

Desperado in the White House: Coup Fails, Trump Faces Impeachment

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In his last desperate days, Trump, speaking at a “Save America” rally on January 6, incited his followers to an insurrection in the Capitol in which five people died. At that rally that morning, Trump urged his twenty thousand followers to march to the capitol, while his lawyer Rudi Giuliani called for “trial by combat.” Some entered the capitol shouting, “Hang Pence,” for his failure to declare Trump the winner of the election. We have to call this *a failed coup* because the intent was to overturn the election of Joseph Biden by forcing vice-president Mike Pence and the Congress to declare Trump the president. It was an attempt to overthrow the incoming elected government by force.

The violence was no surprise. For four years Trump built a massive following of white nationalists. For weeks before white nationalists and fascists had been using social media to organize their forces to go to Washington and to bring firearms. They brought not only guns but also Molotov cocktails and explosive devices, communication systems and maps of the capitol offices. Some capitol police cooperated with the insurrectionists, opening barriers and directing them to congressional offices. For obscure reasons, the National Guard was slow to respond and the Guard was ordered to act only within narrow limits.

As a coup, the event was an utter failure, most importantly because of the lack of support from the military, the key to most coups. Yet it *was a coup attempt*, however pathetic, since, as the rioters said, they had come to overturn the election, to put Trump in power, and as some said carry out “a revolution.” While there have been hundreds protests in Washington by all sorts of groups, and many rightwing riots over the years against workers, Blacks, Latinos, and leftists, there has never been an insurrection such as this, nor any attempt to overthrow the U.S. government since the Civil War of 1861-65 when the slave states rose in rebellion.

For several hours Trump said not a word about the insurrection taking place, but finally under

pressure from his closest aids, he told his followers, "I know you're hurting. We've had an election that was stolen from us. It was a landslide election and everyone knows it." But, he said, "You have to go home now." Speaking directly to the rioters he said, "We love you. You are very special."

After the invaders had been driven out of the capitol, Congress reconvened with Vice-President Pence presiding, and confirmed the election of Biden as president. Yet even then, some 147 Representatives and eight Senators, Trump loyalists, voted against confirming the Electoral College vote.

Trump's "incitement to insurrection" has led the Democrats with the support of some Republicans to call for his immediate removal from office either by the Constitution's Article 25 or by impeachment. Article 25 allows the vice-president and half the cabinet to remove a president if the president is "unable to discharge the powers and duties" of their office. But Pence has so far not taken action and the cabinet is unlikely to support such a move. At the same time, the House, controlled by the Democrats, has now written an impeachment resolution indicting Trump for inciting insurrection. Though the Republican Senate is unlikely to meet again while Trump is in office and probably would not to have the two-thirds votes needed to convict, impeachment may be taken up after Trump leaves office.

Some fear that Trump might in the meantime, take the country to war or launch nuclear weapons. There is also a fear that he will use his presidential powers to pardon his associates, perhaps to pardon the insurrectionists, to pardon his family and more of his friends, and maybe even to pardon himself. So, it seems that until January 20, we will have to live in fear of the desperado in the White House.

Twitter, after four years of Trump spreading lies, has finally permanently closed his account, which is followed by tens of millions. Facebook and Instagram have also shut him down. Still Trump remains an enormous danger. Some 147 Representatives and eight Senators opposed Biden's confirmation. The Republican National Committee met during the insurrection and remains 100% pro-Trump. There are 74 million people who voted for Trump and most of those still support him. According to polls between 20 and 40 percent of all Republicans support the insurrection. Among Trump's yahoos, the fascists are organizing. The Trump forces are planning on returning to Washington for the inauguration. There will be no coup attempt this time, but expect violence. Our next problem will be Biden and the Democrats' neoliberalism, but Trump is still the issue for the moment.