

**PRESS RELEASE**

Two Men from Kentucky and Florida Convicted of Felony and Misdemeanor Charges for Actions During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

WASHINGTON - Two men from Kentucky and Florida were convicted today of felony and misdemeanor charges related to their conduct during the Jan. 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol. Their actions and those 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.

Joseph Irwin, 43, of Cecilia, Kentucky, and John Joseph Richter, 39, of Port Charlotte, Florida, were found guilty in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia of multiple felony and misdemeanor offenses following a bench trial before U.S. District Court Judge Randolph D. Moss.

Irwin was convicted of three felonies, including obstruction of an official proceeding, entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds with a deadly or dangerous weapon, and disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds with a deadly or dangerous weapon. In addition to the felonies, Irwin was convicted of misdemeanor offenses of entering and remaining on the floor of Congress, disorderly conduct in a Capitol building, and parading, demonstrating, or picketing in a Capitol building.

Richter was convicted of the felony offense of obstruction of an official proceeding. In addition to the felonies, Richter was convicted of misdemeanor offenses of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds, entering and remaining on the floor of Congress, disorderly conduct in a Capitol building, and parading, demonstrating, or picketing in a Capitol building.

Judge Moss will sentence the men on Aug. 9, 2024.

According to court documents, in the weeks and days leading to Jan. 6, 2021, the two planned to travel to Washington, D.C., on January 6th with the intent to obstruct the certification of the Electoral College vote. In one text message, Richter sent Irwin a photo discussing the Electoral College certification process on January 6 and former Vice President Mike Pence's role in the certification.

As the two men discussed their travel plans to Washington, D.C., they discussed the potential for violence and their roles. In one message, Irwin asked Richter, "Are we go[ing] open militia or innocent/ready bystander." Richter responded, "Well I think we are gonna be in a huge crowd mostly. So we will have to be opportunists most likely. Gnome sayin? I like the ready bystander wildcard approach myself."

The two also discussed bringing supplies to Washington, D.C., such as flagpoles, goggles, battery banks, and full-face gas masks. In one message, Richter circulated a photo of a metal pointed flagpole he intended to bring to Washington, D.C. Richter explained that he would bring the all-black American flag because the "All black flag means no quarter will be given. It's time to do patriot s —." Irwin also discussed bringing a wooden pole that he inscribed with a black American flag; he said that his "wooden stick is heavy as f —."

On Jan. 6, 2021, the two men attended the "Stop the Steal" rally on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and afterward marched to the U.S. Capitol building, carrying their previously discussed poles in hand. Richter carried a black American flag with a pointed metal tip, and Irwin carried a heavy wooden pole.

After reaching the Capitol grounds, Irwin and Richter ascended to the Upper West Terrace and approached a group of police officers that had just arrived on Capitol grounds. Irwin approached the police officers while wielding his wooden pole at them. Irwin repeatedly yelled at the officers to "Go Home!!" and then aggressively smashed his pole on the ground in a threatening manner at the police officers, ultimately breaking his wooden pole into two pieces.

Next, Irwin and Richter made their way to the Senate Wing Door. Richter disassembled his pole into two pieces and handed one piece of the pole — with a metal tip — to Irwin. From there, the two continued wielding their poles as they watched rioters break into the building and scream, "LET US IN! LET US IN! LET US IN!" Richter and Irwin watched as other rioters smashed the windows and broke into the Capitol through the Parliamentarian's Door. At approximately 2:43

p.m. – just minutes after the Parliamentarian's door had been violently breached – defendant Richter and Irwin entered the Capitol building, banging their poles on the ground.

The two men joined a mob of rioters that progressed through the Capitol and eventually made their way to the Senate Floor, where the former Vice President and members of Congress had not long before evacuated under an emergency order. As the rioters flooded onto the Senate Floor and rustled through the Vice President's desk, Irwin banged his flagpole on the ground and yelled at the top of his lungs, "THIS IS OURS RIGHT HERE! THIS IS OUR HOUSE! THIS IS WHAT THE COURT DO WHEN THE COURT TAKE IT! DON'T GIVE IT BACK TO THEM NOW!" While still on the Senate Floor, after cheering with other rioters in celebration of "taking" the chamber, the two men sat at Senators' desks and had their photograph taken by a fellow rioter while brandishing their poles.

The men left the Senate Chamber and the Capitol building only after Metropolitan Police Department Officers eventually directed them out. After their participation in the Capitol riot, the two continued to celebrate their success in halting the Congressional proceeding. Court documents say that Irwin framed the sharp wooden pole in a shadow box and referred to it as a "Relic."

The FBI arrested Joseph Irwin on Aug. 17, 2021, in Cecilia, Kentucky, and John Richter on March 2, 2023, in Port Charlotte, Florida.

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 Western District of Kentucky and the Middle District of Florida provided valuable assistance.

The FBI's Louisville, Tampa, and Washington Fields Offices investigated this case. The United States Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department provided valuable assistance.

In the 40 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,424 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 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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Topic

VIOLENT CRIME

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