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4 SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE
5 JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL,
6 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
7 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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11 INTERVIEW OF: JASON VAN TATENHOVE

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15 Wednesday, March 9, 2022

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17 Washington, D.C.

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20 The interview in the above matter was held in room 4480, O'Neill Office Building,
21 commencing at 10:05 a.m.

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2 Appearances:

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4 For the SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE

5 THE JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL:

6

7 [REDACTED], INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

8 [REDACTED], PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

9 [REDACTED], PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

10 [REDACTED] INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

11 [REDACTED], CONTRACTOR

12 [REDACTED], CHIEF CLERK

13 [REDACTED], SENIOR COUNSEL & SENIOR ADVISOR

14 [REDACTED], INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

15 [REDACTED], CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

16

17 For JASON VAN TATENHOVE:

18

19 RAPHAEL PROBER

20 MIRANDA DORE

21 Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

22 Robert S. Strauss Tower

23 2001 K Street, N.W.

24 Washington, D.C. 20006-1037

1

2 [REDACTED] Good morning.

3 This is the transcribed interview of Jason Van Tatenhove, conducted by the House
4 Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol,
5 pursuant to House Resolution 503.

6 This will be a staff-led interview, though members of the select committee may
7 also ask questions.

8 At this time, I would ask the witness to please state your full name and spell your
9 last name for the record.

10 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Jason Russell Van Tatenhove. Last name spelled V, as in
11 Victor, a-n; separate word T, as in Thomas, a-t-e-n-h-o-v-e.

12 [REDACTED] Great. Thank you, Mr. Van Tatenhove.

13 My name is [REDACTED], and I'm an investigative counsel with the select
14 committee. With me from the select committee staff are [REDACTED], investigative
15 counsel; [REDACTED], professional staff member; [REDACTED], professional staff
16 member; [REDACTED], investigative analyst; and [REDACTED], chief clerk; and
17 [REDACTED], director of operations. There are currently no members of the select
18 committee in attendance, but I'll announce anyone else who joins.

19 Mr. Van Tatenhove, is it correct that you're voluntarily here for this transcribed
20 interview?

21 Mr. Van Tatenhove. That is correct.

22 [REDACTED] Great. Well, we appreciate it, and we recognize that this is the
23 second time that you've spoken voluntarily with the select committee. You spoke with
24 me and [REDACTED] on January 14th of this year for an informal interview.

25 Thank you for your willingness to work with us again.

1 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Of course.

2 ██████████ I understand that you have counsel with you today.

3 At this time could counsel please state their names for the record.

4 Mr. Prober. Raphael Prober from Aiken Gump.

5 Ms. Dore. Miranda Dore from Aiken Gump.

6 ██████████ Thank you, both.

7 There's an official reporter transcribing the record of this interview. Please wait
8 until each question is completed before you begin your response, and we will try to wait
9 until your response is complete before we ask our next question.

10 The stenographer can't record nonverbal responses, such as shaking your head, so
11 it is important that you answer each question with an audible verbal response.

12 There is a recording of the interview as well, but the reporter's transcript is the
13 official record of our meeting today. You and your counsel will have the opportunity to
14 review the transcript.

15 For the benefit of the reporter and the record, there may be times where I clarify
16 what you've said, including a spelling of a name or a word.

17 We ask that you provide complete answers based on the best of your recollection.
18 If the question is not clear, please ask me to clarify it, and if you don't know the answer,
19 please just say so.

20 Throughout the interview, we will be directing your attention to a couple of
21 exhibits that we have marked for today and have been provided for you in the binder in
22 front of you. These were also electronically provided to your counsel yesterday.
23 When we refer to a document, you can take time to familiarize yourself with it before we
24 discuss it. We just ask that you return the binder at the end of our interview today.

25 And, since we have already had an informal interview, I just want to flag for you

1 that there may be some topics or questions that you've already answered for us, and
2 even though it may seem repetitive in light of our previous conversation, I still ask that
3 you provide complete and full answers to the questions we have today just so we get it
4 on the record.

Finally, logistically, please let us know if you need any breaks. If you would like to speak privately with your attorneys, you are absolutely welcome to do so. We have a separate room that's available if you need to use it.

8 And then the last thing I just want to note -- and this is something that we remind
9 all witness so it is not specific to you, but it is unlawful to provide false information to
10 Congress.

11 So you have a sense of how this is going to work, I will start off with a couple of
12 topics, and then I'll turn it over to my colleague, [REDACTED], to lead the second half of the
13 questioning.

14 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Okay.

15 Any questions?

16 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Not at this time, no.

17 Great.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY [REDACTED]

20 Q Well, Mr. Van Tatenhove, I would just like to start with a couple of basic
21 questions to get a sense of who you are and your background. So can you tell me about
22 yourself, where you grew up?

23 A Sure. I originally grew up outside of New York City in northern New Jersey.
24 I was raised by my grandfather, who was a professional artist, part of the abstract
25 expressionist movement of the fifties and sixties in New York City. So it was kind of this

1 crazy Bohemian childhood with, you know, beat writers and people that I didn't realize
2 who they were at the time.

3 After my parents' divorce, my mother remarried, and we relocated to Fort Collins,
4 Colorado. I was about 10 when that happened. From there on, I was raised by my
5 mother and my stepfather, who's an electronic engineer. He used to do research and
6 development for Hewlett Packard.

7 And I grew up mostly in my teenage years in Fort Collins, Colorado; Then attended
8 a few different universities for art: Colorado Institute of Art in Denver, Front Range
9 Community College, Denver Art Students Lead, and CSU Studio Painting Program. I had
10 my first museum show of my artwork at age 24.

11 I was also a writer during that period of time. I kind of cut my teeth doing
12 underground music magazines in the Denver area, was the art director of the Color Red,
13 did some work with Colorado Women's News, and then also moved into the body art
14 business kind of during that time, and I've owned two different tattoo shops and body
15 piercing studios in my lifetime.

16 Now I live in Estes Park, Colorado, where I have three daughters, two of which are
17 still in the house, and a granddaughter. So that's kind of my gig.

18 Q Great.

19 You proactively answered a bunch of questions that I had about your background,
20 but that's great. As a fellow New Jerseyan, I like that you grew up in northern New
21 Jersey from the first part of your life, too.

22 Mr. Van Tatenhove, have you ever served in the military?

23 A I have not.

24 Q Great. Thank you.

25 And how do you make a living now?

1 A I'm a writer and a professional artist. I show artwork at galleries down in
2 Denver in the arts district, specifically with Bitfactory Gallery right now. I also am a
3 writer, so I have novels that I have released that I make money on and some serial
4 projects on Amazon Vella. These are all fictional in nature. I also have a news outlet
5 called The Colorado Switchblade, which is a substack style publication all online. It is
6 reader supported. I put out all of the information for free, and I have donations for
7 people who want to support what I'm doing.

8 And that's how I make my living.

9 Q Great.

10 What kind of issues do you cover on your substack?

11 A I cover everything from LBGTQ+ issues to women's rights issues. I've had
12 exclusive interviews with the Governor of Colorado about growing up gay on the Front
13 Range of Colorado. I was the first -- when I worked -- I also have been a reporter or staff
14 writer for The Estes Park Trail Gazette, which is owned by Prairie Mountain Media and
15 Digital First and Alden, so a sister paper to the Denver Post and such. I was the first
16 person to ever write about queer issues in the town of Estes Park.

17 Any place where I feel there really isn't a voice -- you know, when there are
18 people, someone in need within the community that doesn't have a voice, that's
19 something that I definitely am attracted to. And then just cultural pieces, whether
20 that's -- you know, I just did an article on a band called Plasma Canvas, which is a local
21 punk rock band that's composed of trans women.

22 So, yeah, I do a lot of things.

23 Q That's great. Thanks so much for going over that.

24 I just want to note for the record that [REDACTED], who is an investigative
25 counsel, joined, and you can see him on the screen up there.

1 Great. So, just for the sake of the record, you mentioned the town that you lived
2 in a couple of times. Do you mind spelling that?

3 A It is E-s-t-e-s P-a-r-k, Estes Park, Colorado, it is located in Larimer County.

4 Q Great. Thank you.

5 So I would like to move now specifically to your role with the Oath Keepers, and I
6 just want to ask a few kind of basic questions to establish the record before we go into a
7 more indepth discussion about your role with them.

8 So when did you first become involved with the Oath Keepers?

9 A I first became aware of the Oath Keepers right before Bundy Ranch. The
10 Bundy Ranch standoff happened in Bunkerville, Nevada. I had just moved up to
11 Montana for a bit, and there was a lot of national coverage happening around what was
12 going on at the Bundy Ranch, and that's kind of when I first heard about them.

13 I wanted to go to Bundy Ranch to see what was happening. I was doing some
14 online radio streams with Revolution Radio and writing and such. So it was a news
15 event that I felt was something that was, you know, important to go down and see what
16 was actually happening.

17 I had made some calls to some political contacts that I had and actually wound up
18 getting embedded in with Stewart Rhodes in his vehicle as he traveled from Kalispell,
19 Montana, down to Bunkerville. Now, this was -- he went twice during this standoff.
20 The first time when I was not there is when the, you know, big iconic images that we
21 think of when we think back to Bundy Ranch with, you know, Eric Parker, you know,
22 training a rifle down at Bureau of Land Management agents. I was not there for that. I
23 came back with Stewart on his second trip and was there for a couple of weeks with
24 Stewart, you know, kind of right with him through everything.

25 Q Got it.

1 And when did you -- I understand you were employed by the Oath Keepers for a
2 period of time. Right?

3 A I was.

4 Q Can you give us a sense of when that started?

5 A That started happening -- I had gone and covered the Sugar Pine Mine
6 standoff, and it was during White Hope Mine standoff that I was offered a position as a
7 writer and what Stewart titled the national media director, and that was when I became
8 an official Oath Keepers employee, and that was, I believe, August of 2015.

9 Q Great.

10 And when did you leave the organization?

11 A Um, I began parting ways in January of 2017 kind of with the rise of the off
12 alt-right. That's when Stewart began kind of courting Richard Spencer, and things were
13 taking a hard right turn from something that I would term was more of a Libertarian, you
14 know, educational outreach type situation. It seemed to take a very hard right turn, and
15 I had issues with that.

16 Q Got it.

17 And when did you kind of sever all ties with the Oath Keepers?

18 A Well, I walked away kind of in 2017. Now, Stewart Rhodes in early to
19 mid-2018, his wife had filed for divorce, and I believe there was a temporary restraining
20 order that was being discussed. And so he had to leave his house, and he showed up at
21 my house.

22 And you have to understand this is a very small mountain community on the
23 Canadian border of Montana where there are not many people. I mean, I would have to
24 drive an hour and a half to get to a stop light. And he showed up asking if he could stay
25 with me for a few days, you know, couch surf, so to say, and I allowed him to do that. It

1 wound up being much longer than I ever anticipated or wanted. But, at the same time, I
2 had just gone through a [REDACTED], and so I saw it
3 as an opportunity for, you know, my wife, who's medically disabled, to be able to have
4 access to medical care if she needed to be driven down to a doctor or, you know, getting
5 groceries at the store or something because I [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED], like nothing.

7 So it wound -- through a culmination of events, it wound up being a many month
8 period of time that he actually stayed in my basement.

9 Q Got it.

10 A And when roughly was that?

11 Q That was early to mid-2018, I believe.

12 Q Got it.

13 A And is there a point at which you cut ties with either Mr. Rhodes or the Oath
14 Keepers organization?

15 A Well, I had already cut ties with the Oath Keepers organization. You know,
16 that was back end of 2016, beginning of 2017 that I really kind of walked away, and there
17 were some, you know, events that happened that really made me just say I'm done,
18 but -- I'm sorry. I got lost. Repeat the question again.

19 Q Sure. Well, I think you answered part of it, so I'll ask the other part. Is
20 there a point at which you severed ties with Mr. Rhodes?

21 A Yes. That was -- it finally came -- you know, there was an agreement, a
22 verbal agreement, that he was going to help out with rent and he would help out with,
23 you know, helping with my daughters and helping with, you know, just household stuff.
24 And that just never materialized. And so I'm a bit of a sucker and, you know, let it go on
25 for longer than I should have but finally was like: Look, you've got to go. I don't care

1 where you're going to go, but you need to get out of here.

2 And he did leave later that day, and I haven't talked with him once since then, as
3 far as my recollection goes.

4 Q Okay. Got it.

5 A Oh, wait. Yeah. Not -- I'm sorry. I misspoke. I have some problems
6 with time lines and how I remember things.

7 Q No problem.

8 A There was an event that happened in July of 2018 down in Tucson, Arizona,
9 which I think is referred to in mainstream media as Operation Backyard Brawl. This was
10 a story that I was interested in going and covering, and Stewart wanted to go down there
11 as well. Now I had told him I would not do any sort of actual writing but that I would
12 take pictures for him and do video -- you know, take videos that he wanted in exchange
13 for me being able to go down there and kind of dig in because I wanted to write an
14 extensive story as to what was happening. And I did write that story. It went up onto
15 my website outlet.

16 But that was kind of the last time I ever did any sort of barter or anything with
17 Stewart. And I had walked away as national media director and a writer for the web
18 page, you know, well before that, but I kind of dipped my toe back into the pool there.

19 Q Got it. That's very helpful. Thank you.

20 When you were employed with the Oath Keepers, what role did you have?

21 A The title Stewart gave me was national media director. I basically served as
22 associate editor for the website and a writer for articles. I did produce videos, you
23 know, bumper music, things like that, the production side of videos. I starred in some
24 videos and created articles and then also did graphic design work, you know, not -- not
25 doing the nuts and bolts of the administration of the website but creating banners and

1 different graphics in a graphic design capacity.

2 Q Got it.

3 Were there any other titles that you held during that time?

4 A No.

5 Q Great.

6 And, just to be clear for the record, were you ever a dues-paying member of the
7 Oath Keepers?

8 A I was not. I was only an employee.

9 Q Great.

10 And I think we'll get into this in more detail later, but can you kind of give me a
11 brief explanation of why you never became a dues-paying member?

12 A I didn't believe that strongly in it. For me, it was a job. It was an
13 interesting experience. It was something that I wanted to someday write about.

14 You have to understand, my heroes growing up were reporters or people like
15 Hunter S. Thompson, whose breakout novel he went and embedded in with the Hells
16 Angels. I saw this possibility of going down to Bundy Ranch and kind of, you know,
17 rubbing elbows with Stewart Rhodes and militia extremists as kind of my own version of,
18 you know, the experience that might lead to a novel someday, so I just -- I didn't -- yeah,
19 it was a job for me.

20 Q Understood.

21 So, as the national media director for the Oath Keepers, did you work in multiple
22 locations? Were you in Colorado, Montana?

23 A So I kind of define my time with the Oath Keepers as you have your
24 day-to-day job duties -- if I am understanding what you're asking correctly, you're kind of
25 talking about the scope of what I did in my job kind of day-to-day. And so I would break

1 that into two different categories in that there's the day-to-day when there wasn't an
2 event happening, you know, and then you would have periods of time where Stewart
3 would do a call to action, and there was a big standoff happening somewhere or speaking
4 engagements, or whatnot. And there were times when I traveled with Stewart
5 throughout the country, and the scope of the work at that point was different than it
6 would be in its day-to-day.

7 Q Understood. And, again, we'll get into all of this in more detail. I just
8 wanted to establish some baseline information.

9 I think you talked about this a little bit a couple of minutes ago, but can you
10 describe your general responsibilities as national media director? Did you have staff
11 under you?

12 A Yes, I can. I did not have any staff under me. I was actually kind of low
13 man on the totem pole. There were other editors and writers that had been there
14 longer. There was a team of four, including myself, not including Stewart.

15 My day-to-day duties when I was just writing really started off with me, you know,
16 checking national news, watching local news, going through the news aggregates, such as
17 Drudge Report, finding stories that -- you know, Stewart kind of had certain stories that
18 he wanted to push that resounded with, you know, the membership base.

19 So we would look for stories like that, set up Google Box and such to let us know
20 when certain key words were hit in national media, and then we would take and bring
21 that to Stewart. We would have editorial meetings via phone with the group kind of
22 discussing what the plans were for the week.

23 The one thing I think is important to know is really when it comes down to it,
24 Stewart had complete control of that editorial vision, you know. Really the Oath
25 Keepers is Stewart Rhodes, in my opinion.

1 So, you know, we would figure out what we're doing, and then I would produce
2 videos once every week or so. I would produce three to five articles a week and any
3 graphics that may -- if he had a fundraiser, you know, I would create graphics for that.

4 So that was kind of the day-to-day, you know, when I -- and I worked out of my
5 home. And the home that I was living in at the time actually was provided by a big
6 supporter of the Oath Keepers. There was a landowner up there that had a lot of
7 property with different cabins on it and such. So I was actually living on the property of
8 one of the big supporters.

9 Then transitioning to when we would go travel, depending on the situation, I
10 would either meet Stewart someplace or I would fly directly with him and travel with him
11 this whole way. And we often flew all over the country or we would drive to different
12 locations.

13 And the scope of that -- those job duties really had to do more with, like, I became
14 more of an administrative assistant, you know, helping them with day-to-day stuff like
15 finding a hotel in a certain town, things like that, helping to proofread his, you know,
16 written word that he was putting out, helping him to record little videos of him talking to
17 the membership, facilitating interviews with national media and local media. I was kind
18 of a gatekeeper to kind of check out who it was that was contacting us and then kind of
19 bring that information to Stewart so he could decide whether or not he wanted to do
20 these interviews, or, you know, sometimes he would have me reach out to different
21 media sources to try to, you know, bring about an interview.

22 So that's kind of what I did.

23 Q That is extremely helpful.

24 There were a couple of things that I wanted to follow up on.

25 And I'll just quickly note that [REDACTED], who is our senior counsel and

1 senior advisor, also joined the interview.

2 You mentioned that you were living on property that was given by a big supporter
3 of the Oath Keepers. Were there -- first of all, who was that? And then were there
4 other staff or members who were also living on the property at that time?

5 A Yes. I'm going to have trouble remembering their names, but I can refer
6 you to businesses that they have within that community. The family owned the Rexford
7 Ranch for Kids, which was kind of a specialized school dealing with a lot of fetal alcohol
8 syndrome adoptees out of Russia. The family had brought these children into the
9 country back in the eighties, I think, from Russia. And actually there was some national
10 news flashes because there was some diplomatic issues back then. And, actually, that
11 ranch actually has been raided recently I believe -- I guess it would have been local
12 sheriff's department. I'm not sure. But it made national news where that particular
13 school was shut down because of different practices that, I guess, were not good. I'm
14 not an expert on that. So I don't really know, and I was already well gone from then. I
15 just had caught it on national news.

16 Q Uh-huh.

17 A The Suttons -- that's the name of the family, the Suttons.

18 Q Great.

19 A And they owned that school and the property. You know, on that property,
20 we had Elias Alias. That's not his real name, but I don't know his real name. He was
21 one of the editors and writers for the Oath Keepers. He had the Mental Militia old
22 website that actually Stewart first made his first post ever about forming the Oath
23 Keepers. It was done on that particular message board. So he and Elias kind of go way
24 back. He's kind of an older hippie guy. He never leaves his cabin. I think he has got
25 to be in his nineties at this point. So he lives on that property.

1 Ernie Tertelgte, who is the Montana Natural Man, he's someone who a lot of law
2 enforcement throughout the country use in training videos about sovereign citizens.
3 He's actually a nice enough neighbor. He just has some divergent views on society.

4 Q Do you mind saying that name one more time?

5 A Ernie Tertelgte. Vice News did a story on him --

6 Q Okay.

7 A -- on the hate your neighbor -- "Hate Thy Neighbor" series, and I think Elias is
8 in that as well.

9 Q Great.

10 Mr. Prober. And, just to clarify, Jason, I want to make sure I heard you right.
11 You said that they lived there, but I think what you meant is, at least when you were
12 there, you knew that they lived there. Do you know that they are currently there?

13 Mr. Van Tatenhove. I have no idea if they are still currently there whatsoever.

14 Mr. Prober. Okay.

15 Mr. Van Tatenhove. I've really cut off contact in all ways, from purging social
16 media profiles to changing my number. When I left, I just wanted to be done with it.
17 You know, I have no remnants of clothing or pictures or anything. I just -- I got
18 rid -- when I moved back to Colorado from Montana, I just wanted to close the door on
19 that portion of my life and kind of make good, you know, put some good karma back into
20 the well through what I was writing and different actions that I was doing to kind of make
21 up just karmically in, you know, my own psyche?

22 BY [REDACTED] :

23 Q Understood.

24 So Elias Alias and Ernie T., they were living there at the time that you were there?

25 A Right. But you have to understand, it was a sprawling property. So I lived

1 on one side of, like, this kind of small hill, mountain, and they were over on the other
2 side. It was on the same property, but you couldn't like -- it wasn't like they were
3 necessarily next-door neighbors like you would think of a next-door neighbor in an urban
4 environment.

5 Q Understood.

6 And then another thing that you said when we talked through your general
7 responsibilities, you described yourself as the low man on the totem pole.

8 Can you give us a sense of kind of what the organizational chart was at the time
9 that you were there?

10 A I can only really give you a glimpse into, like, the people that were in charge
11 of writing -- you know, doing the media side of things. We were the writers. So I have
12 a good notion of that. The rest is just through hearsay and, you know, speaking with
13 Stewart and helping in an administrative assistant type capacity, but I may not -- you
14 know, I don't have firsthand knowledge necessarily of that other aspect.

15 Q Sure.

16 A But, as far as the kind of editorial hierarchy of what I would call the media
17 arm of the Oath Keepers, Stewart is A-number one. Right. He's at the very top. In
18 the end, every editorial decision, every decision made within Oath Keepers, from my
19 experience, came directly from Stewart.

20 And so there was -- Elias had been there the longest. Brandon Smith is a writer.
21 I've seen his articles. I don't have any contact with him anymore, but I know he's
22 written for Zero Hedge, I believe, and I've seen some -- one of his articles on Drudge
23 Report just as a standalone article. I have no idea what outlet he's doing that with. He
24 lived on property with Stewart Rhodes. He lived in a trailer on the family property that
25 Stewart and his family lived on.

1 There was also another gentleman by the name of Shorty, I believe. He went by
2 that. There was a lot of aliases used. So I never knew Elias Alias's real name. I never
3 knew Shorty's real name.

4 That was another person who lived in the bunkhouse, and I remember he was a
5 novelist. He had written a fiction book or two, but that's all I know about him. And he
6 kind of -- it seemed to me like he also -- Stewart liked to have people around him and his
7 family to kind of provide security, I think, in his own vision of things.

8 Q Uh-huh.

9 A So Shorty, you know, never really left the property except to go shopping
10 and stuff. He never went out on, you know, location. And actually most of the other
11 writers would not go with Stewart on location. I was the only one saying: All right, I'll
12 go.

13 And part of that is just due to I had very little traveling I've ever done in my life,
14 and this gave me an opportunity to fly all over the country and see things. You know,
15 it's my first time in Washington. So, you know, I took that as an opportunity to go see
16 the country a little bit.

17 Q Did he expect you to provide security when you were traveling with him?

18 A Um, he talked about it. I didn't really take it serious.

19 So, just in my own personal life history, I've been a martial artist since I was
20 12 years old. I did competitive judo through the Kodokan in Japan and the USJA, United
21 States Judo Association, here. I trained under an Olympic coach, and we -- you know, at
22 one point, we were doing the national team. I've trained a lot with the Olympic Training
23 Center in Colorado Springs. I've gone on to become a Muay Thai coach when I could
24 walk and, you know, competed in Muay Thai and kickboxing and boxing matches as a
25 sport. So my whole life I've always kind of done that as a sports outlet, my athletic

1 outlet.

2 So Stewart was aware of that because I was -- when I was first starting up with the
3 Oath Keepers, I had some of my last professional fights up in Montana, and -- so he had
4 mentioned it, but I don't really -- you know, I don't think Stewart really needed all that
5 much security. He wasn't at that point -- you know, I saw it as delusions of grandeur
6 really.

7 Q Got it.

8 You've mentioned a couple of people who have used aliases, and it seems like,
9 even to their close associates at the time, they wouldn't reveal who they were.

10 Do you have a sense of why people were hiding their identity, multiple people?

11 A I don't know. You know, I wondered that. And, you know, I came to this
12 as kind of a writer to begin with. I was doing writing beforehand, and I always wrote
13 under my name and -- you know, because you have to own what you write in the end. I
14 never asked about it, and it never really came up. But I did wonder about it, but I don't
15 have any good answers.

16 Q Was it common from what you saw across the Oath Keepers organization for
17 people to use aliases?

18 A I would say it was more common not to. There was certainly a segment
19 across membership that did, and I just assumed that was because they would have some
20 sort of -- you know, they didn't want it outed that they held the beliefs that they did.
21 But that's just assumption on my behalf. I really have no actual idea.

22 Q Sure. I understand.

23 So I have a couple of questions about kind of the organizational structure of the
24 Oath Keepers, and I understand that you had a particular vantage point. So, if you don't
25 know the answer to some of these questions or if you aren't familiar with the documents

1 that I'm referencing, then that's totally fine, and we can move on. But are you familiar
2 with any of the governing documents of the Oath Keepers?

3 A I'm familiar with the information that was included on the website, you
4 know, specifically the orders that they will not follow, just because I was always working
5 on the website and having to answer questions so I needed to know about it. So, yes,
6 I'm familiar with that particular piece.

7 Q Great. And we'll go into that particular document in a little bit.

8 Was there a board of directors or any other kind of leadership body?

9 A Yes. From my understanding -- and, again, I've only gleaned this from
10 doing, you know, administrative type assisting, but there was -- at least in my
11 understanding, and, you know, I don't know for sure because I didn't participate on
12 boards or anything like that. But my understanding was you had Stewart right at the top
13 and then you had a national board of directors, and that board of directors would often
14 be a revolving door. There was kind of a honeymoon period where people would come
15 in and be very excited, but over time they would kind of, I think, get a more realistic
16 understanding of the happenings and felt it wasn't for them, and they would quickly
17 move on.

18 Q Can you elaborate on that?

19 A I believe that, you know, Stewart would really kind of target different people
20 to be on the board and kind of court them to do this, and I think, when they realized he
21 was -- in my opinion -- again, this is all my opinion of it -- you know, he was more
22 interested in making money and building memberships and catering to that base with
23 events like Bundy Ranch. I mean, once he saw what happened with Bundy Ranch, there
24 was a quick succession of standoffs, and I think he found that those standoffs resounded
25 with a certain segment of that community that he was drawing membership fees from

1 and donations and such. And he saw that as an opportunity to really, you know, further
2 membership and further donations, and as he began doing more and more standoffs, a
3 lot of those -- you know, say the board of directors that was there kind of when I first
4 started, they started kind of filtering off because they didn't want to go in the direction of
5 standoffs and, you know, kind of this violent edge and turning harder and harder right.

6 So Stewart, in my thought process, found the people that were okay with that and
7 kind of put them in place. Now, back to the original question, you had Stewart up top.
8 You had the national board of directors. Then you had State chapters in States where
9 there were active chapters. That was kind of modeled on that national model. And
10 then, from that State organization, you had county chapters. So it was kind of an
11 umbrella effect going down.

12 Q Sure.

13 Do you remember who was on the national board of directors at the time that you
14 were there?

15 A I have no idea. I think I've mentioned it before, I have certain issues with
16 remembering dates and names. I have more of a photographic memory for faces and
17 scenes, but I can't even tell you what my daughters' birthdays are because I just -- my
18 brain is not wired for numbers and names. So that's going to be something that's going
19 to be difficult for me to do.

20 Q Sure. No problem.

21 Were there other employees affiliated with the national organization? I think
22 you've mentioned a couple of editors and writers.

23 A Yeah. The other employees were located in the Las Vegas area that I was
24 aware of, and they kind of handled the web mastering, the process, the IT of the process
25 that allowed for people to purchase memberships and do donations through the website

1 and, you know, working with Stripe and the different merchant services. They would
2 send out the membership card and certificates and some of the, what Stewart would call
3 swag, which is, you know, the Oath Keepers' shirts and hats and patches, and stuff like
4 that.

5 Q Got it.

6 And I know you mentioned that you have difficulty with names, but do you
7 remember any of those names?

8 A I don't. I do remember it was a -- I found it ironic; it was a gay couple.
9 And because of some of the stances that Stewart had made publicly -- and, you know, this
10 is an issue that we had talked in private about because I myself am queer. And so it was
11 really kind of eye-opening for me to talk with Stewart where, you know, he would put on
12 this big public front that, you know, he was very right wing and kind of toeing that line,
13 but I don't know if he really cared all that much about it in the end. It was just what
14 resounded with the base in my thought process, in my opinion.

15 Q Got it.

16 In terms of salaries for employees, do you have a sense of where that money
17 came from?

18 A I believe the only money coming in was from donations and membership
19 drives and fundraisers. So I believe it all came from the same source. We were not
20 selling advertising on the website. There may have been some money coming in from
21 the swag that was being sold, the merchandise, but I don't believe it was much compared
22 to the donation influx that would happen after something like Bundy Ranch.

23 Q Understood.

24 Can you tell me about the general level of enthusiasm and participation among
25 Oath Keepers members to the extent that you recall? Were there a lot of members who

1 signed up and paid dues but then never came to in-person events. Or was there more
2 of a 1-to-1 ratio?

3 A If I'm understanding your question correctly, you're asking if what was
4 presented with an optics matched up with what actually happened in real life. Is that
5 what you're asking? Maybe I'm not misunderstanding your question.

6 Q I think that's a fair paraphrasing.

7 A Okay. So people were certainly excited online. There were a lot of what I
8 would term "keyboard lawyers" that were very enthusiastic online and trolling on
9 comments and message boards, and they used cap locks a lot in their posts.

10 But, when it comes to the actual events, we were lucky to get a dozen actual Oath
11 Keeper members, and usually it was like four or five that would actually show up to these
12 callouts, as Stewart would call them, or calls to action. Now, there was a lot of people
13 on the peripheral that would show up as well, but those oftentimes were wild cards.
14 There was a lot of unstable individuals and such that would show up to those things.

15 But Stewart was very good at spinning the optics and very aware of the optics, and
16 when you look at one of Stewart's callouts, there's kind of a formula to it. You know, he
17 talks about how he has these very squared away individuals with these great skill sets,
18 and they're calm and stone-faced patriot types. And, you know, talking and doing the
19 callout after making that introduction, he does the callout. But it always ends -- every
20 one of these ends with: Even if you're not able to make it, we need you to do your part
21 by donating, by providing for these people that I just described to go and get there.

22 So really, you know, that was kind of the big draw. It was a membership push.
23 It was a money push.

24 Q Uh-huh. Got it.

25 So you've mentioned State and county chapters of the organization as well. Can

1 you talk about the relationship between the national organization and the State and
2 county chapters?

3 A Well, as with all things Oath Keepers, Stewart really kind of set things up that
4 he was the end-all be-all. He was the president of the Oath Keepers with veto power
5 over everything. So most of the stuff that happened where there was organization, it
6 happened on a county level and on a local level, but oftentimes these groups had become
7 disenfranchised. We saw this with Josephine County that held the Sugar Pine Mine
8 standoff that happened where they actually broke off, used the same kind of modeling
9 that Stewart had kind of showed them and, you know, put in the time to figure out, and
10 they created the Pacific Patriot Network, and we saw the splintering happening quite a bit
11 where you would get a really good county group going that was very engaged and very
12 active on a political level, but they would, for some reason or another, become
13 disenfranchised with Stewart specifically because it became very much -- it was very
14 much, in my opinion, a cult of personality, and cults of personality only last so long before
15 people become disenfranchised, and I believe that was what was happening. And,
16 unfortunately, that led to more splintering of these groups.

17 Q Do you have a sense of how much Mr. Rhodes was aware of what the State
18 and local chapters were actually doing?

19 A I think he had a good handle on that because there was a lot of
20 communication, at least during the time -- the cycles where he was communicating
21 actively. Stewart oftentimes would come into periods of time where he would kind of
22 drop off of the radar for weeks to, you know, a month or so at a time. This happened
23 right after Bundy Ranch, and I saw it happen a couple of times where he kind of went
24 incommunicado, and I would be left with, you know, having some of these local
25 leaderships of the groups calling me up: Hey, I can't get ahold of Stewart; I don't know

1 where Stewart is. And I really had no good answers to give them because I didn't know.
2 I just knew that, you know, he might be around. I don't know. But he's not answering
3 his phone or he's not answering his email; I know that.

4 So that led -- a lot of that type of behavior led to a lot of disenfranchisement too.

5 Q Understood.

6 A But I do think he -- sorry. To get back to what you were asking, I do think
7 that he communicated and, you know, he was always on the phone. I mean, I think, at
8 one point, he even had two phones where he would talk to different groups, especially
9 around a big event like a standoff. He was always on the phone, always talking to local
10 leadership, always having these group calls.

11 Back in the day, it would be more from like a week or GoTo Meeting type -- you
12 know, web conference type thing. I think it kind of dovetailed to more of a
13 signal-encrypted base, but that came after my time really. Really, when I was there it
14 was mostly, you know, go to meeting and different applications like that where you could
15 have, you know, a large group of people, one speaker, and then you could mute and
16 unmute, much like a Zoom meeting but without necessarily, you know, everyone having a
17 camera, kind of the precursors of Zoom.

18 Q While you were there, were there particular chapters that Stewart Rhodes
19 was more in contact with or chapters that were just larger and more active in general?

20 A Josephine County was a flagship chapter for a while. They're the ones who
21 kind of did the Sugar Pine Mine. There were some in Appalachia, Texas, Upstate New
22 York. Yeah, I mean, it just depended -- the ones he had the most communication with
23 were the ones that were doing more things. You know, if they were running people for
24 local office or, you know, if they had good connections, an in with local law enforcement,
25 you know, he would work those, especially if they were doing fundraising dinners. Like

1 Upstate New York chapter would do a lot of fundraising dinners and such. And then if
2 there was an event happening, you know, whatever chapters are around that event, he
3 was in contact with them quite a bit.

4 Q Got it.

5 And, in your role as national media director, did you work with any of the regional
6 chapters in terms of producing content for them?

7 A Not that I recall. I mean, I certainly did interviews with them. You know, I
8 went to them for the story as to what was actually happening, what was the background
9 information, stuff like that. I don't -- you know, I mean, I didn't really do much other
10 than writing these stories and, you know, facilitating Stewart communicating with them.
11 That just wasn't in the scope of my job, so, you know, outside of, you know, someone
12 interviewing someone to create an article or something, you know. But. When I
13 would go to these events, then I certainly would have communication with them then.
14 But it was more like I was attached to Stewart, you know, as he was doing his thing, or I
15 was just there on my own, and I was just working on the story.

16 Q Understood.

17 Let's see. Can you tell us about how the Oath Keepers kind of viewed itself in
18 relation to law enforcement and how Stewart Rhodes specifically viewed that
19 relationship?

20 A So, if I'm understanding your question correctly, you're speaking on, like, the
21 courting of local sheriff's departments, along with the membership, you know, wanting to
22 have -- actively seeking law enforcement, whether that be Active Duty now or previous.
23 I can speak on that a bit from just what I saw.

24 Starting back with Bundy Ranch, when I was not working for the Oath Keepers, I
25 was attached to Stewart during that whole period of time, and there were many trips that

1 we made to the Las Vegas Airport to pick up what was termed "constitutional sheriffs."
2 And this goes back to the Richard Mack constitutional sheriffs, which is kind of a segment
3 that overlaps the militia community and the sovereign citizens community. It's just kind
4 of there.

5 So Stewart would kind of find local, specifically rural, sheriffs that seemed to
6 resonate with his messaging, and so, at Bundy Ranch, we would go to the airport and pick
7 these sheriffs up and shuttle them to hotels and stuff and bring them to speaking
8 engagements during Bundy Ranch. You know, he always wanted to kind of court these
9 sheriff departments. When we went out and covered the -- what was the county clerk?

10 Mr. Prober. Kentucky.

11 Mr. Van Tatenhove. In Kentucky. When we went out to do that, the county
12 clerk -- you know, he tried to offer to do security for the county clerk, which she did not
13 want anything to do with, and that's kind of an ongoing theme that we see. So, instead
14 of just making a wasted trip, Stewart and those of us that were with him went directly to
15 the county sheriff's department and just started hanging out with them and actually was
16 invited out on a manhunt later that night because they had great night vision gear and
17 they had, you know, more sophisticated equipment than those law enforcement officials
18 had because it was such a rural community that they were basically deputized and helped
19 to, you know, go after -- I think it was some -- it was an addict that had some violent
20 outbursts or something.

21 But that was -- you know, that was par for the course. You know, Stewart was
22 always trying to find, you know, specifically sheriffs because that ties into the narrative of
23 the sheriff is the most powerful elected official in a county. And that's part of their, you
24 know, messaging, so he was always going after that. And then also, you know, with
25 previous military or Active Duty military, but yeah.

1 Does that answer your question?

2 Q Yes. Can you elaborate on that last point about military and Active Duty?

3 A I never really saw much of that. I'm sure there were people out there, but
4 that was more just like in, you know, kind of a propaganda point where they're going
5 after -- and, again, I'm sure there were. Now, there were a lot more military veterans
6 that had just gotten off service, and they had just gotten back home, and they would kind
7 of tie in and see what Oath Keepers was like. But a lot of these people, if they were
8 what I would consider squared away, in that, you know, they kind of -- can I swear here?
9 They have got their stuff together. You know, those people would not last long because
10 they would see it for what it was and quickly be, like: I don't need to be here.

11 It was more of the arm chair warriors and kind of, if they were veterans, the ones
12 that did more, including Stewart Rhodes himself -- Stewart Rhodes is not a combat
13 veteran. He washed out of airborne school when he was injured, and he shot his own
14 eye out with a Derringer.

15 So, you know, it's just -- a lot of the membership, even though the optics are, you
16 know, these are good, squared away combat veterans, you know, at the spear's tip, the
17 truth is it really wasn't like that so much. It was more of these kind of people on the
18 fringes, which bring their own inherent dangers with them, in my opinion.

19 Q Can you elaborate on that last point?

20 A Like what we saw at Bundy Ranch with the couple that had kind of -- they
21 weren't involved with any group, but they connected with the messaging of what was
22 happening. And they went to Bundy Ranch, and they were actually kicked out of the
23 camp at Bundy Ranch, and they went to that CiCi's Pizza place outside of Las Vegas and
24 shot sheriff's deputies, killed them. That -- I think there's a lot more opportunity for that
25 type of stuff to happen than worrying about, you know, actual combat veterans.

1 Q Sure. That is a really helpful description.

2 So you mentioned that it was kind of par for the course for Oath Keepers to work
3 directly with local law enforcement or sheriffs to kind of advance their own goals or
4 prepare for events and that sort of thing. Are there other examples that you can think
5 of?

6 A Well, Denny Peyman was a sheriff out of Kentucky as well. He went to
7 Bundy Ranch, and, you know, there was a rapport between him and Stewart, and I
8 connected with him pretty well too. He had just arrested the chief -- what would be like
9 a county commissioner in Kentucky? They have got a special term for it, but it's basically
10 a county commissioner, like the top elected official. He arrested that person and also
11 the treasurer in open session on corruption charges, and so they had taken away all of
12 Sheriff Peyman's funding, and he was driving around in an old -- like, not a good drug
13 dealer's car, but a bad drug dealer's car. It was a Mustang with a door that wouldn't
14 shut, and they took all the funding away from him.

15 So I told Stewart: Hey, do you know about this story? Do you know that
16 they're doing this? And so he actually -- Stewart paid for me to go out there and kind of
17 see what was happening, write stories about it. So that would be an example.

18 You know, really, it's the Richard Mack. He had close ties to Richard Mack.
19 They were in communication often, and, you know, their ideology aligned, so it was a
20 convenient relationship for both of them.

21 Q When you say "their ideology aligned," you mentioned earlier this idea that
22 sheriffs are the most important or powerful --

23 A Well, that's what they're saying.

24 Q Right. Is that the ideology that you're talking about, or is there more?

25 A Well, I mean, that's the basis of that kind of working in tandem, you know,

1 the -- and Richard Mack kind of laid that out in his writings, in his books that he sells.

2 Q Uh-huh.

3 Going back to your point about there not actually being that many combat
4 veterans in the Oath Keepers, were there efforts to conduct training for Oath Keepers
5 members with either veterans or Active Duty military?

6 A There were certainly a lot of trainings, kind of this cottage industry that
7 sprung up around kind of these groups where there are a lot of trainings that happened
8 out in the field. As part of my job, I would go and partake in these trainings. Stewart
9 would often come with me to them, but he never actually did the trainings. He'd go and
10 have pictures taken and whatnot. You know, we would set up a tent or something, but
11 then, at the end of the day, he would go and stay at a hotel and eat at Applebee's.

12 So there are a lot of training opportunities, and there's a lot of people who do
13 that. Stewart is not necessarily one of them. I think a lot of them are put on by
14 veterans, but I'm not exactly sure because I was not a veteran myself. So, you know, I
15 assume that they were, but, you know -- and it was, you know, messaging like that, but I
16 don't know for sure. But there were everything from night operations to survival stuff,
17 firearms training. There's a whole host of trainings that one can find in those
18 communities.

19 Q And when they put on these trainings, what were they preparing for?
20 What was the message that was given out?

21 A They were specifically vague about it a lot of times. A lot of it had to do
22 with community preparedness. Stewart was very hesitant for a long time to even
23 mention the word "militia" because of the negative connotations. So, in my mind, in my
24 thinking, he kind of wrapped it in this community preparedness narrative where you're
25 able to go out and do militia-style trainings but say: Oh, well, this is actually for natural

1 disaster training or, you know, medical training. But, you know, I don't know how much
2 sniper trainings someone needs to get through a natural disaster.

3 Q That's helpful.

4 Can you elaborate a little bit more on the use of the concept of community
5 preparedness? And, if you would just peel back one layer, if there's something else
6 underneath.

7 A Just talking about how they wrapped it in the -- is that what you mean?

8 Q Yeah. Other examples of how it was apparent that this was not necessarily
9 about natural disaster preparation.

10 A Right. Well, just the nature of the trainings themselves. I mean, it was
11 trainings from everything to knife fighting to winter survival to medical training, basic first
12 aid and more advanced, you know. But it was oftentimes focused on -- if we were going
13 to do, like, a trauma training, it was always geared around, like, gunshot wounds or
14 traumas that you would find in a combat situation.

15 There was a lot of trainings on firearms, and, you know, it started off with just
16 basic firearm and safety stuff, but then it turned into, you know, sniper work and such,
17 so -- but he found that it was much easier to discuss these trainings and kind of, you
18 know, wrap it in the trifold brochure that you saw, the CPT teams, which is the
19 community preparedness teams, that they put out after Ferguson. They had taken a lot
20 of that -- all of that -- the pictures and stuff that they had taken. And that wasn't me. I
21 wasn't actually involved with the Ferguson one.

22 But I remember coming in, and they had these, like, nice glossy trifold brochures
23 talking about how to set up these training groups within your own community. So he
24 was really trying to get people to organize on their own but, in the end, you know, pay
25 dues to him and, you know, communicate with him once they have got these groups up

1 and running, so --

2 Q That's helpful.

3 You mentioned that you weren't sure if people providing the trainings were
4 veterans, but do you have a sense of what they were? Like, were they --

5 A They seemed -- well, the training people -- generally the ones running the
6 trainings were not what I would think of as typical Oath Keeper members. They seemed
7 like they were squared away veterans, you know, that were trying to find a way to make a
8 living after, you know, retiring from being warfighters, and they found that there's this
9 community up, you know, in the Pacific Northwest or wherever these rural communities
10 may be, where they can, you know, make a living by sharing some of the basic skill sets
11 that they had acquired.

12 Q Got it.

13 You mentioned that Stewart Rhodes was reluctant to characterize the Oath
14 Keepers as a militia. Did he ever characterize it as a militia while you were --

15 A Not that I saw. I have seen more recently since breaking ties that he seems
16 to have gotten more bold in his messaging, specifically in some of the findings that you
17 guys have that have been released publicly, where he's using the terminology "militia"
18 when he's talking about mustering on, you know, at the State capitals and such. I
19 remember, you know, saying out loud to myself: Wow, he's getting a lot more bold with
20 that.

21 You know, there was kind of a pushback after the nineties where, you know, it
22 became more taboo of a topic. But he seems, you know, in all things to have become
23 more emboldened by, you know, the lead up to what happened that his verbiage at least
24 has changed because I do remember, like, oh, wow, he's actually using the word "militia"
25 now.

1 Mr. Prober. And, just to clarify, I think when you said findings, you were
2 referring to the exhibit documents that the committee had provided which were postings
3 and calls to action on the Oath Keepers website?

4 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Right.

5 Mr. Prober. Correct?

6 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yeah. When going through it, I was, like: Oh, wait, look
7 at this. He's actually saying militia.

8 BY [REDACTED]:

9 Q Help me understand what he thought constituted a militia when you were
10 there and why he was reluctant to use that term to characterize the Oath Keepers and
11 the significance of his use of that term now?

12 A I'm hesitant to tell you what he thought because I don't really know what his
13 thoughts were. I know that he was -- you know, he would say things like: Let's not use
14 the word "militia." You know, we need to use "community preparedness." We need
15 to use different verbiage as to not to get that kind of, you know, negative reaction that
16 had come from the nineties.

17 Q Understood.

18 So, to you, it seems significant now that, you know, he's felt emboldened enough
19 to openly use the term "militia"?

20 A I think so, yeah.

21 Q Great.

22 Are you familiar with the term "Patriot Movement" or that movement in general?

23 A In general, yes.

24 Q Can you describe where you think the Oath Keepers fall within that
25 movement?

1 A You know, I think it kind of encompasses a large swath of right-wing
2 ideology, and I think you kind of have your sovereign citizens. You've got your -- what I
3 would term as a militia, but, you know, they don't like to call it that. So you have your
4 Three Percenters and, you know, your Oath Keepers and the various groups that train and
5 basically function like a militia. You have your constitutional sheriffs. You have your
6 sovereign citizens. They all kind of -- it kind of makes up a geography, and so I would
7 use that Patriot Movement as kind of a general term for that geography.

8 Q That's helpful. Thank you.

9 A And then you also have within that, like, Chuck Baldwin and some of the
10 churches, the patriot churches, that key in on that as well.

11 Q I do want to follow up on that last point, but I don't want to preempt a larger
12 discussion of kind of the network of the Patriot Movement, but I would like to follow up
13 on that in a little bit.

14 I just want to ask a couple of quick followup questions.

15 You mentioned that Rhodes would run candidates for office. What did that
16 mean?

17 A So he would encourage different members that showed interest in running
18 for local elections to run or, you know, he would endorse certain candidates if they were
19 already running on their own but aligned ideologically.

20 There's one instance I can think of where that would apply, and that was the
21 sheriff -- and I forget the county. It's right outside of Plains, Montana. There was a
22 sheriff that he -- and the reason I claim it is because he relayed to me that he helped to
23 get him elected; you know, he helped with campaigning and such.

24 And there was a time where there was a Vietnam -- or sorry -- it was a World War
25 II veteran who he brought to, you know, Washington for a protest and stuff. His name

1 was Reny (ph) maybe. I don't remember. And Reny (ph) had died, and he wanted to
2 be buried next to his wife on the property, and it was against whatever county regulation
3 to just put someone in the ground next to their wife there.

4 So I remember Stewart called for people to go show up and just go and dig a hole
5 and bury him, and he was communicating with the sheriff. And I remember
6 conversation of: You know, I helped get you here, and, you know, there will be
7 pushback if you don't just let us do this.

8 So he kind of exerted that influence to make sure that that happened, and they
9 did actually bury the guy next to his wife.

10 Q Wow. That's a really helpful example.

11 And then I wanted to follow up, you mentioned the use of GoTo Meeting. How
12 did the Oath Keepers use GoTo Meeting? And were there other platforms that were
13 commonly used --

14 A Yeah, I mean --

15 Q -- to communicate among members?

16 A Sorry. I didn't mean to jump over you there.

17 Yes, they would use GoTo Meeting. They would use like -- and I may have the
18 wrong names of them, but it was -- you know, there was a whole bunch of kind of the
19 same thing, like Webex and different things like that where it was kind of a conference
20 call, you know, piece of software that would reside on your laptop that you could -- you
21 know, people would have an 800 number to call in with a pin number to get admitted
22 into a large listening room, and then you would have certain speakers that you could
23 allow, you know, turn the mic on and everyone would hear it, and then -- and I know
24 about this because I was the person when, you know, they were having big calls like this
25 for a couple of times, a few times anyway, where I had to run that. You know, I never

1 spoke on any of them because that wasn't my gig, but I was the one, you know: All
2 right. Jumping to this speaker now, and then, you know, this speaker, and we have got
3 to mute this guy off.

4 So they would use that, you know, before big events. There was always a lot of
5 communication before events were going down where, you know, he was being sure to
6 reach out to local chapters and local leadership and really kind of make sure everything
7 was dialed in, and they used those quite often for that.

8 Q Do you remember if any active law enforcement or elected officials would
9 join those calls?

10 A I can't recall an actual Active Duty law enforcement. Certainly retired law
11 enforcement. Possibly some local lawmakers, you know, because they did work on
12 things. There was an incident at Malheur that I was more involved with, and Stewart
13 did come in on the call, but there were three carloads of women and children that
14 wanted to get out the day that Lavoy Finicum had been shot, and the word we were
15 getting -- I had just returned. I had gone out there to interview Lavoy and everyone. I
16 was one of the last people he talked to before he was shot. And so I had to go back
17 because there was a mountain lion attack on the horses directly across the meadow from
18 where my daughters and wife were. So I had to get back. And so I drove back, and I
19 believe it was like the next night I had received a call from a member of the community
20 kind of letting me know that this was happening. There was these women and children
21 that wanted to get out, and, you know, could we get ahold of Stewart. I think it was
22 Matt Shea (ph) may have been on the call and Michelle Fournier (ph) out of Vegas. She
23 is now a city councilwoman, but she was like a -- I don't remember what her title was,
24 and, you know, people on the ground there.

25 And I guess the guys that were still left there at the refuge didn't want to let them

1 go, but we were able to, you know, through a many hour call to different people on the
2 ground and such were able to get them out, and they had to drive through barbed wire,
3 and they lost one of the cars doing it. So they just got everyone in two cars instead of
4 three and got them out, you know.

5 And so that would be an example that I know of personally where there were
6 some, you know, local legislators and politicians that were involved in a call like that.

7 Q Great. That's a really helpful example.

8 From your vantage point as national media director, what were the social media
9 platforms that the Oath Keepers were using? How were they getting their message out?

1

2 [11:26 a.m.]

3 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Sure. Mostly, their flagship was the website itself.
4 Facebook really was where I think the most of the traffic was. But, you know, YouTube
5 was also something that they used, but not as effectively as Facebook, because you had
6 your private Oath Keepers group within Facebook, and just -- that's where everybody was
7 at that point in time.

8 And then the website. They never really figured Twitter out. You know, they
9 never seemed to be very good at Twitter. And there really wasn't much else out there
10 at the time, I believe.

11 [REDACTED] Got it.

12 Can you kind of --

13 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Can I -- hi. I'm just wondering who you are.

14 [REDACTED] Yeah. Sorry. We have another reporter joining us. They'll
15 switch off so they can take breaks.

16 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Oh, okay, okay. I just wasn't sure what was going on.

17 [REDACTED] No problem. Sorry about that.

18 BY [REDACTED]

19 Q So can you give us a general sense of what the content strategy was when
20 you were national media director?

21 A It was really just, as I had mentioned earlier, finding stories that would
22 resound to the base and then trying to find a way to kind of include Oath Keeper
23 messaging in that, you know, whether that be -- you know, as I was leaving, it
24 became -- at first, it was kind of the Jade Helm stuff, which is where you see, kind of,
25 those orders were not going to follow. That kind of was their main platform for a while.

1 And that had to do with the conspiracy theories revolving around the Jade Helm trainings
2 and whatnot.

3 A lot of it has to do with -- you know, it's a ripple effect. If Alex Jones is talking
4 about it, it's big. And then Stewart will, you know, start throwing things in that direction
5 as well. And, you know, depending on where they were in their interpersonal
6 dynamics -- because they kind of had an on-again, off-again relationship. They work real
7 well together when it's in their common interest, but there were times that they had kind
8 of blacklisted each other from their social media sites and whatnot.

9 So kind of just seeing what was out there and what was gaining traction with, you
10 know, InfoWars or the actual news, you know, some of the outlets out there, but Drudge
11 Report as well and just national media, you know.

12 And that evolves over time. It became more extreme over time. You went
13 from, you know, kind of, this U.N. disarming of the United States citizens to, you know,
14 the immigration issues at the border, where it was, you know, them saying these are
15 rapists and killers and whatnot, very dehumanizing, to, you know, where we wound up
16 recently, with, you know, the election stolen and whatnot. But it seemed to make a
17 progression. It started off, you know, fairly innocuous as far as conspiracy theories go,
18 to, you know -- and I'll say that I underestimated things, I guess.

19 I think I got completely off track there. I'm sorry.

20 Q No, that's okay. It's all very compelling.

21 So I don't think I -- well, I wanted to return to one point. You mentioned the use
22 of Facebook earlier and private Oath Keepers' groups. Were there any issues with
23 Facebook moderation that you saw during that time?

24 A I don't think so. They really didn't clamp down on things until well after I
25 was gone. It was kind of the wild West for a while, you know, with the stuff that you

1 would see Alex Jones posting and everything else. And all that clampdown kind of came
2 down -- now, they did have issues, you know, they were starting -- when I was there, they
3 were starting to see issues. Like, at one point, they could do Paypal for donations.
4 Then Paypal said no, and they had to move to Stripe. So it was more on that back end
5 that I had -- that I saw.

6 And, you know, shortly thereafter, you know, after I had left, when they started,
7 you know, talking with Richard Spencer and whatnot, I think they got deplatformed fairly
8 quickly, but I don't really know.

9 Mr. Prober. And, Jason, are you saying that based on firsthand knowledge or just
10 from what you saw publicly after you left?

11 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Oh, yeah, just completely what I saw publicly. I have
12 no -- and I'll say it as many times as I need to -- I have no firsthand, direct knowledge from
13 when I left going forward. Everything from me leaving Montana on is pure speculation.

14 [REDACTED] Understood. But your perspective from your time --

15 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yeah, I mean, I do have a bit of historical perspective, so --

16 [REDACTED] Right. And it's helpful for us to learn about that, to understand
17 what we know about what they were doing.

18 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Okay.

19 [REDACTED] So I think I'm going to turn it over to [REDACTED], who is going to go
20 into more detail about many of the topics that we just talked about.

21 But I'll hand it over to you.

22 [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

23 Mr. Prober. Would it be possible -- is now an okay time to take a very short
24 break?

25 [REDACTED] Yeah. Absolutely. We'll go off the record.

1 [Recess.]

2 [REDACTED] So we'll go back on the record.

3 [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED] All right, great.

5 BY [REDACTED]

6 Q Well, I was hoping that we could broaden our conversation a little bit to talk
7 about what you understand to be the motivating ideology of the Oath Keepers and of
8 Stewart Rhodes, to help us get a better understanding from your perspective.

9 So when you first became involved with observing the Oath Keepers and
10 eventually becoming an employee during the Bundy ranch standoff, what would you say
11 you saw as the predominant messaging that was emphasized by the organization?

12 A The messaging and the motivation, in my opinion, are two separate things.

13 Q Okay.

14 A The messaging was very much, we're the tip of the spear. We're going to
15 be the people to stand up and literally engage in fighting for, you know, the constitutional
16 rights and such.

17 And, now, this is when Bundy ranch was very active, and you have to understand, I
18 came into it after that perceived victory. So, you know, everyone was kind of riding high
19 on that. So the messaging was, you know, we won, we stood down the Federal
20 Government, and we're going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to be the
21 tip of the spear that's engaging with the Federal Government on behalf of, you know,
22 good Americans everywhere.

23 But, generally speaking, that was a very specific demographic that they were
24 representing that was, you know, fairly right-wing at the time, even more so now, and
25 even, you know, a very nationalist tone as of late. And, again, I don't have any actual

1 firsthand knowledge of that. That's just me coming to that conclusion from public
2 releases.

3 The internal motivations of Stewart Rhodes, I think, are something completely
4 different. And I think those are driven by money and a perceived sense of power and,
5 kind of, a feeding of an ego with being this clandestine paramilitary leader.

6 Q That's really interesting. There are a couple points I want to follow up on
7 there.

8 The first was, you mentioned tip of the spear that would actually engage in
9 fighting against -- or, kind of, in defense of constitutional rights. Was there a
10 conversation during your time with Oath Keepers about who you would be fighting
11 against, who the organization would be?

12 A It was mostly just a blanket, you know, catch-all of the Federal Government
13 or the Feds, whether that be -- you know, a lot of it, because there was a lot of land-use
14 issues, that originally those first standoffs were around land-use issues and cattle grazing
15 and such.

16 So, in the very beginning, it was very much Bureau of Land Management, Forest
17 Service law enforcement, and, you know, agencies like that. Yeah. In my experience, it
18 was mostly those types of agencies.

19 And I'm sorry. What was the second part of the question?

20 Q I think that pretty much answered it.

21 A Okay.

22 Q Yeah. And we can get back to these points too.

23 You mentioned earlier some conspiracy theories, Jade Helm. So were there any
24 particular conspiracy theories that were really powerful motivators to the Oath Keepers
25 when you first started becoming more closely involved?

1 A Yeah. It was Jade Helm, you know, the idea, the notion that they were
2 going to take big-box shops like Walmart, which supposedly had tunnel systems
3 underneath them, and create these U.N. camps.

4 You know, the messaging up to Bundy ranch really was this catch-all of the U.N.
5 You know, the U.N. white hats were going to come in, and it was this globalist cabal that
6 was, you know, conspiring with Communists, whether that be Chinese or Russian, and,
7 you know, take over internally.

8 So it was a, you know -- the terminology they used often, you know, with Oath
9 Keepers and keeping your oath, was they focused very much on the "enemies, foreign
10 and domestic," which they saw as, you know, some sort of infiltration of the Federal
11 Government.

12 Q You mention globalist cabal, global communism. That seems a lot broader
13 than issues of land management and cattle grazing.

14 A Right.

15 Q What are your thoughts on, sort of, that frontline motivation of land
16 management issues versus some of what you just described, in terms of --

17 A So I think they -- Stewart -- when I say "they," I mean Stewart.

18 Q Uh-huh.

19 A Stewart kind of had this broad notion, and then, when the opportunity
20 arose, he focused in on that, and it got a lot of traction.

21 And I think that's where we see the evolution of the Oath Keepers. You know,
22 you kind of go from this broad notion to, oh, wait, here's a rancher in Nevada who's
23 having issues with land grazing rights and Bureau of Land Management and Forest
24 Service, so we're going to focus on that.

25 And I think -- you know, my opinion is, there was a financial windfall that

1 happened from the Bundy ranch, and that encouraged Stewart to find other
2 circumstances that are similar -- like we saw on Sugar Pine and White Hope, where, again,
3 it was, you know, mineral rights usage and such -- to kind of step off on to -- you know, to
4 make that next step to find the next incident, to find the next event or call to action.
5 Because each of these calls to action improved recognizability of the organization
6 publicly, it added to the coffers in that there were donations and memberships that were
7 generated, and it gave them kind of a -- what's the term I would use -- certain amount of
8 credit that, you know, they're doing these things and engaging, you know, the political
9 infrastructure as it is, you know.

10 Q So, just to make sure I understand you, the broad notion you're talking about
11 is some of the more conspiratorial, global cabal, global communism, and then they're
12 grafting onto specific instances -- or Stewart Rhodes is trying to graft those onto specific
13 instances of, sort of, pushback against perceived violation of constitutional rights?

14 A Yep. Yeah.

15 And, you know, these conspiracy theories, Stewart would -- and the community at
16 large would jump down these deep rabbit holes. You know, Bundy ranch, according to a
17 lot of conspiracy theories of people that you talk to that may have been there or whatnot,
18 you know, they're talking about how it really has to do with rare earth minerals used in,
19 you know, lithium batteries and nuclear weapons and such, that it really was an issue that
20 the Feds wanted to be able -- and I think it was specifically, like, Hillary -- some company
21 Hillary Clinton was associated with.

22 You know, these are deep conspiracy-theory rabbit holes that they kind of go
23 down and weave their narrative into. And I think that mostly comes from the success of
24 Alex Jones and using these conspiracy narratives to really make an emotional connection
25 with, you know, their supporters.

1 Q You just mentioned conspiracy theories around Hillary Clinton and how that
2 might be connected to some of these standoffs.

3 I'm wondering if Rhodes ever spoke about public figures like Secretary Clinton in a
4 way that was particularly powerful or --

5 A Egregious?

6 Q Sure.

7 A Yes. Absolutely.

8 There was a period of time where -- as I mentioned earlier, part of my job duties
9 was to create graphics. If you'll remember back to the Iraqi war, where, you know,
10 there was playing cards that were put out with, kind of, the who's who of the wanted list
11 that the allies were going after. Stewart thought that was a great idea, and he came to
12 me, pitching an idea that he wanted to do a playing-card deck of a similar nature but
13 with, you know, politicians that he didn't like -- and Hillary Clinton was, like, the top
14 queen, you know, queen of hearts -- you know, or the wanted posters he had suggested.

15 I told him flat-out that's just nothing I would do. So I just refused to do it. But
16 that's something that, for a period of time, he was very -- you know, he wanted to do kind
17 of a playing-card deck that he could distribute that basically put a target on these people,
18 I mean, in some ways.

19 Q Right. I mean, that seems like a pretty clear indication of violence. So did
20 you ever hear Rhodes talking about public figures to a level that called for violence?

21 A Well, he's on public record speaking -- and, yes, I've heard this echoed in
22 personal conversations, that Hillary Clinton should be tried -- you know, hung for treason.
23 You know, he would make very fantastical statements in that type of way.

24 Q So, trying to get a better sense of the timeline and how the timeline's related
25 to some of these fantastical statements making it into the public sphere, you described a

1 shift in messaging following the Bundy ranch standoff. Can you talk a little bit more
2 about that and why you think that occurred?

3 A It became -- yes, I can.

4 Things became more extreme. They became -- what's the term, I'm always
5 forgetting it, when you're talking about growing extremism? Radicalized. Things
6 became more and more radicalized. And I think that a lot of it comes from just, kind of,
7 the barometer reading of the culture, that particular culture.

8 Q Uh-huh.

9 A We saw the rise of the alt-right. We saw the rise of figures like Richard
10 Spencer, who -- you know, Stewart, when it became popular -- and Richard Spencer lived
11 in the next town over. He lived in Whitefish. We live outside of the Eureka area, so it
12 was the next town over. And I remember having conversations with Stewart, like, what
13 the hell are you doing? Why are you talking to a guy like this? What are you thinking?
14 And his answer basically was, you know, he's getting a lot of attention. Stewart was
15 always looking for where he could take and spin the optics and, kind of, ride on the
16 coattails of that attention.

17 And, you know, he provided security for Richard Spencer. That didn't work out
18 so well, because that's the day he got punched on camera, but --

19 Q Uh-huh.

20 A And then I think that kind of -- Stewart felt emboldened by, say, the legal
21 victories of the Bundys in court and, you know, what happened with Maliar. I think, in a
22 lot of ways, he was emboldened by there was no account held. You know, all of these
23 people -- at least the leadership got off scot-free, which just led them to, let's find that
24 next -- what's the next incident? What's the next event? What's the next standoff?

25 And I think it had more to do -- I don't think Stewart Rhodes is inherently, you

1 know, like, a Nazi, right? But because some of these people that I would classify as
2 Nazis are beginning to get this national attention and, you know, a lot of people listening
3 to what they're saying and, you know, a lot of potential for more money and perceived
4 power, he would move that direction.

5 Q That's really interesting.

6 So, for those years following the standoff, say, 2015-ish to 2018 when you kind of
7 stopped communicating at all with Rhodes, what was your impression of the threats that
8 Rhodes believed were most important to counter? Who were the enemies that America
9 had to grapple with?

10 A Towards the end of my tenure, it very much became -- and this is, you know,
11 when the Trump campaign was ramping up and such -- it was the undocumented
12 immigrants coming from the southern border. They became the devil.

13 Antifa -- I mean, I don't understand how this whole antifa -- I mean, they weren't
14 on the radar, you know, and I don't know what the actual structure and reality of antifa is,
15 but I don't think it's anywhere near what the conspiracy theories around them actually
16 are. You know, they suddenly became, like, the enemy.

17 But who are they? Who are they exactly? I don't know. I don't know if
18 Stewart knows. I don't think anyone really knows. It's just kind of, like, this catch-all
19 bogeyman that they can generate fear around to, again, raise funds and, you know, raise
20 membership and do these standoffs, you know, and -- you know, "We're going to provide
21 security for the patriot prayer circles."

22 So I think it's opportunistic in nature, that, you know, wherever those hotspots
23 are, they're going to alter their course to maximize membership and such.

24 Q So that threat matrix you just described seems a lot different than a singular,
25 sort of, anti-government focus on the Federal Government as the enemy.

1 In that new vision you're describing with antifa and undocumented immigrants,
2 where does the Federal Government fit in, in terms of being an enemy or an ally?

3 A Well, I mean, that -- I don't know. That's a confusing question, in that we
4 saw -- you know, again, I have no firsthand knowledge of this, but, I mean, the most
5 striking image to me for what happened on January 6th at the Capitol was a Capitol
6 officer being beaten with a flagpole that had a Blue Lives Matter flag on it.

7 I think that sums up, visually, kind of, the conundrum that's there, that, you know,
8 there's a certain amount of propaganda that's put out that they believe these things and
9 this is what it is, but when it comes down to it, it's really just what's convenient for them,
10 so what's going to further their agenda, and "they" being Stewart Rhodes, because in the
11 case of the Oath Keepers, Stewart Rhodes is the Oath Keepers.

12 Q So, given that, what did you see firsthand was the role that race and racism
13 played in Oath Keepers/Stewart Rhodes' messaging or in determining missions?

14 Because we've heard a lot about, sort of, constitutionalism and race-neutrality.
15 And some of what you're speaking about, especially when it comes to affiliation with
16 Richard Spencer and focus on undocumented immigrants, seems to contradict that. So
17 I'd be really interested to hear more.

18 A So what -- can you read --

19 Q Sure.

20 A Give me the question again.

21 Q Put simply, what do you think the role of race and racism was in determining
22 the mission structure of the Oath Keepers?

23 A I think there are members within the community, the greater patriot
24 community, that are very racist in their views and ideals.

25 I think Stewart's publicly stated views evolved much like we've been talking about.

1 You know, in the beginning, he would very much -- "Oh, we're not racist. Look, we've
2 got a person of color who's on the board of directors." And there was often times
3 where, when it was claimed he was a racist, he would refer to a family member, I think it
4 was his mother or grandmother, that was an undocumented worker that would come up
5 from Mexico to work in the agricultural industry of southern California.

6 And I know that me and him have had discussions about race and had discussions
7 about, you know, queer issues. And behind closed doors, again, I don't think he's a Nazi.
8 I mean, he certainly has moved that direction, you know, aligning more with White
9 nationalists than he ever would've.

10 And he's claimed at times, you know, I can't wait for us to, you know, go and
11 defend a gay couple protecting their pot farm. But actions have never been anywhere
12 near that. They've never talked about engaging or done, you know, the pre-gaming that
13 would be involved with, you know, one of these events.

14 And that leads me to believe he told me that because that's, you know, what I
15 wanted to hear. I think Stewart's really good at telling different communities what they
16 want to hear to further his own goals.

17 Q So can you talk more about that gap between words and actions? What
18 were some instances where you heard Rhodes talking about his commitment to
19 protecting other vulnerable groups, like LGBTQ people or other racial minorities, and then
20 he refused to do so?

21 A Well, it's along similar lines, but I can tell you that the couple that
22 handled the -- we talked about them before. They live outside the Las Vegas area.
23 That's a committed gay couple. However, it was forbidden for us to mention that. It
24 was forbidden for me to talk about that I'm queer in my own lifestyle.

25 Q Uh-huh.

1 A So behind closed doors it's fine, but don't ever talk about it, because that
2 would not be good.

3 You know, I can't think of one instance that they've come to, you know, be the tip
4 of the spear for anyone other than, you know, a White, cis, Christian demographic.

5 Q And you believe that was a strategic choice by Rhodes to sort of reflect
6 where his base was going?

7 A Yes, I do.

8 Q Are there examples you can remember where there were opportunities for
9 the Oath Keepers to mobilize and support a pro-LGBTQ cause or --

10 A Not anything specific, no.

11 Q Okay.

12 A No, because the whole reason we had that conversation is, why are we
13 not -- you know, because I would bring it up. Why are we not, you know -- if these are
14 constitutional rights we're protecting, that encompasses everyone, you know, our
15 community here in America. Why is it a very specific demographic that always seems to
16 be what the big public events are? And there was never a good answer for that.

17 BY [REDACTED]:

18 Q I suppose it could cut in the other direction. You're talking about local
19 authority of a sheriff being supreme, and county officials. Was there any sort of
20 discussion about implementation of same-sex marriage? Because that was around the
21 time you were involved in the Oath Keepers.

22 A Well, the county clerk in Kentucky -- I think it was Kentucky -- that was one
23 of my first -- you know, one of my big stories I wanted to write, because I kind of had a
24 personal dog in that fight. And the stuff that I had written for my own perspective never
25 saw the light of day, and I was told that it wasn't going to.

1 Now, it turned out that she didn't want to help anyway, so I just kind of pushed it
2 off as a wash. But I fully believe that, you know, even if he had been able to provide
3 security for her, you know, it didn't matter; my side of the story was never going to see
4 the light of day.

5 Does that answer your question?

6 Q Yeah. Yeah. That's helpful.

7 And in terms of some of the land-use issues we were talking about earlier, there
8 are also, obviously, some prominent communities of color, Native communities, that have
9 been protesting Federal land use with pipelines and things of that nature.

10 A I --

11 Q Was that ever a point of contention?

12 A It was. So, actually, when Standing Rock happened, I felt a lot of the, kind
13 of, like, core visual images that started things off were very similar to Bundy ranch, that,
14 you know, you had attack dogs and whatnot. And I thought there was a lot of common
15 ground there just as Americans in general.

16 And I went on my own accord and went twice to Standing Rock to see what was
17 happening, and I wrote an article about it the first time. You know, if you look it up, you
18 can find it, where there are some Tribal people saying, "Oh, we like what he's actually
19 saying here, but look at who he's associated with." You know, they saw that as me
20 trying to ride on the coattails of things, when I just wanted to go tell the story.

21 Stewart didn't want me to go. I just went. And then when the story was there
22 and it was such a big news item, he had to put it up there. But nothing of -- you know,
23 he didn't want me to go, you know. There was never anything -- when you had, you
24 know, a community of color or whatnot, it just never made it, you know? The only time
25 it did was when I said, I'm going anyway, and you can either publish it or not.

1 Q Can you tell us more about why he didn't want you to go?

2 A I didn't think -- I don't -- I think -- let me think here.

3 My recollection is that it was something to the effect of, it's just not our
4 messaging. It's not, you know, furthering what we're doing, necessarily.

5 When I thought, you know, if you're really interested in protecting constitutional
6 rights, this is a perfect time to not only show that, you know, you're not a racist
7 organization and not just interested in, you know, straight, White, conservative views,
8 protecting those, that -- here's a chance to show the world that.

9 Q Do you remember how he reacted to that?

10 A It wasn't good. I mean, basically, it was me saying, look, I'm going, and you
11 can either publish this or not, because I'll just put it up on, you know, some website
12 somewhere. So, yeah.

13 Q Moving forward in time a little bit -- and I know this would be speculation
14 from the outside. When you fast-forward to summer 2020, were you surprised to see
15 how Stewart Rhodes and the Oath Keepers got involved in counter-protests to Black Lives
16 Matter?

17 A Well, I can't say that I was surprised. You know, at Ferguson, their big claim
18 was, well, we were protecting a Black business. It was a bakery, I think, or something,
19 which was just one little section of a building. But that's the only time they've really
20 ever claimed anything like that.

21 I'm sorry. Repeat the question again. I got lost in my thought process.

22 Q Were you surprised to see the Oath Keepers get involved in the
23 counter-protest to BLM?

24 A I wasn't surprised. Because, in Stewart's methodology, he lumps in Black
25 Lives Matter with antifa. It's, kind of, two arms of the same thing in his thinking. And

1 antifa, at that point, was the devil and, you know, kind of that enemy number one for
2 good Trump-supporting Americans. So because -- it didn't surprise me, no.

3 Q What you just said, I think, is pretty striking in terms of associating Black
4 Lives Matter with antifa. And, given that, were you worried about the potential for
5 violence between Oath Keepers and racial justice protesters during the summer?

6 A Absolutely.

7 Q Why do you think there wasn't more violence?

8 A I think we got really lucky. I think there's been the potential for, you know,
9 explosive violence for a while now, and we've gotten very lucky. And I think our luck is
10 running out.

11 You know, whenever you have -- I don't know if you guys have ever actually been
12 to a big protest or what some would term a "riot." I've been in Denver at the Black Lives
13 Matter protests and such. And when you go to an event like that and you're in tactical
14 body armor and, you know, you've got automatic or semiautomatic assault rifles and
15 handguns and you're going with shields to engage, those are the trappings of violent
16 activity.

17 And, you know, I remember the first time Stewart ever -- I ever met him. I was,
18 you know, in the parking lot of a hotel in Kalispell, and he asked me, "Well, did you bring
19 any guns?" And I thought that was kind of shocking, because I was surrounded by guns.
20 I was like, "No. I brought a camera and a microphone and a keyboard."

21 You know, there are so many weapons of violence that are used in these actions,
22 it's just a matter of time until they're actually used for their intended purpose. And, you
23 know, I think it's just blind luck that we haven't seen a lot more bloodshed and violence
24 and death.

25 [REDACTED] Heather, do you think we could bring up exhibit 2?

1 [REDACTED] Yeah. We have it as a hard copy.

2 [REDACTED] Oh, oh, oh. Okay.

3 BY [REDACTED]

4 Q So, Mr. Van Tatenhove, if you wouldn't mind looking at exhibit 2, which is
5 the "Declaration of Orders." So you can take a second to familiarize yourself with it,
6 but --

7 A I did read through it this morning.

8 Q Great. Great.

9 So, I guess, building on this conversation about threats and potential for violence,
10 what can you tell us about the importance of this document in orienting the Oath Keepers
11 and their mission?

12 A This was kind of the foundational document. When I first came to Oath
13 Keepers, you know, Stewart had me read through the website to know -- because I was
14 going to have to field questions from the press and stuff. And, you know, this was right
15 front and center. At the bottom of the web page, every page, you had, you know, this
16 right there or hyperlinked to, you know, a more expanded document.

17 So this was kind of the foundation that the Oath Keepers had been built on really,
18 kind of, up until the point that I plugged in at Bundy ranch.

19 Q So, during the time you were plugged in, how did this document influence
20 internal conversations amongst the Oath Keepers when they were deliberating about
21 what they should be doing next?

22 A You know, there was always -- and you see this a lot in talk radio shows and
23 stuff. There was always talk of, you know, the disarming of the American people,
24 specifically conservative Americans.

25 Q Uh-huh.

1 A And, again, that goes back to -- so what Stewart's really good at is making an
2 emotional connection. You know, as a writer, as an artist, making that emotional
3 connection is paramount to connecting with -- whether that's a viewer of artwork or a
4 reader. You know, marketing people have been doing it since the '50s. It's that
5 emotional connection that's important.

6 And I think this really, kind of, at the time, hooked in to those emotional feelings
7 that people were having surrounding the Jade Helm and just what was in that, kind of,
8 you know, communal ether, so to say. It was what was on the social consciousness of
9 that demographic at the time.

10 Q So this document talks quite extensively about defending the rights of
11 citizens from government overreach. And I guess that kind of brings up the next set of
12 questions that I want to ask, which is about the rise of President Trump.

13 Overarching question here: How do you marry up the idea of the need to
14 defend aggressively against Federal Government overreach and the relationship between
15 the Oath Keepers and Donald Trump?

16 A I don't think you can, really. I mean --

17 Q Okay.

18 A -- again, we look at what Stewart's messaging is versus his actions. Trump
19 was an amazing opportunity for Stewart to feel authentic and, you know -- oh, what's the
20 term I would use -- empowered, that he's legitimate because he's, you know, I think in
21 some ways, influencing the President possibly.

22 We know the President certainly was influenced by FOX News and Twitter posts
23 and such. We know there were connections between the President and, say, Alex Jones
24 and InfoWars. And, you know, I feel like, you know, with the stuff leading up to the 6th,
25 he was trying to directly communicate. And that falls in line with a lot of what I saw

1 with him trying to reach out to different politicians and such.

2 You know, oftentimes -- there was a period of time where we couldn't get an
3 interview on major media. Like, he kind of got blacklisted from FOX for a bit. And that
4 struck Stewart quite a bit.

5 But I think he always had this fantasy notion that, you know, a great conservative
6 leader would come in and want a paramilitary wing and he would feed -- he would, you
7 know, be able to fit into that, as the leader of that paramilitary wing.

8 Mr. Prober. And, Jason, just to clarify, you're talking based on what was out
9 there publicly --

10 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yes.

11 Mr. Prober. -- that you read at the time.

12 Mr. Van Tatenhove. I have no public -- yeah. Once I was done, I was done.
13 So --

14 Mr. Prober. Right.

15 Mr. Van Tatenhove. -- this is just me, with my historical perspective, theorizing.

16 BY [REDACTED]

17 Q I was about to ask that same question, so thank you.

18 And you mentioned something else, that that fit a pattern of Rhodes' earlier
19 attempts to reach out to elected officials. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

20 A You know, there were times he would try to reach out to, you know, bigger
21 fish or, you know, people higher up on the totem pole. It really never got anywhere,
22 you know.

23 And I know that was a point of frustration and contention for Stewart, especially
24 during that period of time. Because he very much liked the national spotlight. He
25 liked being on camera. He liked being, you know, on "Hardball" and such. And he kind

1 of almost referred to them in a nostalgic way, those times when he was on there.

2 And I think that was a big, driving motivation for Stewart, for legitimacy, a
3 perceived sense of legitimacy. You know, if he's able to reach out to the President and,
4 you know, whether directly or indirectly, communicate with him, that, to him, is
5 verification of having legitimacy.

6 Q Uh-huh.

7 I was really struck by your description of paramilitary leadership. And so, given
8 that, I'm wondering how you saw the emergence of President Trump, the eventual
9 election of President Trump, change Rhodes' mission for the Oath Keepers. And did you
10 see that happen firsthand?

11 A That was really -- I mean, one of the last memories I have with Stewart
12 where we kind of were still somewhat in touch was election day.

13 Q 2016.

14 A Yes, when Trump was elected.

15 You know, up until that point, Trump was a bit of an unknown, and Stewart really
16 wasn't even sure what to make of him. It's just, he wasn't Hillary, really, was, you know,
17 in my opinion, kind of where he was at the very beginning.

18 But I think, as things progressed, I mean, I remember having talks with him -- me
19 coming from upstate New Jersey and the New York City area and, you know, the first
20 place I was ever mugged was on the boardwalk of Atlantic City, you know, Trump, to me,
21 was this failed casino owner out of Atlantic City and, you know, kind of a bad landlord. I
22 mean, people in that area kind of have a different view of Trump than people that didn't
23 grow up seeing some of the stuff that happened historically. You know, they just see
24 him from the reality shows and, you know, FOX News and such.

25 So I remember just being like, "Yeah, I don't -- you know what? He's a failed

1 casino owner. Like, I don't know what to tell you. I don't think it's going to work out
2 all that great." And -- but I think he saw, as things progressed, great opportunity. And
3 I think he definitely probably tried to reach out and strove towards that opportunity.

4 Q The opportunity being, as you said, a paramilitary wing of --

5 A I think that's the ultimate goal, yeah. I think that was kind of his grand
6 fantasy of, you know, if the right things manifest at the right time and he gets lucky, that's
7 where he could be.

8 Q And we're skipping ahead a little bit, but is that how you perceived the Oath
9 Keepers' actions throughout the latter half of 2020 and up to the 6th?

10 A I think they kind of went on a mission to try to court Trump, to a certain
11 extent. And, again, that's not from firsthand knowledge; that's just me --

12 Q Of course.

13 A -- like, brainstorming out loud. But, yes, I think the vast majority of their
14 actions were geared, you know -- from, you know, State of the Union on, he was really
15 kind of -- again, the focus evolved. You know, he saw an opportunity, and he started
16 beelining towards that opportunity, you know, much as he did with Bundy ranch and then
17 the other standoffs and Ferguson. And, you know, it's this kind of evolving flight path,
18 so to say.

19 Q So we'll definitely get back to all of that, because I want to make sure we talk
20 about it more. But, if you don't mind, I wanted to circle back to 2016 when you were
21 still more looped in.

22 Do you remember any particular aspects of Trump's rhetoric that was particularly
23 appealing to Rhodes or other Oath Keepers?

24 A Trump really resounded with how Trump spoke about Hillary, you know, the
25 whole "lock her up" thing, you know. And Stewart was publicly, you know, "She should

1 be hung for treason." It was almost like a camaraderie in hatred of Hillary Clinton.

2 Q What about some policy areas? You mentioned undocumented
3 immigrants being seen as a major threat. Did immigration policy talk --

4 A Yeah, I mean, he started going down spending a lot of time in Texas with,
5 like, Tim Naylor's (ph) groups. You know, you have these groups down along the
6 southern States that are patrolling -- they're not sanctioned by anyone. They're not, you
7 know -- they're these just groups that are patrolling, looking for people crossing, you
8 know, and taking it upon themselves to do whatever. I don't know.

9 But when that was big, he wound up, you know, going and traveling to Texas a lot,
10 you know, because that was kind of the hot-button topic of the time. So he would go
11 and, you know, plug in with those groups.

12 Q So you're saying, just to clarify that, once immigration became a more
13 mainstream topic, Rhodes would do more activity with border militia groups in the
14 southern States?

15 A That is correct.

16 Q What do you think about the emergence of other politicians who were more
17 openly sympathetic to militia movements, the Oath Keepers? Did that also have an
18 impact on Rhodes? Did he talk about that?

19 A It had an impact upon the whole community, you know, the what we talked
20 about as the patriot community earlier. You know, it was this growing perfect storm of,
21 you know, having legal victories and going and -- you know, they were storming capitol
22 buildings, State capitol buildings, you know, leading up to things. You saw that in Idaho
23 and different places across the country.

24 It was just this building wave. So, you know, as other politicians came on the
25 scene that began, you know, similar talking points and such, it just built momentum

1 around all of it.

2 Q Yeah. This is all really interesting. I'm just taking some notes as you're
3 talking too.

4 So you talked about the rising wave of -- and a perfect storm. And that kind of
5 brings us back to some of the more present or more recent-in-time events.

6 And I'll ask a similar question to what I asked about the summer of 2020. Were
7 you surprised by Rhodes' and the Oath Keepers' engagement in activities around the 2020
8 election?

9 A No. I mean, if I was surprised at anything, it was that they pulled off some
10 of the stuff they did. Like, you know, I have to admit that I underestimated Stewart and
11 what he was doing. I didn't give as much credit as maybe I should have. Because, in
12 the end, he was part of storming the Capitol with, you know, a wedge formation, moving
13 up.

14 And, you know, he had talked about things previously that were similar -- quick
15 reaction forces and, you know, having boats to move things around and having people
16 outside and, you know, having a ham radio network set up in the area. He had talked
17 about them, but not necessarily ever engaged it, because there wasn't necessarily the
18 opportunity.

19 But seeing some of the discovery releases that have come out since then and
20 whatnot, I had to kind of step back and go, wow. I did underestimate him. Like, I
21 didn't think he'd ever pull something like that off.

22 Mr. Prober. And just to make crystal-clear -- sorry if this is redundant,
23 but -- when you're talking about Stewart talking about these things, you were referring to
24 prior more theoretical conversations, I assume?

25 Mr. Van Tatenhove. This is all --

1 Mr. Prober. Nothing remotely connected to January 6th?

2 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yes, this is just --

3 Mr. Prober. Okay.

4 Mr. Van Tatenhove. This is just me hypothesizing and theorizing based on a
5 historical perspective.

6 ██████████ Thank you.

7 Mr. Prober. Thank you.

8 ██████████ Thank you for the clarification.

9 BY ██████████

10 Q Soon, we'll actually return to some of those particular preparatory steps,
11 that quick reaction force, and kind of ask about that again, given that context.

12 So, just to make clear what I'm hearing from you, it seems like you think Rhodes
13 saw an opportunity in President Trump's claims about a stolen election and the Stop the
14 Steal movement?

15 A Absolutely. Yes.

16 Q All right.

17 Well, I guess, before we move on -- I was going to move on to some questions
18 about Rhodes in particular, but I wanted to get your thoughts, which ██████████
19 touched on briefly, about the dynamics between the Oath Keepers and the broader
20 patriot movement, sovereign citizens, other militias.

21 What would you say is the relationship between the Oath Keepers and a lot of
22 these other groups?

23 A A lot of it is a relationship of convenience. You know, there's a lot of
24 infighting that happens between the various groups. You know, it kind of becomes a -- I
25 won't use the adjective that I was thinking of -- kind of a comparison, a measurement of

1 types amongst male parties. You know, I don't know how else to say it without being
2 improper. I mean, they're measuring dicks. And they often have these splintering
3 effects, right?

4 But when it's convenient for all sides -- and we've seen this with either, like,
5 Ammon Bundy and the Oath Keepers or, you know, Alex Jones and Stewart Rhodes.
6 They had a big falling out at the Alamo gun rights thing, and neither one would be on
7 either one's platform for, you know, a year or two. But the second that they saw a joint
8 opportunity, you know, then they're back on just like nothing -- they didn't skip a beat.
9 Like, you know, "Stewart's always been coming on InfoWars," you know?

10 So a lot of it is relationships of opportunity. They will combine forces when it
11 serves everyone's needs in, you know, the greater public view.

12 Did I get off track there?

13 Q No, no. That was really interesting.

14 Are you concerned about the rise of other militia groups, like the Three
15 Percenters, in the years since the Bundy standoff?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Do you believe they pose a different kind of threat than the Oath Keepers
18 might?

19 A Well, I think some of them -- like, I don't think Stewart is necessarily a true
20 believer in the way that Ammon Bundy is a true believer. You know, Ammon Bundy is
21 someone who was raised by Cliven and his family to believe that he is a Latter Day Saint
22 prophet that's going to save America. I think Stewart's just kind of trying to find a way
23 to attain his goals by using what works out there.

24 I'm more worried about people who truly are willing to engage in violent actions
25 to further what is truly an ideological belief.

1 Q Uh-huh. Thank you. Thank you.

2 So I think, if it's all right, I want to move towards some more specific questions
3 about Rhodes and some of the statements he's made and see if you can help us get some
4 clarity on those.

5 A Sure.

6 Q So, if you don't mind looking at exhibit 1, which is the indictment of Rhodes
7 and a number of other Oath Keepers, there are -- are you familiar with the indictment?

8 A Yes.

9 Q So I just want to ask you about a couple things in there and see if there are
10 any other impressions you'd like to share.

11 So, first, on page 3, there's a discussion in paragraph 4 about quick reaction force.
12 And you mentioned this earlier, but we want to get it on the record clearly here. Have
13 you ever heard Rhodes or other Oath Keepers discuss this kind of strategy before?

14 A Yes, I have. I couldn't tell you exactly where, because, again, I don't know if
15 they ever implemented it. But, you know, Stewart was always kind of brainstorming on
16 how he would go about doing things. And he oftentimes would refer to, like, a quick
17 reaction force.

18 There was a time he even courted -- I don't remember what the event was, but,
19 you know, the Cajun Navy, who go out and do disaster relief stuff where they'll go out,
20 and, you know, if an area's flooded, they have boats that they'll go and rescue these
21 people. And I think he believed they were more extremist than they actually were.
22 But I remember him, you know, brainstorming and trying to reach out to members of the
23 Cajun Navy to, you know, be used in a quick reaction force-type situation using boats.

24 You know, during Bundy ranch, Stewart made a big show of setting up camp and
25 setting up a tent and everything, and then he went and booked us all rooms at the casino.

1 But he did have, you know, a guy there that had a ham radio network that he set
2 up. And, you know, dealing with communications, he was always -- they were always on
3 MURS 3, which is kind of a -- it's not quite ham radio. It's an accessible radio band that
4 you don't have to have a license. You know, I know that they were speaking about
5 things like that.

6 But just having people at a hotel nearby that did have -- you know, they were
7 armed and such. You know, that's something I saw from Bundy ranch, where there
8 would be people at the casino hotel kind of held in reserve.

9 And, you know, at Bundy ranch, he talked about these circles radiating outward
10 that would have different people. And we saw that demonstrated when there was
11 the -- so Stewart, during Bundy ranch, had a couple different calls come in with claims
12 from people that were either actively in the intelligence communities or used to be that a
13 Hellfire missile attack was okayed by the Obama administration. And I can tell you, I
14 was actually in the vehicle. There were two calls that came in. And he took it fairly
15 seriously and pulled everyone out into that concentric ring. And he already had people
16 out in these, kind of, rings going out. And that became a point of contention, because
17 the Bundys saw that as him, you know, turning tail and running when the possibility of
18 violence was there.

19 So, yes, I've seen similar things and heard similar brainstorming-type stuff where
20 he was referencing, you know, quick reaction forces and such.

21 Q It's interesting you mention the context of Rhodes trying to set up a quick
22 reaction force in what seems to be the midst of a natural-disaster-reaction mission.
23 Would you say that's another example of the, sort of, citizen preparedness being a shield
24 for some of these more extreme activities you're discussing?

25 A There was a period of time, with a lot of the hurricanes that came

1 through -- this was shortly, very shortly, after that I kind of began breaking ties, you know.
2 I think it was in about that period, 2016-2017, when he was going down to Florida, he was
3 going down to these areas where these hurricanes were hitting, with the intention of
4 saving people and bringing food, but I always found it ironic that, you know, he was
5 always there with body armor and, you know, long rifles and such, assault rifles.

6 And, again, I think it was -- that was opportunistic. I think, you know, he saw
7 that as a big national camera, and he wanted to be seen on that. And, always, whatever
8 the big event was, whether it was a hurricane or civil unrest or whatnot, he would try to
9 find a way to insert himself and the Oath Keepers into those.

10 Q Yeah. Thank you. That's very enlightening.

11 The indictment also mentions staff formations throughout the indictment. Had
12 you ever heard Rhodes or others discuss that as a tactic?

13 A Yeah. Yeah. He actually -- one of his favorite books was -- I think I still
14 have it in my library, because he wanted me to read it. He was always giving me books
15 to read. And it was, like, "Eagle's Nest" or something. I can see if I can find it. But it's
16 literally talking about military, you know, techniques that have worked historically and
17 such.

18 Q Uh-huh.

19 A And part of it is, I think, if he's able to, kind of, talk the talk amongst actual
20 combat veterans -- because, again, Stewart has no combat experience -- you know, it
21 makes him seem more authentic and such. So, yeah, I think he glommed on to
22 terminology and training techniques and stuff that gave him the appearance of being
23 more so, even though he really didn't have much experience there.

24 Q Understood.

25 On page 10 of the indictment, there's a cite to a message from Rhodes where he

1 refers to, apparently, based on the text of the message, unavoidable civil war, and he also
2 references the overthrow of the Serbian President after a mass march in the nation's
3 capital.

4 Based on your conversations with Rhodes, your understanding of Rhodes, what do
5 you think he might've meant by those messages?

6 A Well, Stewart always felt, you know, we were already in what he would term
7 a cold civil war, cold being that it was -- you know, a hot civil war would be, you know,
8 firearms shooting at each other and whatnot in the streets. Cold civil war, I think he
9 referred to, meant more of, kind of, that period of time before things get to the point that
10 you have, you know, two sides shooting at each other.

11 So, in Stewart's methodology and his own ideology, he's felt like we've kind of
12 been at civil war for a while now. And I always had problems with, like, lining that up.
13 Well, is it the FBI? Is it antifa? Is it BLM? You know, again, I think Stewart Rhodes
14 feels he's in a civil war, and the enemy combatants kind of evolve over time or change
15 over time.

16 Q That's very interesting.

17 So, on page 22, there are a couple of -- I know we're short on time. On page 22,
18 the indictment discusses a message from Rhodes where he says, "Pence is doing nothing,
19 and Trump is complaining, and, therefore, patriots are taking it into their own hands.
20 They've had enough."

21 How do you think this fits in to your prior conversations with Rhodes about his
22 views on civil war?

23 A Which one specifically? Which bullet number?

24 Q Seventy-seven. Sorry.

25 A I think it has to do with, when he makes these grandiose claims about antifa

1 or, you know, Chi-Com (ph) --

2 Q Uh-huh.

3 A -- you know, whatever the bogeyman is that he's putting out to his followers,
4 the people that he's encouraging and directly influencing to do stupid things on his
5 behalf -- because he's not going to go to -- he's smart enough not to do it himself, in my
6 opinion. But when it turns out, well, it's not antifa and it's not that particular bogeyman,
7 he's got to evolve that messaging.

8 And I think we saw that even further on in this, you know, when he's talking about
9 going out to the hills and, you know, hiding out and going to Texas and stuff. You know,
10 he's still calling -- I don't understand what his messaging was there, because he's still
11 calling on -- he's saying, Trump's not going to do anything, but we've still got to keep
12 doing this.

1

2 [12:32 p.m.]

3 BY [REDACTED]:

4 Q Right.

5 A I don't understand what his end goal is there. Maybe he's just desperate
6 and trying to figure out a way out of this in a good way. But, you know, oftentimes, he
7 makes these grandiose claims that Trump is going to come forward, and he's going to
8 invoke the Insurrection Act. And, you know, when that doesn't manifest, he kind of has
9 to evolve and scramble to change that messaging for the membership base and whatnot.
10 He's got to do, you know, a certain amount of spin work to try to, you know, counteract
11 that he got that totally wrong.

12 Q Right. Well, thank you, and we'll come back to the point of the Insurrection
13 Act in a little bit, in a couple of minutes.

14 So, if you could go to page 30 now, the last quote for this. The other documents
15 are shorter. There is a message on 126D where Rhodes says: Patriots entering their
16 own Capitol send a message to traitors is nothing compared to what's coming.

17 This is similar to the prior questions I asked, but what's your sense of what he
18 means by "what's coming"?

19 A Well, I think we have to look at the other messaging around that time
20 period. I mean, there was a gallows set up right there in front of the Capitol. At least
21 that's what I saw from watching the news on my couch. You know, there -- I can only
22 say that he was saying that he was going to follow through on some of the claims that he
23 made that -- you know, what should happen to tyrants, which we've seen in the past, you
24 know, with Hillary Clinton and stuff. He's publicly stated she should be hung by the neck
25 until dead. He would actually add that little part on.

1 So, yeah, I think he's suggesting that, you know, from my own -- again, I don't
2 have any firsthand knowledge of this at this point whatsoever. It's just me
3 brainstorming, but that sounds like a violent call to action to me and a threat.

4 Q So, to put it bluntly, what do you think Rhodes was trying to accomplish on
5 January 6th?

6 A I think at the least he was trying to very much threaten and scare kind of the
7 power structure, and at worst-case scenario, I don't know. I mean, he seems to be going
8 through this radicalization process, and I don't know how far down that road he's gone.
9 You know, again, I felt at times that I underestimated Stewart, you know, because I kind
10 of felt, especially towards the end, there were aspects of him that was kind of inept and,
11 you know, just saying what needed to be said. And yet I was surprised to see that there
12 was -- you know, when we saw the wedge formation going up, I instantly knew, oh, I bet
13 those are Oath Keepers. And, sure enough, they were.

14 So I don't have a good answer for that because I don't know how far he may have
15 gone down that path of radicalization, you know, in the 5 years that I've not really had
16 contact.

17 Q That's very fair, but I appreciate your insights.

18 I wanted to move quickly to exhibit 3 and ask -- thank you, [REDACTED] -- ask you
19 a quick question on that.

20 So, on the first page, towards the bottom, Rhodes writes that the election is part
21 of a deeper ongoing life-and-death struggle between a totalitarian nightmare future.

22 Is that language typical of what Rhodes used to write about when you were more
23 involved?

24 A Um, yes. Yes, but, again, you know, he parroted these types of things way
25 back to Jade Helm, you know, very similar verbiage. And what I didn't understand is,

1 you know, I saw a lot of the action that Trump was taking as leading directly towards a
2 totalitarian nightmare future. Just personally in my own views.

3 I think Stewart may just feel that, you know, the world is a totalitarian nightmare
4 future. I mean, it doesn't seem to matter who's in office or who's not. It's always the
5 same talking points, so --

6 Q At the bottom of page 2 --

7 Mr. Prober. Page 2?

8 [REDACTED] Yes.

9 Mr. Prober. Of exhibit 3?

10 [REDACTED] Of exhibit 3, so it's on exhibit 3. So it's after the "donate" -- I'm
11 trying to find the exact paragraph.

12 BY [REDACTED]

13 Q So there's an exhortation to be ready to report suspicious activities to law
14 enforcement and voting officials in the third paragraph beneath the "donate."

15 A Uh-huh.

16 Q I guess, given the animosity you described between the Oath Keepers and
17 law enforcement in earlier iterations of the organization, are you surprised by that sort of
18 call to action?

19 A To report suspicious activities?

20 Q Uh-huh.

21 A Um, it depends on the branch of law enforcement. Again, he's very pro
22 sheriff's department because that -- it aligns with his messaging.

23 I mean, it sounds like something he would say. But, I mean, I guess I don't know
24 what you're asking specifically.

25 Q I guess I was more curious about the tension between some antigovernment

1 discussions we've had about the Oath Keepers and the support for it sort of being the
2 eyes and ears for law enforcement. But I think your response about sheriff's
3 departments answers that point very well.

4 A Yeah. I mean, again, it's whether it's convenient or not. You know, he
5 works with law enforcement as Blue Lives Matter until it's not convenient to -- you know,
6 whatever his agenda is.

7 Q No. That's very interesting. I know we're going through a lot. Thank
8 you for bearing with me.

9 [REDACTED] I just want to check. To what extent -- we talked about ending
10 at 1 o'clock, but I wanted to see how much of a hard stop --

11 Mr. Prober. His flight I think is at 4. We're off the record. Right?

12 [REDACTED] We can go off the record.

13 [Discussion off the record.]

14 [REDACTED] So we'll go back on the record.

15 BY [REDACTED]:

16 Q So I wanted to go over exhibits 5 and 6 briefly, and then we can kind of move
17 on and put a pin in this section.

18 So exhibit 5 first, the first part of the open letter that Rhodes and Kellye SoRelle
19 sent to Trump. So on page 1 is really just one question I wanted to ask. Rhodes
20 implores Trump to invoke the Insurrection Act, call to militia for all Americans of the
21 patriotic -- patriotic Americans of military age.

22 And I guess I want to get a better --

23 A Where is that?

24 Q That's on page -- sorry. Page 2.

25 A Okay. How far down?

1 Q I'm trying to find where it is on the page.

2 So towards the middle of the page -- I guess my question might not require you to
3 find the exact quote, and I apologize. But I wanted to ask you more specifically about
4 the claims of Trump invoking the Insurrection Act and what you made of those assertions.

5 A I think --

6 Mr. Prober. Sorry. The question is what his view is today of Stewart's
7 statements about invoking the Insurrection Act?

8 [REDACTED] Yes.

9 Mr. Van Tatenhove. And these were made at what date? Was this after the
10 6th?

11 [REDACTED] This letter is before the 6th.

12 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Okay.

13 Mr. Prober. December 14th.

14 [REDACTED] Yes.

15 Mr. Van Tatenhove. I see this as a way to engrain himself with the President
16 with an opportunity to fulfill this kind of fantasy of maybe being able to rise and become
17 this paramilitary figure. And, you know, I think he saw a lot of opportunity with this.
18 And I think it all hinged on Trump actually taking action that he didn't wind up taking.

19 I don't think -- you know, if Trump had won, it would have been something else to
20 try and do it. It's just -- you know, I think he's very opportunistic, and I think he saw it as
21 an opportunity to maybe get that grand prize he's been kind of working towards in his
22 own head.

23 BY [REDACTED]

24 Q Had he spoken about the Insurrection Act when you were --

25 A He had mentioned -- you have to understand, Stewart goes off on these

1 tangents, and he's the type of person who will read, like, three or four books at a time.
2 His brain is always kind of processing, and mine kind of works that same way too. So we
3 would get into these conversations just on crazy theoretical whims, kind of almost
4 debates at times, and he would often bring up the Insurrection Act, yeah.

5 Q So I guess I'm trying to understand what is step number two? Step number
6 one is Trump invokes the Insurrection Act. What is step number two as it relates to the
7 Oath Keepers?

8 A That they would be tapped by Trump as, you know, some sort of
9 paramilitary force. I don't think he's looking at history all that well, like, to see what
10 happened with those first paramilitary forces in, say, Nazi Germany when Adolf was
11 coming to power. It didn't work out so well in the end for those initial people.

12 But I think he kind of saw it as like, you know, an opportunity and that if Trump
13 could declare the Insurrection Act, he could pretty much do whatever he wanted, and he
14 could instill Stewart and the Oath Keepers as some sort of security force that would bring
15 them real legitimacy and political power.

16 Q So a security force to do what or a paramilitary force to do what?

17 A To help President Trump secure, you know, his rightfully won election.
18 Those are air quotes, for the record.

19 Q Well, I'm asking in the context of your previous conversations, to the extent
20 that you remember, what did Rhodes want the Oath Keepers to be empowered to do?

21 A Well, you know, I don't know if that was necessarily clear. I think it just
22 was a route to, you know, power and fame and money that went along with it. I think,
23 in his mind, if Trump, you know, opened up the Insurrection Act, that kind of gave him a
24 blank check. You know, at that point, Trump could do whatever he wanted. And, I
25 don't know if he thought it out all that much, but I don't know. So I guess I don't have a

1 good answer to that.

2 [REDACTED] Fair enough.

3 Sorry, [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED] No. You're good.

5 BY [REDACTED]

6 Q I guess my broader question on what you were just saying -- and we touched
7 on this before, but what was it about Trump that made Rhodes adopt the opposite
8 position of when he was worried about the Obama administration with Hellfire missiles
9 and Jade Helm? Why the shift?

10 A Opportunity. He was always shifting. He was always evolving to, you
11 know, the path of least resistance for his goals. Trump signaled a dynamic shift to a
12 world view that was, you know, resounding with his base, with Stewart's base, with the
13 Oath Keeper membership. It was, I think, more than anything just an opportunity to
14 further everything, you know.

15 I'm sorry if I sound like I'm repeating myself.

16 Q No. I think it's very good to hear these points.

17 Mr. Prober. I will do the same and just reiterate that this is all, obviously, just
18 speculation, but I just want to make sure we're based on your historical knowledge and
19 understanding.

20 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yes, I have no indepth firsthand knowledge of this.

21 Mr. Prober. Given the gravity of what we're talking about, I feel like I can't say
22 that enough. So thank you for indulging me.

23 [REDACTED] Of course.

24 BY [REDACTED]

25 Q There is just one more document that I wanted to discuss, and that was

1 exhibit 7, and so -- sorry. No -- exhibit 8, which is the Oath Keeper warning after
2 January 6th. This is the day before President Biden's inauguration. And, on this
3 document, there are several mentions of false flag operations that were meant to trap
4 patriot militia actors.

5 Was that sort of language often present in your conversations with Rhodes?

6 A Yes. And I think it's definitely present in his writings and such and in the
7 writings he would have me do. False flag operations are a good catch-all for sowing
8 distrust and, you know, kind of flipping the script, so to say. If it's not what it appears to
9 be, then there's something much more. And if he's got the direct line of access to
10 information of that, you know, then he's more credible.

11 But, yeah, that was definitely part of what I would term the propaganda around
12 things, you know, the threat of false flag activities, you know, and he would reference
13 back to the filcontean (ph) and then, of course, 9/11 and such and, you know, sprinkling
14 conspiracy theory with actual events that happened, which is often done.

15 So, yes. To answer your question, yes, this is rhetoric that I have heard him
16 discuss just in personal conversations and these kind of, you know, theoretical
17 conversations we would have off the cuff.

18 Q Thank you. Thank you.

19 So, in the executive summary, points 2 and 3 are both sort of immediate in their
20 ask. In point two, he says: Muster NOW. NOW is in all caps. And, in point three,
21 he says: Muster ASAP -- all caps.

22 Was that kind of urgent language usually present in his messages?

23 A It's heightened in this.

24 Q Uh-huh.

25 A And I believe this is where he was actually talking about -- maybe this isn't

1 exactly it, but this is where he started using terminology of militia where he had avoided
2 it before. You know, it's heightened, but along similar lines. You know, it seems to be
3 more punctuated. I would always try to steer him away from using all caps.

4 Q So you are right; on this document, there are multiple references to militias.
5 And this warning was also sent out, as I mentioned, the day before President Biden's
6 inauguration.

7 What is that timing and the use of "militia" suggest to you about Rhodes' state of
8 mind?

9 A Again, I have no firsthand knowledge of this. I'm just supposing.

10 Q Yeah.

11 A But it seems to me that he's desperate at this point, like he's got to get
12 something to happen because I'm sure at this point he was feeling things close in. You
13 know, there were arrests happening of the people that were involved around him and,
14 you know, much like a lion coming in and tightening around him and, you know,
15 theoretically speaking, if he could create an event to take focus or -- I remember this
16 morning when we went through this just turning and saying, I don't -- I don't understand
17 what his goal is here. It seems desperate, and it seems like he's just grasping at anything
18 he can at this point and trying to involve others, you know, encouraging them to make
19 rash, emotional, not well thought out, you know, actions at State capitals and such. It's
20 almost like he's trying to -- I don't know -- get other people involved too so it's not just
21 him. I don't know.

22 Q Understood.

23 I just have two more questions on this.

24 The first is, in your conversations with Rhodes during the Obama administration,
25 was there ever any similar conversations about an eventuality where you need a

1 nationwide muster against the sitting President?

2 A Not that I can specifically remember.

3 Q Uh-huh.

4 A Excuse me.

5 Q Take your time.

6 A Sorry. I swallowed wrong.

7 Q Do you need another break or --

8 Mr. Prober. Do you want to take a minute?

9 Mr. Van Tatenhove. It will settle here in a minute.

10 [REDACTED] We can pause, go off the record for a minute.

11 [Discussion off the record.]

12 [REDACTED] We can go back on the record.

13 Mr. Van Tatenhove. So repeat the question for me.

14 BY [REDACTED]

15 Q Yeah. So did you ever have any conversations with Rhodes back during the
16 Obama administration about the potential need for a nationwide militia muster against a
17 sitting President?

18 A Not as seriously as the verbiage is in this. I mean, it was always kind of out
19 there that, you know, the Oath Keepers and the patriot community in general would need
20 to take action, but nothing specific like this where he's talking about, you know,
21 mustering on State capitals and in red areas as opposed to blue areas. This is much
22 more indepth. Back then, it was much more of a generality.

23 Q Okay.

24 A So this is, again, something that has seems to have evolved from, you know,
25 just kind of a generality to specifics, so --

1 Q We've kind of already touched on this, but I want to ask again. Why now?
2 A Because that's the direction it's been going, and I think it was kind of a
3 culmination point. And I think right now as a country, just me speaking on my opinion
4 and thoughts of things, I think that we're at a crossroads. You know, whether or not
5 Trump can run for reelection and whether he wins I think will have very dramatic -- you
6 know, there will be two dramatic outcomes: One where, you know, we can move
7 forward and try to avoid this type of scenario building to what we saw on the 6th, and
8 one where all bets are off and we may not recognize, you know, where we're living as the
9 country that we grew up in.

10 I think we're at a very dynamic period of history right now, and with all the
11 geopolitical events happening globally that, if we don't figure this out right now, things
12 could get exponentially worse.

13 Q Building on that, do you perceive the Oath Keepers having a role to play in
14 democratic erosion?

15 A In the future or currently?

16 Q In the future.

17 A Again, that depends on --

18 I think he might be locked out.

19 [REDACTED] Got it.

20 Mr. Van Tatenhove. That depends entirely on what happens with this
21 commission and any legal proceedings that may happen.

22 I'm going to throw this out.

23 [REDACTED] We'll go off the record for a moment.

24 [Discussion off the record.]

25 [REDACTED] We'll go back on the record.

1 Mr. Van Tatenhove. So, if Stewart is held to account legally and we may be
2 seeing the dismantlement of the Oath Keepers specifically, there will be other groups that
3 come rise up to fill that vacuum, but how things move forward from here will dictate
4 whether they have a good foundation to build on for that.

5 You know, I've had -- there was a -- it's not with the Oath Keepers, but it's within
6 that community. I had a discussion with Ernie Tertelgte, the Montana Natural Man, the
7 sovereign citizen, about what his -- if the end game of all of his actions and stuff were to
8 come to fruition, what does that world look like? And for me it was very striking to kind
9 of flip, you know, end game that out to see what it was that that world would look like.
10 And, for me, that's not a world I want to live in. It's not a world I want my children to
11 live in.

12 So I think, right now, we're kind of, as I said earlier, at a crossroads where if things
13 go one way, we may have a chance to really, you know, solve some of the issues around
14 extremism and violent extremism specifically within these communities and, you know,
15 have a practical way to address them whereas, if it goes the other way, I think we're kind
16 of looking at a Wild West scenario to a certain degree.

17 ██████████ Thank you for that detailed answer, and I appreciate all of your
18 answers.

19 Right now, I want to turn it over to ██████████, who I think had a few more
20 questions, and bring us to the end.

21 ██████████ Yes.

22 BY ██████████

23 Q So we've already covered the majority of what I would like to get to. So I
24 just have a couple of questions for you. Apologies if they seem a little disconnected.

25 A That's okay.

1 Q ██████████ mentioned that we would come back to your decision to leave,
2 both the first decision to leave the official role and then later to fully cut ties with the
3 organization.

4 I just wanted to ask if there were particular incidents that sort of crystallized that
5 decision for you?

6 A There's one incident in particular that was what I would describe as the
7 straw that broke the camel's back, and that goes back to -- and it wasn't with Stewart
8 specifically, but it was with people within that inner circle.

9 So we all lived within the Eureka, Montana, area. It was kind of an old valley,
10 and they had one grocery store, and they had one deli in that grocery store that had
11 tables and such, and that's kind of where people would gather towards the end of the day
12 and just sit around and discuss things in kind of a communal area.

13 And I remember one day walking into a conversation that was being had where
14 they were saying these things out loud. It was a denial of the Holocaust, and it was that
15 it was all a hoax. And to me that was the line I couldn't -- it didn't matter if I didn't know
16 how I was going to support my kids and my sick wife. It didn't matter that, you know,
17 we were living at a place that, you know, was owned by large -- you know, one of the
18 biggest supporters of Stewart Rhodes and what was going on. It didn't matter we didn't
19 know how we were going to do it but that somehow we were going to find a way to just
20 break free of this.

21 And I went right back home to my wife, and I told her: I don't know how we're
22 going to do it, but we just need to figure it out because this is nothing we can be a part of
23 with the direction it's going.

24 So it was that denial of the Holocaust that really, for me -- you know, because I did
25 stay longer than I would have liked to because I didn't have many options. You know,

1 I'm 6-foot tall. I have tattoos everywhere. Generally speaking, I have a mohawk with
2 tattoos on the side of my head. There aren't a lot of jobs for writers in northwest
3 Montana and Idaho area for people like me.

4 And, you know, so I did have to take that into account because I have two
5 daughters that are still in the house that depend on me. You know, I am the main
6 caregiver for my wife who's been medically disabled for 27 years. So, yeah, that was
7 the -- that crystallizing event for me.

8 Q And was that conversation in 2016 or in 2018?

9 A I believe it would have been in the 2017 area probably, towards the end of
10 it. You know, that all kind of happened at once. You know, suddenly Richard Spencer
11 was on the scene. Suddenly there was an alt-right that I had never heard of before, you
12 know, the terminology used alt-right, and it just kind of happened in quick succession.

13 [REDACTED] Sorry. I just want to make it clear on the record because I know
14 there were some questions about the dates. Do you mean early 2017? I think that
15 was the timeframe that we were talking about earlier.

16 Mr. Prober. When you formally ceased employment with them.

17 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yeah, I think it was early 2017.

18 [REDACTED] Great. Yeah. Just wanted to make sure we had that.

19 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Yeah. And, again, I apologize. I'm kind of a little
20 divergent.

21 [REDACTED] No problem. We just wanted to make sure that the record was
22 clear.

23 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Thank you.

24 BY [REDACTED]

25 Q Great.

1 The last time we spoke, you told us a little bit about a story you did regarding a
2 conspiracy near the border, and I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about the
3 circumstances of that story and specifically the Oath Keepers' interest in it.

4 A Yes. So, in mainstream media, it's referred to, if you look back, the
5 border -- the brawl on the border -- hold on. I've got it in my phone.

6 Mr. Prober. Is this it? Backyard Brawl.

7 Mr. Van Tatenhove. Backyard Brawl. It happened in Tucson, Arizona.

8 So it involved a conspiracy theory that kind of dives into the whole elite pedophile
9 rings and, you know, the crazy Adrenochrome stuff associated with the Clintons. What
10 the story was is there is -- it's basically a homeless encampment that is run by a guy.
11 What's his name? Meyer, Michael Meyer, I believe, who kind of runs it as a militia style
12 camp. And we had started seeing stories, and it got some national attention because
13 there was a guy named Craig "Sawman" Sawyer who has a reality TV show where they -- I
14 think he's retired Special Forces or something where they go and do rescues of children
15 and predators, you know, kind of to catch a criminal type thing.

16 And the story was that they had found this torture chamber with, you know,
17 lashings and stuff where people were supposedly trafficking children. By "people," I
18 mean, they were saying that it was the elites and, you know, they had lashings and stuff,
19 what they referred to as a rape tree on a Cemex cement factory. The conspiracy theory
20 says that the Clintons are involved in this Cemex, you know, corporation and that it was
21 being used as part of this child-trafficking flow, I guess, of moving children and such.

22 And it turned out, I mean, from looking at the video that was there, I knew that
23 there was some big holes in that story because the chamber they were talking about was
24 actually an agriculture water pod, you know, the large plastic kind of pill-shaped pods
25 used for doing water, and it looked like just a typical homeless camp.

1 So I wanted to go and see, you know, and if I could, like, tell the truth about it, and
2 that's what I did. I went down there, and I started -- it looked to be a homeless
3 encampment, and I started talking with people within the homeless community and
4 found out that it was actually a trans woman that had lived there, and it was her
5 belongings that were there, but it was just a camp, and they used -- they have a huge
6 problem with feral hogs in that area. So the lashings for the rape tree were actually just
7 areas -- living up in the mountains like I do, you know, we have to hang up food because
8 we have bears and mountains lions and such, so same sort of thing. They had to hang
9 food up to keep these feral hogs from getting into that stuff. And I actually got ahold of
10 the trans woman, and there was a video of her interview like breaking down what
11 everything was.

12 The truth of it was this group found that they could, much like Stewart does in
13 certain ways, touch on a very emotional subject matter and use that to generate funds.
14 They were bringing in huge amounts of gift cards. Specifically they were asking for
15 donations in gift cards because they're untrackable and they can spend them on whatever
16 they want. And, you know, they actually went and were breaking into residents' houses
17 along the border where, you know, they said they had found -- and they did. They did
18 actually find some human remains, but this was the remains of an adult, you know,
19 unfortunate person who didn't make the journey crossing the border.

20 But they were actually breaking into houses and, you know, claiming that these
21 houses were part of pedophile rings, which affected the people who own the houses.
22 So it was just this big kind of smoke-and-mirrors, dog-and-pony show to generate funds.

23 And I wound up writing like a 3,000-word article on it. And, you know, that's
24 what I wanted to do was kind of expose it for what it really was because I felt like, you
25 know, I had seen it happen time and time again where they take a conspiracy theory and

1 they maybe pepper in very small pieces of truth, but they use that to create this kind of
2 heightened frenzy almost of response on a social media level and news level at times.
3 You know, Craig "Sawman" Sawyer had to retract everything and all the news places that
4 had done it. And actually the guy that was doing it wound up serving time; they actually
5 prosecuted him for it.

6 But I think it kind of reflects kind of what the MO is for some of these
7 organizations where they take an emotional moment, an emotional subject, and they
8 kind of build this vent around it, and they use that to profit from. They use it to get
9 donations and memberships and, you know, sell merchandise and stuff, not thinking
10 about, like, the people's lives they impact, you know, the people that own the homes and,
11 you know, the actual at-risk homeless population that are being exploited for this, you
12 know.

13 And Stewart doesn't care about like the people he encourages to tie it into kind of
14 the Oath Keepers, but he encouraged people to do a lot of, in my opinion, stupid things
15 that had real-life repercussions. And Stewart made claims that he would help them
16 because he's a Yale-educated attorney. He's very proud of that and says it all the time.
17 And there are many people that he -- you know, part of his calls to actions were, you
18 know, if you get into legal problems, I'm a Yale-educated attorney; I'll help you out.

19 Well, he was disbarred because he specifically abandoned clients, you know, that
20 he had promised he would help out in these types of situations when he's inspiring them
21 to do these really stupid things and then just ghosts them completely. And it was
22 abandonment, in my opinion.

23 And I think that's, you know, certainly a much less of an issue than, you know, the
24 violence that the Capitol Police faced and whatnot and the potential for violence, but it's
25 still a cost of these types of things where you have lives of people that got caught up in

1 this and did -- made bad decisions based on the influence of someone like Stewart
2 Rhodes and then had real-life implications to that.

3 You know, there are people in jail right now that, you know, what they did was
4 exactly what Stewart asked them to do, and yet Stewart, up until this point, you know,
5 was living scot-free and eating steaks at Applebee's.

6 Q I just have one more thing to ask, and I'll go ahead and preface this myself by
7 saying I'm specifically interested in your observations as just an observer informed by
8 your experience with Stewart Rhodes and the Oath Keepers in the past.

9 Overall, what was your experience finding out about January 6th? What were
10 you thinking about and what did you notice as you watched the attack unfold?

11 A It was very much kind of a, oh, they did it. I mean, to me, it made sense.
12 To me, oh, of course, that's them in a wedge formation going up, you know. And to
13 hear what, you know, what this contains, it makes sense in that this has been a
14 progression from the start, and this is the logical outcome of that progression, you know.
15 And, for me, it was a personal realization because I thought Stewart was fairly inept at
16 times and probably couldn't pull off some of these grandiose plans that he had, but, well,
17 he did, to a certain degree.

18 And, you know, to me, that was, oh, well, maybe I should have taken that more
19 seriously because, you know, this is -- this could lead to more serious things happening
20 that have much larger repercussions to the country.

21 And so, for me, it was a bit of an introspection like maybe I shouldn't have just
22 blown him off as, you know, don't worry about it, it's just Stewart; that, well, maybe we
23 need to take these dangers and warning signs a lot more serious.

24 ██████████ That's everything from me. Thanks.

25 ██████████ Great.

1 BY [REDACTED]:

2 Q Well, I have a couple more topics that I want to hit just very quickly.

3 So, in conversations we've had with Oath Keepers leadership from more recent
4 times, some of them suggested that Rhodes operates as a sort of a voice of reason among
5 more potentially blood-thirsty people within the organization.

6 What do you think of that characterization, based on your time in the Oath
7 Keepers?

8 A Well, as bad as it is to hear that said out loud, there is a certain amount of
9 truth to that and not necessarily from within that organization, but there were times
10 that -- you know, the Oath Keepers, when you're dealing with other groups within that
11 environment, was kind of a moderating influence. But what we're going to run into with
12 that, in my opinion, is, in that vacuum of, you know, if the Oath Keepers are dismantled
13 and you don't have a clear leadership, what's going to fill that vacuum?

14 Because, again, I mentioned earlier that my real fear is kind of these people on the
15 peripheral who are kind of the wild cards. You know, they may not be mentally stable.
16 They may be homeless. And we saw a lot of transient kind of communities that would
17 latch on to these events that would happen because there would be food there. There
18 would be funds flowing into it. You know, it was like an encampment where you could
19 live out of tents and such. And oftentimes those people were the ones who would see
20 like what happened at the CiCi's Pizza where it's more of a wild card. You don't know
21 who they are. And, you know, are they a straight-up Nazi? Are they a straight-up
22 racist?

23 You know, there were straight-up Nazis and racists that showed up to Bundy
24 Ranch and these events. And, you know, to a certain degree, as much as it sounds awful
25 to say out loud, Stewart could be a moderating effect to these people in organizing to

1 kind of push them to the sides because it was bad for optics for him.

2 You know, I fear what's going to rise up in that power vacuum either way, and I
3 don't know what the good answer for that is.

4 Did I completely --

5 Q No. That answers it head-on.

6 You know, over the last couple of hours, you mentioned a couple of times this
7 tension of whether Stewart is a, quote/unquote, true believer on some of these issues
8 and whether he is saying certain things to rile up his base. And you just talked about
9 how unstable people who might want to affiliate with the Oath Keepers then go and do
10 unstable things.

11 To what extent, based off of your experience with Rhodes, did Rhodes know the
12 effect that his words had on those people and accepted those risks or encouraged those
13 risks?

14 A I think he was very aware of it, but I think he, you know, felt that he could
15 moderate it a bit, you know, by keeping them out to the peripheral. I mean, that -- yes,
16 it kept them out of the Bundy Ranch, so to say, but that didn't work out so well for the
17 sheriff deputies in Las Vegas who are, you know, dead now; didn't work out for their
18 families.

19 I think he knows very well how powerful his words are. He's built this whole
20 thing based on nothing but his words. And I think Stewart is a true believer, but he's a
21 true believer in his vision of himself and what his kind of goals and aspirations are, which I
22 think, again, kind of lie in that money aspect and the prestige and, you know, perceived
23 power of being this figurehead. He's certainly a true believer in that.

24 Q That's a really helpful explanation.

25 A couple of the conspiracy theories that you mentioned that were circulating

1 either with Rhodes or just amongst Oath Keepers, it seems like there's a lot of overlap
2 with the QAnon umbrella of conspiracies, you know, the global cabal that leads pedophile
3 rings, Hillary Clinton. Was there an explicit discussion ever of QAnon and
4 whether -- from your experience?

5 A So QAnon kind of manifested afterwards. I remember, like, just offhanded
6 comments I made to Stewart that it sure sounds like flat-earthers and QAnon kind of is,
7 like, two intelligence officers at the bar saying: Here, hold my beer. Watch this.
8 Right?

9 I don't really have a good grasp of QAnon because it was too deep of a rabbit hole
10 for me to go down. And, when you do talk radio, you kind of get a minor in conspiracy
11 theory, and it was just more than I could really -- had any want or desire to chew on just
12 for speculative purposes. I kind of grouped them in with the flat-earthers.

13 So I don't know much. I know Stewart at least, when I had interactions with him,
14 was kind of the same way, like, we don't really know. Now, he may have -- I'm sure he
15 probably engaged it much more because it resounded so deeply within the Trump
16 support base. You know, it really became a part of that Trumpian world view kind of,
17 and, you know -- but that's nothing I ever cared to delve into really. But I'm sure
18 Stewart did just based on who his base was and how he caters to that evolving view of
19 the base, that kind of evolving world view and what conspiracies are big at the time.

20 Q Got it. Thank you.

21 So, after Stewart Rhodes was arrested a couple of weeks ago, Kellye SoRelle, who
22 is the general counsel of the Oath Keepers -- I believe she started after you had all
23 severed all ties. Right?

24 A Yes.

25 Q -- she started an online fundraiser, sort of a legal fund for Rhodes and the

1 Oath Keepers and described opponents of the Oath Keepers as anti-Christian. And
2 when we were talking about the patriot movement earlier, you mentioned some
3 churches within the patriot movement as well.

4 A Uh-huh.

5 Q So I just want to get your thoughts. Is the Oath Keepers a Christian
6 organization? Do they perceive of themselves as a Christian organization? And in the
7 ideology that motivates Stewart Rhodes or other leaders of the Oath Keepers, is there a
8 Christian nationalist bent to that?

9 A Certainly with others, yes. And the Christian nationalist bent is deeply
10 engrained in the community. We see this with Chuck Baldwin's -- they talk about it as
11 the Black Regiments, which goes back to the notion that the priests of the congregations
12 during the Revolutionary War led their flocks into battle, kind of this urban myth that
13 they've created, much like the Three Percent thing, the whole Three Percent. It's kind of
14 along the lines of that.

15 But they've really keyed in on this, and Chuck Baldwin keyed in on it and moved
16 his church. He got a golden parachute deal from the church he was in at Florida before
17 he moved to Kalispell specifically because of the patriot movement. And so, yes, there
18 is a dynamic of it.

19 Now, again, with Stewart, I've had very specific conversations with Stewart about
20 organized religion and Christianity specifically because I am not Christian. And, you
21 know, in internal conversations behind closed doors, Stewart doesn't really care. He's
22 not really Christian either. I mean, when he was living at my place, he was starting to go
23 do meditation and yoga and such, and I thought, all right, well, that can't be bad for him.

24 But, again, the conversation kind of dovetailed back to it doesn't matter. I mean,
25 this is what the base is. So we've got to kind of cater to that because I fairly adamantly

1 non-Christian in my own world beliefs, and, you know -- but I definitely brought up that
2 topic of conversation with him.

3 Q This is really interesting because I think Rhodes has continued to be pretty
4 vocal and public about his non-Christian beliefs and his use of meditation from Eastern
5 religions. But it sounds like you're saying that he viewed Christian nationalism or
6 Christianity as a useful cloak --

7 A It's a good vehicle.

8 Q -- to advance his message, a good vehicle as you said?

9 A Yeah.

10 Q Great.

11 Last thing, I promise. I wanted to ask about personal security details. It seems
12 like in the last -- in 2020 and early 2021, the Oath Keepers provided personal security
13 details to various public figures. Was that something that the Oath Keepers were
14 engaging in during the time that you were employed there?

15 A It's something they were attempting to. He would often reach out to, you
16 know, elected officials and politicians to provide security as a private security detail.
17 That was kind of his foot in the door, at least what he was trying to do. Oftentimes
18 when I was there, it was shot down. And, again, I think it had to do with just seeing
19 through kind of the BS. You know, I remember him approaching me: Well, you should
20 be my private security guy.

21 And I'm, like: No. Come on, I'm a writer, and I've got a camera with me, you
22 know.

23 But he would hand you a book that was all about private -- well, here's a textbook
24 on how to do private security.

25 So, you know, I think the people that he would employ as that really have no

1 real-life training in that type of stuff, and I think it probably would have just fostered a
2 very, actually, less secure environment, but he saw it as an in because, you know, that
3 builds a politician's ego -- well, I've got my own personal security detail -- especially if
4 they're a smaller, local level politician, you know, but I think that's what he was doing,
5 you know, to get plugged into the rally there on the 6th.

6 It's just something I've seen him try to employ multiple times and talk about it. I
7 didn't really see much because that really kind of started where he actually got to do
8 some of that, you know, with the patriot prayer circles up in the Pacific Northwest when,
9 you know, they were really just, you know, hoping to get the optics of brawling with
10 antifa, with air quotes.

11 Q Got it.

12 I have one last pretty broad question.

13 A I've heard that before.

14 [REDACTED] This is really intended to be kind of a conclusory question. So I
15 just want to check if anyone else has questions.

16 Mr. Prober. I had one thing I was hoping if Jason -- if you would like to address,
17 but let me ask you guys. It may be this is where you're planning to go anyway.

18 [REDACTED] Possibly.

19 Mr. Prober. Given my experience getting to know Jason and sitting here today, I
20 thought it would be really helpful and important to have on the record why you feel that
21 it's important to be here today speaking with the committee.

22 So I don't know if that's where --

23 BY [REDACTED]

24 Q You read my mind. That was going to be -- well, it's not just why are you
25 speaking to us, but why are you going public? I imagine this is risky for you in many

1 ways. So why?

2 A It is because I feel -- so I kind of -- again, I came into this whole situation with
3 these grandiose dreams of, you know, having a breakout novel, and, you know, I was
4 influenced by Hunter Thompson and stuff, but I failed at that. I failed at it pretty
5 miserably. And I did become a propagandist for him.

6 And we were talking earlier about, you know, does Stewart realize the power of
7 words. And I think part of my self-realization is I recognize that I contributed to that and
8 that, you know, some of this is, you know, on my hands, and I've got to -- in my own life,
9 you know, I do believe in karma. I do believe in trying to do the right thing and learning
10 and growing. And, if I can help to be part of how we get away from this and really kind
11 of show the world, like, this is what they're actually about, then I need to do that.

12 And I did this not just from what -- because this is very recent that I've used my
13 name in speaking out. I've been contributing to major -- well, no, I'm not going to say
14 that.

15 I've been contributing in my own way as I can. You know, after I left the Oath
16 Keepers, I became a first responder. I joined the CAN-AM Search & Rescue team,
17 became the training officer. I got my EMT license and served on the Eureka Volunteer
18 Ambulance Service. And then I went and worked for the Forest Service as a wild land
19 firefighter who is fire-line qualified, you know, and all of those were -- yes, they were
20 good adventurous things to do, but, you know, my core was, well, you know, I want to
21 kind of give back. I want to try to -- and part of it is education for myself.

22 So, when you're in these echo chambers within these communities, the Forest
23 Service is the enemy. You know, the government is the enemy. You know, you
24 don't -- one of the best things that have come out of this whole situation is I became a
25 very close friends with a Forest Service law enforcement agent while I was -- because we

1 served on several first responder teams up there. And, to this day, he's one of my best
2 friends.

3 And, going from, you know, a place where everyone around me, "Oh, that's the
4 enemy, you know, that's the evil government," I had no practical real-world experience
5 with having actual rapport and a relationship with, you know, someone in a Federal law
6 enforcement capacity. And, you know, to this day, he's still one of my best friends.

7 So it's just part of a personal motivation to try to make right what I did. And
8 then, you know, I think I've kind of done that in my own reckoning, but we're at a very
9 dangerous time right now. And, if my experience and my voice can help kind of take
10 that from the worst-case scenario to a much better scenario, well, then, it's kind of my
11 responsibility to do that if I see if, you know, I have the ability to do it.

12 I don't know if that makes much sense, but --

13 [REDACTED] It does.

14 Well, Mr. Van Tatenhove, we really appreciate the fact that you came in. This is
15 the second time you've spoken to us voluntarily. You've given so many hours of your
16 time to us, and we really appreciate that you have shared your perspective and your
17 thoughts so freely.

18 And I will do one last check to see if anyone else has questions.

19 Okay. Hearing none, we will close the record and end the transcribed interview.

20 [Whereupon, at 1:30 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

1 Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

2

3

4 I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the
5 answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

6

7

8

9

10 Witness Name

11

12

13

14 Date

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