

Fox News emails, messages show its role in instigating January 6 attack

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19 February 2023

The legal document filed Thursday in the defamation lawsuit by Dominion Voting Systems against Fox News gives a glimpse of the utter cynicism with which the network executives and multi-millionaire program hosts regard their audience, although that hardly qualifies as a revelation.

More significant by far is the insight into the role of Fox News in the transformation of the Republican Party into an increasingly fascist party. Both executives and on-air figures like Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity and Laura Ingraham were preoccupied, during the post-election period, with concern that they would be outflanked on the right by outlets like NewsMax and One America Network. The latter catered directly to the election conspiracy theories embraced by Trump and attorneys for his campaign like Sidney Powell and former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani.

Dominion filed its lawsuit in March 2021, after the failure of Trump's attempted coup of January 6, 2021, when he instigated the mob attack on the US Capitol in an effort to prevent the congressional certification of his election defeat and Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election.

Powell, Giuliani and other Trump advocates claimed—as one major thread of their myriad conspiracy theories—that the election software developed by Dominion and sold to many state election authorities had been used to “flip” votes from Trump to Biden. There was zero evidence to support this claim, and in emails and text messages both the Fox executives and the program hosts ridiculed Powell and Giuliani as “crazy” and their claims as without foundation.

This did not stop the program hosts from publicly backing these claims, bringing the Trump lawyers and other advocates, like My Pillow boss Mike Lindell, onto their programs for fawning and supportive

interviews, as well as Trump himself, on occasion. These Fox interview programs, broadcast each evening, were a nightly barrage of lies and incitement, aimed at creating a supportive milieu for the openly fascist elements who would storm the Capitol on January 6.

The reservations expressed by Fox executives were not about the obvious conflict between the facts of the election, which Biden won handily, and the demented claims of the Trump campaign. They were concerned that the Republican Party as a whole was being damaged by the “Stop the Steal” campaign, confirming Fox's longtime role as the house organ of the Republican right.

News Corp. owner Rupert Murdoch, the billionaire boss of the media empire that includes Fox, was concerned that the increasingly threadbare claims of a stolen election were undermining the Republican Party's prospects in the Georgia Senate runoff set for early January 2021.

In one email to Fox CEO Suzanne Scott on November 16, 2020, included in the document filed by Dominion, Murdoch wrote of Powell, Giuliani and the like: “These people should be watched, if skeptically. Trump will concede eventually and we should concentrate on Georgia, helping any way we can. We don't want to antagonize Trump further, but Giuliani [should be] taken with a large grain of salt. Everything at stake here.”

As it developed, the Republicans lost both Georgia seats in the Senate, and with that control of the upper house of Congress, the outcome that Murdoch was seeking to avoid because he feared it might threaten the tax cuts and evisceration of corporate regulations which the Trump administration had carried out over the previous four years. His fears were proven groundless, however, as the incoming Biden administration made

no serious attempt to roll back Trump's policies in either sphere.

Perhaps the most important element in the Dominion document, but the least publicized in the corporate media, is a new revelation about Trump's actions on January 6, 2021, as the assault on the US Capitol was winding down and local police, without support from National Guard troops whose deployment was blocked by the Pentagon, were beginning to take control of the building.

Trump tried to get on the Lou Dobbs program, which began at 5 p.m. on Fox, and called the network for that purpose. Network executives began to get cold feet, however, as it looked as though the attack had failed. Internal discussions drew the conclusion that putting Trump on live television with Dobbs, a loud-mouthed advocate of the "stolen election" myth, would be "irresponsible."

The Dominion brief declares: "The afternoon of January 6, after the Capitol came under attack, then-President Trump dialed into Lou Dobbs' show attempting to get on air... But Fox executives vetoed that decision. Why? Not because of a lack of newsworthiness. January 6 was an important event by any measure. President Trump not only was the sitting President, he was the key figure that day."

The network rebuffed Trump because "it would be irresponsible to put him on the air" and "could impact a lot of people in a negative way," according to Fox Business Network President Lauren Petterson, whose testimony was cited by Dominion.

This remarkable conclusion deserves further consideration. A television "news" network decided that on the day of a violent assault on the US Capitol, it would be "irresponsible" to allow the president of the United States to go on the air live. They obviously felt that Trump would make statements that would be politically damaging, perhaps even incriminating. The "responsibility" they felt was not to the American people, who deserved to know, but to the interests of the Republican Party and the corporate ruling elite as a whole.

It is also worth noting that the House select committee that investigated the January 6 attack did not know Trump had called Fox News in an effort to get on the air at that time in the late afternoon. It raises the question: What other critical facts are still buried in

secrecy despite 18 months of testimony and millions of pages of documents?

The select committee, now disbanded, hardly glanced at the role of the Pentagon officials, including Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, who blocked the dispatch of troops to the Capitol until after the struggle for control of the building had ended and police had cleared the attackers out.

Nor did it seriously investigate the role of other military-intelligence agencies, such as the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, which had extensive knowledge ahead of time about the plans for a violent assault on January 6, but did nothing to stop it or to beef up the defenses of the Capitol to repel it.



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