



PRESS RELEASE

New York Man Found Guilty of Felony and Misdemeanor Charges Related to Capitol Breach

Tuesday, June 13, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant Tackled Capitol Police Officer from Behind, Causing Officer to Flip Over Ledge and Fall onto Officers Below

WASHINGTON — A New York man was found guilty in the District of Columbia on Monday, June 12, 2023, of multiple felony and misdemeanor charges, including assaulting law enforcement officers, for his actions during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. His 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.

Ralph Joseph Celentano III, 55, of Broad Channel, New York, was found guilty after a trial before U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly of two felony charges, including assaulting, resisting, or impeding officers and civil disorder, and related misdemeanor offenses.

According to the government's evidence, Celentano traveled from New York to Washington D.C. and attended the "Stop the Steal" rally on the Ellipse on Jan. 6, 2021. After the rally, Celentano breached the restricted perimeter of the U.S. Capitol Building and made his way to the very front of the mass of rioters gathered at the Lower West Terrace. At the same time

rioters had breached the Capitol Building and forced the recess of the U.S. House of Representatives, Celentano engaged in several physical altercations with law enforcement officers attempting to hold their police line on the West Front. Celentano locked arms with other rioters and pushed forward to breach the police line and then repeatedly shoved a separate law enforcement officer backward.

Evidence at trial showed that after successfully breaching the police line, Celentano observed a uniformed Capitol Police officer standing at the edge of a raised platform with his back turned. Celentano approached the officer from behind and rammed the officer in a “football-style tackle.” According to court documents, the officer was hit so hard that he flipped over the ledge and fell onto officers below him. The officer, an Iraq war veteran, recalled thinking, “I didn’t survive a war to go out like this.”

Over the course of the next few days, Celentano sent several text messages and posted on the social media network Parler about the riot on Jan. 6th. Among his messages, Celentano indicated he had fought the Capitol Police and won, taken over the Capitol, and stated that it was a day he would always remember, and that he would do it all over again.

Celentano was arrested on March 9, 2022, in Broad Channel, New York.

Celentano is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 11, 2023. In addition to the felonies, Celentano was found guilty of four misdemeanor counts of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds; disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds; engaging in physical violence in a restricted building or grounds; and acts of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings.

The felony assault charge carries a statutory maximum sentence of 8 years in prison, and the felony civil disorder charge carries a statutory maximum sentence of 5 years in prison. All charges carry potential financial penalties. The Court 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 and the Department of Justice National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York.

This case was investigated by the FBI’s Washington Field Office, which identified Celentano as #107 in its seeking information photos, and the FBI’s New York Field Office. Valuable assistance was provided by the Metropolitan Police Department and the U.S. Capitol Police.

In the 29 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,000 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including nearly 350

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 June 13, 2023

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

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Press Release Number: 23-319

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**District of Columbia**

Main Office:

601 D Street, NW

Washington, DC

Email USAO-DC



Telephone: (202) 252-7566