



PRESS RELEASE

Arizona Man Sentenced to Prison on Felony Charges for Actions During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Friday, February 23, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

WASHINGTON – An Arizona man was sentenced on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, on two felony charges related to his conduct 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.

Jacob Zerkle, 51, of Bowie, Arizona, was sentenced to 24 months in prison and 36 months of supervised release by U.S. District Judge Reggie B. Walton. Zerkle pleaded guilty to civil disorder and assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers, both felonies, on Oct. 30, 2023.

According to court documents, Zerkle traveled with his brother from his home in Arizona in order to protest “election integrity” in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6, 2021. On the morning of January 6th, Zerkle traveled to the National Mall and joined a vocal group of approximately 75 to 100 individuals that included Proud Boys leaders Joe Biggs, Charles Donohoe, Ethan Nordean, and Zachary Rehl. While former President Trump’s “Stop the Steal” rally was still underway, Zerkle walked with the group east from the Ellipse area adjacent to the White House, past the Washington Monument, to the west front of the U.S. Capitol building.

The group circled the north side of the Capitol, proceeding to the large plaza on the east side before returning to the Peace Circle, though Zerkle split from the group at some point before this. Between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m., Zerkle entered the restricted area of the Capitol grounds via the Pennsylvania Walkway, crossed onto the grass lawn on the northwest portion of Capitol grounds, and joined other rioters. There, he and others watched as rioters began scaling the nearby Northwest Staircase toward the first floor of the Capitol building. During this period, Zerkle joined the crowd in chanting, “Hang ‘em high” toward the Capitol building.

Later, at approximately 2:00 p.m., Zerkle assaulted a group of Metropolitan Police Department officers who had arrived at the Northwest edge of the grounds as the unit made its way toward the Capitol building to assist and reinforce U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), who were outnumbered by the amassing crowd on the West Plaza of the Capitol.

Court documents say that between 1:59 and 2:04 p.m., as the officers attempted to navigate through the crowd to the West Plaza, Zerkle, as well as other individuals in the crowd, physically engaged with the officers and intentionally made physical contact with at least three officers, which included placing his hands on the officers and forcibly pushing. Zerkle also yelled at the officers that they were “traitors.” Because of Zerkle’s and other rioters’ conduct, the officers were delayed in responding to the Capitol Building as ordered.

The FBI arrested Zerkle on March 15, 2022, in Arizona.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia and the Department of Justice National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section prosecuted this case. The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Arizona provided valuable assistance.

The FBI’s Phoenix and Washington Field Offices investigated this case. The Metropolitan Police Department and the U.S. Capitol Police provided valuable assistance.

In the 37 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,313 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 469 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement, a felony. The investigation remains ongoing.

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

Updated February 23, 2024

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VIOLENT CRIME

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