

Ex-leader of Proud Boys and “prolific” FBI informant sentenced to 22 years in prison for role in January 6 coup

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On Tuesday, Trump-appointed Judge Timothy Kelly sentenced the ex-head of the fascist Proud Boys militia group, Henry “Enrique” Tarrío, to 22 years in prison for the leading role he played in organizing the right-wing mob that attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021 in an effort to prevent the certification of the pro-Biden Electoral College vote.

The 22-year sentence is the most severe of all those handed down by judges in more than 1,100 cases relating to the violent assault on Congress on January 6. The sentence reflects the instrumental role the Proud Boys, under Tarrío’s leadership, played in the events of that day.

Throughout the trial and sentencing, prosecutors frequently referred to Tarrío as a “general,” who was leading his Proud Boys troops from afar during the attack.

Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, III Percenters and other far-right militia groups and fascistic forces were summoned to Washington D.C. by former President Donald Trump as part of the Republican Party’s multifaceted effort to overturn the 2020 election and install Trump as presidential dictator. The near-success of the coup was due to the support it received from the Republican Party and sympathetic elements within the local and federal police agencies as well as the military.

During the trial, it was revealed that Tarrío regularly coordinated with and received information from D.C. Metropolitan Police Lieutenant Shane Lamond. Text messages revealed during the trial show that beginning in 2019 and in the lead-up to the coup, the veteran police officer fed Tarrío information about alleged “Antifa” mobilizations and police deployments.

In December 2020, following a “Stop the Steal” rally in D.C. (District of Columbia), Tarrío tipped off Lamond that he had called in his own arrest for burning a Black Lives Matter banner.

Lamond took as good coin Tarrío’s claims that the burning of the banner was not a “hate crime” because there were non-white people in the Proud Boys. Lamond warned Tarrío that after his admission, the D.C. Metropolitan police had issued a warrant for his arrest.

Seeking to give himself plausible deniability for the coming coup, Tarrío, working with Lamond, ensured that he was arrested on January 4, two days before the attack. At the same time, he used his pre-arranged arrest to further inflame the Proud Boys and other fascists who were planning to attack the Capitol and to encourage violent attacks on the under-deployed police guarding the Capitol while a joint session of Congress met to officially count the Electoral College vote.

Lamond was indicted on May 18 of this year for obstruction of justice and providing false statements related to his cozy relationship with the

fascist militia group. His trial is set to begin in February 2024.

Lamond is by no means the only representative of police agencies who enjoyed close relations with the Proud Boys. Following the January 6 attempted coup, it was revealed that Tarrío had been a “prolific” informant for the FBI since 2012. Two months later, the lawyer for Proud Boys leader Joe Biggs revealed that his client had been an FBI informant since 2019.

Last week, Judge Kelly sentenced Biggs, who had been convicted of seditious conspiracy, to 17 years in prison.

Despite the FBI infiltration of the Proud Boys and other fascist militia groups, neither the FBI nor any other federal police agency issued a public threat assessment or warning in advance of January 6 that neo-Nazis summoned by Trump would be amassing to disrupt the official certification of Biden’s victory.

Seeking to cover for their complicity in facilitating the attack, FBI Director Christopher Wray and other federal police and intelligence leaders perjured themselves at multiple hearings on the events of that day. Wray testified before Congress that the agency did not have any informants in the Proud Boys, while former assistant director of counter-terrorism Jill Sanborn testified that it was illegal for the FBI to monitor the public social media communications of the group.

Tarrío’s 22-year sentence is four years longer than the sentences handed down earlier against the founder of the Oath Keepers Stewart Rhodes and Washington Proud Boys chapter leader Ethan Nordean, both of whom were convicted of seditious conspiracy. However, the 22-year sentence is 11 years less than what was sought by prosecutors and five years less than the minimum sentencing guidelines.

During the sentencing hearing, Judge Kelly rebutted arguments from Tarrío’s lawyers that because Tarrío was not in D.C. during the coup, sentence enhancements on grounds of terrorism did not apply. Kelly noted that in text messages sent by Tarrío in the lead-up to the attack, he directed the Proud Boys to bring paramilitary gear, including pepper spray. During the trial, video was played showing convicted Proud Boy Zachary Rehl pepper-spraying a cop on January 6.

Kelly noted that in the same high-level chats, Tarrío and the Proud Boys discussed bringing radios and dressing “incognito,” that is, shunning their traditional black and yellow colors and Fred Perry polos in order to blend in with the crowd and hide from the police.

In seeking a 15-year sentence for his client, Tarrío’s attorney, Sabino

Jauregui, argued that Tarrío was “not a terrorist, only a misguided patriot,” and that the Proud Boys only brought pepper spray and military gear to fight “Antifa.” Jauregui repeatedly tried to claim that Tarrío was not in communications with Proud Boys during the attack on the Capitol.

US Attorney Conor Mulroe refuted Jauregui’s claim that Tarrío was “incommunicado” with his Proud Boys lieutenants on January 5 and during the siege itself. Mulroe noted that the jury convicted Tarrío based on numerous messages and phone calls Tarrío made with Proud Boys leaders Ethan “minister of war” Nordean and Jeremy Bertino on January 5, and that during the attack itself, Biggs and Tarrío had a 42-second phone call.

In his closing sentencing argument, Mulroe emphasized that “many” Proud Boys were in the first wave of the attack and were instrumental in breaking through police lines and forcing their way into the Capitol itself. Mulroe said that as the Proud Boys leader, Tarrío distributed plans, dubbed “1776 Returns,” that called for occupying the Capitol and other government buildings to delay certification. Mulroe said the militia leader glorified violence and sought to cultivate “fear” about the organization. He pointed to private messages in which Tarrío favorably compared himself to Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels.

Refuting notions that Tarrío was remorseful, Mulroe noted that following the arrest of his comrades in 2021, Tarrío posed for a photograph in Washington D.C. in which he appeared to be lighting the Capitol on fire. The prosecutor added that when the jury was deliberating in the Proud Boys trial earlier this year, Tarrío went on a podcast and proclaimed: “The Proud Boys did nothing wrong.”

Prior to sentencing, Judge Kelly agreed with many of the arguments advanced by the prosecutors and emphasized Tarrío’s leadership role within the group. He noted that Tarrío created the “Ministry of Self-Defense” encrypted chat group made up of top Proud Boys leaders following Trump’s December 18, 2020 tweet calling for a “wild” protest in D.C. on January 6, and that Tarrío agreed with Biggs that the group needed to get “radical” and mobilize “real men” for the upcoming attack.

Kelly noted that not being in D.C. on the morning of January 6 provided Tarrío “some strategic” benefits. The judge drew attention to the fact that Biggs had messaged other Proud Boys on January 6 saying that he had spoken with Tarrío that morning. During the attack itself, Tarrío issued commands to the group, writing on social media, “Don’t f*cking leave,” and “I’m proud of my boys and my country.” In separate private messages to Proud Boys leaders as the attack was ongoing, Tarrío wrote, “Make no mistake, we did this.”

Including Tarrío, four members of the Proud Boys have been convicted of seditious conspiracy, a Civil War-era charge used against Confederates who plotted and took up arms against the United States.

Last week, Judge Kelly sentenced Proud Boys Joseph Biggs, Ethan Nordean, Zachary Rehl and Dominic Pezzola to prison terms ranging from 10 years (Pezzola) to 18 years (Nordean).

Following his January 4, 2021 arrest for burning a Black Lives Matter banner, Tarrío was barred by the US government from entering Washington D.C. But despite the ban, Tarrío managed to secure an in-person meeting with Oath Keepers leader Rhodes in a D.C. parking garage less than 48 hours before the attack.

Both Rhodes and Tarrío were members of the “Friends of Stone” text message chat group—a select group of high-level Republican operatives and militia elements organized by Trump confidante Roger Stone in the

lead-up to the coup.

Stone is one of several high-level Trump operatives known to have close ties to the right-wing militias that stormed the Capitol but who have not been charged for their actions. Stone has maintained a relationship with Tarrío since 2014 and even helped him run for Congress in 2019. At Trump rallies and Proud Boys events throughout the Trump presidency and leading up to the coup, Tarrío frequently wore T-shirts that read “Roger Stone did nothing wrong.”

In addition to Stone, former Trump National Security Advisor Michael Flynn and *InfoWars* host Alex Jones, both of whom enjoy close relations with the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, have yet to be charged for their actions in connection with January 6. During a September 2 *InfoWars* show, Jones had as guests Flynn and Biggs, the latter appearing from his prison cell.

In his interview with Jones, Biggs implored Jones’ listeners to vote for Trump so that a reelected Trump could pardon the Proud Boys. “I know Trump will pardon us,” Biggs told Jones. “I believe that with all my heart.

“And he should,” Biggs added. “We didn’t do anything. We are his supporters. We went there like he asked.”

Biggs confirmed that Tarrío was sitting next to him, and that Tarrío would come on Jones’ program following his sentencing hearing.

While the sentences handed down against the Proud Boys’ leaders are substantial, the most significant fact is that all of those forces within the state apparatus, including the Republican Party, the police, the FBI and the military, who supported Trump’s coup remain free, and, with the exception of a small circle around Trump, have not even been indicted.

This includes members of the Supreme Court, such as Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito. The former’s wife, Virginia Thomas, played a central role in the submission of fake pro-Trump slates of electors in swing states that went for Biden, yet Justice Thomas has refused to recuse himself from cases related to the attempted coup.

Alito held off issuing a ruling on a suit filed by Trump lawyers to delay the certification of Biden’s victory, waiting until January 7 to reject it, i.e., only after it was clear that the fascist siege of Congress had failed to prevent the vote to certify Biden’s win. Had the insurrection succeeded, there is little doubt that Alito would have ruled differently.

Then there are Trump’s co-conspirators within the police-military-intelligence apparatus, such as generals Charles Flynn and Walter Piatt and former acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, all of whom worked in tandem to block the deployment of D.C. National Guard troops to the Capitol during the attack.

This underscores that the defense of democratic rights cannot be left to the Democratic Party, whose political cowardice and duplicity have enabled Trump and the Republicans to continue and intensify their conspiracy to establish dictatorial rule. Biden and the Democrats have deliberately covered up the scope of the conspiracy in order to politically chloroform the working class and maintain bipartisan support for the war against Russia in Ukraine and the war preparations against China, while intensifying attacks on working class living standards to make workers pay for the war and bailouts of the rich.



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