

Soldiers' testimony at House hearing on January 6 belies attempts to whitewash military role in Trump coup attempt

Jacob Crosse
18 April 2024

On April 17, four former senior soldiers in the D.C. National Guard testified before the House Administration subcommittee in Washington regarding the deliberate delay in deploying the Guard to the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

All of the witnesses at Wednesday's hearing were senior officers and enlisted members of the D.C. National Guard during the failed coup. They all testified that they observed then-D.C. Guard Commander William Walker seek Pentagon approval to secure Congress after Capitol Police were overrun. And they all confirmed that these requests were blocked by senior military and civilian officials in the Pentagon, even as security forces were deployed to protect the homes of senior military officials.

The witnesses included:

- Colonel Earl Matthews, chief legal adviser to Walker during January 6, and a former political appointee in the Trump administration.
- Command Sergeant Major Michael Brooks (ret.), senior enlisted officer in the DC Army National Guard during January 6.
- Captain Timothy Nick, aide-de-camp, to Walker; January 6 was his second day on the job as Walker's personal assistant.
- Brigadier General Aaron Dean, adjutant general of the D.C. Army National Guard. Dean was second-in-command under Walker.

Neither Dean, Nick, Brooks or Matthews was asked to testify under oath to the January 6 Select Committee, although all four were in the company of Walker, the commander of the DC Guard, from 1:49 p.m. through 5:55 p.m. on January 6, 2021.

It is highly significant that more than three years after the attack on Congress, and more than 15 months after the January 6 House Select Report issued its "Final Report," these four individuals are only now publicly testifying on the purposeful delay of military assets to the Capitol.

Continuing the cover-up, most Democrats on the committee did not attend the hearing and none of those present asked questions to bring out more information on the role of the military in the coup attempt.

Wednesday's hearing, which was attended by mostly Republicans, was chaired by Georgia Rep. Barry Loudermilk, one of 147 members of the GOP who voted to overturn the 2020 election following the attack on the Capitol. In addition to voting to overturn the election, video footage released by the now-defunct January 6 House Select Committee showed Loudermilk leading a group of Trump supporters on a "reconnaissance" tour of the Capitol Complex on January 5.

By holding the hearing, Republicans are seeking to exploit

deliberate deficiencies and lies promulgated in the "Final Report" issued by the Select Committee at the end of 2022. At the time the report was issued, the WSWs characterized it as a "whitewash," that was written in service of preserving the legitimacy of government institutions and pillars of bourgeoisie class rule.

Far from exposing the full extent of support Trump's coup had within the state, the report, overseen by former Representative Liz Cheney, a right-wing Republican militarist, downplayed and concealed the support Trump's coup had, and still retains, within the Republican Party, the US Supreme Court, police, military and intelligence agencies.

Regarding the delay of the National Guard troops, the Select Committee, which did not dedicate a single public hearing to the topic, wrote in Appendix 2 that the delay was "the byproduct of military processes, institutional caution, and revised deployment approval process."

Exonerating pro-Trump elements in the Pentagon, the committee concluded, "We have no evidence that the delay was intentional."

Despite being the nominal targets of the attack on January 6, Joe Biden and the Democrats have all but dropped any serious investigation into the attack. This, coupled with attempts to paint the coup as the sole responsibility of Trump, while ignoring the role of the Pentagon in blocking the deployment of troops, has provided an opening for pro-Trump Republicans to posture as "seekers of the truth" and advance the "Fedsurrection" narrative, which posits that elements of the "deep state" entrapped Trump supporters by urging their participation on January 6.

In the hearing, Loudermilk, fellow Republicans on the committee, and some of the witnesses, sought to pin the 199-minute delay to deploy the Guard, not on Trump, or leading figures in the Pentagon, such as acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, his chief of staff Kash Patel, or generals who were sympathetic to Trump, but on the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley.

The top uniformed military officer, Milley earned the ire of Trump for warning his aides in the weeks leading up to January 6 that the ex-president was planning a right-wing provocation in order to seize power, telling them, "This is a Reichstag moment, the gospel of the Führer."

In his testimony, which pleased Loudermilk, Matthews pinned the delay on Milley stating it was the “result of an overcautious, reluctant, hesitant, facilitating leadership, and I think they were concerned about the political optics of a military presence here. And I don’t think they trusted the commander-in-chief, and I think that was because of our senior ranking military officer who was making disparaging remarks about the president to them.

Loudermilk responded, “So you are indicating that there was delay but that it was not for a nefarious purpose, just so we don’t walk out of here with conspiracy theories that the DoD wanted the Capitol to fail. I just want to make sure, that’s not, that’s not where you are going with that?” Matthews agreed.

But Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller did not block dispatch of the Guard because they were worried it would side with the mob, but for directly opposite reasons. They sympathized with mob’s actions, which were approved in real time by Trump in the White House.

The deliberate delay gave Trump’s mob ample opportunity to take members of Congress hostage in order to delay certification. The strength of Trump’s coup was not in any great support in the population, but in key institutions of the capitalist state.

Despite advancing this right-wing conspiracy theory, Matthews, and other witnesses on the panel, provided startling testimony that has been completely ignored in the mainstream capitalist press.

In his opening statement, Matthews, as he has publicly before, denounced two senior general officers in the United States Army, General Charles A. Flynn, (brother to former Trump adviser, retired Gen. Michael Flynn) and Lt. Gen. Walter E. Piatt. He accused them of lying to Congress, federal investigators and the public about why it “took so long” for the District of Columbia National Guard to deploy to the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021.

When I say these general officers lied I do not do so lightly or cavalierly. I speak from personal knowledge having interacted with them on January 6 in my official military capacity.

Unfortunately some senior officials within the Department of the Army and Department of Defense have sought to protect, or promote, Generals Flynn and Piatt. These senior civilian officials have excused, condoned, or overlooked the misconduct of these officers.

The generals’ “distortions” Matthews testified, “contributed to a deeply, and fundamentally flawed [Department of Defense] Inspector General investigation and deficiencies in other official inquiries.”

Later on Matthews said,

I submitted a document saying that these men were liars and I stand by that, 100 percent and its a stain on my Army that

they got away with ... that nobody said anything about it.

And they even sent Piatt to the President of the United States to have him promoted! He is a liar! And all of us can attest to that.

In his testimony, Command Sergeant Major Brooks seconded Matthews’ testimony on the delay. “We waited for hours, we did not receive the order to respond,” he said. “We were there and we were ready, but we were not authorized to respond.”

Captain Timothy Nick testified the “delayed response” was “caused by critical presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed, Pentagon senior officials.”

“I can say unequivocally that the Inspector General’s review is riddled with inaccuracies, misstatements, false flags, and narratives, regarding how critical Pentagon senior officials responded when our Republic was under great stress,” he continued.

Among the inaccuracies, Nick observed that the Army “falsely denied that General Flynn was ever on” a critical 2:30 p.m. phone call in which Walker, and others, have testified that Flynn and Piatt denied his, and former US Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund’s request for troops because they did not like the “optics” of National Guard soldiers outside the Capitol.

Nick testified, “Flynn was on the call and even participated in discussions.” He added that the IG review was “papering over the fact Lt. Gen. Flynn and Piatt” told then-Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy that it was their “best military advice” to recommend McCarthy deny Walker’s request to deploy soldiers to the Capitol.

While every witness testified that Walker was not given authority to deploy his soldiers until after 5 p.m., Brigadier General Aaron Dean confirmed that Walker tried “multiple times” throughout the siege to contact Secretary McCarthy but was unsuccessful.

Refuting statements from McCarthy and others that the D.C. Guard was not capable of responding to a “riot,” Dean said, “We had the capability, we had the planning, we had the know-how. So, the question I have is, out of all the events, all the inaugurations that the D.C. National Guard supported, out of all the NATO summits, out of all the IMF protests that we’ve had, the summer of 2020, COVID ... we were not able to respond to this? We are incapable? That’s categorically false.

“We were prepared in many ways.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact