



PRESS RELEASE

North Carolina Man Arrested for Assaulting Law Enforcement During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Wednesday, August 30, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant Led the Charge into the Lower West Terrace Tunnel

WASHINGTON - A North Carolina man has been arrested on felony and misdemeanor charges, including assaulting law enforcement, related to 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.

Brett Alan Rotella, also known as Brett Ostrander, 34, of Kannapolis, North Carolina, is charged in a criminal complaint filed in the District of Columbia with felony offenses of obstruction of law enforcement during civil disorder and assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers. Rotella is charged with several misdemeanor offenses, including knowingly entering or remaining in any restricted building or grounds without lawful authority, disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, and impeding passage through the Capitol grounds or buildings.

Rotella was arrested on Aug. 29, 2023, and will make his initial appearance today in the Western District of North Carolina.

According to court documents, on Jan. 6, 2021, law enforcement authorities observed a man, later identified as Rotella, wearing a red skull cap, a black sleeveless puffy vest over a red sleeveless shirt, white or gray long shorts with a black stripe and black tennis shoes on the West Plaza of the Capitol building. Court documents say that Rotella held a long pole with at least two flags affixed to it at various points during the day.

At about 2:26 p.m. on January 6th, Rotella approached a metal police barricade, grabbed it, and pushed it in the direction of a Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officer, and yelled, “fuckin’ tear gas us, I didn’t do shit!” At approximately 2:33 p.m., the police line on the West Plaza fell, and police retreated away from the area. As the officers near him left their positions, Rotella led numerous other rioters in quickly following the police up the southwest stairs from the West Plaza. While leading the group, Rotella periodically paused and called out “HOLD!” or held up his fist, indicating to the group behind him to stop. Rotella then followed police into a long hallway leading into the U.S. Capitol building on the Lower West Terrace, referred to as “the tunnel.”

According to court documents, police retreated into the tunnel and shut and locked the first of two sets of double doors to the entrance of the Capitol building. Rotella stood outside those doors and stared in at the police line, holding a flag. Moments later, the rioters smashed one of the panes of glass in the doors and opened the set of doors. Rotella then reached around and opened the door on the left and was the second rioter to enter the tunnel. Rotella and the rioters then approached the police line situated behind the second set of doors.

A rioter then came through the doors and quickly began to physically fight the police. Soon, other rioters, including Rotella, joined in the fight. At approximately 2:43 p.m., Rotella turned his back on the police line and pushed against the police officers while using his hand to help leverage his weight and push against the door frame. During this time, Rotella briefly grabbed a police riot shield. Rotella then left the tunnel at about 2:55 p.m. after he was sprayed with OC spray.

Approximately one hour later, Rotella was still located in the area near the tunnel. By this time, the police had successfully expelled the rioters from inside, but the mob was continuing to fight against the police from outside. Court documents say that Rotella was a member of the crowd, pushing in a concerted fashion and calling out “heave ho” from the outside against the police line. Approximately four minutes later, while still pushing with other members of the mob, Rotella extended his left hand in the air, extended his left index finger, then his middle finger, then his ring finger as if to count “1, 2, 3” and then pushed hard against the rioters in front of him.

Rotella then made his way through the dense crowd closer to the police line. While in the crowd, Rotella was passed a large orange ladder, which he then grabbed and pushed overhead into the mouth of the tunnel. After the ladder was pushed back out of the tunnel by police, Rotella continued to push against other rioters near him to collectively push and breach the police line.

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 Western District of North Carolina and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of North Carolina.

This case is being investigated by the FBI's Charlotte and Washington Field Offices, which identified Rotella as BOLO (Be on the Lookout) #82 on its seeking information photos. 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.

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

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Updated August 30, 2023

Attachment

[Rotella Statement of Facts](#) [PDF, 3 MB]

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

Components

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) | [USAO - District of Columbia](#) | [USAO - North Carolina, Middle](#) | [USAO - North Carolina, Western](#)

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PRESS RELEASE

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February 4, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

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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...

February 3, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

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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



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