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The Michigan conspiracy, Trump, and the 2020 election

Yesterday's announcement of criminal conspiracy charges against 13 fascists who plotted to kidnap and murder Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer removes all doubt as to what Donald Trump means when he refuses to commit to a "peaceful transition of power." The US president is clearly implicated by word and deed in a wide-ranging and violent plot to overturn the outcome of the November 3 election.

Federal prosecutors outlined initial details of the plot in a 15-page criminal complaint filed in the US District Court for the Western District of Michigan. The conspirators, who claim the ability to mobilize "hundreds" of people, made intricate plans to intercept Whitmer at her vacation home and to forcibly transport her on a boat across Lake Michigan to an undisclosed militia-controlled location in Wisconsin. They then planned to stage a trial and execute her. Other conspirators planned to descend on the state Capitol in Lansing, take control of the legislative chambers, and disband the elected government.

Trump's plan for election day is no longer a matter of conjecture. In battleground states that support Biden, Trump will falsely proclaim himself the victim of election fraud, deploy violent groups to intimidate voters, seize statehouses and eliminate political opponents. Armed supporters will declare the vote invalid or compel state legislatures to certify pro-Trump slates of electors. Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have Democratic governors and Republican-controlled legislatures and will therefore be the central target of this plot.

The further exposure of this plot makes clear Trump's motivations for rushing back to the White House from Walter Reed hospital. On Wednesday, barely 24 hours before yesterday's announcement, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

Trump's decision to return to the White House from the Walter Reed Medical Center Monday night was clearly motivated by deep concerns over the impact of his sickness on his position and political conspiracies.

Unless all the polls are totally wrong, Trump's political position is deteriorating, and he faces the danger of a substantial defeat at the polls. But this fact does not alter his plans. The more desperate the crisis of the administration, the more Trump calculates that his ability to remain in office depends entirely on his ability to utilize extra-constitutional measures. Such conspiracies cannot be orchestrated from a hospital bed in Walter Reed. Trump requires control over the apparatus of the state.

Under normal conditions, political etiquette would have compelled Trump to call Governor Whitmer, express his relief at her escape from danger, denounce the conspiracy against her life and the constitutional order in the most unequivocal terms, and pledge the full support of his administration for the exposure, apprehension, and punishment of all those involved in the plot.

But Trump has done no such thing. On Fox News last night, Trump scolded Whitmer for “complaining” about the plot, adding, “She goes and does her little political act and she keeps her state closed...what she is doing is a horrible thing to the people; the churches are closed.” Trump’s statements excuse and legitimize fascist violence. His comments are a signal to the fascist conspirators that Trump has their backs and that they, if convicted of a crime, can count on a presidential pardon.

The criminal complaint, which was announced from Michigan and not Washington D.C., makes clear the Michigan plot is only the tip of the iceberg in a national conspiracy connected to Trump or those around him. The criminal complaint quotes one of the conspirators as saying, “I can see several states taking their f—ing tyrants.” The complaint also references the conspirators’ collaboration with militia groups in the swing states of Ohio, where the group held a secret meeting in June, and Wisconsin.

Though the complaint does not mention the president by name, the originator of the conspiracy is in the White House. Trump has on many occasions specifically selected Whitmer for condemnation because she was most visibly identified with implementing measures aimed at curbing the spread of the pandemic, which ravaged Michigan in March and April. It is now clear these attacks were part of a deliberate strategy to lay the basis for the present coup attempt.

In March, Trump referred to her as “Half-Whitmer” for criticizing his administration’s response to the pandemic. On April 17, Trump tweeted his call to “LIBERATE MICHIGAN” and other swing states, including Minnesota and Virginia, a clear signal to “Operation Gridlock” protests goaded by Trump and the Republicans against restrictions aimed at stopping the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

That same month, he tweeted: “I think they’re listening to me. They seem to be protesters that like me and respect this opinion, and my opinion is just the same as about all of the governors. They all want to open—nobody wants to stay shut, but they want to open safely.”

On April 30, the far-right protesters descended on Lansing and entered the statehouse armed with assault rifles to demand the end of the lockdowns. The next day, Trump tweeted: “The Governor of Michigan should give a little, and put out the fire. These are very good people, but they are angry. They want their lives back again, safely! See them, talk to them, make a deal.” During last week’s presidential debate, Trump issued what is known in the military as a “preparatory command” to his fascist supporters, ordering them to “Stand by.”

The Biden-Harris campaign responded to these threats by issuing a series of platitudes chastising Trump for his “un-presidential” behavior and imploring people to vote. But this appeal is meaningless under conditions where Trump plans to ignore the outcome.

Throughout Trump’s presidency, the Democratic Party has responded to every escalation in Trump’s fascist strategy by downplaying the danger to the population. Judging by their muted response yesterday, the Democrats are treating the exposure of Trump’s plans to mobilize fascist militias as a minor episode, and the major newspapers are already pushing coverage on their online editions far down the page.

It is urgently necessary that the public be made aware of all the details of Trump’s dictatorial conspiracy. The success or failure of Trump’s plot depends on this.

In which other states are similar plots underway? Which of Trump’s fascist aides are in contact with the Michigan militia groups? The Nazi Stephen Miller? Roger Stone, who helped promote the right-wing QAnon conspiracy theory? How many degrees of separation

are there between Trump and the fascists? Which other public figures do the fascist groups plan to kidnap and assassinate? Which governors, members of Congress, media personalities, or cultural figures are next on Trump's kill list? What do the text messages and meeting recordings of the plotters reveal?

The Democratic Party does not want the matter to be investigated for fear that it will trigger opposition from below. Their response is, "Keep moving, nothing to see here." Trump relies on this spinelessness to move forward with his plans. But workers, youth, and honest journalists and professionals must demand answers immediately to expose and stop the plot against America!

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