



PRESS RELEASE

Former Leader of Proud Boys Pleads Guilty To Seditious Conspiracy for Efforts to Stop Transfer of Power Following 2020 Presidential Election

Thursday, October 6, 2022

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant Also Pleads Guilty to Firearms Charge Stemming from Search of Home This Year

WASHINGTON – A former leader of the Proud Boys pleaded guilty today to seditious conspiracy for his actions before and during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. He and others sought to stop the transfer of power by disrupting a joint session of the U.S. Congress convened to ascertain and count the electoral votes related to the presidential election.

Jeremy Bertino, 43, pleaded guilty in the District of Columbia to seditious conspiracy in connection with the Capitol breach. He also pleaded guilty to a charge of unlawful possession of a firearm, stemming from a court-authorized search of his residence in March 2022. As part of the plea agreement, Bertino has agreed to cooperate with the government's ongoing investigation.

According to court documents, the Proud Boys describe themselves as members of a "pro-Western fraternal organization for men who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world,

aka Western Chauvinists.” Bertino joined the Proud Boys in approximately 2018 and was, for a time, the vice president of his local Proud Boys chapter in South Carolina.

As stated in the court documents, on multiple occasions in 2020, Bertino traveled to Washington, D.C., for rallies as a member of the Proud Boys. During one trip, on Dec. 12, 2020, several individuals, including Bertino and other Proud Boys members, were involved in an altercation. During that altercation, Bertino, among others, was stabbed. Bertino was hospitalized, released, and was still recovering outside of the Washington D.C. area from his injuries as of Jan. 6, 2021. Otherwise, he would have traveled to Washington.

In December 2020, Bertino accepted an invitation from Enrique Tarrio, then Proud Boys’ national chairman, to join a new chapter that Tarrio had devised called the “Ministry of Self Defense” (MOSD). In the weeks leading to Jan. 6, 2021, Bertino participated in encrypted chats and other communication with members of MOSD leadership. Bertino and other MOSD leaders agreed that the presidential election had been stolen, that the purpose of traveling to Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, was to stop the certification of the Electoral College Vote, and that the MOSD leaders were willing to do whatever it would take, including using force against police and others, to achieve that objective.

Bertino continued to participate in planning sessions as he recovered from his injuries. At least as early as Jan. 4, 2021, he received encrypted chat messages indicating that members of MOSD leadership were discussing the possibility of storming the Capitol. On Jan. 6, Bertino monitored activities through mainstream and social media, as well as posting in the MOSD chats. He posted messages himself to MOSD leaders and members to encourage and assist in the operation, such as advising those on the grounds of the Capitol to “form a spear.” Similarly, Bertino posted to his public social media account, “DO NOT GO HOME. WE ARE ON THE CUSP OF SAVING THE CONSTITUTION.” On the evening of Jan. 6, 2021, Bertino messaged Tarrio and celebrated the achievement, saying, among other things, “You know we made this happen,” and “1776 motherf****r.”

The firearms charge stems from an FBI search of Bertino’s residence on March 8, 2022. While executing a search warrant, agents located six firearms, including an AR-15 style firearm with a scope, and more than 3,000 rounds of ammunition. Bertino was barred from possessing firearms and/or ammunition due to a previous conviction.

Bertino was charged in a criminal information that was filed today. Five other members of the Proud Boys, including Tarrio, were indicted on June 6, 2022, on seditious conspiracy and other charges. They have pleaded not guilty and are awaiting trial. A sixth member of the group, Charles Donohoe, 34, of Kernersville, North Carolina, pleaded guilty on April 8, 2022, to conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding and assaulting, resisting, or impeding officers.

Bertino faces a statutory maximum of 20 years in prison for seditious conspiracy and up to 10 years in prison for the firearms charge. The charges also carry potential financial penalties. No

sentencing date was set. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

This case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, the Department of Justice National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section, and the Department of Justice Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Gang Section. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of North Carolina.

The case is being investigated by the FBI's Washington, Charlotte, and Columbia, South Carolina Field Offices.

In the 20 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 870 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including over 265 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.

Updated October 6, 2022

Attachments

[Bertino - Information](#) [PDF, 88 KB]

[Bertino - Statement of Offense](#) [PDF, 5 MB]

[Bertino - Plea Agreement](#) [PDF, 9 MB]

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

Components

[Criminal Division](#) | [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) | [National Security Division \(NSD\)](#) | [USAO - District of Columbia](#) | [USAO - North Carolina, Western](#)

Press Release Number: 22-339

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February 4, 2025

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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...

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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

Main Office:

601 D Street, NW

Washington, DC

Email USAO-DC



Telephone: (202) 252-7566