

Failed Republican candidate who organized shooting attacks on New Mexico Democratic politicians held without bail

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Solomon Peña, the failed Republican candidate charged with at least 15 crimes related to shootings at houses of state Democratic officials and politicians, was brought before a judge in a video conference January 18. He remained silent while the judge ordered him held without bail pending his next hearing, scheduled for February 1.

Although Peña's attorney, Roberta Yurcic, did not contest the no-bail motion, she later issued this statement: "At this point, the charges against Mr. Peña are merely accusations that have not yet been tested by the full rigor of the judicial process. I plan to fully defend Mr. Peña and fiercely safeguard his rights throughout this process."

More details about Peña have been released since his arrest that remove any doubt that, in addition to having a long rap sheet including "smash and grab" robberies, being deeply disoriented and, in the words of a neighbor, "not a polite, nice person," he holds full-blown fascist beliefs. In one social media post, he claimed, "Critical Race Theory, the entire Black Lives Matter movement, aborting the unborn, food stamps, affirmative action, etc. are all demonic."

On his Twitter account, Peña boasted about traveling to Washington D.C. to participate in former president Donald Trump's failed coup on January 6, 2021. It is unclear if Peña committed any crimes while in Washington D.C.

After his electoral drubbing in New Mexico's District 14 by state representative Miguel Garcia, a Democrat who garnered 74 percent of the vote, Peña refused to concede defeat. Instead, he visited the homes of two county commissioners and at least one of the legislators, uninvited, alleging that the election results

were fraudulent and demanding they refuse to certify the results.

The shootings into the houses of the Democrats took place from December 4 to January 3. According to an arrest warrant affidavit produced by Albuquerque police, and citing a confidential witness, one of the conspirators initially told shooters "to aim above the windows to avoid striking anyone inside," but Peña told them to be "more aggressive," and "wanted them to aim lower and shoot around 8 p.m. because occupants would more likely not be laying [sic] down."

At the last shooting, at the home of state senator Linda Lopez, police found evidence that "Peña himself went ... and actually pulled the trigger on at least one of the firearms that was used." According to Kyle Hartsock, the Albuquerque police deputy commander, an AR-style gun Peña tried to use malfunctioned, and another shooter fired more than a dozen rounds from a separate handgun.

The informant told police that Peña's instructions to conduct the drive-bys earlier in the day and to shoot lower, made them "uneasy since they knew that doing so would more likely end in death or injury." In the same report, a cop notes that they understood the reason Peña joined the January 3 attempted assassination of Lopez was "to ensure better target acquisition."

Hartsock pointed to firearm evidence, surveillance video, cell phone and electronic records and witnesses in and around the conspiracy that helped police connect the five co-conspirators.

The responses—and nonresponse—of the two state and national bourgeois parties adds to the damning evidence of "the advanced decay of bourgeois politics

and the capitalist system as a whole,” as the *World Socialist Web Site* reported.

In an interview with MSNBC’s Chris Hayes this past Tuesday, state senator Lopez, after recounting the shots that struck both her and her daughter’s rooms, said that “this country needs to take a look at itself internally” and offered the usual bromides about how “the rhetoric has to stop.”

“We have to figure out what is acceptable; violence is not acceptable,” Lopez said, adding that “democracy is what our country is based on and to have these persons being willing to destroy it, this is something that I will not stand for and I know there are others who will not stand for it either.”

She then praised state Republicans—a party that includes election deniers and convicted January 6 participants like Couy Griffin—who told her that Peña’s actions were “unacceptable” and “expressed their dismay.” She concluded by urging all to “agree to disagree,” an appeal to “civility” that has had no effect but scorn among fascist Republicans.

Lopez’s sentiments were repeated by other Democrats, including Albuquerque Mayor Timothy Keller and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, who said, “There is no place in our society or our democracy for violence against any elected official or their families.”

At the national level, the cynicism and hypocrisy of the Democrats was on full display. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre intoned that President Biden “has spoken out repeatedly and emphatically about how our nation rejects violence as a political tool. That is a bedrock principle of our democracy.”

Jean-Pierre was speaking for an administration that supports such paragons of democracy as Saudi Arabia, the beheading capital of the world, and the blood-soaked al-Sisi dictatorship of Egypt. And bringing together both issues of attacks on democracy and “violence as a political tool,” the administration is doing just that with its support for and provision of billions of dollars of weaponry for the fascist-infested regime in Ukraine for the NATO/US proxy war with Russia.

Domestically, violence by police has continued under the Biden administration, as have antidemocratic moves like the illegalization of strikes by railroad workers.

New Mexico Republicans, meanwhile, issued a statement saying, “These recent accusations against Solomon Peña are serious, and he should be held accountable if the charges are validated in court,” then ludicrously claimed that the GOP “condemns all forms of violence.”

In fact, last year the Republican National Committee overwhelmingly passed a resolution declaring the violent failed coup of January 6 “legitimate political discourse.”

The New Mexico Republicans added that the shootings were “yet another example of a convicted felon unlawfully gaining access to firearms, which they are barred from owning or possessing, and using the weapon in a manner that causes public harm.”

In fact, armed members of far-right groups, self-proclaimed “citizen militias” and Trump supporters, regularly have shown up at protests in Santa Fe and Albuquerque to threaten, intimidate and even shoot protesters.

On January 18, Yahoo! News reported, “The Republican National Committee did not respond to requests for a statement.” This is not surprising, since Republican representatives like Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia) and Lauren Boebert (Colorado) have repeatedly threatened Democratic lawmakers and “joked” about taking them out with weapons.

The Democrats cannot be relied upon to carry out a serious struggle against the violence fomented by Republican-aligned terrorists like Solomon Peña. They are too concerned with gaining and keeping Republican support for their imperialist designs, including the ongoing US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, and eventually China. They will continue to misrepresent the Solomon Peñas of the world as outliers while appealing to mythical “responsible” Republicans to bolster their war drive.



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