



PRESS RELEASE

Florida Man Pleads Guilty to Assaulting Law Enforcement During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Friday, August 18, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant Participated in Coordinated Pushes Against Police in Lower West Terrace Tunnel and Passed Pepper Spray, Sledgehammer to Others

WASHINGTON – A Florida man pleaded guilty on Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023, to assaulting law enforcement 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 2020 presidential election.

Zachary Johnson, 34, of St. Petersburg, Florida, pleaded guilty in the District of Columbia to one count of assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers. U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon scheduled Johnson to be sentenced on Nov. 30, 2023.

According to court documents, Johnson, a member of the Proud Boys, traveled from his home in Florida to Washington, D.C., to protest Congress' certification of the Electoral College vote. On Jan. 6, 2021, Johnson marched with a group of Proud Boys to the west of the U.S. Capitol around the Peace Monument. There, a group of rioters confronted United States Capitol Police (USCP) officers who were standing behind metal barricades bearing "AREA CLOSED"

signs. The rioters, including Johnson, then overran the officers and barricades. Johnson then advanced on the Capitol and was among the first to enter the restricted grounds.

Court documents say that after the crowd of rioters overran the line of officers protecting the west side of the Capitol, Johnson moved to the vicinity of the West Terrace, where a stage for the Presidential Inauguration was being constructed, and ultimately made his way to Lower West Terrace tunnel and archway. Inside the tunnel, police officers formed a line behind a set of glass doors to stop rioters from entering the building. Soon thereafter, numerous rioters entered the tunnel.

Johnson entered the tunnel at approximately 3:15 p.m. and joined other rioters in a collective push against the established law enforcement lines, including, at times, rocking together in a coordinated “heave-ho” fashion. During this time, several rioters stole shields from the officers, which they passed back out of the tunnel.

At approximately 3:18 p.m. and 3:19 p.m., the line of officers pushed the rioters, including Johnson, out of the tunnel. Johnson then grabbed a collapsible police baton that an officer had lost during the confrontation with rioters. Johnson posed for a photograph displaying the baton.

Outside of the archway, Johnson once more joined a group of rioters who again collectively pushed against the officers – again at times rocking together in a coordinated fashion – in another effort to breach the police line and gain entry to the Capitol building. While outside the tunnel, Johnson helped pass a sledgehammer and canister of OC/pepper spray up to other rioters closer to the entrance. Those rioters then used the OC/pepper spray to further assault the officers protecting the Capitol. Johnson remained outside of the tunnel until at least approximately 4:10 p.m.

FBI agents arrested Johnson on Jan. 13, 2022, in Florida.

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

This case was 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 Middle District of Florida.

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

In the 31 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,106 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 350 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement.

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

Updated August 18, 2023

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

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