

The 1/6 er's

(1.)

Perhaps the most tragic event of January 6<sup>th</sup> was the focal point was lost. Many things transpired that day, this country may never truly understand.

A massive amount of people, known only to each-other now, came together in the resting place of the founding documents. A place created for a challenge, the kind of challenge only the heart of the American spirit could know.

Did we forget "God Bless America" from the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam? These battle cries meant we would and we should never shed tears because of enemies or tyranny.

An excerpt of a letter penned by Guy Reffitt, sent to ProPublica from jail.

## In Exclusive Jailhouse Letter, Capitol Riot Defendant Explains Motives, Remains Boastful

The material obtained by ProPublica sheds light on the radicalization of a Jan. 6 defendant whom prosecutors have characterized as a "serious danger ... not only to his family and Congress, but to the entire system of justice."

by [Joshua Kaplan](#) and [Joaquin Sapien](#)

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**The Insurrection**  
The Effort to Overturn the  
Election



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In a letter sent from behind bars, a key defendant in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol said he and fellow inmates have bonded in jail, and boasted that those attacking the building could have overthrown the government if they had wanted.

The letter is signed “the 1/6ers” and expresses no remorse for the assault on the Capitol, in which five people died. While no names appeared on it, ProPublica was able to determine, through interviews with his family and a review of his correspondence from jail, that it was penned by Guy Reffitt, a member of the Three Percenter right-wing militant group accused of participating in the riot. The letter said the inmates arrested for their role in the attack regularly recite the Pledge of Allegiance inside the Washington, D.C. jail and sing the national anthem “all in unison, loud and proud most everyday.”

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“January 6th was nothing short of a satirical way to overthrow a government,” said the letter, written by hand on yellow lined paper. “If overthrow was the quest, it would have no doubt been overthrown.”

The letter sent to ProPublica is believed to be one of the first public statements from a Jan. 6 rioter currently in detention. ProPublica also obtained text messages with Reffitt’s family and was able to ask a few questions of him via text from the D.C. Jail, with his wife, Nicole Reffitt, acting as a relay. Guy Reffitt declined to participate in a fuller interview on the advice of his lawyer, his wife said.

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Reffitt faces a variety of charges, including obstructing an official proceeding, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years. He is awaiting trial and has pleaded not guilty. In text messages he sent last month to his wife, Reffitt said he was resigning from the Texas Three Percenters.

Last week, Reffitt told ProPublica via his wife that more than 30 people arrested in connection with the Jan. 6 attack had discussed the letter while in custody. He said that the “1/6ers” are “not organized” and that there are “no leaders,” just “people chatting about things” because they are

"stuck here together."

Reffitt said that the suspects communicate with one another with what are known as "kites," jailhouse slang for messages passed from cell to cell. They are also able to socialize during the two hours a day they're let out of their cells. The Department of Justice declined to comment.

Those detained in connection with the Capitol siege have been treated by D.C. officials as "maximum security" prisoners and kept in restrictive housing, according to media reports. Three defendants that Nicole Reffitt said she understood to be parties to the letter denied any knowledge of it when contacted by ProPublica. One of them said he became friends with Guy Reffitt inside the D.C. Jail, but had been moved to another unit by the time the letter was penned.

Nicole Reffitt said she helped her husband write the letter and solicit support through phone calls and a jailhouse messaging app inmates are allowed to use periodically to communicate with the outside world. The D.C. Jail has held dozens of defendants in connection with the riot, on charges ranging from obstructing an official proceeding to assaulting a police officer with a dangerous weapon.

The letter counters the notion that there was a "plan" or "conspiracy" to take down Congress on Jan. 6, blaming much of the violence on "isolated overly emotional individuals." It suggests that their actions were meant to put the country on notice: "The people clearly are not happy," Guy Reffitt said in response to questions sent through his wife.

"Ask the Capitol Police for [their] opinion of how it could have been," the letter says. "They are grateful it wasn't a real insurrection complete with mind, body and soul."

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Reffitt had a moment of notoriety in late January when it became public that his son had contacted the FBI to report him roughly two weeks before the riot. In text messages reviewed by ProPublica, Reffitt asked his wife for a list of presidents so that the group could use it to create cell names. Reffitt now resides in a cell he has dubbed "the Garfield suite," named after the 20th U.S. president, James A. Garfield.

ProPublica reporters visited Reffitt's family in Wylie, Texas, a Dallas suburb, and interviewed Nicole Reffitt and their two daughters. The reporters also met with the Reffitts' son, Jackson Reffitt, who had reported concerns about his father's activities to the FBI. Jackson Reffitt said the bureau did not follow up until the Capitol was under siege. The FBI did not immediately respond to questions from ProPublica.

The family shared group text message chats from the past year and some of their correspondence with Guy Reffitt during his more than three months in jail.

The material sheds light on the radicalization of Reffitt, whom federal prosecutors characterized in a court filing as a "serious danger ... not only to his family and Congress, but to the entire system of justice."



News media footage used in a court filing shows Reffitt on a staircase between terraces outside the U.S. Capitol building. United States District Court for the District of Columbia

Reffitt, 48, worked most of his adult life on oil rigs, an occupation that took him and sometimes his family around the world, including three years in Malaysia. But when the coronavirus hit in 2020, work dried up and he intensified his political activity, focusing on the Black Lives Matter movement, which he viewed as destructive.

Reffitt saw his actions on Jan. 6 as a critical step in protecting his wife and kids from what he viewed as a decades-long American slide toward “tyranny,” according to his text messages.

“We watch the people of other countries rise up against authoritarianism and think, how sad they must be to want freedom and liberty so much,” the letter said. “Here, the more you try to divide, bend or even break America. The more The Republic of The People will stand indivisible and resolute.”

Reffitt’s son covertly recorded conversations with his father that have shown up in court filings as evidence that Reffitt came to the Capitol armed and with violent intentions.

“You’ll find out that I had every constitutional right to carry a weapon and take over the Congress, as we tried to do,” he said in one recording, according to a transcript in court files. Jackson Reffitt, 18, has since moved out of the family home and is raising money to support himself and his schooling.

In another excerpt in court files, Guy Reffitt was blunt: “I did bring a weapon on property that we own. Federal grounds or not. The law is written, but it doesn’t mean it’s right law. The people that were around me were all carrying too.”

Reffitt’s wife and daughters said his statements were more benign than they sound — that Reffitt is notorious for his hyperbole and left the Capitol when he learned rioters had made it inside. Nicole Reffitt said she has long referred to her husband teasingly as “Queenie” because of his flair for the dramatic. Prosecutors have not accused him of entering the Capitol building or hurting anyone.

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In their most recent filing, prosecutors added new evidence to their case against Guy Reffitt. They obtained a recording of a Jan. 10 Zoom meeting involving Reffitt and two other Three Percenters. In it, Reffitt allegedly said he helped lead the charge on the Capitol with a .40-caliber pistol at his side, at one point telling a U.S. Capitol Police officer who was firing nonlethal rounds at him, “Sorry, darling. You better get a bigger damn gun.”

Reffitt went on to describe how the group might be able to disable a social media company’s servers by using a sniper rifle to disable the generators at a nearby Texas facility. According to court records, he said attacking the servers would “make them feel it back” in Washington, D.C. He added: “Then they won’t know we’re coming next time.”

In court filings, his lawyer said that prosecutors have “relied on bragging” and that none of the government’s video or photographs from the Capitol show Reffitt to be armed. Reffitt has not been charged with a gun crime.

The letter expressed hope that the events of Jan. 6 wouldn’t need to be repeated: “I hope that was the only day in American history we would without doubt, feel the need to notify our government, they have transgressed much too far.”

Several experts on extremism reviewed the letter for ProPublica and had differing views of its implications.

“I tend to look at this letter as a person puffing themself up,” said Jason Blazakis, a former senior counterterrorism official at the Department of State.

Peter Simi, an associate professor at Chapman University in Southern California, found the language in the letter more alarming, especially in how it characterizes the Jan. 6 riot as inevitable.

“I would interpret it as a threat. You can say it’s thinly veiled, but I don’t think it’s that thinly veiled,” Simi said. “This is the preamble — what you saw on the 6th. More is coming ... If you thought the 6th was bad, just wait and see.”

## **The Meet and Greet**

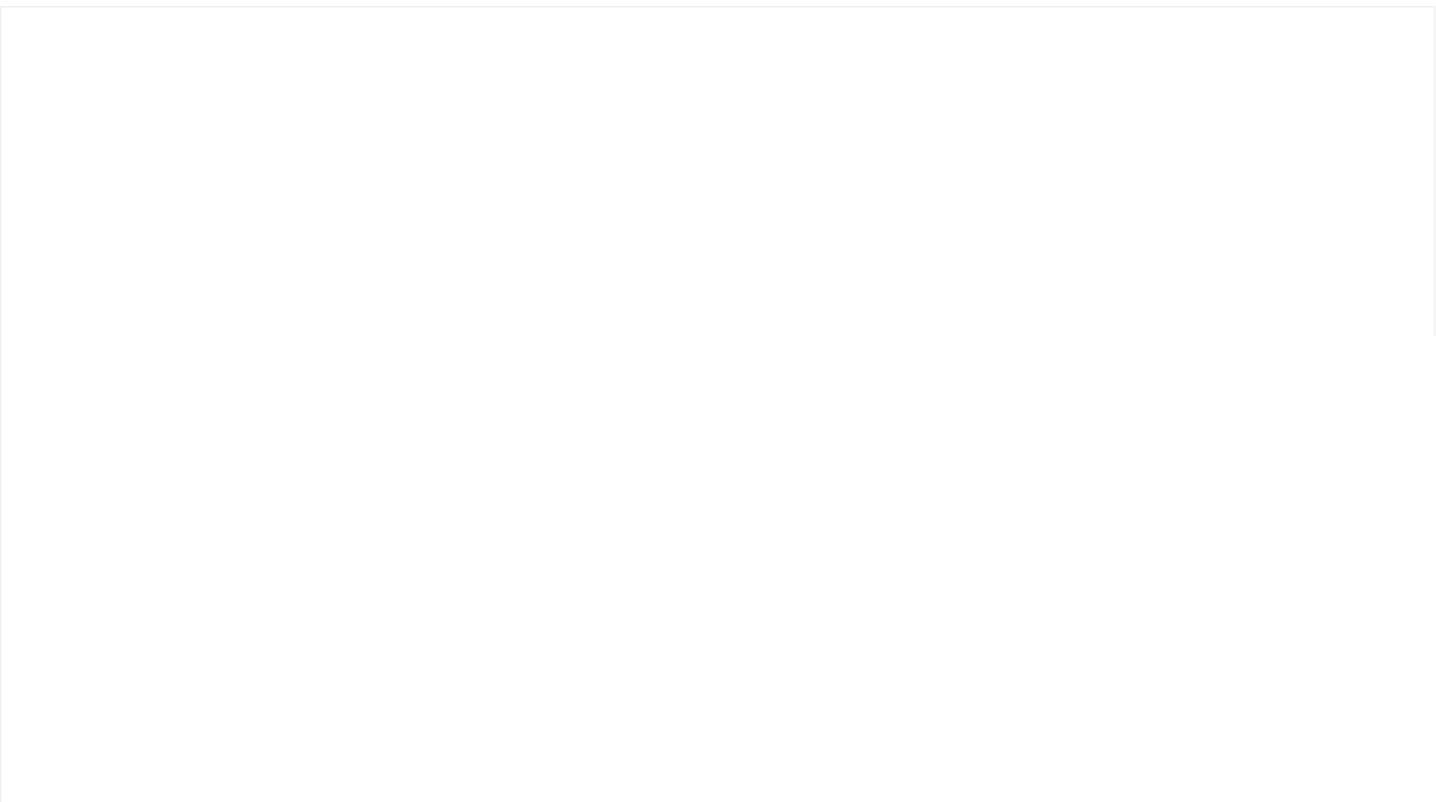
As Reffitt struggled to find work in the spring of 2020, he spent hours watching Fox News and getting angry over the Black Lives Matter protests, his family said. His teenage children supported the movement; Reffitt viewed it as “bullshit,” according to his texts. One argument with his son ended with Reffitt throwing a coffee mug across the room. About a week later, Jackson Reffitt went to march in a BLM rally in Wylie. His father went armed, the family said, standing guard outside the suburb’s Olde City Park.

Around that time, Guy Reffitt was introduced to the Three Percenters, a decentralized anti-government movement. The group, which takes its name from the myth that only three percent of the population fought the British in the American Revolution, is credited with popularizing the militia movement by framing it in more palatable, patriotic terms.

Nicole Reffitt recalled a “meet and greet” in June, with about 20 members coming to the Reffitt home for a barbecue.

After some awkward small talk, the conversation turned to “what everyone could do,” she said. Who had military experience? Who had a license to carry? Who knew how to stop a bleed? Someone took notes to be sent up the chain of command.

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Guy Reffitt was enthralled. Afterwards, he began doing what he called "intel," doing background checks on new recruits. His wife was relieved he seemed to have a sense of purpose.

In August, Reffitt drove to a BLM demonstration in Mississippi, hoping to surveil a particular activist. The family said that Reffitt intended to place a GPS tracking device on the man's car. He abandoned the plan when he wasn't sure he had the right vehicle.

Nicole Reffitt said she was alarmed when she found multiple license plates in the bed of her husband's pickup truck. She said her husband told her he used them to make sure he wasn't being tracked. "I was like, 'What the fuck? What are we doing?'" she said. "He told me to go to work and keep my business to myself."

After then-President Donald Trump lost his bid for reelection, Guy Reffitt began to sequester himself in the front room of his suburban brick home, glued to Newsmax as it reported theories of how the vote was rigged.

On Dec. 19, Reffitt found a new obsession, his family said, when Trump tweeted: "Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!"

From then on, Reffitt's texts bounced between plans for shopping and cooking prime rib for Christmas and talk of going to D.C. to "shock the world."

"It's the government that is going to be destroyed in this fight," Reffitt texted his family on Dec. 21. "Congress has made fatal mistakes this time."

Feeling "paranoid" about his father, Jackson Reffitt sent in a tip via the FBI website. He said he wrote that his father was a militia member who made threatening statements about public officials and kept talking about doing "something big."

## Full Battle Rattle

After Christmas, Guy Reffitt firmed up plans to travel to Washington for the Jan. 6 rally. His family said he planned to bring weapons, which was unsurprising; they said he went most everywhere armed. Nicole Reffitt told ProPublica her husband promised to disassemble the weapons to

comply with Washington, D.C., laws. His defense attorney has argued that there is no evidence that he “carried a loaded firearm.”

But according to court records, on Dec. 28, Guy messaged an unnamed individual. “I don’t think unarmed will be the case this time,” he said. “I will be in full battle rattle. If that’s a law I break, so be it, but I won’t do it alone.”

When he left to drive to Washington, he told his family, “If everything works out, I’ll see you again,” in what Nicole said was a typically melodramatic goodbye.

“I love ALL of you with ALL of my heart and soul,” he texted on the morning of Jan. 6. “This is for our country and for ALL OF YOU and your kids.”

Jackson Reffitt came home to find his mother and sister transfixed by the television as protestors pushed past police lines. “What the hell?” he recalled asking. “Is dad there?” The screen showed police in the Senate chambers, guns drawn.

“Your father is there,” his mother responded.

Finally acting on Jackson Reffitt’s earlier tip, an FBI agent called him to set up a meeting.

Two days later, Guy Reffitt came home, eager to boast. His son decided to record him. Jackson Reffitt met with the FBI agent the following week.

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In the pre-dawn hours of Jan. 16, a squad of more than a dozen officers rolled up to the Reffitt home, armed for a SWAT raid, according to his family and footage from their neighbor’s security camera. A mobile battering ram idled in front of their house as the officers tossed flash-bang grenades. The family clambered out, some still in their underwear.

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Guy Reffitt went without resistance, assuring the kids that the federal agents were only doing their jobs. He was expecting to be arrested by then, his family said, and even laughed with an officer who accompanied him to the bathroom after he'd been handcuffed.

As he was being carted off in the back of a police vehicle, he yelled out the window: "I didn't ask for this!"

He has been behind bars since.

On April 22, Reffitt messaged his wife a note of encouragement.

"You are superstars to more than half the country," he wrote. "There's no going back now."

Kirsten Berg contributed reporting.

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