

Trump-endorsed Republicans in Arizona refuse to concede, threaten violence

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More than a week after the Arizona gubernatorial race was called for the current Democratic secretary of state, Katie Hobbs, Trump-backed Republican candidate Kari Lake has refused to concede the election.

Lake has used the fact that on Election Day there were issues with certain vote tabulators and printing machines in Maricopa County to claim that the entire election is illegitimate.

The relatively minor issues, which in no way prevented people from casting ballots as long as they were willing, and able, to wait in line, were not located in either Democratic or Republican strongholds, according to an analysis by *Washington Post*.

Lake, like Trump before her, spread lies prior to the election that mail-in ballots were not trustworthy and encouraged her supporters to cast their ballots on election day, leading to increased voter turnout at the 233 election polling sites located in Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix.

The former local news anchor and possible Trump 2024 vice presidential candidate has centered her election-denying campaign on Republican officials in Maricopa County who have been unwilling to substantiate her bogus claims that technical issues with some voting machines on Election Day were the product of malfeasance aimed at disenfranchising her voters.

Without naming her directly, police officials are warning that Lake's daily attacks on election officials, coupled with her refusal to concede, are fueling threats of violence against election officials and forcing them to take stringent security measures.

In a press conference Monday, Maricopa County Sheriff Paul Penzone said that while there have been no arrests, his department was investigating a "high number of threats" against election officials. Penzone acknowledged that these attacks began before the election and have continued even after all the votes were counted.

Penzone called the "high number of threats" a "natural escalation" from the 2020 election, which Trump and a majority of the Republican Party continue to claim was fraudulent.

"Folks feel emboldened, they have people running for office or in elected office who are empowering them," Penzone said, adding, "And it needs to stop."

Over the weekend, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Gates, a lifelong Republican, confirmed to multiple news outlets that on Election Day, November 8, he had to be moved to an undisclosed location under police supervision due to violent threats.

Maricopa County spokesperson Jason Berry told CNN that Gates received a "specific threat" against him "on social media," prompting the sheriff's office to sequester him.

Despite the very real threat of lethal violence, with the backing of ex-President Donald Trump, the Lake campaign has continued to attack Republican Maricopa County election officials in social media posts and in private phone conversations through lawyers affiliated with the Republican National Committee (RNC).

Tensions between Republicans aligned with Trump and the old-line establishment wing of the Republican party exploded into the open last Friday after Trump coup lawyer and Rudy Giuliani protégée Jenna Ellis released a selectively edited video on Twitter showing a heated exchange between RNC attorney Benjamin Mehr and an attorney for Maricopa County, Tom Liddy.

Tom Liddy is the son of G. Gordon Liddy, the head of the "plumbers" unit that burglarized the Democratic National committee headquarters in 1972 on behalf of Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal.

Only a portion of the 12-minute phone call, which took place on Monday, November 14, has been released by the Lake

campaign. In interviews with *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*, Liddy said that he did not know the call was being recorded.

In the call, Liddy made clear to Mehr that he would not be intimidated by what he perceived to be threats against him for refusing to kowtow to demands from the Lake campaign.

In the portion released by Ellis, Mehr says, “I think we are in agreement. We don’t want bad stuff to happen.”

Implying that Liddy is not being forthright with the Lake campaign, Mehr adds that it would be “really helpful... for us to be able to say that Tom Liddy is giving us good information.”

After some back and forth, Liddy says, “You sound like you’re threatening me.” Mehr responds that he isn’t, but Liddy repeats back to him what he claims Mehr said to him earlier in the call: “If I don’t get these answers to you quickly, you’re not going to be able to tell the crazy people that I’ve been helpful.” Liddy then says, “I don’t give a f*ck.”

The Lake campaign has refused to release the full recording of the call.

In his interview with *Newsweek*, Liddy said he was originally speaking on the phone with Lake campaign attorney Tim La Sota. Liddy said that La Sota was asking him typical questions about the election, such as inquiring about the number of outstanding provisional ballots and voter participation.

But then another voice came on the phone and began threatening him, Liddy told the news magazine.

Liddy recounted: “The voice said something to the effect of ‘it is very important that we get the answers to these questions quickly. There are a lot of irate people out there who want to take to the streets and we can’t control them. I want to be able to tell them that Tom Liddy has been cooperative. Right now I cannot tell them that.’”

He continued: “I told Ben that I didn’t give a sh*t what he told the angry people in the mob. I was not going to be intimidated and my clients at Maricopa County won’t be intimidated. I told him that his words sounded like a threat.”

This past Saturday, outgoing Republican Attorney General Mark Brnovich lent succor to Lake’s baseless claims by issuing a four-page letter filled with technical criticisms of how the election was handled. The letter, issued by the “election integrity unit” created by Republicans in Arizona after Democrats wiped them out in the 2018 election, made no allegations that vote totals were manipulated or that any plan

existed to defraud Lake or the rest of the Republican ticket.

Nevertheless, the Lake campaign has seized on the letter, along with the fact that two smaller Republican-controlled Arizona counties, Mohave and Cochise, have voted not to certify their results to bolster their claims of fraud.

In Arizona, county boards do not have the legal right to unilaterally decide not to certify the results provided by state elections officials. On Monday, the Associated Press reported that state Elections Director Kori Lorick wrote a letter to the board of Cochise County warning that if they did not certify by December 5, all of their residents’ votes would go uncounted.

As of Monday, all of the votes have been tallied in populous Maricopa County, the center of far-right Republican incitement against the election results. In addition to Hobbs, Democratic Senator Mark Kelly was reelected, defeating Trump-endorsed election denier Blake Masters.

In the secretary of state race, the Democratic candidate, Adrian Fontes, defeated Republican Mark Finchem, one of several “America First” election-denying secretary of state candidates across the country to lose their race, by over 120,000 votes.

Finchem, like Lake, was endorsed by Trump, and, like Lake, has refused to concede despite losing by a substantial margin. The admitted Oath Keeper, who has yet be charged for marching on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, has demanded that a new election be run.

In the attorney’s general race, Democrat Kris Mayes currently leads Abraham “Abe” Hamadeh by 510 votes. While the razor-thin margin will force an automatic recount, on Tuesday, Hamadeh and the Republican National Committee filed a lawsuit targeting Mayes, Hobbs and every county recorder and board of supervisors in the state of Arizona, alleging “gross incompetence and mismanagement.”

Hamadeh, who is currently an active duty intelligence officer in the US Army, has previously said he would “lock up” those he deemed responsible for Trump’s defeat in the 2020 election.



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