



PRESS RELEASE

Pennsylvania Man Pleads Guilty to Assaulting Law Enforcement with a Dangerous Weapon During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Thursday, September 5, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

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WASHINGTON – A Pennsylvania man pleaded guilty today to assaulting law enforcement with a dangerous weapon 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.

Joshua Lee Atwood, 31, of Burgettstown, Pennsylvania, pleaded guilty to a felony charge of assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers using a dangerous weapon before U.S. District Judge Randolph D. Moss. Judge Moss will sentence Atwood on Dec. 20, 2024.

According to court documents, Atwood traveled from his home in Burgettstown to Washington, D.C., to attend the Jan. 6, 2021, “Stop the Steal” rally on the National Mall. After the rally, Atwood made his way toward the U.S. Capitol building and, by approximately 4:22 p.m., arrived at the Lower West Terrace Tunnel, the site of some of the most violent attacks against law enforcement on January 6th. There, Atwood observed law enforcement officers actively attempting to prevent members of the crowd from entering the building.

At approximately 4:35 p.m., Atwood climbed into the Capitol building through a broken window next to the Tunnel and entered into a Senate room near the Lower West Terrace exterior doors. Atwood exited the building and, by approximately 4:51 p.m., joined the mob gathered around the Tunnel entrance, which law enforcement officers were actively defending. Atwood started throwing several objects at officers in the Tunnel, including a plastic bottle and a metal pole, both of which struck police officers.

Atwood then picked up a wooden pole and used it to forcibly strike at the riot shields of officers in the police line. Atwood then used the pole to strike an officer's helmet before throwing the pole at the police line. Next, at approximately 4:56 p.m., Atwood drew a canister of pepper spray and continuously sprayed the officers guarding the Tunnel entrance until the canister was depleted. Atwood then threw the canister at police. Atwood then threw additional items at the police, including a baseball bat and a plastic bottle.

Atwood then used a police riot shield to strike at officers guarding the Tunnel, including by thrusting the bottom edge of the shield into the officer's shields. When striking police with the riot shield, Atwood yelled, "F — off, you guys are all pieces of s —", and "Everyone of you should be ashamed of yourself. Everyone of you m — f — are pieces of s —. Betraying your country like this, why would you betray your country. Do you love your country, or do you want civil...communist f —."

Shortly after, Atwood picked up a metal scaffolding pipe and threw it at police. The pipe bounced off a riot shield and struck another officer in the head and neck. Moments later, Atwood picked up a heavy black speaker and threw it toward the group of officers. The FBI arrested Atwood on April 17, 2024, in Pennsylvania.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and the Department of Justice National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting this case. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania provided valuable assistance.

This case was investigated by the FBI's Pittsburgh and Washington Field Offices. Atwood was listed as BOLO (Be on the Lookout) #229 in the FBI's seeking information images. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police Department.

In the 43 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,488 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including nearly 550 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.

ContactUSADC.Media@usdoj.gov*Updated September 5, 2024***Topic****VIOLENT CRIME****Components**[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) | [USAO - District of Columbia](#) | [USAO - Pennsylvania, Western](#)

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