

Armed Seattle man who threatened to kill Democratic Congresswoman Jayapal charged with one felony

Jacob Crosse
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On Wednesday, nearly three weeks after Brett Forsell threatened to kill U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal while brandishing a loaded pistol outside her home in Seattle, Washington, King County prosecutors filed one felony stalking charge against the gunman.

Forsell, who is 49, was booked into jail on Thursday night. He was first arrested outside Jayapal's home on July 9 on suspicion of committing a hate crime after Jayapal, her husband Steve Williamson and multiple neighbors heard Forsell and others hurl death threats at the congresswoman. He also attempted to set up a tent near Jayapal's house.

Jayapal and neighbors reported to police that they heard Forsell yelling, "Go back to India," and "I'm going to kill you."

However, at that time the police refused to lodge any charges against Forsell, and he was released after having been detained for 72 hours.

A judge then issued an Emergency Protection Order (ERPO), allowing police to seize the .40 caliber Glock pistol Forsell had in his possession on the night of his arrest, as well as a rifle found at his mother's house, where Forsell and his two adult sons reside.

In charging documents released on Wednesday, prosecutors requested that bail be set at \$500,000. Prosecutor Gary Ernsdorff wrote that while Forsell was in custody on July 9, his thoughts were consumed with "getting his Glock .40 caliber semiautomatic handgun back as quickly as possible."

Ernsdorff alleged that Forsell revealed his intention to "obtain an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle." He added that Forsell "intends to continue his pattern of returning to Representative Jayapal's house until, in his words, she

'goes back to India.'

"The State is requesting bail as the defendant is not likely to appear in response to a summons, likely to commit a violent offense if free in the community and likely to interfere with the administration of justice, as he has already stated that he would return to the victim's home as soon as he is released," wrote Ernsdorff.

According to the police, Forsell waived his Miranda rights after his initial arrest on July 9 and told them his only bias against Jayapal was "her political beliefs and status as a Democrat." He admitted that since June 29, 2022, he had driven by Jayapal's house "3-7 times" and yelled things such as "Fuck you and your party."

The court and police documents corroborate the accounts given by Jayapal and her neighbors. The documents also reveal that Forsell had driven by Jayapal's residence earlier that same night before returning with his son, Landon Forsell.

The police said a tape recording confirmed the claim by Jayapal's husband, Steve Williamson, that one man called Jayapal a "communist," and another said she should "kill herself."

During an interview with police on July 9, Jayapal said she was "shaken" by the threats because the "males sounded very angry" and that a similar incident had occurred outside her house on July 2.

She also said the anger and comments directed at her on July 9 reminded her of "her experience in Washington D.C. on January 6." She said hearing the assailants calling out her name while threatening to kill her "was like re-living" the siege at the Capitol. She said she feared it

might be the same forces “coming to get me here.”

Jayapal told the police that while she did not know Forsell, she had received an email from him on January 5, 2022 that “expressed dislike towards her.” Jayapal also said that on April 10 and July 1 of this year, a car had driven by her house and the driver had yelled “something about the Democratic Party.”

Despite the violent threat posed by Forsell, and possibly his son, charges did not follow in the days after he was released, forcing Jayapal to demand publicly in interviews on CNN, MSNBC and “Democracy Now!” that Forsell be charged.

“I think it would be a terrible, terrible sign, not just to me, but to elected officials across the country if they are not able to arrest him and charge him,” Jayapal said last week on MSNBC.

Jayapal is the chairperson of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, yet none of her fellow “progressive” Democrats such as Senator Bernie Sanders or Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez issued a single tweet or public statement backing her demand for the gunman’s arrest. The same goes for the top leadership of the Democratic Party. Neither President Biden nor House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has uttered a word in public about the fascist threat to Jayapal’s life.

Yet on July 22, less than one day after New York Republican Congressman Lee Zeldin was attacked by a man while campaigning for governor, the Biden White House issued a statement condemning the attack “in the strongest terms.” Zeldin’s attacker, David Jakubonis, was immediately jailed and remains in detention.

In a statement released following Forsell’s arrest, Jayapal said that the single charge against Forsell, nearly three weeks after the fact, was an example of “the justice system doing its work.” She added that she was “grateful to the King County Prosecutor’s Office for holding this man accountable.”

The right-wing death threats leveled at Jayapal are part of a growing trend of right-wing political violence that is being cultivated and encouraged by the Republican Party.

One example occurred last Saturday at the UpRising Bakery and Cafe outside of Chicago. Overnight on July 23, police received a call that the bakery was being vandalized. They arrested 24-year-old Joseph I. Collins,

who was charged with a hate crime and damage to property.

Bakery owner Corinna Sac reported that her property had been vandalized with homophobic slurs, including “Groomers” and “fags,” along with the message “Christ is King.”

Sac had planned to hold an event Saturday night called “Starry Night Drag Brunch,” featuring performances by three local drag queens. In the weeks leading up to the vandalism, Proud Boys chapters in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Kentucky, had begun to mobilize against the bakery after right-wing social media accounts with close ties to the Republican Party, such as “Liberals of TikTok” and fascist propagandist Andy Ngo, began to target the event on their media accounts.

The phrase “Christ is King,” which was spray-painted at the bakery, has been popularized by America First fascist Nick Fuentes. Fuentes’ followers have frequently chanted the phrase at rallies, including at an anti-vaccine rally in New York last November and the November 14, 2020 “Million MAGA” march in Washington D.C.

A report issued earlier this month by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) found that in the first six months of 2022, the Proud Boys held “counter-protests or harassed people on at least 28 separate occasions at LBGTQ” and abortion rights events.

The SPLC reported that since Trump’s attempted coup of January 6, 2021, the number of Proud Boys chapters had grown from 43 to 72.



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