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Senate report on January 6 is silent on role of Trump and Republicans in coup attempt

On Tuesday, the Senate Homeland Security and Rules committees released a joint report on their investigation into the January 6 storming of the US Capitol by a fascist mob incited and directed by then-President Donald Trump.

The two committees, headed by Democratic senators Gary Peters of Michigan and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, respectively, held public hearings at the end of February and beginning of March that took testimony from the US Capitol Police chief, the acting chief of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, the House and Senate sergeant-at-arms, the commander of the D.C. National Guard, and lower-level officials from the Departments of Defense, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security.



In this Jan. 6, 2021, file photo rioters try to break through a police barrier at the Capitol in Washington. (AP Photo/John Minchillo, File)

The most explosive testimony was given by then-D.C. National Guard Commander, Gen. William Walker, (now the House sergeant-at-arms), who said he was blocked for hours from deploying his Quick Response Force to clear out the mob from the Capitol by Trump-

appointed officials at the Pentagon. In the event, then-acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy authorized the deployment only after Trump had publicly called off the coup attempt and urged his “heroes” to leave the Capitol. The report, the first such congressional review of the attempted nullification of the US election and installation of Trump as president-dictator, presents new details adding to the already abundant evidence of a deliberate stand-down by police, intelligence and military forces. Their actions enabled the pro-Trump mob’s effort to carry out Trump’s call in a speech delivered that morning to “fight like hell” and block congressional certification of Joe Biden’s victory.

The report makes clear that the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Pentagon and the US Capitol Police were well aware of plans by far-right militia forces, discussed on open source social media for weeks prior to January 6, to carry out a violent assault on Congress. Far-right elements discussed plans to take hostage and likely kill targeted elected officials based on the lie peddled by Trump and legitimized by the Republican leadership that the election had been stolen.

New details in the report establishing that the intelligence and police agencies had advance knowledge of pro-Trump forces’ plans to storm the Capitol include:

- * Capitol Police intelligence officers knew as early as December 21 that protesters planned to “bring guns” and other weapons to the January 6 demonstration and turn them on any law enforcement officers who blocked their entry to the Capitol. They also knew that these forces were sharing maps of the Capitol campus online and discussing the building’s best entry points, how to seal them off and trap lawmakers inside.

- * On January 5, the FBI informed Capitol Police about posts on a website called thedonald.win, on which Trump supporters had been exchanging information about tunnels around the Capitol and “stating their goal of finding Democratic Members early to block them from entering the Capitol.” The email also noted a “huge uptick with reporting via open source of the groups’ intentions of forming a perimeter around the campus.” The email also included a post declaring that allied militia groups could “enter the Capitol as the Third Continental Congress and certify the Trump Electors.”

- * A Capitol Police official shared a tip the night before the attack, which had been received by the FBI National Threat Operations Center, of a “significant uptick” in new visitors to a website called WashingtonTunnels.com.

- * Nevertheless, the Capitol Police intelligence unit concluded there was no credible threat of a violent attack on the Capitol. The report gives further details on the complete lack of planning by the Capitol Police leaders for January 6, despite the fact that Trump had targeted that day’s joint session of Congress as the last chance to prevent a peaceful transfer of power. It notes the lack of protective equipment and non-lethal riot control devices, and quotes Capitol Police officers saying they had no communication with top officials during the riot.

One officer said: “The objects thrown at us varied in size, shape and consistency. Some were frozen cans and bottles, rebar from the construction, bricks, liquids, pepper spray, bear spray, sticks of various widths, pipes, bats.” Another told Senate investigators: “We were ill prepared. We were NOT informed with intelligence. We were betrayed.”

But more significant than the new information in the 120-page report is what it leaves out. In order to obtain the support of the top Republicans on the two committees, the Democratic chairs agreed to omit any discussion of the role of the coup-plotter-in chief, Donald Trump. Senator Amy Klobuchar of the Senate Rules Committee and Senator Gary Peters of the Homeland Security Committee also agreed to omit the term “insurrection” from their analysis and to take no position on the “stolen election” lie that was used to mobilize Trump’s fascistic mob and continues to be promoted by the Republican Party and the ex-president, whose dictatorial conspiracies continue unabated.

On this cowardly and duplicitous basis, the report presents the events of January 6 as the result of organizational deficiencies and inexplicable intelligence failures, reviving the mindless “failure to connect the dots” mantra that was used to cover up the connections between the Al Qaeda hijackers who carried out the 9/11 terror attacks on New York and Washington D.C. and the US intelligence agencies. The latter allowed the attacks to go forward in order to create the political climate in the US for “war on terror” military assaults on the oil-rich regions of Central Asia and the Middle East.

That coverup was carried out by the bipartisan 9/11 Commission set up in the aftermath of the terror attacks. Tuesday’s Senate report embodies the response of Biden and the Democrats to the defeat 11 days before by Senate Republicans of a House bill to establish a similar whitewash body in response to the January 6 coup attempt. They appear willing, in the interests of concealing the increasingly fascistic orientation of the Republican Party, to extend their coverup efforts to the ex-president himself.

The basic line of the Senate report is summed up approvingly by the *New York Times*, which calls it “the most comprehensive and detailed account to date of the dozens of intelligence failures, miscommunications and security lapses that led to what the bipartisan team of senators that assembled it concluded was an ‘unprecedented attack’ on American democracy...”

The glaring contradiction between this interpretation and the facts set forth in the report itself was summed up, perhaps unwittingly, by Senator Peters, who told the press on Tuesday: “The attack was quite frankly planned in plain sight.”

The report takes great pains to present as plausible the sophistries offered by top Pentagon officials to excuse their role in the hours-long delay in the deployment of National Guard troops to the Capitol. It omits any reference to Trump’s role in refusing pleas from besieged lawmakers, and even his vice president, Mike Pence, to send forces to clear out the fascists. (Trump had specifically incited his mob against Pence when the latter refused to use his ceremonial role in the counting of electoral votes to overturn Biden’s victory. Insurrectionists set up a noose outside the Capitol and chanted, “Hang Mike Pence.”)

It credits as serious the claims of Miller and McCarthy that they had to obtain a “mission analysis” before authorizing the dispatch of National Guard forces, even as Trump’s militarily trained militia allies were marauding through the Capitol in search of lawmakers to seize and/or kill.

Had they succeeded—and, according to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, one of those targeted by Trump’s mob, they came within seconds of doing so—Trump would have declared a state of emergency, backed by the Republican leadership, suspended Congress, and initiated a process that would have ended with the nullification of the election and his assertion of dictatorial powers.

One significant detail in the report, which had not been widely reported previously, if at all, is the fact that then-D.C National Guard Commander Walker confirmed that a D.C official “threatened to have the mayor hold a press conference” to announce that the Defense Department had refused to support her request for assistance. It was only then, sometime after 3 p.m., that Miller and McCarthy declared their readiness to approve the requests for National Guard troops to clear out the insurrectionists.

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