



PRESS RELEASE

Tennessee Man Sentenced for Assaulting Law Enforcement During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant Wrested Barricades from Police; Hit Officers with Door-Sized Plywood

WASHINGTON – A Tennessee man was sentenced to prison today for assaulting law enforcement and other 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.

Joshua John Portlock, 42, of Smyrna, Tennessee, was sentenced to 20 months in prison, 24 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution by U.S. District Judge Carl J. Nichols. Portlock pleaded guilty to a felony charge of assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers on Aug. 31, 2023.

According to court documents, Portlock traveled from Tennessee to Washington, D.C., to attend the "Stop the Steal" rally at the Ellipse on Jan. 6, 2021. After the rally, Portlock walked from the Ellipse to the West Front of the U.S. Capitol, near the north scaffolding on the west

side of the building. There, police officers installed a row of barricades that demarcated the restricted area that the public was not allowed to enter.

At approximately 2:28 p.m., Portlock, along with other rioters, breached the defensive perimeter and pushed police officers back toward the Capitol building. After pushing the barricade open, Portlock violently grabbed and wrenched the barricade away from police, took it away from the officers, and carried it into the crowd of rioters. After rioters pushed the barricades and created gaps in the police line, officers fell back and established a second defensive perimeter closer to the Capitol. At approximately 2:31 p.m., Portlock joined with other rioters and assaulted these officers in an apparent effort to break the perimeter and enter the U.S. Capitol.

Court documents say that Portlock picked up a large piece of plywood and, with the help of another rioter, pushed the plywood into and against the line of officers. Portlock and other rioters then pushed the piece of plywood over the officers, and it landed on top of them. As the officers were occupied with the plywood thrown at them, other rioters attacked them from the side. After sustaining repeated assaults from Portlock and his fellow rioters, officers were forced to abandon the second defensive line and fell back further toward the Capitol building. Portlock then moved toward the Tunnel, where some of the most violent confrontations between rioters and officers occurred on January 6th.

By approximately 2:46 p.m., Portlock moved from the West Front area to the Tunnel, where he joined other rioters attempting to push through the police line and into the Capitol. Court documents say that Portlock was in the Tunnel for approximately 15-20 minutes. During this time, he assaulted and obstructed officers, including by participating in "heave-ho" pushes against police, which involved multiple rioters collectively leaning back and then pushing forward against officers while chanting "heave-ho" to coordinate their efforts. Additionally, on at least two occasions, Portlock passed stolen USCP riot shields to the front line of rioters, which assisted those rioters in their assaults on officers.

The FBI arrested Portlock on Nov. 3, 2021, in Tennessee.

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 Middle District of Tennessee provided valuable assistance.

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

In the 39 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,387 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 493 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 April 17, 2024

Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

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