



PRESS RELEASE

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

Thursday, May 2, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant who “Stands for Violence” Assaulted Police with Pepper Spray

WASHINGTON – A Texas man was sentenced to prison today after he pleaded guilty to two felonies, including assaulting law enforcement officers during the Jan. 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol. 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.

Ryan Taylor Nichols, 32, of Longview, Texas, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth to 63 months in prison and 36 months of supervised release. Judge Lamberth also ordered Nichols to pay a fine of \$200,000, restitution in the amount of \$2,000, and a special assessment of \$200. Nichols pleaded guilty to obstruction of an official proceeding and assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers on Nov. 7, 2024, both felony offenses.

According to court documents, Nichols traveled from his home in Texas to Washington, D.C., with his friend and co-defendant, Alex Kirk Harkrider, based on their belief that the 2020 presidential election was fraudulent. Nichols and Harkrider exchanged text messages in the preceding days, planning and organizing the trip to D.C. In one message, Nichols sent Harkrider

a photograph of body armor and pricing, stating that the body armor would protect against various bullets. In another series of messages to Harkrider, Nichols stated, “Dad and I are building a gun container in the truck today. Just know I have intel that Washington will be a warzone. Big possibility that actual battle goes down.”

Court documents say that Nichols and Harkrider each brought two firearms with them on their trip, transporting them in a box that Nichols and another individual specifically constructed in the back of Nichols’ truck for the trip. On the night of Jan. 5, 2021, Nichols and Harkrider attended a rally on the streets of Washington, D.C. At one point, Nichols shouted, “Cops don’t know what’s going on. Too many of us, not enough of them.” Later, Nichols shouted, “Those people in the f — Capitol building are our enemy.”

On the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, Nichols and Harkrider attended a rally in support of then-President Trump near the Ellipse and later marched toward the U.S. Capitol building. Nichols and Harkrider both wore body armor. Nichols was armed with a crowbar, and Harkrider was armed with a tactical tomahawk axe. The two then arrived at the Capitol grounds and joined a large crowd of rioters gathered in front of an arched entrance to the Lower West Terrace doors, also known as the Tunnel. This was the site of some of the most violent assaults on law enforcement officers on January 6th. Rioters at the Tunnel battled officers for hours as they attempted to storm the Capitol building.

At approximately 3:56 p.m., Nichols waved the crowd toward the Tunnel as both he and Harkrider pushed the crowd against the officers in synchronized movements, rocking back and forth as the crowd chanted, “Heave! Ho!” At approximately 4:01 p.m., Nichols again called for the crowd to push forward, extended his palm, and beckoned with his fingers for a large red canister of O.C. or pepper spray that was being passed through the crowd. Nichols took hold of the canister and delivered two streams of spray into the Tunnel, hitting multiple law enforcement officers.

At about 4:13 p.m., Nichols observed another rioter trying to break a window to the Capitol with a stolen canister of police pepper spray. Nichols and Harkrider then entered the Capitol through a broken window, emerged from a room inside the building, and stood on a window ledge. Nichols then, holding his crowbar in one hand and a bullhorn in the other, shouted to other rioters, “Get in the building, this is your country, get in the building, we will not be told ‘No,’” “This is the second revolution,” “This is not a peaceful protest,” and “If you have a weapon, you need to get your weapon!” Nichols and Harkrider then exited the Capitol building at about 4:35 p.m.

Later that day, back at his hotel room, Nichols posted a video to Facebook, in which he stated, in part, “So, yes, I’m calling for violence! And I will be violent! Because I’ve been peaceful and my voice hasn’t been heard, I’ve been peaceful and my vote doesn’t count. I’ve been peaceful and the Court’s won’t hear me. So you’re f — right, I’m going to be violent now! And I’m

here in Washington, D.C. and it just got started. So if you want to know where Ryan Nichols stands, Ryan Nichols stands for violence.”

The FBI arrested Nichols on Jan. 18, 2021, in Texas.

Harkrider was convicted of multiple felony and misdemeanor offenses for his role in the events of January 6th and is awaiting sentencing.

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 Texas.

This case was investigated by the FBI’s Dallas and Washington Field Offices. Valuable assistance was provided by the Metropolitan Police Department and the U.S. Capitol Police.

In the 39 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,385 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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VIOLENT CRIME

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February 4, 2025



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