

# **DOWN A MOUSE HOLE WITH BILL CLINTON'S CAT, SOCKS**

Neither Rudy Giuliani nor Bernie Kerik can remember, they claim, about whether the "SB" helping Boris Epshteyn with media consulting on the effort to steal the election in 2020 is Steve Bannon, to say nothing of whether Tom Fitton had a role.

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# **REPUBLICANS DEMANDED INDEPENDENCE FOR JOHN DURHAM AND GOT ROBERT HUR AND JACK SMITH IN THE BARGAIN**

Jack Smith has been living by the rules Republicans demanded, and got, for John Durham.

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# **TRUMP'S "BEAUTIFUL MIND PAPER BOXES:" JACK SMITH'S POINTS OF LEVERAGE**

As hard as it would be for the Intelligence Community to declassify 31 highly classified documents for trial, it might do as much damage

to Trump's psyche to have the contents of "his" "beautiful mind paper boxes" shared for the entire world to see. And that may give Jack Smith leverage over Trump in any plea negotiations.

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## **JAMES BOASBERG LIKENS TRUMP'S DEMANDS ON PENCE TO A BRIBE**

James Boasberg's logic for rejecting most of Mike Pence's Speech and Debate claims to avoid testifying in the January 6 grand jury suggests he believes Trump met one of the elements of the offense for obstructing the vote certification.

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## **JACK SMITH KNOWS HIS JUSTICE ROBERT JACKSON**

As a former prosecutor at The Hague, Jack Smith learned from Justice Robert Jackson at Nuremberg how to prosecute the crimes of national leaders, and the indictment of Trump reflects those lessons well.

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# **ALL GOP HORSERACE ANALYSIS IS USELESS WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE INDICTMENTS**

Any horserace analysis of the GOP primary that fails to at least consider how potential indictments might affect the primary is utterly useless.

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## **OATHS BROKEN, OATH KEEPERS BOWED: SENTENCES FOR 2 MORE IN MARQUEE JAN. 6 CONSPIRACY CASE**

Raw emotions positively dominated a federal courthouse in Washington, D.C. this week as the Justice Department secured significant sentences for two more Oath Keepers involved in a larger conspiracy to forcibly stop America's transfer of power on Jan. 6, 2021.

On the heels of an 18-year-sentence delivered to a defiant Elmer Stewart Rhodes, the leader of the far-right group, and a 12-year-sentence handed down to Kelly Meggs, Rhodes' deputy on the 6th, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta sentenced Oath Keeper Jessica Watkins, once the founder of the Ohio Regular Militia, to 8.5 years and Kenneth Harrelson, a ground team leader on the 6th, to four years. Both were acquitted of the sedition charge in this case but they were found guilty of multiple felonies

including serious obstruction charges. Sedition itself is rarely prosecuted in the United States and rarer still are these prosecutions successful since the bar to prove this sort of conspiracy is set so high.

This week marked a victory for the Justice Department, the rule of law, and the victims of Jan. 6 even if Donald Trump, the man who started it all, has yet to bear any real legal responsibility for his role in inciting an attack on the U.S. Capitol to stay in power.

That day may come. But in the meantime, the willing pawns in Trump's betrayal of the U.S. Constitution and common decency alike will now begin to serve their time.

Underlining the severity of events, prosecutors initially sought an 18-year sentence for Watkins noting the jury's conclusion that her true objective on Jan. 6 was to storm the Capitol, use her body—and the bodies of her recruits—to violently obstruct the certification of the 2020 election, and intimidate Congress and impede police.

Judge Mehta told a highly emotional Watkins in court Friday that though she was acquitted of the most serious charge, at the time of Jan. 6 she was nevertheless a self-professed Oath Keeper who conspired to mar and disrupt democratic proceedings and lead recruits who, he believed, wouldn't have been there but for her leadership. That would include, Mehta noted, Oath Keepers Bennie and Sandra Parker. She also led Donovan Crowl and Graydon Young into the fray.

Watkins was on the Nov. 9, 2020, GoTo Meeting with Stewart Rhodes and other Oath Keepers, where, Judge Mehta described, the origins of a violent conspiracy began to emerge. Before sentencing, the judge told her she "knew exactly what Rhodes had said, [and] was listening carefully on the call."

In that meeting, Rhodes said he had abandoned all hope of a peaceful way to keep Trump in

office or stave off a civil war. There was “nothing left but to fight,” and “we’re not getting out of this without a fight,” he said in November 2020.

He was primed for violence and ready to issue orders. Watkins was ready to take them.

She would ask Rhodes then about providing weapons for Oath Keeper events, Mehta noted, pointing to a discussion about transporting altered, weaponized pool cues. She and Oath Keeper Donovan Cowl called them “nightsticks.”

The foreseeable violence of Jan. 6 was evident in her constant willingness to prepare for it in the days and weeks leading up to the certification, Mehta said. And on that day, Watkins used an “aggressive, assaultive” posture and was “purposeful” as she coursed through the Capitol. Communications between her and others like Oath Keeper Donovan Cowl showed she wasn’t in D.C. merely to provide a security detail for Trump VIPs or to protect Trump supporters attending speeches like she and her defendants argued at trial.

She understood why Oath Keepers had set up the arsenal of weapons they dubbed a “quick reaction force” or a “QRF” at a hotel in northern Virginia, Mehta said. She brought an AR-15 from her home base of Ohio to Winchester, Virginia on the 6th. At trial, she said she decided to leave it at Cowl’s property there because she worried cleaning staff at the hotel outside of D.C. (the QRF) would “freak out” if they saw them.

In court Friday, Mehta told Watkins he believed she would have gone to get weapons if Rhodes had asked her and it was “small comfort” that she had left her own personal weapon further behind.

In any event, it is unlikely Watkins would have needed to drive hours back to Winchester anyway: The arsenal at the hotel in Arlington, Virginia, was just over the Potomac River from the U.S. Capitol, and it had more weapons than Oath Keeper Terry Cummings had seen in one place

since his time in the military, he testified in October.

Watkins was part of the first stack, or line formation, inside of the Capitol. Leading the group on the ground was Kelly Meggs. He was sentenced to 12 years for seditious conspiracy earlier this week. Watkins used Zello, a walkie-talkie messaging app to communicate her maneuvering inside the Capitol and Mehta said there was no doubt that she pushed her way past police and headed toward the Senate. She could be seen and heard in footage urging "push! push! push!" and encouraging rioters to overrun police.

Watkins kept some of her communications tied to Jan. 6 intact but others she deleted, and this, both the jury and Judge Mehta concluded, indicated an intent to conceal her activities and obstruct an investigation into her crimes after she was identified in press reports in the wake of the attack. He told Watkins he didn't know if there was a direct connection between Rhodes' orders to Oath Keepers to delete communications after the 6th and her decision to remove her own communications but he considered it obstruction nonetheless.

Mehta agreed to a terrorism enhancement sought by the Justice Department but still went below the guidelines. He was sympathetic to her and her background. Watkins is transgender and she had a difficult upbringing in a strict religious household. Once in the Army she temporarily went AWOL because of harassment from a bunkmate who discovered her online searches involving gender identity. Her military service didn't earn her any special deference at sentencing.

"I don't think you're Stewart Rhodes. I don't think you're Kelly Meggs. But your role in those events was more than a foot soldier. I think you can appreciate that," Mehta told her in court Friday.

She nodded slightly as he spoke to her.

Watkins was racked with emotions during the

sentencing hearing. She burst into tears the moment she took the podium and it was her chance to ask for mercy from the court. After somewhat composing herself, she spoke loudly though often her voice would quake as her tears flowed. She clutched a tissue for a few moments as she spoke. Her face flushed.

"I wrote this letter to you today to express my feelings of remorse considering my participation in Jan 6. As I said previously, my actions and behaviors that fateful day were wrong and as I now understand, criminal. This is what has brought me before you today and why you must hold me responsible. The events of Jan. 6 are unfortunate and while I believe in peaceful protest and redress of government, violence is never the answer," Watkins said.

She expressed her "strong" frustration with people who assaulted police and told Judge Mehta since she had been incarcerated she had studied video evidence online and emphatically claimed she had "solved the crime" of a police assault on Jan. 6 unrelated to her case.

She also said she accepted that "her actions in and around the Capitol inspired those people to a degree."

"They saw me there and that probably fired them up," she said, noting how Oath Keepers were pat on the back as they ascended the Capitol steps.

"At trial, I said I was an idiot for going in there. But idiots can be held responsible and this idiot must be held responsible," she said.

Watkins cried as she left the stand, saying she still loved her country and that it was never her intent to harm it or anyone. She regretted that Metropolitan Police Officer Christopher Owens was not present Friday. She wanted to personally apologize again though she aired the same sentiments at trial while he was in the courtroom. Owens, who was on the receiving end of Watkins' push inside the Capitol, issued a poignant and painful victim impact statement two days before her sentencing. She was present for

it but unable to address him then.

Judge Mehta's empathy for Watkins was substantial. She had overcome a lot, he said. And in a tone that sounded stern yet near fatherly, the federal judge looked at Watkins earnestly, telling her he believed she was someone who could one day be a role model for others.

"I'm happy you have found someone who loves you. You and he tried to make a go of it with your own business... you served as a firefighter and a medic, and frankly, I do believe that the purpose of the Ohio State Regular Militia was not to battle our government," Mehta said. "But somewhere along the line, that all got waylaid and perverted. I don't know what it was. Whether it was Alex Jones or other corners of the internet you found yourself in; you clearly began to have delusional thoughts about what the risks were if the other guy won and what you would need to do to ensure the safety of your countrymen."

No one with a "human bone in their body," Mehta added, could hear Watkins' life story and not feel some degree of compassion.

"You have overcome a lot. You are resilient. You are someone who could serve as a role model. I say that at a time when people who are trans are so readily vilified and used for political purposes. It makes it all the more hard for me to understand why there is still a lack of empathy for those who suffered that day. Maybe it's part of the process, the journey," Mehta said.

The "lack of empathy" the judge referred to was tied to Watkins' remarks in private calls reviewed by prosecutors and raised at sentencing. In one call, she had derided police who came under attack on Jan. 6 and spoke publicly of their post-traumatic stress.

"'Boo hoo, poor little police officers got a little PTSD, wah! 'I had to stand there and hold the door open for people. Wah!'" Watkins had



said, according to prosecutor Alexandra Hughes.

Her attorney, Jonathan Crisp, said Watkins had undertaken efforts at deradicalization. She's been detained for two years. Mehta did raise the question with Crisp of how he could reconcile her seeming callousness in the phone call with her more remorseful presentation in court. The lawyer, who is a JAG and served in Iraq but did not see combat, admitted, "it may sound evil," to make the comment but it came from an opinion that any wearer of any uniform in law enforcement or military service should expect that risk, danger and sacrifice effectively come with the territory. Crisp argued that wasn't to diminish the unique circumstances of Jan. 6 and the unexpected conditions police were under, but that was the opinion, deluded as others may perceive it to be.

At her sentencing as well as at Rhodes and Meggs' sentencing and later, at Harrelson's, the judge made it a point to underline to each that their sentences would need to reflect the role they played and how serious it had impacted not just people of the United States but also the very people who defended the Capitol with their lives, forsaking their own families, self-interest and self-preservation instincts.

Mehta said it was an officer's job to expect sacrifice though this did not diminish their heroism in the face of something that, "I would dare say, even a police officer would have expected [on the 6th.]"

Roughly an hour after Watkins, her co-defendant Florida Oath Keeper Kenneth Harrelson was sentenced by Judge Mehta to four years in prison. Prosecutors initially sought 15. Much like it was with Watkins, Harrelson was deeply emotional before the judge.

He was acquitted of seditious conspiracy. He was also acquitted of conspiracy to obstruct proceedings and destruction of property. The jury convicted him on just two of six counts that he faced: obstructing an official

proceeding and conspiracy to prevent an officer from discharging his duties. He did not testify at trial whereas Watkins, Rhodes, and co-defendant Thomas Caldwell, did.

Harrelson was somewhat enigmatic in court. He was reserved throughout roughly 30 days of proceedings; reading from paperwork ceaselessly, his head down and face close to the pages before him. His lawyer, Bradley Geyer, while certainly not a shrinking violet when he would speak before the jury, was among the least chatty attorneys at trial, seemingly preferring to let Harrelson fade into the background.

Harrelson wasn't a prolific texter or user of social media and very few of his messages emerged in evidence. He deleted most and deleted Signal off his phone. The extent of his communications around the 6th is something that will remain a mystery for prosecutors for sometime and maybe forever.

"We don't know what we don't know," Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Nestler said in court Friday.

Prosecutors considered Harrelson a "ground team leader" who took orders from Meggs. Another fellow Oath Keeper, Jason Dolan, told the jury in October he considered Harrelson to be his superior and it was Dolan who also helped transport weapons to the QRF in Arlington. Harrelson also participated in firearms training with Meggs and was close with Rhodes in the days leading up to the critical Nov. 9 GoTo meeting. Like Watkins, Harrelson heard Rhodes call for violence if Trump wasn't permitted to stay in the White House (despite his defeat).

At sentencing, Judge Mehta was unwilling to add leadership enhancements to Harrelson's sentence because while he thought there were elements of Harrelson's role that could fall into the leadership category, what he reviewed he didn't consider dispositive proof that the Florida man "controlled" anyone in a significant sense on the 6th.

Harrelson went up the Capitol steps in the first stack led by Meggs and once atop, turned to wave at others to come inside. Once in, he and Dolan screamed "treason!" at police officers and "This is our fucking house!" Dolan told the jury when he was on the stand this was done to put fear into lawmakers preparing to certify the election.

When law enforcement came calling for Harrelson after the 6th, he hid the AR-15 he brought to the D.C. area as well as the rifle case. He failed to tell investigators about several photos he took on the 6th during the melee.

And, Nestler noted, he didn't show any remorse in the days afterward. Quite the contrary: he continued to speak with Meggs, Rhodes and Oath Keeper and Roger Stone security goon Jeremy Brown.

Mehta told Harrelson he believed he was just as responsible in many ways for the conspiracy as his cohorts on Jan. 6, including his superior Kelly Meggs. He knew the QRF was packed to the gills with weapons, for one, and his time in the Capitol—while fleeting—was not unimportant since it advanced the group's mutual attempt to stop Congress from its work.

Oath Keepers like Caleb Berry testified at another Oath Keeper trial that Harrelson had bubbled over after leaving the Capitol because he had patted down an officer at one point and made a tantalizing revelation.

"It was clear as day in the video that you did pat down Officer [Ryan] Salke as you are leaving the building and if that were not enough, we had [Oath Keeper] Graydon Young who testified you did pat him down and Caleb Berry said you told him you did the pat down and said you were surprised at how little armor they had," Mehta said.

Mehta noted too how Berry, who pleaded guilty to conspiracy and obstruction of an official proceeding in July 2021, said Harrelson was "pumped" at this and excited. Then the men

talked about how they could have been more effective if they would have brought gas masks and firearms.

At the trial and at sentencing, Geyer emphasized how rioters burst into singing the National Anthem on the stairs. And while Geyer and the defendants had invoked that moment with a type of romantic patriotic reverence in court last year, on Friday, Mehta's tone was pointed when he told the Army veteran" video may have indeed shown rioters singing the National Anthem on the Capitol steps as the Oath keepers ascended and burst inside, but it, more importantly, showed him walking through the crowd to the landing.

"And you are the first one. You were the first one to get close enough to see what was happening at the doors and what was transpiring there. Nevertheless, you enter and you immediately start recording and the words "treason!" are being uttered" Mehta said.

Harrelson claimed once inside, he and Meggs attempted to "help" U.S. Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn after coming upon him in the small rotunda near then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's office.

A jury may have agreed that as Harrelson made his way through a Capitol under siege, the Florida Oath Keeper would have, at the bare minimum, clearly understood this was not the place to be. The judge said he would only guess that the jury acquitted him of the *conspiracy* to obstruct charge because they didn't agree beyond a reasonable doubt that he actually understood how Congressional proceedings actually worked. (Harrelson voted once his entire life and in a state election; had no political interests prior to his involvement with Rhodes and the Oath Keepers and had a very hardscrabble upbringing with a "junkie mom," his attorney said, and an absentee father.)

Harrelson has a one-point terrorism enhancement on his sentence because he did intimidate officials: staffers were trapped inside the

office he stalked outside of; police inside, like Officer Dunn had been fighting off the mob, defending colleagues, helping people who were overcome, when Harrelson and Meggs came upon him, adding to his already crushing burden.

When he spoke on his own behalf, Harrelson cried several times, sniffing hard with his body tightening up as he delivered remarks to the court.

"I got into the wrong car at the wrong time and I went to the wrong place with the wrong people," Harrelson said before going to explain how he got to D.C.. and was told to report to Michael Greene, a designated Oath Keepers operations leader on the 6th. Greene was acquitted of conspiracy at the third Oath keepers trial in March.

"I have no gripes with the government... I shouldn't have been there. I should have paid more attention to what was being said [and] on my phone...to Officer Harry Dunn: I would like to truly apologize. when he came up those stairs and expressed that they were killing his friends and carrying out his buddies on stretchers, all I said was 'really'? I didn't know what was happening on the west side...I didn't know I was hurting anyone and I could have done more and I apologize. I think about that a lot," he said, choking through tears. "I know I should have done more. I apologize."

Harrelson continued on to say that he had "demolished" his life, loved his wife and children, was scared for them, and apologized to them as well.

After Mehta sentenced him, and after the terms of his supervision were read and the Oath Keeper left the courtroom in his prison-issued jumpsuit, he turned his head to the pews and blew his wife a kiss.

*(Coming up this week at the federal courthouse: Oath Keepers and co-conspirators Roberto Minuta, Edward Vallejo, Joseph Hackett, and David Moerschel— all of whom were found guilty of*

*sedition conspiracy—will be sentenced on June 1 and 2.)*

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## **‘NOTHING HAS CHANGED, MR. RHODES, NOTHING HAS CHANGED’: SEDITIOUS OATH KEEPER ELMER RHODES SENTENCED TO 18 YEARS**

After expressing zero remorse and heralding himself to a federal judge as a “political prisoner” who “like Donald Trump only committed the crime of opposing those who are destroying our country,” Oath Keeper Elmer Stewart Rhodes was sentenced to 18 years in prison for his role leading and orchestrating a seditious conspiracy to stop America’s transfer of presidential power by force on Jan. 6, 2021.

It *would* have been surprising if Rhodes took any other tack when it was his chance to speak.

But Rhodes offered no surprises at the Prettyman courthouse in Washington, D.C. on Thursday.

He was unrepentant, just as he was at trial when he testified on his own behalf for a little over a day. Even then, as a jury actively held his fate in their hands, he publicly smeared proceedings in jailhouse interviews while comparing himself to Nelson Mandela. And just four days ago, in yet another interview from jail, Rhodes kept up The Big Lie.

The 2020 election was fraudulent, he argued, and the U.S. government had launched a “terror campaign” on Jan. 6 defendants. Four days ago he

called for “regime change” and in words that could haunt any appeal of his conviction in the future, he added: “We’re going to have to stop it, the American people” and “It’s not going to stop until it’s stopped.”

In his bright orange jumpsuit on Thursday, Rhodes gripped the sides of the podium as he read eagerly from his lengthy remarks, perhaps soothed by the sound of his own voice.

“All Jan. 6 defendants are political prisoners. They are grossly overcharged. A steep sentence here won’t help or deter people, it will make people think this government is even more illegitimate than before,” Rhodes said.

He continued on to issue what sounded like a veiled threat with his voice moving from even and calm to more emphatic as his tone was slightly raised.

“Characterizing Trump supporters as racists, fools and led down the primrose path by Trump as fools doesn’t help either,” Rhodes exclaimed. “My goal will be to be an American Solzhenitsyn to expose the criminality of this regime.”

He said his guilt was “preordained” and told presiding U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta claims that he is a white supremacist should lead him to “sue for defamation.” He said the “regime change” he hoped for a few days ago meant he hoped Trump would win in 2024. He went on a tear about leftist violence and antifa. Rhodes may impress himself or his supporters with such diatribes, but Judge Mehta appeared thoroughly unimpressed. (Mehta has presided over three Oath Keepers trials alone in recent months and his familiarity with this defense is arguably second to none.)

So long did Rhodes’ defiant remarks ramble on that Mehta actually interrupted him at one point and quite politely reminded him that his time speaking was finite.

When Rhodes was finally done, Mehta looked at the Oath Keeper leader. On Thursday, Rhodes met

Mehta's eyes only sometimes. He frequently jotted down notes as Mehta spoke.

"Mr. Rhodes, you are convicted of seditious conspiracy. You are a lawyer. You understand what that means," Mehta said.

For those who are not, Mehta provided a background. It was true, he said, neither Rhodes nor his conspirators assaulted police. It was true there were those who "did worse" in this regard on Jan. 6 than Rhodes specifically or members of his organization.

But Rhodes is unique nonetheless. The seditious conspiracy he led against the United States is the most serious crime one can commit against this government, Mehta said.

"It is an offense against the government to use force. It is an offense against the people of this country," Mehta told Rhodes.

The Oath Keeper founder looked right at the judge at this comment.

"This isn't confined to one day or how you reacted... it is a series of acts in which you and others committed to use force, including potentially with weapons against the government of the United States as it transitioned from one president to the other. And what was the motive? You didn't like the new guy. I get it. But let me be clear to you, Mr. Rhodes, and anyone else who is listening: In this country, we don't paint with a broad brush, and shame on you if you do," Mehta said.

He continued: "What we cannot have, what we absolutely cannot have is a group of citizens who because they did not like the outcome of an election and don't believe the law was carried out in the way they believe it should be, for them to take up arms and foment a revolution. That's what you did. Those aren't my words. Those are yours... you are not a political prisoner, Mr. Rhodes. You are not here for your beliefs or because Joe Biden is president or because you supported the other guy."



The evidence presented to jurors was convincing beyond a reasonable doubt, Mehta underlined. And though Rhodes has been quick to whine about unfair jurors, Mehta reminded him Thursday that it was this jury that acquitted him of multiple other counts.

"But they found you guilty of sedition. That was a jury of your peers. Make no mistake about it," Mehta said.

Telling Rhodes the enduring legacy of Jan. 6 belonged to the police and people working on Capitol Hill that day who "protected this democracy as we know it," Mehta emphasized how law enforcement officers "laid their bodies on the line."

"You talk about keeping oaths? No one is more emblematic of that than those police officers. Their heroism, their stamina, their courage. But for their acts, it could have been a far uglier day than it already was and it is one of the blackest stains on our country. People shouldn't forget that," he said.

In the days leading up to Jan. 6, Rhodes convinced dozens of people to come to Washington, D.C. simply because he called on them to do so, the judge said.

"You sir, present an ongoing threat and peril to this country and to the fabric of this country. You are smart, charismatic, and compelling and that is frankly, what makes you dangerous," Mehta said. "Anyone think for a moment that Joseph Hackett would come to D.C. with a weapon to fight in the streets? That only happens because of you, Mr. Rhodes."

Everyone Rhodes called to D.C. for Jan. 6 was a victim of the "lies and propaganda" he shared. It would have been one thing, the judge noted, if Rhodes had looked at what happened on Jan. 6 and said anywhere in his communications with Oath Keepers or in public that it wasn't a good development. But he didn't. He celebrated the carnage.

And just three days after the attack on the Capitol, Rhodes wasn't dialing it back.

At trial in November, Jason Alpers, a military veteran and government witness, testified that he met with Rhodes on the night of Jan. 10 in a parking lot outside of an electronics store. Alpers said he was asked to meet with Rhodes by one of Alpers' former employees. Rhodes, Alpers said, wanted to pass a message to Trump.

Uneasy about the meeting from the outset, Alpers secretly recorded Rhodes. The recording was played for jurors.

"If he's not going to do the right thing, and he's just going to let himself be removed illegally, then we should have brought rifles," Rhodes told Alpers. "We could have fixed it right then and there."

Rhodes said he would have hung then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi from a "fucking lamppost."

The Oath Keepers defense has hinged almost entirely on the claim that members did not come to the Capitol on Jan. 6 to foment violence, but to act as a "security detail."

After the judge read Rhodes' own words back to him from that Jan. 10 meeting, Mehta noted: "Doesn't sound like you were there for a security detail."

Mehta pointed to Rhodes' comments during a "Freedom Corner Rally" broadcast from the jailhouse four days ago and how Rhodes said, "at the risk of another charge, I'm going to leave it at that" after he mentioned finding a "way to fix this" situation for Jan. 6 defendants.

With just a hint of exasperation, Mehta told the 58-year-old: "Nothing has changed, Mr. Rhodes. Nothing has changed."

"The reality is, based on the words we hear you speak, the moment you are released, you will be prepared to take up arms against your government. Not because you think the wrong

president is in office but because you think that is an appropriate way to have redress of government when the law is applied in a way you don't think it should be," Mehta said.

And then perhaps encapsulating the very gravity of his decision, Mehta told Rhodes that when the Oath Keeper found himself in a bad place, "everyone else did too, leaving everyone as objects of his willingness to engage in violence."

"And we just cannot have that in this country," Mehta said.

In an interview during a break in proceedings Thursday, U.S. Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn told me it was clear that Rhodes had no remorse.

"He didn't care how much time he got," Dunn said.

The sentence brought him little comfort, he said.

Rhodes is "misguided," and he is fixated on assigning himself labels, Dunn said. Rhodes picked "political prisoner" as his label because he certainly wasn't going to choose the more accurate one of "insurrectionist," Dunn said.

If Trump is elected in 2024 or Ron DeSantis wins the White House or there is any political candidate that has sympathy for seditionists, Dunn expects there could be pardons for Oath Keepers in the future. DeSantis has already said he would consider them. Including one for Trump.

"That's why we need to make sure they don't get the opportunity to pardon them. That's why we have to have people vote for people who aren't insurrectionists or seditionists. There is a possibility it could happen we have to make sure it doesn't. We the American people," Dunn said.

Rhodes' sentence gave him little solace. Dunn said while it was abundantly clear to him that Mehta understood the threat Rhodes poses to

society until there is also accountability for Trump, lawmakers, or even some of the influencers involved with undertaking or promoting the violence and destruction of Jan. 6, he genuinely worries about what is ahead.

"My heart and mind still wander about this looming threat. It's hard to find comfort knowing this threat still exists," Dunn said.

A day prior, when Dunn delivered a victim impact statement to the defendants, Rhodes rarely looked at Dunn. He was writing notes most of the afternoon. On occasion, he did look up though his face was expressionless.

Dunn described how the violence on Jan. 6 upended his life and left him, nearly 900 days later, "a shell of his former self," Rhodes didn't look up then. Then Dunn uttered three words that snapped the extremist leader right to attention: "real oath keepers."

Dunn was describing how on the day he testified at the Oath Keepers trial, he was originally scheduled to speak to first responders. But instead of talking to them—"real oath keepers, real victims"—he had to testify instead and tell the jury about "what actually happened" on Jan. 6.

Dunn turned to look right at the defendants when he said this. Rhodes looked back at Dunn. His head was already cocked to one side but the "real oath keepers" remark prompted Rhodes' neck to crane downward even further. He didn't blink. He seemed to bristle instead, though he kept it just barely under the surface.

Tasha Adams, who recently won her divorce after a years-long estrangement from Rhodes, told me in an interview Thursday that she thinks Rhodes is "incapable" of feeling remorse.

"He only ever adjusts his version of reality to fit into his personal storyline. He believes he has done nothing wrong, that he has been wronged himself, and that someday he'll get even," Adams wrote in an email.

In court Thursday, Rhodes was “speaking to get the attention of DeSantis and Trump,” she said.

“He is in this for the pardon and the long game, even if that is not 2024. Even if it means 2028. He is not sorry. He is only sorry it wasn’t bigger,” she wrote.

As for Adams, there is closure with the sentence.

She has been outspoken about her now ex-husband as she watched the trial from afar. She has publicly described his history of abusing her or isolating her. And when the government submitted its sentencing proposal, prosecutors included excerpts of an interview with Adams where she described the depths of Rhodes’ abuses against her and their children.

“There was always violence in little ways. If he was really mad over something, he would want to do what he called martial arts training which included sticks and knives with a dulled edge or a knife with its edge taped. He would usually hurt us when he would do this training and it would always wind up with whoever he was angry at at the time. It was never just rough training or when he was happy with you... I don’t know if you can see all the scars on my arms. That’s from knife training. He would keep me pinned down in a chair...and he would hit the chair or sofa next to my head when he was upset with me,” she told Assistant U.S. Attorney Kathryn Rakoczy.

“[I have] closure in that I know at least we have a couple of years of peace. I’m more focused on getting passed this next election, but at least we are all in the clear for a while. It is also a statement. It says that Stewart is definitively not a good guy. Which is extremely powerful to me, after decades of people telling me what a good man is and how lucky I am,” Adams said Thursday.

Today, her children are happy and relieved, she said.

"They were of course hoping for 25 years. But 18 is pretty solid. I think they're mostly glad to just not have to think about him for a while," Adams wrote.

I also asked Adams what the big takeaway was for the day or what she thinks society can do to move away from extremism.

"That is a very big question. I wish we could find a way to move away from the fear of change. I really believe that is what extremism is deeply rooted in. Extremists are a group of people whose self-worth is completely entangled with a way of life that society has grown up and left behind. We don't need those old belief systems of race, and gender and control anymore. And yet they truly they believe they will cease to exist in any meaningful way without them. I don't know if there is a way to solve it, beyond time and communication (whenever possible,)" she wrote.

Judge Mehta also sentenced Rhodes' 54-year-old co-defendant Kelly Meggs to 12 years in prison on Thursday. Meggs was found guilty of seditious conspiracy, too. (Rhodes was also convicted of obstruction of an official proceeding and tampering with documents and proceedings. Meggs was also found guilty of conspiracy to obstruct a proceeding, obstruction of an official proceeding, conspiracy to prevent an officer from discharging their duties, and tampering with documents or proceedings.)

Meggs cried several times as he spoke in court, reeling at the pain he said he caused his family. Many of his family members, including his sister and son, attended the hearing. No one showed up for Rhodes. The moment Meggs' sister, Crystal, approached the podium to provide character testimony, Meggs began to weep. His face turned red and his shoulders shook as he cried. A marshal handed him a box of tissues.

"I truly apologize for being here," Meggs said, choking through tears. "It has not only ruined my life but the life of my entire family."

Meggs' son, Zachary, asked Mehta to show mercy on his father. His father put him through college and employed him at a car dealership, he said. Without his father at home, he fears he won't be able to keep the family's house.

Meggs' wife, Connie Meggs, was tried separately and found guilty in March for obstructing an official proceeding. Connie was one of several Oath Keepers who breached the Capitol in a stack formation on Jan. 6.

Zachary is getting married soon and he told Judge Mehta he "would really like to have my father at the wedding."

Meggs' lawyer, Stanley Woodward, also represents Connie Meggs and as such, didn't find it prudent to read a letter she wrote in support of her husband in court. Meggs, as he cried, said his "deepest regret is the pain I've caused my wife."

"I have failed her. I have caused my wife more pain than she should ever deserve, incarceration and home confinement for two years all because of me," he said.

Meggs also lamented how he lost his life as he knew it, including things like cars and retirement accounts.

"Everything has been taken away... I've been taken away from my family for 828 days. I want to apologize to everyone I've let down," Meggs said amid tears.

Meggs also addressed Officer Dunn who was seated in the pews behind him. Though Mehta said neither the jury nor he ever found any evidence to support the claim by Oath Keepers at trial that they were "helping" Dunn on the 6th, Meggs nonetheless circled around that unsupported claim once more Thursday.

Then he apologized.

"Officer Dunn, if my presence in any way affected you, I do apologize, sir," Meggs said before a U.S. Marshal quickly approached him and

told him to turn around and address the judge. Defendants are not allowed to turn to address people in the pews.

During the trial, prosecutors showed jurors a patch Meggs wore on Jan. 6. It read, "I don't believe in anything, I'm just here for the violence."

Before he was sentenced, Meggs said yes, he did wear a patch that said "I'm just here for the violence."

"I wasn't there to cause violence or instigate violence. I was there to keep the violence from happening to anyone. It's what I had done so many times before and what I was doing that day," Meggs said.

Whether he forgot or omitted it for convenience, Meggs did not mention the front half of the slogan: "I don't believe in anything."

Meggs admitted the language he used in numerous texts and Oath Keepers communications was vile, but he chalked it up to hyperbole.

And as to his own public comments about the trial—which have included the assessment that it is "bullshit" and that the jury is biased—Meggs said only: "I don't blame them for having bias. I would too if my town had been locked down for some violent event but I still think they were biased."

In truth, the jury was vetted for bias extensively by both prosecutors and the defense, and in the end, the final verdicts were a mixed bag of acquittals and convictions.

Mehta addressed Meggs directly before sentencing him.

There may have been dispute by the defense about whether Meggs was looking for Nancy Pelosi once inside the Capitol on Jan. 6, for example. But while on this day he called that language unfortunate and hyperbolic, nonetheless, "there was a lot of it," Mehta said.



Witnesses at trial described how Meggs went searching for Rhodes on Jan. 6 and turned to him for direction and leadership. Meggs also led efforts to coordinate and establish a huge arsenal of guns to be held at a hotel in northern Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C. This was what Oath Keepers dubbed a “quick reaction force” or QRF.

Mehta was at times incredulous with Meggs’ defense.

If Oath Keepers were there for security, why did they need the QRF? If the Oath Keeper talk was bombast and just bombast—well, Mehta said, he could understand a person believing that to be the case with one message.

But two? Or three?

“I don’t know how anyone can stand here today and say this is just bombast. You were telling others on this ‘OK FL hangout chat,’ you were prepared to die and that’s what patriots did by the thousands,” Mehta said.

And like he told Rhodes during his sentencing, it didn’t sound like Meggs was part of any security detail; the jury didn’t believe that and neither did he. Meggs didn’t even step foot in the area he claimed he was slated to be in to provide security, the judge added. And it didn’t help matters that Meggs had discussed bringing Proud Boys to D.C. to act as force multipliers on the 6th.

The former chapter leader may disagree with the jury’s decision and that’s fair, Mehta acknowledged.

“But we have a process like this for a reason. In the mind of the 12 people in that jury, beyond a reasonable doubt, you committed conspiracy offenses in many ways that day,” Mehta said.

The pain Meggs expressed in court was tangible and the judge said he felt it deeply.

“I have felt it deeply with every sentence I’ve

made in connection to [Jan. 6] cases," Mehta said.

He added that he still finds it "astonishing how average Americans somehow transformed into criminals in the weeks before Jan. 6."

"In contemplating violence to prevent the transfer of power: maybe you were just under the spell of Mr. Rhodes. I don't know. Even today, I get it. I don't really blame you for it. Unlike Rhodes, who I think poses a real threat, you're not in the same category but you do continue to say things that are not consistent with reality," he said.

This February, Meggs said in a media interview that police had invited people inside the Capitol and that he thought it was acceptable for him to walk through the door. Mehta also underlined the absurdity of Meggs' claims that somehow if there was just more closed-circuit footage from the 6th made public, he would be absolved.

That blurs the fact that there was access to every single hour of his conduct that day, Mehta said.

In the end, Meggs still opposed the U.S. government by force.

"We have a process," Mehta underlined. "It's called an election. If your guy or gal loses, you hope for better results next time. You don't take to the streets or join in for a war in the streets. You don't rush into the U.S. Capitol with the hope of trying to stop the electoral count."

On Friday, Rhodes' and Meggs' co-defendants Jessica Watkins and Kenneth Harrelson will be sentenced. Fellow co-defendant Thomas Caldwell's sentencing date was originally set for this Wednesday but it was vacated on Monday as Judge Mehta awaits a ruling from the circuit in another Jan. 6 case that will provide a definition of the "corruptly" requirement in the obstruction of an official proceeding statute.

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# **STEWART RHODES: YALE LAW GRAD, SEDITIONIST, TERRORIST, AND ONGOING THREAT TO DEMOCRACY**

In sentencing Stewart Rhodes, Judge Mehta called him an ongoing peril to the very fabric of democracy.

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# **PETER BAKER DISCOVERS THAT RUSSIA SOWS PARTISAN ANTAGONISM AND THEN HELPS THEM DO SO!**

Peter Baker thought his naive observation about the way that Putin uses sanctions to foster divisions in the US was worth giving Russia an opportunity to claim that January 6 defendants were really just persecuted dissidents.