



PRESS RELEASE

California Man Sentenced to Prison for Assaulting Law Enforcement During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Thursday, September 7, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant Assaulted Police with Bear Spray

WASHINGTON – A California man was sentenced in the District of Columbia today on two felony charges 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 2020 presidential election.

Sean Michael McHugh, 36, of Auburn, California, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge John D. Bates to 78 months in prison and 36 months of supervised release. Judge Bates also ordered McHugh to pay \$2,000 restitution and a \$5,000 fine. McHugh was found guilty of obstruction and assaulting, impeding, or interfering with law enforcement officers following a stipulated bench trial before Judge Bates in April 2023.

According to court documents and the stipulated evidence presented in court, prior to his arrival in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6, 2021, McHugh told others that he was going to Washington, D.C., to “fight” and “storm Congress.” He brought a canister of bear spray with him to Washington, D.C., and he carried it in a holster for ready access. The bear spray is 50 percent

stronger than the pepper spray used by police. Before the riot, McHugh urged others to “march on Congress directly after Trump’s speech.”

McHugh was part of the initial breach of the Capitol grounds at the Peace Circle. Once he arrived at the Capitol, McHugh actively participated in at least four attempts to breach perimeters established by officers during the riot. He was one of the initial rioters to breach a police line and enter the West Plaza. Afterward, McHugh wrestled with an officer for control of a barricade protecting access to the Capitol and assaulted a line of U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) officers on the West Plaza, hitting them with his bear spray, causing the officers to back away from the line, and preventing them from performing their official duties. Finally, McHugh helped other rioters to push a large metal sign into officers. In between these acts of aggression, McHugh used his megaphone to encourage other rioters to act against law enforcement.

After the riot, McHugh posted multiple messages on Facebook bragging about his actions during the riot and reveling in the violence against police, boasting, “...we stormed them and we took Congress”

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 Eastern District of California.

This case was investigated by the FBI’s Washington Field Office, as well as the Metropolitan Police Department, with significant assistance provided by the FBI’s Sacramento Field Office.

In the 32 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,146 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 398 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 September 7, 2023

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

Components

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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...

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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