

Four more Oath Keepers convicted of seditious conspiracy in Trump's failed coup

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On Monday, a Washington D.C. jury found four members of the Oath Keepers militia group guilty of seditious conspiracy related to their efforts to keep then-President Donald Trump in power on, and after, January 6, 2021.

In addition to sedition, which carries a maximum 20-year prison sentence, Roberto Minuta, 38, of Prosper, Texas; Joseph Hackett, 52, of Sarasota, Florida; David Moerschel, 45, of Punta Gorda, Florida; and Edward Vallejo, 64, of Phoenix, Arizona were found guilty of conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding, obstruction of an official proceeding and conspiracy to impede members of Congress—all felonies. Hackett was also convicted of tampering with documents, referring to his destruction of incriminating evidence after the fact.

None of the convicted Oath Keepers have been sentenced as yet by Obama-appointed US District Court Judge Amit P. Mehta. In a continuation of the lax treatment Trump's foot soldiers have been afforded by the government and the courts, after the four men were found guilty on Monday, Judge Mehta declined to detain them and instead ordered them to remain under house arrest.

This marks the second time in the last two months that leaders of the fascist paramilitary group have been convicted by a jury of participating in a violent plot to stop the certification of the 2020 presidential election.

Last November, the founder of the Oath Keepers, Elmer Stewart Rhodes III, and Florida chapter president Kelly Meggs were found guilty of sedition, as well as obstruction of an official proceeding and tampering with documents. Rhodes, who founded the group following the election of Obama, is a Yale-educated lawyer and former Army paratrooper who previously staffed for Texas libertarian Representative Ron Paul.

In the first trial, Oath Keepers Kenneth Harrleson, Jessica Watkins and Thomas Caldwell were not convicted of

sedition, but all three were found guilty on other felony counts related to preventing the certification of the election and obstruction of Congress.

Refuting lies advanced by Trump supporters and a layer of middle-class pseudo-left elements who claim that the January 6 attack on Congress was a “First Amendment” demonstration or a “spontaneous riot,” US prosecutors, in the course of the first Oath Keepers trial, presented encrypted and private communications between Rhodes and his co-defendants showing that they coordinated their travel and brought weapons to Washington D.C. to prevent the certification.

Of the more recently convicted Oath Keepers, Hackett, Moerschel and Minuta breached the Capitol on January 6, while Vallejo waited at a Comfort Inn hotel in Arlington, Virginia for a call for assistance from his co-conspirators. At the hotel, Vallejo had a cache of military grade weaponry, including semi-automatic assault rifles and thousands of rounds of ammunition. Prosecutors presented evidence during the trial that Vallejo repeatedly texted his fellow Oath Keepers as the Capitol was under siege about his desire to deploy the weaponry.

On January 6, at 2:24 p.m., the exact time Trump tweeted that “Mike Pence didn’t have the courage” to unconstitutionally overturn the election, Vallejo texted: “Vallejo back at hotel and outfitted. Have 2 trucks available. Let me know how I can assist.”

Fourteen minutes later, as Pence and members of Congress were fleeing from hundreds of Trump supporters, including white supremacists and neo-Nazis, Vallejo texted on the Oath Keeper group chat, “QRF standing by at hotel. Just say the word...”

“QRF,” which stands for “Quick Reaction Force,” is a military term used to describe a small team or unit that can

quickly engage an enemy target. The Oath Keepers, like almost all fascist paramilitary groups, recruit heavily from the US military and police agencies.

In addition to thousands of dollars in military grade weaponry, the Oath Keepers brought knives, combat uniforms, a 30-day supply of food and water, ballistic eye wear, body armor, tactical vests, radio equipment, ropes and other combat/survival gear. Leading up to January 6, members of the group engaged in paramilitary training and practiced combat tactics such as moving under fire and applying emergency aid.

After the attack failed, most of the Oath Keepers left Washington D.C. However, some members, including Vallejo, stayed to “probe” for another opportunity to attack. Thomas Caldwell, a retired Navy lieutenant commander, joined Vallejo in leading a “QRF” based in Virginia.

At least eight members of the Oath Keepers have been found guilty, or pled guilty, to sedition. Last spring, Oath Keepers Joshua James of Alabama and Brian Ulrich of Georgia pled guilty to seditious conspiracy.

Ulrich and Minuta served as personal bodyguards for top Trump political operative Roger Stone on January 6. Minuta also acted as a “VIP” bodyguard for fascist Alex Jones of *Infowars* during the November 14 “Million MAGA March” in Washington D.C., and for former Trump national security advisor, QAnon adherent and retired general Michael Flynn at the December 12 “MAGA March” in D.C.

In addition to meeting directly and in person with Oath Keepers who spearheaded the sedition plot, Stone was in constant communication prior to the November 2020 election and through January 6, 2021 with the leadership of both the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys through the “Friends of Stone” text group which he administered. Stone, like Trump and the other architects of the coup, has yet to be charged more than two years after the attack.

In his guilty plea, Ulrich admitted to being at the Willard Hotel with Stone when the Capitol was first attacked. Ulrich said he left Stone behind to storm the Capitol as part of a military-style “stack” formation.

During the trial it was revealed that Stone refused to leave the Willard Hotel to join the Oath Keepers in the siege because his bodyguards could not guarantee his safety.

In his plea agreement last March, James, like Ulrich, implicated Rhodes in the plot. James described having dinner with Rhodes after the attack on Congress had failed,

during which he and Rhodes divvied up “thousands of dollars worth” of firearms, ammunition and related equipment.

Ulrich, like Rhodes, Caldwell, Watkins and Vallejo, has prior military experience.

The Oath Keepers and Proud Boys are the two most prominent far-right militia groups whose members have been charged with seditious conspiracy for their actions in furtherance of Trump’s coup. Both groups enjoy close relations with Republican Party politicians and police agencies around the country.

While Oath Keepers membership has plummeted since January 6, 2021, the Proud Boys, encouraged by fascistic politicians and abetted by sympathetic police departments, continue to harass, assault and intimidate political opponents of Trump and the Republican Party.

Currently, five leaders of the Proud Boys, including former chairman and long-time FBI informant Henry “Enrique” Tarrio, are also on trial in Washington D.C. for sedition. Witnesses are currently testifying in that trial, which is expected to last several more weeks.

In the Proud Boys trial on Monday, prosecutors presented an 11-page rule book obtained from the home of one of the defendants, Dominic Pezzola. In the book, which lays out the Proud Boys’ fascist program, it is said that Lucian Wintrich, a former White House correspondent for *The Gateway Pundit* during the Trump administration, is also a Proud Boy.

“There are dozens of chapters and they are all over the world. We have a Proud Boy in the White House (Lucian Wintrich)” the document states.



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