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Trump co-conspirator and fascist adviser Steve Bannon indicted for contempt of Congress

On Friday, a Washington D.C. federal grand jury indicted fascist Steve Bannon, 67, a senior adviser to former President Donald Trump and host of the “War Room” podcast, for refusing to comply with a congressional subpoena issued by the House Select Committee charged with investigating Trump’s January 6 coup attempt.



Steve Bannon at the “Take Back Virginia” rally in Richmond, Virginia, October 13, 2021

[Credit: AP Photo/Steve Helber]

A statement released Friday by the Department of Justice (DoJ) announced that Bannon was charged with two counts of contempt, one for refusing to testify, the other for refusing to provide documentation to the committee by the required dates. The grand jury’s indictment came three weeks after the House, in a near party line vote, recommended

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holding Bannon in contempt for refusing to provide documentation and testify before the Select Committee.

Bannon has not just refused to testify after receiving the subpoena issued by the committee. September 24, he ceased all communication with the committee. After failing to provide documentation by October 7, Bannon, through his lawyer, Robert Costello, sent a statement to the committee seven hours later stating that he would not comply with the committee's request because Trump had invoked "executive privilege" on any and all communications sought by the committee.

Besides the fact that Bannon stopped working in an official capacity for the White House in 2017, well before concrete plans for the January 6 coup were conceived, his ludicrous claim of "executive privilege" encompasses documents and communications which did not take place between Bannon and Trump. This includes the former Breitbart editor's interactions with the pro-Trump "Women for America First" political group, which organized the rally outside the White House on January 6, as well as his discussions with Trump's coup lawyers, Republican operatives, lawmakers and fascist militia members at Trump's "command center" at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel.

This past Tuesday, Washington D.C. Federal District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan rejected a lawsuit from Trump which claimed executive privilege to protect documents sought by the committee. In her ruling Chutkan drew attention to the fact that President Joe Biden has not asserted privilege over the documents, currently possessed by the National Archives, and that "the Supreme Court has already made clear that in such circumstances, the incumbent's view is accorded greater weight."

However, a federal appeals court on Thursday issued a short-term injunction blocking the Archives from turning over the documents to the committee. Lawyers for Trump and Biden will submit briefs over the next two weeks after which arguments will be held on November 30. The records sought included meetings held by Trump as well as where he was located during the January 6 attack on Congress.

The DoJ statement announcing the indictment against Bannon indicated that each count of contempt carries a minimum sentence of 30 days in jail up to a maximum of one year as well as a fine between \$100 and \$1,000. In other words, Bannon could spend up to two

years in jail and be fined up to \$2,000. NBC News and the *New York Times* have both reported that Bannon plans to turn himself in to authorities on Monday and appear in court later that afternoon.

The same DoJ statement quoted Attorney General Merrick Garland, who ludicrously declared, “Since my first day in office, I have promised Justice Department employees that together we would show the American people by word and deed that the department adheres to the rule of law, follows the facts and the law and pursues equal justice under the law.”

Similarly, in a joint statement following the DoJ announcement, Chairman of the January 6 committee Bennie Thompson (Democrat-Mississippi) and Vice Chair Liz Cheney (Republican-Wyoming) wrote: “Steve Bannon’s indictment should send a clear message to anyone who thinks they can ignore the Select Committee or try to stonewall our investigation: no one is above the law. We will not hesitate to use the tools at our disposal to get the information we need.”

In reality, Trump, Bannon and his co-conspirators, like the demented fascist Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar and Oath Keeper leader Stewart Rhodes, have brazenly flouted the law, walking free and inciting fascistic terrorism against the immediate targets of the coup, the Democratic Party, over 10 months later. Far from pursuing “equal justice” the Democrats and the Biden administration have bent over backwards to placate their fascist “colleagues,” covering up Trump’s central role in organizing the coup and the vast support it received within the Republican Party, the financial oligarchy, and the organs of the capitalist state, such as the police, military and intelligence agencies.

And while the other Republican on the January 6 committee, Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, told CNN’s Jake Tapper on Friday that the federal grand jury’s indictment of Bannon sent a “chilling message” to “anybody else that was going to follow through like this,” former Trump White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, who has also been subpoenaed by the committee, defiantly refused to appear before the committee for deposition on Friday.

Meadows’ attorney, George Terwilliger, released a statement claiming it would be “irresponsible for Mr. Meadows” to testify before the courts resolved “legal disputes” concerning “privileged communications.”

In response Thompson and Cheney released a statement Friday afternoon: “Mr. Meadow’s actions today—choosing to defy the law—will force the select committee to consider pursuing contempt or other proceeding to enforce the subpoena.

“It’s unfortunate that Mr. Meadows has chosen to join a very small group of witnesses who believe they are above the law and are defying a select committee subpoena outright.”

As Trump’s co-conspirators run out the clock on the select committee in anticipation of a Republican take-over of the House in 2022, and with it the shuttering of the committee’s “investigation,” new revelations of Trump’s state of mind during and after the coup underscore the extreme danger facing the working class and the advanced decay of bourgeois democracy in the United States.

In anticipation of the release of a new book by ABC News’s Jonathan Karl, Axios published an audio recording Friday of Trump stating it was “common sense” for his supporters to demand to “Hang Mike Pence!” during the attack on the Capitol.

Questioned by Karl if Trump was at all concerned for Pence’s safety, Trump replied: “No, I thought he was well-protected. I had heard that he was in good shape.” After Karl reminded Trump that his fascist mob were calling to “Hang Mike Pence,” Trump defended his foot soldiers and their blood lust.

“Because it’s common sense, Jon,” Trump snapped before regurgitating his fascist election lies. “It’s common sense that you’re supposed to protect. How can you—if you know a vote is fraudulent, right?—how can you pass on a fraudulent vote to Congress? How can you do that?”

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