

**PRESS RELEASE**

Four Men from California Sentenced to Prison for Conspiracy and Other Charges Related to Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Friday, April 19, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

WASHINGTON – Four men from California were sentenced to prison today after they were previously convicted of conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding and other charges related to their conduct during the January 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol. Their 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.

Erik Scott Warner, 48, of Menifee, California, was sentenced to 27 months in prison.

Felipe Antonio Martinez, 50, of Lake Elsinore, California, was sentenced to 21 months in prison.

Derek Kinnison, 42, of Lake Elsinore, California was sentenced to 33 months in prison.

Ronald Mele, 54, of Temecula, California, was sentenced to 33 months in prison.

In addition to the prison term, U.S. District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth ordered each defendant to pay \$2,000 restitution and complete 36 months of supervised release.

All defendants were convicted of conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding and obstruction of an official proceeding, both felony offenses, following a 17-day jury trial. Warner and Kinnison were also convicted of tampering with documents or records, a felony. In addition to the felony convictions, all four men were also found guilty of misdemeanor offenses of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds and disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds.

According to the evidence at trial, in the weeks and months prior to January 6th, the men, all of whom were members of a Three Percenter militia in Southern California, coordinated and conspired together to arrange travel from California to Washington, D.C., to collect weapons, and to obstruct Congress' certification of the Electoral College. Among other methods of communication, the men used a Telegram chat entitled "The California Patriots – DC Brigade" to coordinate logistics and to discuss their intentions for January 6.

On January 6, the group went to the Ellipse for the "Stop the Steal" rally and afterward headed toward the Capitol. As the four men approached the Capitol at approximately 2:00 p.m., Kinnison announced, "This is the storm of the Capitol," as they moved through the crowd. By approximately 2:10 p.m., Warner had joined rioters ascending the northwest stairs to the Upper West Terrace, at a location police had been defending moments earlier. As he ascended the stairs, carrying bear spray and a thick wooden flag pole like a baton, Warner called out for the rioters to "hold the line."

At the same time, Martinez, Kinnison, and Mele advanced against a police line on the northwest lawn. Mele called out for the crowd to "Push! Push! Push!" as the officers on the lawn were surrounded, assaulted, and forced to retreat. At approximately 2:13 p.m., Warner broke into the Capitol building through a smashed window. When Martinez, Kinnison, and Mele heard by phone that Warner had broken into the Capitol, Martinez called out, "We have to get up there!" All three men then moved together to ascend to the Upper West Terrace to join Warner. As they ascended the northwest stairs, Mele shot a "selfie" style video, in which he proclaimed, "Storm the Capitol!" The group stormed the Capitol wearing plate carriers and other tactical gear and carrying knives and cans of bear spray.

In the days and weeks following the events of January 6, Warner and Kinnison deleted the DC Brigade Telegram chat from their cell phones to conceal their involvement on January 6 from investigators.

The FBI arrested the men on June 10, 2021.

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 Central District of California.

The case is being investigated by the FBI's Los Angeles and Washington Field Offices. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department.

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 nearly 500 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.

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