



PRESS RELEASE

Florida Man Found Guilty of Felony Civil Disorder During Jan. 6 Capitol Breach

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

WASHINGTON — A Florida man was found guilty of obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder stemming from his conduct 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.

James Brett IV, 50, of Clearwater, Florida, was found guilty of a felony offense of obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder following a bench trial before U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon. In addition to the felony conviction, Brett previously pleaded guilty to three misdemeanor offenses of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, and disorderly conduct in the Capitol grounds or buildings.

Judge Leon will sentence Brett on March 27, 2025.

According to court documents and evidence presented during the trial, on the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, Brett gathered with a large group near the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., at about 10:00 a.m. and marched toward the U.S. Capitol building, bypassing the planned

rally at the Ellipse. Brett was positioned at the front among the crowd with a few group members from the Tampa area.

By approximately 11:20 a.m., the group arrived at the Capitol's west front, passing "AREA CLOSED" signs and barriers. Two of the group leaders used a megaphone to deliver provocative statements. As the group continued to the east side of the Capitol, several members near Brett taunted U.S. Capitol police officers. The group returned to the west side of the Capitol around 12:50 p.m., converging at Peace Circle.

At approximately 12:53 p.m., the first breach of the restricted area occurred as rioters toppled barricades at Peace Circle, enabling the mob, including Brett, to advance. Brett and his co-defendants surged forward, joining others in overwhelming police lines and entering the restricted grounds. By approximately 12:58 p.m., Brett reached a barricade on the Lower West Plaza, where rioters pushed past law enforcement. Brett joined the toppling of a permanent barricade before jumping over and helping others cross.

Brett then advanced with the mob to the West Plaza, where violent clashes ensued between rioters and police for the next 90 minutes. The scene involved physical confrontations, pepper spray, tear gas, and improvised weapons. Despite the escalating chaos, Brett stayed close to his co-defendants, witnessing direct assaults on police. Around 1:05 p.m., Brett was in proximity as rioters attacked officers and faced tear gas and chemical sprays deployed by police.

By 2:28 p.m., the mob overwhelmed police lines, forcing officers to retreat into a narrow Tunnel on the Lower West Terrace leading to the Capitol building. Rioters, including Brett at 3:15 p.m., followed police into the Tunnel, where some of the day's most violent assaults occurred. Officers inside the Tunnel acted as the last line of defense against entry into the Capitol. At 3:18 p.m., law enforcement mounted an effort to clear the Tunnel, forcing Brett and others out. Brett then lingered near the Tunnel's entrance until an officer pushed him away. As he descended the stairs, Brett passed close to two police officers who had been violently dragged into the crowd by rioters. Shortly after that, Brett left the area.

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 Middle District of Florida provided valuable assistance.

The FBI's Tampa and Washington Field Offices investigated this case. The U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department provided valuable assistance.

In the 46 months since Jan. 6, 2021, more than 1,561 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including more than 590 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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