

# Architect of the Capitol fired after Inspector General report revealed complicity in January 6 coup

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On February 13, 2023, President Joe Biden fired James Brett Blanton, the Architect of the Capitol after a scathing Inspector General report on the Office of the Architect of the Capitol revealed that Blanton and his wife, Michelle Blanton, aided former President Donald Trump's failed coup.

Blanton, a 20-year Navy officer, was nominated by Trump to be Architect of the Capitol (AOC) in December 2019. He formally assumed the position after being approved by Congress on January 16, 2020. During virtually his entire tenure as AOC, the Capitol was closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including in the run-up to the January 6, 2021 attack.

In the Inspector General's (IG) executive summary it was revealed that on January 6, as thousands of Trump supporters, neo-Nazis and militia members were storming Congress in an attempt to capture and/or kill lawmakers in order to keep Trump in power, Blanton, who heads a 2,400-person agency charged with maintaining the security of the Capitol complex, was not at the Capitol. Instead, Blanton, was, apparently, "working from home" in his government vehicle, a Jeep Grand Cherokee.

Blanton neglected to drive to the Capitol despite the fact that a major official proceeding was set to take place there, the certification by Congress of Joe Biden's victory in the presidential election, and there had been numerous security threats for that day, including Trump's notorious call for his supporters to come to Washington on January 6 because "it will be wild."

Given this conduct, there is no legitimate political explanation for Biden waiting more than two years to fire Blanton. Throughout this time, including three State of the Union ceremonies, this brazen collaborator in the coup attempt was continuing to run the Capitol building, which was the target of the violence.

It was also revealed in the IG report that Blanton and his

family members used the government-issued Jeep to drive to Florida for vacation and to run errands, such as grocery shopping or dropping the children off at sporting events. According to the IG report, which accused Blanton of driving over 19,000 miles more than expected, Blanton claimed that he used the vehicle to run errands because it was a "mobile command center," and if he was needed in an "emergency" he could quickly respond to the Capitol complex, something he failed to do on January 6, or any other day during his tenure as AOC.

On February 9, 2023, Blanton was called to testify before the House Administration Committee on the contents of the Inspector General's report. While the Republicans and many Democrats on the committee focused on the petty corruption, the "waste, fraud and abuse" aspect of the report, which has also been the main headline in the capitalist press, several representatives questioned Blanton as to why he was not at the Capitol as it was under siege on January 6.

Blanton testified that it was not "prudent" for him to show up because the large angry crowd would have made it "difficult" for him to get inside the building. Blanton could not answer why he was not at the Capitol prior to the mob storming it, say around 9:00, 10:00 or even 11:00 a.m.

While questioning Blanton on his decision to not come to the Capitol on January 6, Representative Norma J. Torres (California-Democrat) revealed that during the siege she and other members were "stranded on the balcony for 45 minutes face down crawling," trying to avoid the mob.

"I am outraged to hear, that you were in a comfortable place whether in your car or in your home while we were screaming at the one police officer that was near gallery 3 asking him to lock the door above us that was wide-open after the emergency had been called and after every single one of our colleagues that was down on the floor had already been evacuated," Torres said.

“Do you know sir that the police officer could not close or lock that door because he did not have the keys to that door? Do you know that?,” Torres angrily asked Blanton, who replied blandly, “That’s news to me.”

Blanton’s involvement in Trump’s coup did not begin with his inexplicable absence on January 6, which prevented lawmakers and police from locking crucial doors.

The IG report also revealed that on September 30, 2020, one day after Trump told the Proud Boys in his debate with Biden to “Stand back and stand by,” Blanton’s wife, Michelle, posted a picture of the couple inside the Capitol dome with the caption, “This is happening!!!” and “All PATRIOTS welcome ... [Private Message] me ;-).”

Later that same day, on September 30, the report revealed that an “additional photograph” was “taken from the US Capitol” with a comment that read, “Contact me for a private tour. All PATRIOTS accepted!”

The Blantons were not the only Trump-aligned elements offering “private tours” of the Capitol prior to January 6. Last year, the January 6 Select Committee revealed surveillance video showing Georgia Republican Representative Barry Loudermilk escorting a group of Trump supporters around the Capitol complex the day before the attack.

The report revealed that on December 28, 2020, nine days before the attack on the Capitol, Michelle Blanton took another “tour” of the Capitol, this time with her “swim team” while it was still closed to the public. It is unclear at this time if any of the people the Blantons gave “tours” to have been charged in the coup.

Torres questioned Blanton about the “tours” noting that as a fifth-year member of Congress, “I have never taken a tour of the dome, because I have been told that there is a long waiting list. That I have to put my name on that waiting list. So do you think I am not “Patriot” enough to take a tour of the dome? Do I not meet that “Patriot” requirement?”

Blanton did not reply. The IG report also revealed that Michelle Blanton did not just take photographs from inside the Capitol and offer “tours” to “Patriots.” The report said that the IG obtained “multiple social posts” made by Michelle which included “photographs of congressional license plates.”

Torres questioned Blanton as to why his wife was taking photographs of lawmakers’ license plates, especially given the fact that the plates are used as a security measure to confirm the identity of lawmakers driving onto the Capitol complex.

Blanton did not have an answer, but said he would not characterize the fact that his wife posted the private license plate numbers of congressional members online as a “security breach.”

The true extent of Blanton and his wife’s involvement in ensuring former President Donald Trump’s mob of fascist militia members had ample opportunity to capture and kill lawmakers cannot be ascertained at this moment because the House Administration Committee has refused to publicly release the roughly 800-page Inspector General report. Additionally, the report notes that “Blanton misled and provided false information to investigators on multiple occasions.”

What was revealed in the summary has confirmed that the danger of Trump’s coup was not due to the strength of the lumpen militia members and other Trump acolytes who have been convicted so far, but due to the massive support Trump’s coup retained within the institutions of the capitalist state: from the Capitol Police Board, to Congress, the Department of Defense, the intelligence agencies and the Supreme Court.

The fact that this damning information is only now coming to light—more than 25 months after the attack and well after the completion of the January 6 Select Committee’s “Final Report” and the disbanding of the committee—underscores the massive ongoing cover-up of Trump’s coup that has been undertaken by both big business parties. The Democrats, nominal targets of the coup, have aided their “Republican colleagues” in delaying and burying the most incriminating findings even as the danger of dictatorship increases.

More than two years after the failed coup, Trump and his high-level co-conspirators remain free. Under conditions of capitalist reaction, US-NATO war against Russia and social counter-revolution, the Democratic Party, a party of millionaires, military veterans and CIA agents, has proven itself incapable of defending the democratic rights of the population.

For over two years, Biden and the Democrats have pledged to build a “strong Republican Party” and now the same Republican politicians that backed Trump’s coup are in leading positions in Congress, while Trump remains the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024.



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