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Ocasio-Cortez describes fascist assault on January 6: “It was an all-out attempted coup”

In a newly released interview with Maria Hinojosa of *Latino USA*, New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez stated that the fascist assault on the US Capitol on January 6, directed by then-President Donald Trump, was “an all-out attempted coup.”



Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (center), Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020 [Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin]

Pushing back against the narrative espoused by Trump, the majority of the Republican Party, their far-right and neo-Nazi allies, and a not insignificant layer of the pseudo-left, Ocasio-Cortez explained that her characterization was not “some sort of exaggeration.” She noted that former Vice President Mike Pence “was taken out of the Senate chamber

something like 60 seconds before these terrorist insurrectionists got into the Senate chamber. 60 seconds.”

Explaining the pivotal role of Pence as president of the Senate, Ocasio-Cortez stated that Pence was “the one person, arguably, that had one of the most important roles in making sure that procedurally the Electoral College counts went on as proceeded.”

The former vice president drew the ire of Trump after he resisted repeated demands from the would-be dictator that he unconstitutionally overthrow the election during the January 6 formal counting of the previously certified Electoral College votes. After Pence released a letter on the morning of January 6 explaining that he would “follow the Constitution” and not Trump’s demands, Trump responded by telling thousands of “Stop the Steal” supporters gathered outside the White House to march on the Capitol, “fight like hell” and “save America” by preventing Congress from carrying out its procedural task of certifying the victory of his Democratic opponent, Joe Biden. He made a point of denouncing Pence and inciting the mob against him.

Within 15 minutes of Trump ending his speech, his supporters, led by QAnon adherents, Proud Boys and Oath Keeper militia groups, began to storm the Capitol. Within an hour, hundreds of Trump supporters had made their way into the building, chanting, “Hang Mike Pence,” as gallows were being set up outside the Capitol.

In the interview, Ocasio-Cortez said, “60 seconds could have meant, potentially, the difference between what we have right now and a martial state. And we don’t want to acknowledge how close we got, but that is how close we got.”

Ocasio-Cortez has been the target of repeated death threats from fascist Republicans for, among other things, acknowledging the reality of January 6. In the interview, she went on to describe the Trump administration as “fascistic” and revealed that she has enrolled in therapy following the attack.

Alluding to the police stand-down that facilitated the attack, Ocasio-Cortez said: “They constructed gallows, functional gallows with nooses, and they put it in front of the Capitol and they were looking for us. And we were not protected. There are things that happened

that day, that if 60 seconds went differently, a different door opened, a chair not barricaded in a certain way, we could have a completely different reality right now.”

Ocasio-Cortez’s remarks come as the forces complicit in Trump’s coup attempt, including the majority of the Republican Party, significant sections of the police, military and intelligence leadership, as well as sections of the financial oligarchy, are seeking to dismiss the significance of the attack.

Their attempts to whitewash the coup come as new revelations continue to surface demonstrating that the attack on the Capitol was not a security or intelligence failure, or the result of a “lack of imagination,” but a coordinated action in which top Pentagon officials appointed by Trump and top Capitol Police officials played a central role.

On Wednesday, the House Administration Committee held the first post-January 6 congressional hearing on the role of the Capitol Police Board, which is charged with overseeing the U.S. Capitol Police. The board consists of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), the House Sergeant at Arms and the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

The Administration Committee took testimony from Architect of the Capitol J. Brett Blanton and the recently installed House Sergeant at Arms and former D.C. National Guard commander, Gen. William Walker. The new Senate Sergeant at Arms, Karen Gibson, refused to attend the hearing.

In their opening statements, Walker and Blanton made clear that the attack was the result of “failures” for which there were no innocent explanations. Walker, who previously testified before Congress that he was forced to wait 3 hours and 19 minutes for approval from the Pentagon to deploy his National Guard soldiers even as the Capitol was under siege, said of the 6th: “There were failures in equipment; failures in training; failures in intelligence; failures in command and control and communication; poor planning, preparation, and execution.”

Architect of the Capitol Blanton is the only member of the Capitol Police Board who retained his position following the attack. Then-Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving and Senate Sergeant at Arms Michael Stenger all resigned within days of the attempted coup.

At Wednesday's hearing, Blanton reiterated previous comments he made refuting congressional testimony from the current acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman, who claimed that Sund reached out to the Capitol Police Board on January 4, asking for authorization to declare a state of emergency and calling on the board to request National Guard support. Both Pittman and Sund claimed the Board denied his requests.

At the House Administration Committee hearing, Blanton said that he participated in a "Law Enforcement Partners Inauguration Briefing" hosted by Sund on January 5, during which "then-Chief Sund mentioned the expected rally near the White House, but there were no actionable intelligence or credible threats shared at the meeting."

Blanton continued: "In terms of support for the United States Capitol Police, as I shared previously, then-Chief Sund did not reach out to me or my staff with a request for an emergency declaration or interest in seeking National Guard support in advance of the breach."

Blanton acknowledged that Sund "engaged in conversations with other members of the Board [the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms], but no conversation occurred with me or any AOC employee involved in Board matters. In addition, the AOC has no record of the January 3 intel briefing [which warned that 'Congress itself' would be the target on January 6] cited in the media and by Acting Chief Pittman."

In response to questions from Democratic North Carolina Representative G.K. Butterfield, Blanton confirmed that the Capitol Police did not provide any intelligence to him prior to January 6 warning of an attack on the Capitol.

It was revealed during the hearing that Blanton and his chief security officer had been so concerned about an attack on the Capitol that they provided a timeline to House Administration Committee Chair Zoe Lofgren (Democrat, California) that began on December 28 and went through January 7. The timeline showed they had been collecting information featuring many detailed warnings of events that would come to pass.

Lofgren said, "It appears to show that your team was able to gather warnings of violence on the 6th. The AOC staff shared that with the Capitol Police, but one of your staff,

according to what you submitted, then reported back, ‘There is no talk about any credible threats or storming the Capitol after talking with Watch Commander Wisham.’”

Blanton said that he was told, “Wisham said he would look through his emails and forward anything he found to us.”

Lofgren noted that one of the documents prepared by the Architect of the Capitol security officer stated: “There is a threat of weapons being introduced to demonstration activities, Henry ‘Enrique’ Tarrio, leader of the Proud Boys, was carrying two high capacity firearm magazines when arrested by MPD [D.C. Metro Police Department]. Social media postings provided tips on how to secretly bring in weapons and ammunition to D.C. Oath Keepers and III Percenters who normally engage in armed protest, plan to have weapons. There is also the threat of the Proud Boys and other groups going ‘incognito.’ For example, the Proud Boys will be wearing all-black. Some demonstrators have announced plans to create ‘mob violence’ to draw law enforcement to certain areas.”

Lofgren then asked Blanton: “How did you reconcile the briefings you were getting from your Chief Security Officer, that was prepared for you and your leadership team, with the information you are getting from the Capitol Police, which said there were no specific threats?”

Blanton said that his security officer had provided the Capitol Police with newspaper clippings, including from an interview with far-right Trump supporter Representative Louie Gohmert of Texas. In the article, Gohmert threatened “riots and violence in the streets” after a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit filed by him and other Republicans against Pence in an attempt to overthrow the election.

Blanton said he was told by the Capitol Police, “[t]hese are just news articles, they are not credible threats.” He reiterated that during a January 5 meeting in which every member of the Police Board was present, once the topic of January 6 came up, Blanton was reassured by then-Chief Sund, “[w]e do have a plan for the 6th, a good plan.”

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