



PRESS RELEASE

Four Men Sentenced for Actions During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Friday, September 20, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

Group Participated in the First Breach of the Restricted Capitol Grounds

WASHINGTON - Four men from Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia were sentenced to various terms after they were convicted of multiple felony and misdemeanor charges related to their conduct during the Jan. 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.

Sentenced on Sept. 19, 2024, by U.S. District Judge Jia M. Cobb are Stephen Chase Randolph, 34, of Harrodsburg Kentucky; James Tate Grant, 31, of Cary, North Carolina; Jason Benjamin Blythe, 28, of Fort Worth, Texas; and Paul Russell Johnson, 38, of Lanexa, Virginia.

Randolph was sentenced to 8 years in prison, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution.

Grant was sentenced to 36 months in prison, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution.

Blythe was sentenced to 30 months in prison, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution.

Johnson was sentenced to five years of probation, conditions of which include, intermittent confinement on the weekends for the first year, followed by two years of home and ordered to pay a \$25,000 fine and \$2,000 in restitution.

A fifth defendant, Ryan Samsel, 40, of Bristol, Pennsylvania, will be sentenced on February 4, 2025

All five defendants were convicted of civil disorder. Ryan Samsel and Steven Chase Randolph were found guilty of assaulting Officer C.E. with a deadly or dangerous weapon and inflicting bodily injury (a metal crowd control barrier). James Tate Grant, Paul Russell Johnson, and Benjamin Blythe were found guilty of assaulting Officer D.C. with a deadly or dangerous weapon (a metal crowd control barrier). Randolph was convicted of an additional felony charge of assaulting, resisting, or impeding Officer D.C. Samsel was convicted of additional felony charges of civil disorder, assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers; and assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers using a dangerous weapon (a wooden plank).

According to evidence presented during the trial, the group participated in the first breach of the restricted Capitol grounds on Jan. 6, 2021, and led the initial attack on United States Capitol Police (USCP) officers. Their attack paved the way for thousands of rioters to storm the Capitol grounds.

At approximately 12:40 p.m., the five men joined with other rioters at the Peace Circle, across from the Capitol grounds. Here, the sidewalk at the edge of the Capitol grounds across the street from the Peace Circle was blocked by linked bike-rack barricades. A second set of bike rack barricades, with signs that read “Area Closed By Order of the United States Capitol Police Board” and reinforced with snow fencing and zip ties, barred the way up the Pennsylvania Walkway, a footpath that runs from the Capitol to the sidewalk across the street from the Peace Circle.

At about 12:50 p.m., Samsel approached the first barricade, opened a section, entered the restricted grounds, and approached the Capitol via the Pennsylvania Walkway. This marked the first breach of the restricted perimeter. Grant followed closely behind Samsel and waived the crowd forward onto the restricted grounds. Defendants Johnson, Blythe, Randolph, and others in the crowd followed Grant and Samsel past the first barricade and walked toward the officers standing behind the second barricade. At around that same time, Johnson shouted a series of exclamations, including “Let’s go!” “We pay your bills!” and “You back the f — off!” over his megaphone.

Samsel and Grant then began to forcibly push and pull on the second barricade while officers held it in place. Samsel stopped pushing long enough to remove his denim jacket, hand it to someone off-camera, and turn his red “Make America Great Again” hat around backward. Johnson handed off his megaphone and backpack to someone behind him in the crowd.

Randolph began to forcibly push and pull on the fence directly across from USCP officers. Johnson, Grant and Samsel joined Randolph in lifting the linked metal bike rack barricade off the ground. Blythe moved forward and grabbed the barricade with the other four defendants, and the five drove the metal bike rack barricade into a line of USCP officers.

As they drove the metal bike rack barricade at the police line, one officer was struck in the face. The force of the strike threw the officer backward and caused the officer to slam their head twice: first against a metal handrail, then against the stairs. The officer lost consciousness and suffered a concussion. Another officer was driven several feet backward by the metal bike rack barricade until the back of their body ran into the stairwell and handrail behind them.

After the five defendants pushed the metal bike rack barricade into the USCP officers, Randolph jumped over the barricade and grabbed an officer. By this point, the barricades were down, and the officers outmanned. The defendants and the rest of the rioters quickly overwhelmed the police line, and the USCP officers retreated backward toward the Capitol building. The rioters, including the five defendants, then walked to the Capitol building.

Each of the five men continued to fuel the riot on January 6th. Samsel assaulted other officers, Johnson incited the crowd over a megaphone, and Grant entered the Capitol building, while Blythe and Randolph climbed to the Upper West Terrace. The five remained at the Capitol for hours. Samsel's additional assaultive and destructive conduct included grabbing the riot shield of a law enforcement officer while rioters were attempting to overtake police, tearing through the tarp in the scaffolding on the Capitol grounds, waving a flag in the officers' faces, and taking a 2x4 plank of wood from the scaffolding and throwing it at a group of Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers as they struggled to maintain a police line.

Defendant Grant climbed through one of the broken windows next to the Senate Wing door and into the Capitol building at approximately 2:50 p.m. He then stormed the halls with other rioters and was recorded with others inside Senator Merkley's office. Blythe stayed on the Capitol grounds for hours. He climbed the media tower at the steps of the Capitol and joined others in resisting officers who were attempting to clear rioters.

Johnson moved with rioters to the West Plaza. Using his megaphone, Johnson loudly and continuously shouted commands to the crowd, alerted them to what he perceived to be happening inside the building, and encouraged them to take action to stop the Congressional proceedings from taking place. Randolph also remained on Capitol grounds for hours, eventually climbing onto the Upper West Terrace, where he observed law enforcement engaged in a struggle with rioters inside and outside the inaugural archway, also known as the Tunnel.

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 Pennsylvania,

Eastern District of North Carolina, Eastern District of Virginia, Eastern District of Kentucky, and the Northern District of Texas.

This case was investigated by the FBI field offices in Philadelphia, Charlotte, Norfolk, Louisville, Dallas, and Washington, D.C. Valuable assistance was provided by the United States Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department. Samsel was identified as BOLO #51, Grant #50, Johnson #49, Randolph #168, and Blythe #52 on the FBI's seeking information photos.

In the 44 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,504 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 560 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 7, 2025

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February 4, 2025



District of Columbia

Main Office:

601 D Street, NW

Washington, DC

Email USAO-DC



Telephone: (202) 252-7566