

Trial evidence shows Proud Boys coordinated with Trump campaign in lead-up to January 6 coup attempt

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On Thursday, federal prosecutors in the seditious conspiracy trial of five members of the fascist Proud Boys militia group introduced evidence indicating that the leadership of the Proud Boys was coordinating with Donald Trump's campaign immediately following Trump's 2020 election defeat.

The five Proud Boys currently on trial include former chairman and "prolific" FBI informant Henry "Enrique" Tarrio. They are facing multiple felony charges, including seditious conspiracy, for their role in Trump's failed coup.

Of the over 1,000 people accused of criminal activity in relation to their actions on January 6, 2021, more than 14 have been convicted of either seditious conspiracy—that is, plotting to overthrow the government—or conspiracy to prevent the transfer of power. This includes 11 members of the Oath Keepers militia group, who, along with the Proud Boys, III Percenters and other white supremacists and fascists, stormed the Capitol on January 6 to block the certification of the electoral vote and keep Trump in power. So far, at least 54 Proud Boys have been charged in the January 6 attack.

More than 25 months after the attack, which left hundreds injured and resulted in at least five fatalities, neither Trump nor his Republican allies in Congress and on the Supreme Court have been charged with a crime. The vast majority of those convicted in the failed coup have received only wrist-slap sentences after pleading down to misdemeanor offenses such as trespassing and parading.

At the Proud Boys trial on Thursday, prosecutors presented part of a thread of Telegram messages Tarrio exchanged with then-North Carolina Proud Boy chapter

leader Jeremy Bertino on November 7, 2020, the same day the Associated Press and other major news organizations called the presidential election for Biden.

In the messages, the two fascists lamented Trump's defeat. "Bro... wtf happened," Bertino messaged Tarrio at 12:36 pm, adding, "They called it. Now we have to mobilize. Should we roll out to the state houses?"

"Yes," Tarrio replied at 12:38, adding, "I'll be available after Sunday."

The next day, Bertino, who was the first Proud Boy to plead guilty to seditious conspiracy, messaged Tarrio, "we're going to Raleigh this afternoon."

Tarrio instructed Bertino, "Make sure... no colors," referring to the Proud Boys' trademark yellow and black outfits. "Why not?" Bertino responded.

"The campaign asked us to not wear colors to these events," Tarrio replied. Tarrio did not say precisely to whom he spoke from the "campaign," but added that the goal was to "Keep identifying colors to a minimum."

While Tarrio did not explicitly say the "Trump campaign," it is obvious from the context, given that the event to which Bertino was going was a "Stop the Steal"-type event, that Tarrio was referring to the Trump campaign.

Since the Proud Boys' founding in the midst of the 2016 presidential campaign, they have been loyal foot soldiers for Trump.

Before assuming the leadership of the militia group,

Tarrio, a protégé of Roger Stone, participated in the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Trump almost certainly knew that Tarrio and other “Friends of Stone” were at the fascist rally when he told reporters that there were “very fine people on both sides.”

Two years later, Tarrio was photographed behind Trump at a rally in Miami, Florida, in February 2019, wearing a shirt that read “Roger Stone did nothing wrong.”

The close connections between the Proud Boys and the Trump White House were well known prior to January 6, not only by the police and intelligence agencies, but also by the Democratic Party and presidential candidate and then President-Elect Joe Biden.

In the only presidential candidates’ debate held, on September 29, 2020, debate moderator Chris Wallace invited Trump to condemn “white supremacist” groups that supported him. Trump asked Wallace to clarify “who” he wanted him to condemn. Biden, unprompted, offered the “Proud Boys” as an example.

Trump responded by instructing the Proud Boys to “Stand back and stand by,” adding that “someone has got to do something about the left and Antifa.”

Despite the best efforts by the lawyers for the defendants, the judge in the current trial has allowed prosecutors to present Telegram messages exchanged between the defendants—Tarrio, Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs, Zachary Rehl and Dominic Pezzola—and other high-level Proud Boys, showing that Trump’s public embrace of the group during the debate led to a spike in membership and galvanized the Proud Boys to prepare for action.

“HE SAID OUR NAME!!!” wrote Nordean. “My phone hasn’t stopped ringing,” Biggs replied. Another Proud Boy, using the moniker D-Bow the Viking, wrote, “Donald has given us a command.”

In addition to showing texts indicating coordination between the Trump campaign and the Proud Boys, this week prosecutors also presented Telegram messages showing that the Proud Boys were planning to attack and occupy the Capitol as early as December 20, 2020, more than two weeks before January 6, and one day after Trump told his followers over Twitter to come to

Washington D.C. on January 6 for a “wild protest.”

There is little question, given the number of informants already revealed to be operating within the Proud Boys, that all of the federal police agencies charged with protecting Congress, including the Capitol Police and the Washington Metropolitan Police, were well aware of the Proud Boys’ plans to attack Congress prior to January 6.

On December 20, John Charles Stewart, a Pennsylvania Proud Boy who has since pled guilty to conspiracy, wrote in the “Ministry of Self-Defense Leaders” chat that the Proud Boys’ “main operating theater” on January 6 “should be out in front of the Capitol building.”

“That’s where the vote is taking place and all the objections,” Stewart wrote.

In the same chat, on January 3, 2021, another Proud Boy, with the handle “Gabriel PB,” concurred, writing, “Yes sir, time to stack those bodies in front of Capitol Hill.”

Another Proud boy named Jake Phillips responded that same day: “What would they do if 1 million patriots stormed and took the capital (sic) building. Shoot into the crowd? I think not.”

In the chat, the Proud Boys continued to discuss the best methods for breaking into the Capitol, with Stewart saying in a voice note that the Proud Boys attack should be aimed at the “front entrance to the Capitol building.”

The next morning, January 4, Tarrio replied to Stewart, “I didn’t hear this voice note until now, you want to storm the Capitol.”

The Proud Boys trial is expected to last for several more weeks.



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