Hundreds of Oath Keepers revealed to have worked for US Department of Homeland Security

Jacob Crosse
14 December 2022

On Monday, journalists with the Project on Government Oversight (POGO) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), published reports confirming that over 300 current and former employees of the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), or agencies under its umbrella, self-identified as members of the fascist Oath Keepers militia group.

In alliance with then-President Donald Trump and large sections of the Republican Party, the Oath Keepers, along with the Proud Boys and other right-wing militia groups, spearheaded the January 6, 2021 attack on Congress aimed at keeping Trump in power by means of political violence.

At least 31 members of the Oath Keepers have been charged in connection with the storming of the US Capitol, which left hundreds injured and resulted in at least five fatalities. Two members of the Republican-aligned militia group, founder Stewart Rhodes and Florida chapter leader Kelly Meggs, were convicted of seditious conspiracy last month for their role in the attack.

Four more members of the Oath Keepers—Roberto Minuta, Joseph Hackett, David Moerschel and Edward Vallejo—are currently on trial facing seditious conspiracy charges. Later this month, Proud Boys Henry "Enrique" Tarrio, Joseph Biggs, Ethan Nordean, Zachary Rehl and Dominic Pezzola will go on trial for sedition.

The analysis published by OCCRP and POGO is based on an internal Oath Keepers roster from 2009-2015, which had nearly 40,000 unique email addresses. The membership list was previously acquired by anonymous hackers and shared with various news agencies last year.

The new reports identified 306 dues-paying members of the Oath Keepers who listed their employment at the DHS or a subsidiary agency. The largest of this contingent, 184, identified themselves as current or former members of the US Coast Guard.

Forty Oath Keepers identified by the reporters said they either currently work or had previously worked at the DHS itself. Forty more persons self-identified as agents with Customs and Border Protection or the Border Patrol. Another 11 said they had experience with or currently worked at Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"Most Border Patrol agents are Oath Keepers, we just haven't signed up yet," one Border Patrol agent wrote on his Oath Keeper application, OCCRP reported.

While POGO and OCCRP are not publishing all of the names they identified, they did report that they attempted to reach out to everyone on the list. They estimated that roughly 90 percent of the 306 they identified had retired, meaning as many as 30 active Oath Keepers are still employed with the DHS or one of its agencies.

Significantly, seven Oath Keepers identified themselves as current or former employees of the US Secret Service. OCCRP reported that one of the seven

© World Socialist Web Site

wrote that he was a “20 year special agent” with the agency and claimed that he worked on the security detail for two presidents.

“I am currently a 20 year special agent with the United States Secret Service,” the unidentified person wrote. “I have been on President Clinton and President Bush’s protective detail. I was a member and instructor on the Presidential Protective Division’s Counter Assault Team (CAT).”

The DHS is a sprawling and ever-expanding federal bureaucracy, created by President George W. Bush in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. It currently employs some 250,000 people and has a nearly $100 billion 2023 budget, nearly triple the $38.2 billion budget the department had in 2015.

The DHS was ostensibly created to “protect the homeland,” which would theoretically include Congress when it came under attack by neo-Nazis, white supremacists and fascists during the certification of a presidential election. But in congressional testimony four months after the January 6 attack, not a single DHS employee could explain why the agency failed to issue a threat assessment prior to January 6 warning that an attack on Congress was possible.

Claims that there was “no intelligence” to indicate an attack on Congress was imminent are belied by the close connections between the Oath Keepers and the Secret Service prior to the attack. In October, NBC reported that staff members with the January 6 Select Committee had been “briefed on multiple phone calls in 2020 between an agent in the Secret Service’s protective intelligence division and members of the Oath Keepers.”

Besides the fact that Oath Keepers were “on guard” for Trump’s 2017 inauguration and regularly provided “security” for Trump and other Republican operatives, during last month’s Oath Keepers trial former member John Zimmerman testified that Rhodes had active contact with at least one Secret Service agent in the months leading up to the attack on the Capitol.

The DHS is riddled with far-right sympathizers. Earlier this year it was revealed that following the attack on Congress, virtually every Secret Service agent deleted or failed to turn over text messages from January 5-6, 2021 despite being required to preserve such records under the law and having been asked to turn over the texts by several congressional oversight committees.

The top leadership of the DHS at the time, including Trump’s acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf and his acting Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli, also deleted their messages following the attack on the Capitol.

In addition to the DHS and its agencies, fascist Oath Keepers have infiltrated police departments around the country. Using the same data set, the Anti-Defamation League published a report in September which found that 373 self-identified Oath Keepers were *currently* working in police departments and sheriff’s offices around the country, nearly four times as many as the 73 the ADL found in its 2021 report.

Of those 373, the ADL found “at least 10 chiefs of police and 11 sheriffs.” Overall, the ADL “identified more than 1,000 individuals who we believe previously served in law enforcement.”

The ADL also identified “117 individuals who we believe currently serve in the US military, an additional 11 people who serve in the reserves, and 31 individuals who hold civilian positions, or are military contractors.”

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site