



PRESS RELEASE

Two More Oath Keepers Members Sentenced on Felony Charges Related to U.S. Capitol Breach

Friday, May 26, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

WASHINGTON – Jessica Watkins and Kenneth Harrelson were sentenced today on felony charges for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Their actions disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress that was in the process of ascertaining and counting the electoral votes related to the presidential election.

Watkins, 40, of Woodstock, Ohio, was sentenced to 8.5 years (102 months) in prison and 36 months of supervised release for conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding, obstruction of an official proceeding, interfering with law enforcement officers during a civil disorder, and conspiracy to prevent an officer from discharging duties. Harrelson, 42, of Titusville, Florida, was sentenced to 4 years (48 months) in prison and 24 months of supervised release for obstruction of an official proceeding, conspiracy to prevent an officer from discharging duties, and tampering with documents or proceedings. Both defendants were found guilty at trial in November 2022, along with co-defendants Elmer Stewart Rhodes and Kelly Meggs who were sentenced earlier this week. Co-defendant Thomas Caldwell is awaiting sentencing. Co-conspirators Roberto Minuta, Edward Vallejo, Joseph Hackett, and David Moerschel — who were all found guilty at trial in January 2023 — are scheduled to be sentenced next week on June 1 and 2, 2023.

According to the government's evidence, beginning in late December 2020, via encrypted and private communications applications, Watkins, Harrelson, Rhodes, Meggs, Caldwell, and others coordinated and planned to travel to Washington, D.C., on or around Jan. 6, 2021, the date of the certification of the electoral college vote. The defendants also, collectively, employed a variety of manners and means, including: organizing into teams that were prepared and willing to use force and to transport firearms and ammunition into Washington, D.C.; recruiting members and affiliates; organizing trainings to teach and learn paramilitary combat tactics; bringing and contributing paramilitary gear, weapons, and supplies – including knives, batons, camouflaged combat uniforms, tactical vests with plates, helmets, eye protection, and radio equipment – to the Capitol grounds; breaching and attempting to take control of the Capitol grounds and building on Jan. 6, 2021, in an effort to prevent, hinder and delay the certification of the electoral college vote; using force against law enforcement officers while inside the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021; continuing to plot, after Jan. 6, 2021, to oppose by force the lawful transfer of presidential power, and using websites, social media, text messaging and encrypted messaging applications to communicate with each other and others.

On Jan. 6, 2021, a large crowd began to gather outside the Capitol perimeter as the Joint Session of Congress got under way at 1 p.m. Crowd members eventually forced their way through, up, and over U.S. Capitol Police barricades and advanced to the building's exterior façade. Shortly after 2 p.m., crowd members forced entry into the Capitol by breaking windows, ramming open doors, and assaulting Capitol police and other law enforcement officers. At about this time, according to the government's evidence, Rhodes entered the restricted area of the Capitol grounds and directed his followers to meet him at the Capitol.

At approximately 2:30 p.m., according to the government's evidence, Meggs, Harrelson, and Watkins, along with other Oath Keepers and affiliates – many wearing paramilitary clothing and patches with the Oath Keepers name, logo, and insignia – marched in a "stack" formation up the east steps of the Capitol, joined a mob, and made their way into the Capitol. Rhodes and Caldwell remained outside the Capitol, where they coordinated activities.

While certain Oath Keepers members and affiliates breached the Capitol grounds and building, others remained stationed just outside of the city in quick reaction force (QRF) teams. According to the government's evidence, the QRF teams were prepared to rapidly transport firearms and other weapons into Washington, D.C., in support of operations aimed at using force to stop the lawful transfer of presidential power.

Watkins was arrested on Jan. 18, 2021, in Ohio. Harrelson was arrested on March 10, 2021, in Florida.

This case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and the Department of Justice's National Security and Criminal Divisions. Valuable assistance was provided by numerous U.S. Attorney's Offices throughout the country.

The case is being investigated by the FBI’s Washington Field Office with valuable assistance provided by numerous FBI offices throughout the country, including the Dallas, Cincinnati, Tampa, Jacksonville, and Richmond Field Offices.

In the 28 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,000 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 320 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.

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Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

Components

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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...

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**District of Columbia**

Main Office:

601 D Street, NW

Washington, DC

Email USAO-DC



Telephone: (202) 252-7566