



PRESS RELEASE

Five Florida Men Arrested on Charges for Actions During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Wednesday, August 24, 2022

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of
Columbia

Defendants Were Allegedly Affiliated With a Militia Group, Were Among Rioters on Lower West Terrace

WASHINGTON — Five Florida men, all self-identified militia members, were arrested today on charges stemming from their actions during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Their actions and the actions of others disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress convened to ascertain and count the electoral votes related to the presidential election.

Four of the defendants -- Benjamin Cole, 38, of Leesburg, John Edward Crowley, 50, of Windermere, Brian Preller, 33, of Mount Dora, and Jonathan Rockholt, 38, of Palm Coast, Florida -- are charged with the felony offense of interfering with a law enforcement officer during a civil disorder. Along with a fifth defendant -- Tyler Bensch, 20, of Casselberry -- they also are charged with the misdemeanor offenses of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds and disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds.

Crowley, Rockholt, and Bensch were arrested in Florida and are making their initial court appearances today in the Middle District of Florida. Cole, who was arrested in Louisville, is making his initial court appearance in the Western District of Kentucky. Preller, who was arrested in Hardwick, Vermont, is making his appearance in the District of Vermont.

According to court documents, the five men self-identified as members of the “B Squad,” a subgroup of a militia-style, Florida based organization known as the “Guardians of Freedom,” which adheres to the ideology of the “Three Percenters.” They traveled to Washington, D.C., with others in the “B Squad” and stayed at a hotel on Jan. 5, 2021. On Jan. 6, the five defendants were among those illegally gathered on the Capitol grounds. Cole wore a tactical vest. Preller wore a tactical vest with a chemical irritant spray attached to the front, as well as large goggles and a green helmet with the word “monster” on the back. He also carried a long black walking stick and wore a shirt that read “waterboarding instructor.” Rockholt wore a tactical vest and carried what appeared to be a knife in his front right pocket; he also wore a baseball helmet. Bensch wore a tactical vest, as well as a military-style helmet with goggles and a black gas mask. He also carried a chemical irritant in front of the vest.

Cole, Crowley, Preller and Rockholt were in a group that engaged in a confrontation with law enforcement officers in the tunnel area of the Capitol’s Lower West Terrace. Bensch remained just outside. While inside the tunnel, Cole, Preller, Crowley and Rockholt confronted and assisted the crowd in confronting the officers that were preventing the tunnel and Capitol from being breached. They added their force, momentum, bodies, and efforts to the other rioters in a “heave-ho” effort that put pressure on the police line. As a direct result of the actions of the rioters in the tunnel at that time, the mob penetrated deeper, pushing the police line back.

Once officers finally were able to repel Cole, Preller, Crowley, Rockholt, and others from the tunnel, Rockholt picked up a clear riot shield with a Capitol Police seal before leaving the area. Bensch, meanwhile, used one of his chemical irritants to spray the face of an individual who was an unknown member of the crowd, even though that person posed no threat to him.

This case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia and the Department of Justice National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Attorney’s Offices for the Middle District of Florida, the District of Vermont, and the Western District of Kentucky.

The case is being investigated by the FBI’s Washington, Jacksonville, Tampa, Boston, and Albany Field Offices. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department.

In the 19 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 860 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including over 260 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement. The investigation remains ongoing.

Anyone with tips can call 1-800-CALL-FBI (800-225-5324) or visit tips.fbi.gov.

A complaint is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Updated August 25, 2022

Attachments

[Cole et al - Complaint](#) [PDF, 229 KB]

[Cole et al - Statement of Facts](#) [PDF, 26 MB]

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

Components

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)_](#) | [National Security Division \(NSD\)_](#) | [USAO - District of Columbia](#) | [USAO - Florida, Middle](#) | [USAO - Kentucky, Western](#) | [USAO - Vermont](#)

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PRESS RELEASE

Guilty Plea in Theft and Sale of Hundreds of Government-Issued Phones and Computers Slated for Destruction

Nikhil Parekh, 37, of Randallstown, Maryland, pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court in connection with the theft and sale of hundreds of government-issued smartphones, laptop computers, and other IT...

February 4, 2025

PRESS RELEASE**Alleged Armed Carjacker Charged After Arrest**

Parren Hawkins, 33, of Washington, D.C., was charged today in Superior Court with armed carjacking in connection with an incident, yesterday, in Northeast D.C. The charge was announced by U.S...

February 3, 2025

PRESS RELEASE**Murder of Shoe Reseller Results in 32 Year Sentence**

Darius Anderson, 23, of Washington, DC, was sentenced today to 32 years of in prison for first-degree murder while armed and related offenses in the June 2022 killing of 30-year...

January 31, 2025

**District of Columbia**

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