



FBI agents, prosecutors fear retribution from Jan. 6 rioters pardoned by Trump

FEBRUARY 6, 2025 · 5:00 AM ET

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Tom Dreisbach



Former Metropolitan Police Department Officer Michael Fanone, who helped defend the U.S. Capitol during the Jan. 6 attack. Fanone is filing for protective orders against the men who assaulted him that day.

Susan Walsh/AP

Pardoned Jan. 6 rioters and their supporters have been whipping each other up online with increasingly dire threats against FBI agents and prosecutors who worked on investigations of the [violent attack on the U.S. Capitol](#).

"All their prosecutors deserve a rope!!!" reads one post on X.

"These two slimy swamp creatures will face justice" reads another post.

"YOU ARE NEXT," reads another.



INVESTIGATIONS

Criminal records of Jan. 6 rioters pardoned by Trump include rape, domestic violence

Since President Trump gave Jan. 6 rioters blanket clemency — regardless of whether they were convicted for assaulting police, or if they had prior convictions for crimes including forcible rape, manslaughter and domestic violence — threatening messages have proliferated against law enforcement officials.

[Police officers who defended the Capitol on Jan. 6](#), as well as FBI agents and federal prosecutors who investigated the attack say they are increasingly worried about violent retribution against themselves and their families by defendants, who have been emboldened by Trump's pardons.

"I've spent my career prosecuting violent criminals, transnational organized crime, violent crime, firearms offenses, trafficking offenses," said one federal prosecutor, who spent years prosecuting Jan. 6 cases. "Never have I felt less safe than with these defendants."

"I'm concerned for the safety of myself. I'm concerned for the safety of my colleagues," said this prosecutor, who asked for anonymity due to fear of retaliation from the Trump administration as well as Jan. 6 rioters they prosecuted. "I'm concerned for the safety of the victims."

Morale among prosecutors and investigators who worked on Jan. 6 cases was already low. The Trump administration [has dismissed](#) more than two dozen prosecutors who worked on Jan. 6 cases. Trump officials have also launched a [wide-ranging inquiry](#) into FBI employees' roles in Jan. 6 investigations, leading to fear of a political purge of thousands of agents.

Those moves have given law enforcement officials who investigated the Capitol attack little to no faith that the Trump administration would investigate the threats they are currently facing.



POLITICS

Trump gave pardons to hundreds of violent Jan. 6 rioters. Here's what they did

"A lot of us are already not reporting these threats, because we don't think they'll care — unless and until one of us gets killed," said one official who worked on Jan. 6 cases and also requested anonymity because of fear of retaliation.

The victims in the case of Jan. 6 include the approximately 140 police officers who were injured in the violent attack.

Former Metropolitan Police Department Officer Michael Fanone was assaulted with a stun gun and suffered a heart attack during the riot. Trump's pardon freed the man who drove the stun gun into Fanone's neck, Daniel Rodriguez, who had pleaded guilty and was serving a 12-year prison sentence. Since the pardons, Fanone said he was filing for protective orders against Rodriguez and the other men who assaulted him on Jan. 6.

"The fact that I have to do this, to try to afford my family some degree of protection, is outrageous," Fanone told [NBC Washington](#). "But we are in an age of government lawlessness."

FBI employees who sued the Department of Justice over a questionnaire asking about their involvement in Jan. 6 investigations [alleged](#) that "their personal information has already been posted by Jan. 6 convicted felons on 'dark websites' (aka the 'dark web')."

"Social media posts are circulating that are calling for violence against FBI personnel," said Natalie Bara, the president of the nonprofit FBI Agents Association, at a [press conference](#) announcing another lawsuit seeking to block the dissemination of agents' identities. "This rhetoric is not just irresponsible — it is dangerous."

Some Jan. 6 defendants have called out FBI agents and prosecutors by name online.



Former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio who was sentenced to 22 years in prison for seditious conspiracy, and pardoned by President Trump. He has since called for retribution and the arrest and prosecution of an FBI agent who investigated his case.

CHANDAN KHANNA/AFP via Getty Images/AFP

Enrique Tarrio, the former leader of the far-right Proud Boys, was convicted of seditious conspiracy and sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in the Jan. 6 attack.

Since receiving a full and unconditional pardon from Trump, he has called for retribution and the arrest and prosecution of an FBI agent, who investigated his case.

"The people who did this, they need to feel the heat, they need to be put behind bars, and they need to be prosecuted," Tarrio said in an interview with the far-right show Infowars shortly after his pardon.

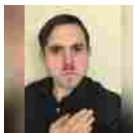
"Success," Tarrio added, "is gonna be retribution."

Tarrio's rhetoric echoes the new leaders of the Department of Justice, as well as Trump himself.



Ed Martin is the interim U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia and a conservative activist who has been a longtime supporter of Jan. 6 defendants.

Michael A. McCoy/Getty Images



INVESTIGATIONS

Trump's Bedminster club hosted an alleged Nazi sympathizer who stormed the Capitol

The interim U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, conservative activist Ed Martin, recently served on the board of the Patriot Freedom Project, a controversial nonprofit that advocates for Jan. 6 defendants. In 2024, Martin [gave awards](#) to Jan. 6 defendants, including a rioter with a history of extreme racist and antisemitic comments, who was described by prosecutors as a "Nazi sympathizer."

Martin was himself in the crowd of protesters outside the Capitol on Jan. 6 and posted on social media after the building had been breached, "Rowdy crowd but nothing out of hand. Ignore the #FakeNews." He was not charged with any crimes related to Jan. 6.

Martin has also suggested that violence against police that day may have been justified.

"The more we find out about how staged and managed this was, the more we have to have less judgment for somebody who hits a cop," Martin said in a [podcast interview](#) in 2024.

Martin and the Department of Justice did not respond to NPR's requests for comment.

Meanwhile, Martin has asked for Chuck Schumer, the top Democrat in the U.S. Senate, to cooperate with an inquiry into comments Schumer made nearly five years ago. Schumer said that conservative Supreme Court Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Neal Gorsuch would "pay the price" if they voted to uphold abortion restrictions. Schumer soon walked back that comment and said, "in no way was I making a threat." The Washington Post [first reported](#) Martin's letter to Schumer.

During the presidential campaign, Trump himself reposted a message on social media that "the cops should be charged and the protesters should be freed."

Current and former Department of Justice officials said the Trump administration's public support for the rioters seems to have inflamed the threats against police, FBI agents and prosecutors.



INVESTIGATIONS

Trump has made more than 100 threats to prosecute or punish perceived enemies

"This level of enmity and animosity directed towards the prosecutors — not to say it's never happened before, but I've never experienced it so consistently and at such a high level," said the federal prosecutor NPR spoke to.

This prosecutor said that they previously felt that their bosses at the Department of Justice would take action to protect them from these threats. Not anymore.

"I did feel that things were taken very seriously at whatever level they could, and people were doing whatever they could," this prosecutor told NPR. "I do not feel that way now."

"I'm not feeling any support from the department," the Justice Department official who spoke to NPR said. "We do not exist in their minds right now, beyond considerations about firing us."

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