

Attorney General Garland calls for release of search warrant for Trump's estate

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Attorney General Merrick Garland made his first public comment on Monday's FBI raid on the Mar-a-Lago estate of former President Donald Trump, announcing Thursday that the Department of Justice (DOJ) had gone to court to seek the public disclosure of the search warrant that provides the judicial authorization for the raid, as well as an inventory of the contents seized.

Garland said he had personally approved the raid and sought to defend the FBI and the DOJ from the right-wing furor that has erupted in response to Trump making the raid public. He said the White House was not involved in his decision to make a public statement and had not been informed in advance.

As for President Biden, he remains on vacation in South Carolina and has refused to comment either on the raid or on the ensuing political firestorm. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined to answer any questions on the subject at a press briefing Tuesday, and there are no further briefings scheduled this week.

Biden's silence in the face of the right-wing furor over the raid is extraordinary. He has declined to issue a statement declaring his full confidence in Garland, which under other circumstances would be routine. He is more concerned with keeping the Republican Party on board with his war policies against Russia and China than with the threat of fascist violence in the United States.

Both the president and the attorney general continue to avoid the central issue posed by the raid: How is it connected to the attack on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, and to Trump's ongoing efforts to mobilize his fascist followers, overthrow the government and install himself as a fascist dictator?

Garland pointed out that going to court in South

Florida to seek the disclosure of the warrant was only necessary because Trump had not released it, which the ex-president could have done at any time since the raid. He gave the ex-president until Friday to decide whether he would agree to the release or oppose it.

The Justice Department request to unseal the warrant and the inventory of evidence taken was filed by U.S. Attorney Juan Antonio Gonzalez and Jay Bratt, chief of the Justice Department's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section, Counterintelligence Division. Bratt's role is significant, since unnamed DOJ officials and the media have repeatedly declared that the only purpose of the Mar-a-Lago raid was to retrieve highly sensitive classified documents that Trump took with him when he left the White House.

In his two-minute statement, Garland referred to the "intense public interest" about the first-ever police raid on the home of an ex-president and said the proposal to unseal the warrant and inventory was in response to that. According to the motion filed in South Florida, "the former President should have an opportunity to respond to this Motion and lodge objections, including with regards to any 'legitimate privacy interests' or the potential for other 'injury' if these materials are made public."

In the event Trump opposes the release of the warrant and inventory related to the August 8 raid, federal Judge Bruce Reinhart, who issued the original search warrant, set August 25 for a hearing on the issue. Trump's lawyers must file a brief opposing release and give the U.S. Attorney time to prepare a response by that date.

The search warrant could prove to be revealing and politically significant. The *New York Times* reported on its website Thursday afternoon, "Some senior Republicans have been warned by allies of Mr. Trump

not to continue to be aggressive in criticizing the Justice Department and the F.B.I. over the matter because it is possible that more damaging information related to the search will become public.”

Garland said he would not release a third document related to the raid, the DOJ affidavit filed with the judge, arguing that there was “probable cause” that crimes had been committed and that evidence of those crimes was at Mar-a-Lago.

In his appearance before the press at 3:00 p.m. Thursday, Garland defended the FBI agents and Justice Department attorneys who were handling the investigation.

He cited a flood of threats of violence and accusations of political motivations on social media in the three days since Trump made the raid public and claimed he was being targeted by the Biden administration for political reasons.

Press reports suggest that there was considerable discontent within the FBI over the right-wing campaign of violent rhetoric directed at the FBI and the Justice Department. Garland’s defense of the FBI agents and DOJ attorneys was thus in response to considerable internal pressure within the agency.

The day before Garland’s appearance, FBI Director Christopher Wray sent out a memo to all bureau employees urging them to be on their guard and telling them that his “primary concern right now” was their “safety and security.”

The right-wing threats against the DOJ and FBI have included repeated declarations of “war” against an alleged conspiracy by the “deep state” against Trump. One particularly ferocious threat called on Trump supporters to “destroy the FBI.” There have been death threats against federal agents in general and against Garland and Wray in particular.

A Trump supporter, later identified as Ricky Shiffer, apparently acting on such sentiments, tried to carry out an armed assault on the FBI office in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area. He arrived at the office at 9:15 a.m. Thursday morning, wearing body armor and equipped with an AR-15 assault rifle and a nail-gun.

After he was unable to get through the visitor screening room, he fled the scene and was later spotted by Highway Patrol officers on the I-71 interstate headed northeast out of Cincinnati toward Columbus, Ohio. Gunshots were exchanged, and Shiffer exited the

interstate and was pursued by the police along rural roads.

Eventually Shiffer abandoned his car and fled on foot through a cornfield. An armed standoff ensued, lasting for several hours, before Shiffer was shot and killed.

According to the *New York Times*, Shiffer had declared on social media that he was present at the US Capitol on January 6 and blamed the attack on federal agents posing as Trump supporters (a common ultra-right conspiracy theory). He also posted about the fascist militia group the Proud Boys, writing, “Save ammunition, get in touch with the Proud Boys and learn how they did it in the Revolutionary War, because submitting to tyranny while lawfully protesting was never the American way.”

The final shootout with Shiffer took place around 3:00 p.m., suggesting that Garland was following the events in Ohio closely and delayed his appearance in front of the media until he was sure that the gunman had been killed, although he made no mention of these events in his brief statement.



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