message from the January 6, 2021 coup to the House Select Committee investigating Donald Trump's attempt to overturn the 2020 election and seize power as president-dictator.

That message—an appeal from then-Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund to the Secret Service for assistance in fighting off the fascist mob unleashed by Trump on Congress to halt the certification of Joe Biden's victory—was indicative of the events of the day.

Sund, D.C. National Guard Commander William Walker and Mayor Muriel Bowser, as well as numerous Democratic lawmakers hiding from the rampaging mob or evacuating to the Capitol's basement tunnels, pleaded with the Pentagon and the Secret Service to authorize the dispatch of federal forces to the besieged Capitol. But the top officials, all hand-picked cronies of Trump, delayed any action for more than three hours, waiting until after 5 p.m. to authorize the dispatch of National Guard troops that had been standing by. By that time, the insurrection had fizzled out and Trump had called on his "special people" to withdraw.

Throughout that time, according to recent reports, Trump's deputy White House chief of staff for operations, Tony Ornato, a still-serving Secret Service official who previously had led Trump's Secret Service detail, was coordinating with Kash Patel, chief of staff to acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller.

Trump installed Miller and Patel as part of a purge of the Pentagon leadership he carried out two days after the presidential election was called for Biden. Trump removed Mark Esper and other officials who had opposed his plan to invoke the Insurrection Act and mobilize the army to crush left-wing anti-police violence protests on June 1, 2020. Deputy White House Chief of Staff Ornato had played a central role in organizing that first coup attempt.

The last two televised hearings of the January 6 Committee have established that Trump deliberately mobilized armed fascists to capture and kill Democratic lawmakers as well as his vice president, Mike Pence, in order to overturn the election. The Secret Service played a central role.

Pence's Secret Service detail tried unsuccessfully to remove him from the Capitol so as to prevent the timely certification of the Electoral College vote, as stipulated by law. This was to open the way for Trump to throw the election into the Supreme Court, Republican-controlled legislatures of swing states won by Biden, or the House of Representatives, where the Republicans controlled the majority of state delegations.

As an unnamed "congressional official" told the *Intercept*, "People need to understand that if Pence had listened to the Secret Service and fled the Capitol, this could have turned out a whole lot worse. It could've been a successful coup, not just an attempted one."

The Biden administration and the Democratic-controlled Congress have known for months that the Secret Service was engaged in a cover-up of its role in the coup attempt. But the issue only broke into public view on July 13, when the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the parent organization of the Secret Service, sent letters to the House and Senate Homeland Security Committees informing them that in response to his 2021 request for text messages sent and received by Secret Service agents in connection with the events of January 6, the

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Secret Service told him the messages had been deleted.

After meeting with the inspector general last Friday, the January 6 Committee issued a subpoena for all such communications from January 5 and January 6, 2021 to be handed over by Tuesday, July 19. On Tuesday, Secret Service Assistant Director Ron Rowe told the Committee in a letter that apart from the message from Sund, all other text messages had been deleted and were likely unrecoverable.

Rowe wrote that Inspector General Joseph Cuffari had requested all text messages sent or received by 24 Secret Service personnel between December 7, 2020 and January 8, 2021. He claimed that all but the Sund message had been deleted by agents, who failed to save them in advance of a "phone migration" beginning on January 27, 2021, in which all cell phone content was wiped out.

In fact, the messages were deleted *after* the Secret Service received a broad preservation and production request by Congress on January 16, 2021, which was followed by a request two months later from several House committees for text messages received or sent between January 5 and January 7.

The unauthorized deletion of government records is illegal. The deletion of the records of the federal police agency charged with protecting the president, vice president and other high government officials concerning an attempted coup signifies complicity in the coup attempt and the ensuing coverup.

On Tuesday, the National Archives and Records Administration sent a letter to the Secret Service ordering it to investigate the deletion of the text messages. This, however, is little more than a formality.

The Secret Service arrogantly defends its actions, denouncing any imputation of "malicious" intent in the mass destruction of information demanded by Congress and the DHS inspector general. Spokesman Anthony Guglielmi told the *Hill* that there were no "hidden messages" the agency was concealing or information it was "holding out" from the Committee.

"There's no reason for us to say the texts were lost," he said. "I mean, how do you know that those people texted… People say texts were lost. How do you know texts were sent?"

State operatives and institutions that were complicit in the coup and continue to plot the imposition of dictatorial rule, including the Republican Party and substantial sections of the police, the military and the intelligence apparatus, operate with impunity because of the cowardice of the Biden administration and the Democrats.

Not a single ringleader of the coup has been criminally charged or jailed, beginning with Trump. The January 6 Committee, controlled by the Democrats, is seeking to isolate the role of Trump from the rush to the right of the entire ruling class and the massive crisis of American capitalism, which makes the traditional forms of bourgeois democratic rule impossible.

The Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street, the military and the CIA, is terrified of revealing the reality of the collapse of American democracy and the growth of fascist forces, openly cultivated by Trump and his party. They fear the already seething growth of working class opposition to mass death from COVID, war, inflation, austerity and social inequality—policies backed by both parties of American capitalism.

The main concern of the Democrats is to suppress the struggles of the working class, working together with the trade union bureaucracy and upper-middle class proponents of racial and identity politics.

Even now, on the eve of a prime time televised hearing focusing on Trump's actions on January 6, Committee members are tip-toeing around the Secret Service's defiance and what it says about the broader conspiracy against democratic rights.

Downplaying the issue, Representative Jamie Raskin (Democrat from Maryland) told reporters on Tuesday, "One thing I've learned in this process is that when one evidentiary door closes, another one will open and we'll find a way."

Representative Stephanie Murphy (Democrat from Florida) said Tuesday on the MSNBC "Deadline White House" program: "One of the purposes of the Committee is to identify areas of improvement around communication, around responses, around intelligence. We need to work with the agency."

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