

US Secret Service confirms contact with Oath Keeper leaders, including Stewart Rhodes, leading up to January 6 coup

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In the second week of the seditious conspiracy trial against five members of the fascist Oath Keepers militia group, prosecutors presented more text evidence that the US Secret Service had contact with the leader of the group, Stewart Rhodes, leading up to the January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Last week, former Oath Keeper John Zimmerman testified that Rhodes told him that he had a contact within the Secret Service.

Rhodes, a Yale-educated lawyer and former Army paratrooper, allegedly told Zimmerman that this Secret Service contact had previously spoken to him about Oath Keepers providing security services for a Trump campaign event in September 2020. Zimmerman said Rhodes discussed with the Secret Service what kind of weapons the Oath Keepers were allowed to carry while “working” the rally.

After Zimmerman’s testimony emerged last week, the agency refused to confirm if it had previous contact with Rhodes.

However on Wednesday, the *Washington Post* wrote that a “Secret Service official” confirmed that “members of the agency’s protective intelligence division reached out to the Oath Keepers in advance of protests in D.C. in November and December as well as the January 6 ‘Stop the Steal’ rally.” The *Post* reported that Rhodes, “and other leaders” from the fascist militia group, “were in contact with Secret Service officials multiple times in late 2020.”

The so-called “Million MAGA” marches, held in

Washington D.C. on November 14 and December 12, 2020, helped to galvanize Trump’s militia elements in support of the coup and served as nexus points for further coordination between the groups and the White House itself. At each march, fascists engaged in street fights with local residents and anti-fascist activists.

That the Secret Service was actively in touch with Rhodes during these rallies dispels any pretense that the intelligence agencies and Washington D.C. police department were unaware that a fascist attack animated by Trump’s lie that the election was stolen was being planned. The question now is how much of Rhodes’ activities were directed, or at least passively encouraged, by the agency closest to the aspiring dictator Trump?

Prosecutors presented revealing text messages on Thursday illustrating how Rhodes saw the relationship between himself and the Secret Service.

The messages were exchanged between Florida Oath Keeper leader Kelly Meggs and Rhodes. Meggs and his wife Connie were both cited in Thursday’s January 6 Select Committee hearing as being two of at least seven Oath Keepers who have been charged in the coup and have also previously provided security to Trump political crony Roger Stone. Rhodes was one of dozens of fascists who belonged to the “Friends of Stone” text group which was used by Stone to coordinate “Stop the Steal” efforts.

After the Oath Keepers were granted “VIP” passes to protect Republican officials during the Ellipse rally

outside the White House on January 6, Meggs asked Rhodes how the Secret Service would feel about the fascist militia group “protecting” Trump.

Rhodes responded that the group would only bring guns if Trump invoked the Insurrection Act and federalized them as a militia.

“I’m not talking about us just walking onto the White House lawn with rifles,” Rhodes wrote to Meggs. However, Rhodes added that he thought the Secret Service “would be happy to have us there,” based on previous conversations he had with other agents.

In those same Signal chats with Meggs, Rhodes advised that the group adopt the fascist QAnon slogan “WWG1WGA” (Where We Go One We Go All).

In addition to revealing the close coordination between the Secret Service and the Oath Keepers leading up to the attack on the Capitol, testimony from former Oath Keepers has shed further light on the massive amount of weaponry the group brought with them in support of Trump’s coup. That there were not massive fatalities on January 6 appears to be more a result of luck and inexperience on the part of the fascists, as opposed to any action taken by the police or intelligence agencies to prevent violence.

On Wednesday, Oath Keeper Terry Cummings provided testimony on his activities with the group leading up to and during January 6.

While Cummings is not charged with a crime, he did admit he was only testifying because a subpoena compelled him to. Cummings confirmed he was in the Air National Guard for 21 years and that his first deployment was to Germany in 1978.

Cummings testified that after joining the militia group while living in Florida in 2020, he spoke with Oath Keepers Jason Dolan and Kenneth Harrelson about coming to Washington D.C. on January 6.

Cummings, who did not have a leadership role in the group, said that he, Dolan and Harrelson met up with Connie and Kelly Meggs at a “rustic camp” in North

Carolina on January 4, 2021. From there the group headed to a Virginia hotel outside of D.C. (District of Columbia) where the “quick reaction forces,” or QRFs, were gathering.

Cummings brought his AR-15 with him to the hotel, but he claimed that this was for “defensive” purposes. Upon seeing the weapons cache the Oath Keepers had already amassed less than 48 hours before January 6, Cummings remarked: “I had not seen that many weapons in one location since I was in the military.”

Prior to the attack on Congress, Cummings was one of several Oath Keepers who received VIP passes to go backstage and “protect” Republican politicians and operatives. During his “security” mission on January 6, Cummings was told by Kelly Meggs that he “had contact with the organizers” of the “Save America” rally.

After Trump’s speech, Cummings joined fellow Oath Keepers in marching on the Capitol but due to a fortuitous bathroom break, he got separated from the group and did not participate in the military “stack” breach of the Capitol. Cummings said that he did reconnect with Rhodes outside the Capitol as the siege was underway.

Cummings recalled Rhodes telling him to “just suck it up” when police started to use tear gas.



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