

**PRESS RELEASE**

Two Leaders of the Proud Boys Sentenced to Prison on Seditious Conspiracy and Other Charges Related to U.S. Capitol Breach

Thursday, August 31, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

WASHINGTON - Two former leaders of the Proud Boys organization were sentenced today for seditious conspiracy and other charges 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 necessary to certify the 2020 presidential election.

Joseph R. Biggs, 39, of Ormond Beach, Florida, was sentenced to 17 years in prison and 36 months of supervised release.

Zachary Rehl, 38, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was sentenced to 15 years in prison and 36 months of supervised release.

A jury convicted Biggs and Rehl and three other co-defendants of multiple felonies, including seditious conspiracy and conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding on May 4, 2023, for their actions before and during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

According to court documents and evidence presented during the trial, the Proud Boys organization played a significant and often violent role in Washington, D.C. rallies in November and December 2020. In the aftermath of that violent conduct, Biggs and Rehl served as members of a special chapter of the Proud Boys known as the “Ministry of Self Defense.”

Beginning after Dec. 19, 2020, Biggs and Rehl, all of whom were leaders or members of the Ministry of Self-Defense, conspired to prevent, hinder, and delay the certification of the Electoral College vote and to oppose by force the authority of the government of the United States.

In the days leading to January 6th, Biggs, Rehl, and co-defendants Henry “Enrique” Tarrío and Ethan Nordean hand-selected co-defendant Dominic Pezzola and others known as “rally boys” to participate in the attack on the Capitol that day. This group established a chain of command, chose a time and place for their attack, and intentionally recruited others who would follow their top-down leadership and who were prepared to engage in physical violence if necessary.

On January 6th, the group and the men they recruited and led participated in every consequential breach at the Capitol on January 6th. The group began their assault that day at 10:00 a.m. when Biggs, Rehl, and others marched an assembled group of nearly 200 individuals away from speeches at the Ellipse and directly toward the Capitol. They arrived at the First Street gate at 12:50 p.m., and Biggs led the crowd in chants of “Whose Capitol? Our Capitol!” and “Whose house? Our house!” Within minutes, Biggs, Rehl, and others led their recruits up the first street walkway, breaching multiple barricades and tearing down fencing. Biggs then declared, “we’ve gone through every barricade thus far.”

At about 1:30 p.m., when law enforcement appeared to have successfully controlled the crowd by pushing them back, the men again pushed forward with Biggs and other co-defendants leading the charge. Biggs and other co-defendants then gathered at the base of the concrete stairs that led to the doors and windows of the Capitol. The group again surged toward the Capitol and overwhelmed officers who had been battling the crowd for nearly an hour. Rehl sprayed an officer in the face. One co-defendant, Dominic Pezzola, smashed open a window, allowing the first rioters to enter the Capitol at 2:11 p.m., and Biggs entered close behind him with some of his men.

During the attack, Biggs posed with other Proud Boys on the west lawn of the Capitol for a celebratory video in which Biggs stated that “January 6 will be a day in infamy.” Rehl made social media posts calling January 6 a “historical day,” and told his mother that he was “so f**** proud” of the Proud Boys’ “raid of the capitol.”

Later, Biggs and Rehl made statements regarding their attack on the Capitol. On January 7th, Rehl told members of the Ministry of Self-Defense that he was “proud as f*** what we

accomplished. Likewise, Biggs recorded a podcast-style interview in which he called January 6 a “warning shot” to the government that showed them “how weak they truly are” after being “b****-slapped . . . on their own home turf.” Biggs explained that “January 7th was warning shot to the government –look, we started this country this way and we’ll f*****’ save it this way.”

During the hearing, U.S. District Judge Timothy J. Kelly applied the enhancement for a federal crime of terrorism to the defendant’s final sentence.

This case was 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.

This case was investigated by the FBI’s Washington Field Office. The charges in the investigation are the result of significant cooperation between agents and staff across numerous FBI Field Offices and law enforcement agencies.

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.

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Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

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January 31, 2025



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