US prosecutors recommend wrist-slap six-month sentence for January 6 conspirator Stephen Bannon

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On Monday, US prosecutors recommended that former Trump White House advisor Stephen K. Bannon be sentenced to six months in prison and pay a $200,000 fine. The Republican operative was found guilty on two counts of contempt of Congress by a Washington D.C. jury this past July in a trial that lasted less than a week.

The maximum penalty for contempt of Congress is one year in prison and a $100,000 fine, meaning Bannon could face up to two years in prison when he stands before US District Judge Carl J. Nichols, a Trump appointee, this Friday.

To say that the six-month sentence recommended by US prosecutors is a "slap on the wrist" fails to convey the degree of leniency Bannon is being afforded. The sentence recommendation, only a quarter of the amount of time he could spend in prison, comes after a year in which Bannon has not only refused to cooperate with the House Select Committee on January 6, he has incited fascistic violence against its members on a near-daily basis.

The Select Committee issued a subpoena to Bannon for documents and testimony on September 23, 2021. The first deadline for Bannon to produce documents was October 7, 2021. Bannon let the day pass without producing a single document. One week later, on October 14, Trump's former advisor failed to appear for an in-person testimony.

The next week, the Select Committee voted 9-0 to recommend that Bannon be held in contempt, and on October 21, 2021, the House of Representatives, in a near-party line vote of 229 to 202, voted to hold Bannon in contempt. For nine months Bannon attempted, and failed, to get the charges dismissed outright or delay the trial until after the midterm elections.

After Bannon was found guilty in July of 2022, he went on Fox News' right-wing Tucker Carlson program and demanded a "real committee" to "get to the bottom of January 6" and "investigate what happened to Ashli Babbitt ."

Babbitt, an Air Force veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Trump supporter and QAnon adherent, was shot and killed by a US Capitol police officer as she attempted to break into the House chamber on January 6, 2021. She was part of the fascist mob that stormed the Capitol in an attempt to block certification of Joe Biden's election victory. Trump and his backers have sought to turn her into a martyr as part of their defense of the attempted coup and its perpetrators.

The same week this past July that Bannon denounced the House Committee on Fox, he said he was going to "kill this administration," referring to the Biden government, "in the crib."

As host of the fascistic War Room podcast, Bannon, a former officer in the US Navy, played an integral role in Trump's coup. Through his program, Bannon helped coordinate the "Stop the Steal" movement online and at multiple in-person rallies leading up to the attack on the Capitol.

In the Justice Department's sentencing recommendations filed Monday, US Attorney Matthew Graves wrote that since the subpoena was issued by the January 6 Committee last September, Bannon "has pursued a bad-faith strategy of defiance and contempt."

Explaining the importance of Bannon's documents and testimony, Graves wrote that it was a "matter of national importance: the circumstances that led to a violent attack on the Capitol and disruption of the peaceful transfer of power."

Graves noted that to date Bannon has "flouted the Committee's authority and ignored the subpoena's

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demands" and "has not produced a single document to the committee or appeared for testimony."

The only time Bannon attempted to cooperate with the subpoena was right before the trial was set to begin this summer. Graves wrote that Bannon "attempted to leverage the information he unlawfully withheld from the Committee to engineer dismissal of his criminal prosecution. When his *quid pro quo* attempt failed, the Defendant made no further attempt at cooperation with the Committee - speaking volumes about his bad faith."

Bannon has not only acted in "bad faith," he has spent the last year since he was subpoenaed by the committee propagating Trump's lie that the 2020 election was stolen and leading Republican efforts to organize future coups. On an almost daily basis, Bannon has current and aspiring Republican politicians and operatives on his program to champion the "America First" movement and the transformation of the Republican Party into a fascist organization.

Graves himself noted that this past July on his podcast Bannon threatened to go "medieval on these people," referring to members of the January 6 Select Committee.

US prosecutors observed that Bannon was at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel, a nerve center of the January 6 conspiracy, on January 5, 2021. At a hearing of the Select Committee, Vice Chair Liz Cheney claimed that Bannon was at the hotel on January 6 as well.

The Willard Hotel served as a nexus for Republican lawyers, rally organizers, right-wing operatives and militia elements involved in the coup plot. Bannon reportedly mingled with pro-Trump legislators at the hotel the day before they voted against certifying the Electoral College vote, which had been made official on December 18, 2020 when the various slates of state electors met in Washington D.C. to register their votes.

On his January 5, 2021 edition of the War Room, the former Goldman Sachs investment banker and ex-Breitbart editor predicted that "All Hell is going to break loose tomorrow."

None of the high-level Willard Hotel co-conspirators—Eastman, Giuliani, Ellis, Stone—or Republican lawmakers such as "Stop the Steal" leaders Andy Biggs, Paul Gosar, Mo Brooks and Tommy Tuberville, and others like Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley, who voted against certification hours after the attempted coup—have been charged by the Biden Justice Department more than 21 months after Trump's failed overthrow of the government.

That these, and hundreds of other high-level Republican officials, as well as Trump accomplices in the military, police and intelligence agencies, have not been criminally prosecuted underscores that the Democratic Party is incapable of and unwilling to defend the democratic rights of the population.

The day after the sentencing recommendations were released, Bannon had on his program the third highest-ranking member of the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives, Elise Stefanik of New York. Stefanik replaced Liz Cheney in the Republican leadership after Cheney refused to back Trump's election lies.

After Stefanik, Bannon welcomed the fascist host of "Info Wars," Alex Jones. In his appearance, Jones defended anti-Semites Ye (Kanye West) and Jack Posobiec and hawked his book, saying it exposed the "globalist" agenda.

Former Trump White House trade advisor and weekly guest on the "War Room" Peter Navarro is facing an upcoming contempt of Congress trial for ignoring a House Select Committee subpoena. Navarro rejected a plea deal earlier this summer that would have seen him spend just 30 days in jail.

The Department of Justice has refused to indict two other high-level Trump co-conspirators who refused to comply with the January 6 Committee's subpoenas and were held in contempt by the House—former White House Communications Director Dan Scavino and former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows.

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