Trump pardons January 6 coup architects and fake electors

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This past Friday, President Donald Trump issued sweeping pardons for 77 Republican operatives and lawyers who conspired with him and the Republican Party to overturn the 2020 election results. The mass pardon was written on Friday but released on Sunday by Trump's newly appointed pardon attorney, Ed Martin, who himself participated in the "Stop the Steal" effort and was present at the Capitol on January 6, 2021 as it was being overrun by far-right militia elements and Trump zealots.

Among those who received pardons were several of Trump's top coup lawyers, including Rudolph Giuliani, John Eastman, Jenna Ellis, Kenneth Chesebro and Sidney Powell. Trump's former chief of staff Mark Meadows and former Justice Department Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey Clark were also named along with a bevy of fraudulent or "alternate" electors and Republican Party operatives, including former chair of the Arizona Republican Party Kelli Ward.

The proclamation echoes Trump's fascistic rhetoric, declaring his action "ends a grave national injustice perpetrated upon the American people following the 2020 Presidential Election and continues the process of national reconciliation."

The document is written so broadly that it covers virtually any criminal activity conducted under the auspices of "stopping the steal." The "full, unconditional pardon" applies "to all United States citizens for conduct relating to the advice, creation, organization, execution, submission, support, voting, activities, participation in, or advocacy for or any slate or proposed slate of Presidential electors, whether or not recognized by any State or State official, in connection with the 2020 Presidential Election, as well for any conduct related to their efforts to expose voting fraud and vulnerabilities in the 2020 Presidential Election."

Hinting that there will be further pardons, the document states that the list includes "but is not limited to" the 77 names listed. Notably, the pardon "does not apply to the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump."

All those pardoned worked to construct a pseudo-legal cover for Trump's coup attempt. The alternate electors theory, advanced by John Eastman, proposed that in states Trump lost, electors loyal to him should meet and send documentation to Congress, not signed by local governors or secretaries of state, asserting the electors were bound to Trump, not the popular vote.

This theory was advanced by Trump's lawyers and also his allies on the Supreme Court, including Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, the wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Ginni Thomas, working with Trump's coup lawyers, pressured Republican-majority state legislatures in Arizona and Wisconsin to back the fraudulent electors and call special sessions overriding previously declared Biden electors.

In a post on X announcing the pardons, headlined, "No MAGA left behind," pardon attorney Martin echoed Trump's lies that the few who are facing charges for their role in trying to overturn the election were unfairly targeted by the Biden administration. He wrote that the pardons were issued because Trump "wanted us to look at those people who had been targeted by the Biden administration. The targeted is a huge group of Americans. We've been working hard to find them and one group that jumped up right away is the 2020 alternate electors and their affiliates who were targeted by Jack Smith and others."

In reality, all of those who participated in the failed coup have already had their federal investigations dropped by the Trump administration, have already been pardoned or had their sentences commuted. Trump, the coup plotter-in-chief, spent zero time behind bars for his role in perpetrating the attack that resulted in hundreds of injuries and multiple deaths.

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While none of those named in the latest pardon are facing federal charges, some of the 77 people on the list are still being investigated by state attorneys general for their role in the failed coup. Ellis, Powell and Chesebro previously pled guilty in Georgia courts, under oath, to crimes such as filing false elector certificates and interfering with election duties. Giuliani, Meadows, Eastman and Ellis have been charged by an Arizona grand jury for their role in the fake electors plot, but the case has yet to move to trial.

The president does not have the power to pardon state crimes, but Trump's allies, including Martin and election attorney Cleta Mitchell, herself heavily involved in the failed coup, have argued that the pardon could cover state-law crimes committed by false electors because the activity related to the federal election.

This is the second major blanket pardon Trump has issued to his January 6 co-conspirators since returning to the White House. In one of his first major acts as president, Trump pardoned over 1,600 foot soldiers charged and/or convicted for their role in the failed coup, including Elmer Stewart Rhodes of the Oath Keepers and Henry "Enrique" Tarrio, Florida Proud Boy and FBI informant.

The broad pardon is aimed at not only rewriting history and lending credence to Trump's "big lie" that the 2020 election was stolen, but also to serve as a signal to Trump's most fanatical supporters that the fascist in the White House will protect them from prosecution as long as they carry out crimes on his behalf. The pardons come less than one year before the 2026 midterm elections are set to be held.

Notably, none of those pardoned by Trump are actually facing federal charges, a testament to the complete inability and unwillingness of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party to hold those accountable who tried to overturn the last vestiges of bourgeois democracy in the United States. Their central concern after the failed coup, as President Joe Biden and former Speaker Nancy Pelosi said numerous times, was building a "strong Republican Party."

To this end, the Democrats, through the January 6 Select Committee, led by Wyoming Republican Representative Liz Cheney, daughter of war criminal Dick Cheney, presented a false "one-man coup" theory, which blamed Trump and a few of his "crazy" allies in the Republican Party, while exonerating Trump's allies in the Pentagon, in Congress and on the Supreme Court in the attack. The bipartisan cover-up of the coup has prepared the conditions for its continuation and normalization under Trump's second administration.

No doubt working in concert with the Trump White House, following the release of the pardons, Stewart Rhodes, founder of the Oath Keepers, appeared on a *Gateway Pundit* podcast on November 9 to announce he was "relaunching Oath Keepers."

Rhodes said he was getting "invitations" to speak about January 6 and restarting the organization. He said potential Oath Keepers must be willing "to protect people against radical antifa and other leftist violence in the streets."

In the same interview, reported by *Media Matters*, Rhodes encouraged Trump to invoke the Insurrection Act. "We're facing an ongoing invasion of this country, it has not stopped. We're facing an insurrection by the left. And we're also facing a direct blocking and resistance against enforcing federal law—federal immigration laws, attacking ICE agents..."

The fascist militia leader added, "He could just say given the circumstances of an invasion, insurrection, and resistance against federal law being enforced, I'm calling up the militia, ordering all the men to come together [in] every county, put the veterans in charge of training and organizing all the other men and just have them stand to and await his orders. He can do that and I think he should do that."

The latest pardons underscore that the defense of democratic rights cannot be entrusted to the capitalist state or its political parties. The working class must intervene as an independent political force, uniting its struggles against dictatorship, war and social inequality in a mass movement for socialism.

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