

WHAT HAPPENS IN DC STAYS IN VEGAS

I'd like to look at the (currently separately charged) cases of Mitchell Vukich and Nicholas Perretta, friends from Pittsburgh who went to insurrection together. Both were arrested on June 23 for misdemeanor trespassing and theft.

The FBI arrest affidavits are coy about how the investigation started. Vukich's states that the FBI got "approximately 7 online tips" based on his social media.



It describes that Pittsburgh-based FBI Agents interviewed one of those tipsters, but the affidavit doesn't provide the date.

That means it's impossible to know from the affidavit whether the FBI started chasing down the tips before, as both affidavits explain, the FBI reviewed surveillance footage and honed in on the two friends.

Following the events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, FBI employees have conducted a review of surveillance camera footage obtained from security cameras located inside the U.S. Capitol Building. In the course of this review, an individual matching the description of and known images of PERRETTA can be seen walking throughout multiple locations inside the Capitol with another individual. 1 The following does not represent an exhaustive analysis of all available surveillance footage, but rather a summary of PERRETTA's movement through the U.S. Capitol building.

The Perretta affidavit, which was obtained second, mention the Vukich tips when explaining (under the heading, "Co-conspirator Statements") how the FBI came to interview Vukich while he was flying *through* Las Vegas' McCarran Airport in April.

On April 26, 2021, after receiving multiple tips implicating VUKICH as a possible participant in the civil unrest at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, Special Agents of the Las Vegas Division of the FBI conducted an interview of VUKICH while he was traveling through the Las Vegas Airport. Among other things, during the interview, VUKICH was shown multiple still photographs taken from Capitol Security Cameras during the events of January 6, 2021. VUKICH admitted that he was the individual depicted in those images in the photos wearing goggles on his head and a distinctive T-shirt with white writing. (VUKICH circled in yellow below). Moreover, VUKICH affirmatively identified the second individual wearing the black clothes and baseball cap as NICHOLAS J. PERRETTA. (PERRETTA circled in red below).

This detail was the first that stuck out to me. We know from the Electronic Communication opening a full investigation on Thomas Webster that the FBI had recommended him for watchlisting. Of course, Webster was suspected of assaulting a cop by that point. All the FBI claimed to have on Vukich in April (partly because they're being reticent about dates) were those screencaps from Twitter showing him claiming to be "one of the first 15 people in the Capitol." But they likely had Vukich on a watchlist to know to find him transiting the airport.

Importantly, the language justifying Webster's watchlisting recommendation mentions obstruction (though not assault):

THOMAS WEBSTER participated in the illegal entry into the United States Capitol Grounds, with the intent of interrupting the congressional proceeding.

It also seems to have been written for him specifically, as it notes that he trespassed on the grounds, but makes no claim that he entered the building, which he did not.

But Vukich is charged with just misdemeanors. So either the FBI is watchlisting January 6 rioters for trespassing, or the FBI thinks or thought there was more going on here. It's quite common for DOJ to charge trespass on the initial arrest affidavits and add charges with an indictment; such an approach would be particularly useful if they were trying to hide details of their investigation because the probable cause would have been presented secretly to the grand jury rather than published to a docket.

The other thing that stuck out for me is how casually the affidavits reveal that the friends also stole some papers. That detail is included in the Vukich version of the Las Vegas interview.

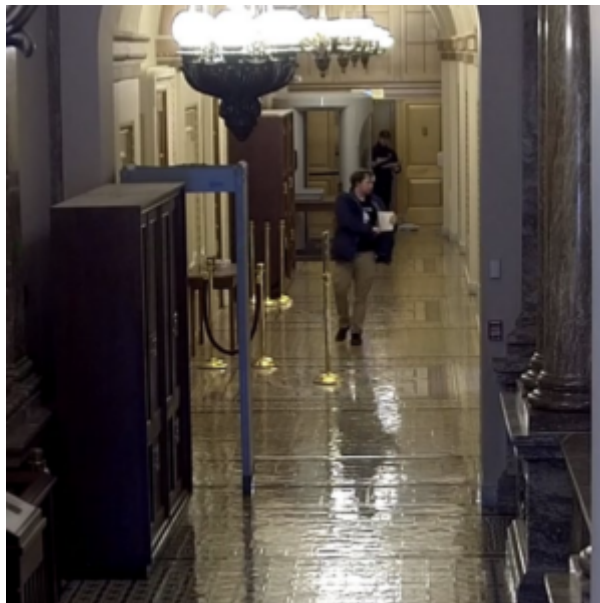
He admitted to being present in the U.S. Capitol during the events of January 6, 2021, and further admitted to taking paperwork, which he described as a congressional session agenda, and removing it from the Capitol premises.

Perretta also confirmed having taken documents – which he claims to have thrown away – in an interview conducted in Pittsburgh on June 8.

PERRETTA further explained to FBI agents that he had traveled to Washington, D.C., on January 6, 2021, with his friend, VUKICH. After attending a speech by President Trump on the National Mall, PERRETTA began to walk towards the U.S. Capitol and eventually entered the

Capitol building and grounds. In the process, PERRETTA described seeing individuals bypass barriers and police officers, witnessed flashbangs and tear gas, was tear-gassed himself, and saw someone in the crowd push an officer down before walking up the steps of the U.S. Capitol. PERRETTA further admitted that he and VUKICH took papers from the interior of the Capitol, which he described as three-month-old congressional papers, that they later threw away outside of the Capitol. Finally, PERRETTA claimed that he believed that the U.S. Capitol was open to the general public.

The theft of these papers shows up most notably in the different captions the two affidavits provide for this image, one of the ones that, by context, the FBI suggests may have been the basis for the interest in the friends.



The caption in the Vukich affidavit says this shows him—closer to the camera—securing the documents he allegedly stole.

Gallery West Approximately 2:25pm
Individual matching the description of VUKICH securing paperwork that he appears to have picked up from inside

the U.S. Capitol.

The caption in the Perretta affidavit describes that he is looking at papers.

Gallery West Approximately 2:25pm
Individual matching the description of
PERRETTA (rearground) seen looking at
paperwork that he appears to have picked
up from inside the U.S. Capitol.

According to the Google GeoFence collection on Vukich he (presumably they) were in the Capitol for around 15 minutes, from 2:11pm until 2:36pm.

Again, all these guys are charged with are misdemeanor trespassing and theft. But it was an interesting approach to finding two guys who picked up and pocketed some outdated paperwork.