

Beat: News

Leader of North Carolina Chapter of Proud Boys Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy

Jan 6th U.S. Capitol Breach

Washington, D.C., 09.04.2022, 16:50 Time

U.S. Department of Justice - United States Department of Justice | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 8, 2022

Leader of North Carolina Chapter of Proud Boys Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy and Assault Charges in Jan. 6 Capitol Breach. Defendant Admits Planning and Participating in the Attack.

A leader of the Proud Boys pleaded guilty today to felony charges for his actions before and during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. His and others' actions disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress convened to ascertain and count the electoral votes related to the presidential election.

Charles Donohoe, 34, of Kernersville, North Carolina, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding and assaulting, resisting or impeding officers. As part of the plea agreement, Donohoe has agreed to cooperate with the government's ongoing investigation.

According to court documents, the Proud Boys describes itself as a "pro-Western fraternal organization for men who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world, aka Western Chauvinists." Donohoe joined the Proud Boys in 2018 and became the president of his local Proud Boys chapter in North Carolina. As of Jan. 6, 2021, he was a fourth-degree member of the Proud Boys, the highest rank within the organization.

In December 2020, according to the court documents, Enrique Tarrio, then the Proud Boys national chairman, formed a new Proud Boys' chapter known as the "Ministry of Self Defense," which focused on the planning and execution of national rallies. The first objective of the Ministry of Self Defense was to plan for actions in relation to the Washington, D.C., rally on Jan. 6, 2021. Donohoe was a leader of this new chapter, which eventually grew to include at least 65 members.

At least as early as Jan. 4, 2021, Donohoe was aware that the Ministry of Self Defense's leaders were discussing the possibility of storming the Capitol. Donohoe believed that storming the Capitol would achieve the group's goal of stopping the government from carrying out the transfer of presidential power. Donohoe understood from discussions that the Proud Boys would pursue their objective through the use of force and violence.

On Jan. 6, 2021, Donohoe was part of a group of 100 or more Proud Boys who marched away from a rally near the Washington Monument towards the Capitol. Shortly after 12 p.m., the group was assembled two blocks west of the Capitol, and Donohoe understood that other Proud Boys leaders were searching for an opportunity to storm the Capitol. At approximately 1 p.m., the group arrived at the Capitol and began breaching the barriers surrounding the Capitol grounds. While in the West Plaza of the Capitol, Donohoe threw two water bottles at a line of law enforcement officers who were attempting to prevent the mob's advance in the West Plaza at the Capitol building. As events continued, Donohoe joined with a crowd, including other Proud Boys, to push forward to advance up the concrete stairs toward the Capitol. The crowd overwhelmed law enforcement officers on the stairs, continued toward the Capitol, and ultimately entered the Capitol building after Donohoe's co-defendant, Dominic Pezzola, allegedly broke open a window of the building.

Hours later, Donohoe posted messages to the Ministry of Self Defense Leadership Group celebrating the group's actions that day.

Donohoe was arrested on March 11, 2021, and he has been detained since his arrest. He is among six defendants - including Tarrio and Pezzola - indicted in the District of Columbia on conspiracy and other charges; the others have pleaded not guilty. Donohoe faces up to 20 years in prison on the conspiracy charge and up to eight years in prison on the charge of assaulting, resisting or impeding officers. Both charges also carry potential financial penalties. No sentencing date was set. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The case is being 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 Western District of North

Carolina.

The case is being investigated by the FBI's Washington and Charlotte Field Offices.

In the 15 months since Jan. 6, 2021, nearly 800 individuals have been arrested in nearly all 50 states for crimes related to the breach of the U.S. Capitol, including over 250 individuals charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement. The investigation remains ongoing.

Anyone with tips can call 1-800-CALL-FBI (800-225-5324) or visit tips.fbi.gov.

Topic(s): Counterterrorism?National Security

Component(s): Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)?National Security Division (NSD)?USAO - District of Columbia

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-20425/leader-of-north-carolina-chapter-of-proud-boys-pleads-guilty-to-conspiracy.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619