

# RFK Jr. downplays Trump's failed coup and defends his convicted and jailed foot soldiers

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On Friday, presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., running as an independent, issued a campaign statement in defense of Trump's failed coup and his imprisoned fascist foot soldiers. The less than 500-word statement included so blatant a falsehood that the Kennedy campaign felt obliged to release an "updated" version later that same evening.

In both statements, Kennedy Jr. adopted the political line and lying rhetoric of Trump and the Republicans concerning the attempt to overthrow the results of the 2020 presidential election. Kennedy claimed that the multilayered and months-long effort to overturn the election, which culminated in a violent assault on the US Capitol that left hundreds injured and several dead, "may have started as a protest but turned into a riot."

More than three years after the failed coup, RFK Jr. wrote:

I have not examined the evidence in detail, but reasonable people, including Trump opponents, tell me there is little evidence of a true insurrection. They observe that the protesters carried no weapons, had no plans or ability to seize the reins of government, and that Trump himself had urged them to protest "peacefully."

As with his anti-vaccine and COVID-19 disinformation, the lies come rapidly and in bunches with RFK Jr. It is a matter of fact that multiple Trump supporters sentenced to prison for their actions on January 6 have admitted that they brought firearms to the Capitol.

To cite one example, Christopher Alberts, a former member of the Virginia National Guard, admitted in court that he had a 9-millimeter pistol loaded with hollow point and high-pressure rounds on his person when he was assaulting police

officers on January 6.

In addition to a pistol, Alberts was wearing a gas mask and body armor with a steel plate. He also had a two-way radio, an earpiece, a throat microphone, bungee cords, binoculars, a ski mask and two knives. In their charging documents, prosecutors wrote that as Alberts was trying to breach police lines, using a wooden pallet as a ram, he "screamed at police officers that they were 'domestic terrorists' and were 'treasonous, communist motherf\*\*ers,' who were improperly stopping the rioters 'from doing what's right.'"

Guy Reffitt, a member of the fascistic militia group Texas III Percenters, was found guilty on five charges related to the insurrection, including carrying a pistol on Capitol grounds. Reffitt has previously claimed that "people ... around me were all carrying too."

Elmer Stewart Rhodes, co-founder of the Oath Keepers militia group, and several of his associates were found guilty of seditious conspiracy for their actions in furtherance of Trump's coup. As part of the plot to seize the Capitol and take lawmakers hostage, the Oath Keepers kept a weapons cache at their hotel just outside Washington D.C. The plan called for dozens of rifles and thousands of rounds of ammunition to be distributed among the militia elements once Trump invoked the Insurrection Act and deputized the Oath Keepers.

CBS national reporter Scott MacFarlane has kept a running Twitter thread for nearly three years documenting the numerous weapons, in addition to guns, cited by prosecutors in court filings submitted in response to the January 6 coup. Items cited include tomahawk axes, zip ties, rope, pipes, batons, clubs, metal whips, bear mace, sledgehammers, pitchforks, tasers, hard-knuckle tactical gloves, hammers, grappling hooks and hunting knives.

In Kennedy's "updated" statement, he wrote that his

previous “understanding that none of the January 6 rioters ... were carrying firearms was incorrect.” Talking out of both sides of his mouth, he added, “I have never minimized or dismissed the seriousness of the riot or any crime committed on that day.”

The strength of Trump’s coup was not in the few hundred armed white supremacists, QAnon fanatics and Trump loyalists who made it into the Capitol, but the fact that his foot soldiers were able to breach the building in the first place and nearly take lawmakers hostage.

Trump’s insurrectionists were able to threaten lawmakers and delay the Electoral College certification because the coup was supported by large sections of the Republican Party, including members of Congress, and by higher-ups in the military-police establishment who oversaw a stand-down that allowed the Capitol to be overrun for hours. The 199-minute stand-down of D.C. National Guard troops testifies to the immense support Trump’s coup had (and still retains) within the police-military-intelligence apparatus.

While downplaying the threat of dictatorship, Kennedy, echoing Trump, raised the supposed injustice visited on the less than 1,000 people who have been convicted of crimes related to the attack.

“Like many reasonable Americans, I am concerned about the possibility that political objectives motivated the vigor of the prosecution of the J6 defendants, their long sentences, and their harsh treatment,” Kennedy wrote.

In reality, Trump’s fanatics have overwhelmingly been given light sentences, if any at all. According to the Associated Press, of the 1,352 people charged with crimes in relation to January 6, only 529, or about 39 percent, have faced any incarceration period. The average sentence for 157 defendants who pled guilty to serious crimes, including assaulting police, was two years and five months, the AP reports. Meanwhile, 68 defendants who took their felony cases to trial have been sentenced, on average, to four years and three months in prison after conviction.

The AP noted that of the 467 defendants who pled guilty to a misdemeanor, more than half avoided jail time.

Defending Trump, Kennedy wrote he was “disturbed by the weaponization of government against him.” Kennedy added that as president he would appoint a “special counsel—an individual respected by all sides—to investigate where prosecutorial discretion was abused for political ends in this case, and I will right any wrongs that we discover.”

Kennedy’s statement Friday was just the latest defense of Trump from the self-declared independent candidate. In an extended interview with CNN’s Erin Burnett on Monday, Kennedy rejected any notion that Trump represented a threat to democratic forms of rule. He claimed that Biden was a greater threat to democratic rights than Trump, saying Biden had personally intervened to censor his social media posts. He failed to explain the content of the posts, which put forward anti-vaccine propaganda and lies that have deadly implications for the population.

Trump does represent a very real and dangerous threat of authoritarian rule and has declared that if elected he will establish a dictatorship on day one of his second term. He speaks for a far-right, fascistic wing of the ruling class, as does the Republican Party as a whole.

Biden, however, despite his attempt to present his reelection as a bulwark against the imposition of dictatorship, is himself, along with the Democratic Party as a whole, engaged in vicious attacks on the democratic rights of migrant workers and student opponents of genocide in Gaza, as well as the social rights and conditions of workers. His administration and the Democrats, in particular, are focused on escalating the war against Russia over Ukraine and preparing for war against Iran and China, as part of a global war for US imperialist world hegemony.

For the sake of this expanding global war, Biden has sought at every point to cover up the role of the Republican Party in Trump’s coup attempt and work for “bipartisan unity” with Trump’s fascistic GOP.

As for the far-right RFK Jr., three days after his CNN interview and a day before his January 6 statement, Kennedy sent out a campaign email in which he disgustingly compared the persecution of Julian Assange and Edward Snowden with “J6 activists sitting in a Washington DC jail cell stripped of their Constitutional liberties.”

Kennedy’s campaign later retracted the email, claiming it did not “reflect Mr. Kennedy’s views.” Such retractions do not alter the fact that Kennedy is deliberately making overtures to Trump and the ex-president’s fascistic MAGA base.



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