

Nation&World



Pete Marovich/Getty Images

“The department will work tirelessly to hold accountable those responsible for crimes related to the attack on our democracy,” Attorney General Merrick Garland (second from right) said Wednesday.

JAN. 6 INSURRECTION | INVESTIGATIONS

Sedition trial bolsters Justice Department

Prosecutors may see reason to use sedition charge on more plotters

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON — The seditious conspiracy convictions of Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes and another leader in the far-right extremist group show that jurors are willing to hold accountable not just the rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, but those who schemed to subvert the 2020 election.

Tuesday’s verdict, while not a total win for the Justice Department, gives momentum to investigators just as the newly named special counsel ramps up his probe into key aspects of the insurrection fueled by President Donald Trump’s lies of a stolen election.

As Democrats call for charges to be brought against Trump and the House committee investigating the insurrection weighs making a criminal referral to the Justice Department, the Oath Keepers verdict may embolden investigators to build cases against other major players behind the push to keep Trump in power.

“The fact that they got two convictions for seditious conspiracy gives DOJ the confidence that they can pursue other higher-ups and charge seditious conspiracy as well because certainly a D.C. jury accepted it,” said Jeffrey Jacobovitz, a Washington white-collar criminal defense attorney.

Game changer

They are the first seditious conspiracy convictions at trial in decades and are significant because the legally complex

charge can be difficult for juries to grasp and for prosecutors to prove, especially in an ultimately unsuccessful plot. The sprawling Capitol riot probe has already led to the arrest of more than 900 people across the U.S. and could result in hundreds of more charges, but Rhodes and his associates



STEWART RHODES

were the first to stand trial on the Civil War-era offense. Jurors found Rhodes and Kelly Meggs, who led the Florida chapter of the antigovernment group, guilty of sedition for plotting to use force to block the presidential transfer from Trump to Joe Biden. Three other co-defendants were acquitted of the charge, but all five were convicted of obstructing Congress’ certification of the electoral vote, which — like seditious conspiracy — carries up to 20 years in prison.

“As the verdict of this case makes clear, the department will work tirelessly to hold accountable those responsible for crimes related to the attack on our democracy on January 6, 2021,” Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters Wednesday. Garland said he wouldn’t speculate on what it could mean for other possible cases.

The verdict, while split, could strengthen the Justice Department’s hand as it gears up to try a second group of Oath Keepers as well as former Proud Boys national chairman Enrique Tarrio and other top leaders for seditious conspiracy. With both trials slated to begin this month, the convictions could spur new

plea deals.

Beyond the rioters

“If I am a defense attorney for any of those defendants, today I am reaching out to my client to say: ‘We need to have a conversation about whether you still want to go to trial,’” said Barbara McQuade, who served as U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Rhodes never went into the Capitol, but prosecutors spent weeks making the case that he rallied his followers, amassed weapons and prepared armed teams outside Washington with the goal of stopping Biden from becoming president. In hundreds of messages shown to jurors, Rhodes urged his extremist followers to fight to defend Trump and warned of a civil war if Biden became president. On Jan. 6, Oath Keepers dressed in tactical battle gear joined the angry mob of Trump supporters and pushed into the Capitol.

Charges stemming from the insurrection thus far have focused largely on those who stormed the Capitol, attacked police officers, smashed windows and sent lawmakers running for their lives. But Justice Department officials have already shown acute interest in speaking with members of the Trump administration about efforts to undo the election.

The Justice Department also has issued a wave of subpoenas related to a scheme to elevate alternate, or fake, electors in battleground states who would invalidate Biden’s win. It has scrutinized the fundraising practices of Trump’s political action committee, with subpoenas seeking records of communications with Trump-allied lawyers who supported efforts to overturn the election results.

ELECTIONS ’22 | ARIZONA GOVERNOR

Defeated GOP nominee says Dem had conflict of interest

Secretary of state’s work routine; no problems reported

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY
The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Republican Kari Lake and supporters of her failed campaign for Arizona governor are attacking Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs as having a conflict of interest in overseeing the election she won.

Secretaries of state across the country routinely oversee their own races, and Republicans had no such criticism when one of their own was secretary of state in Georgia

and oversaw his own election for governor four years ago. The criticism on Hobbs has persisted after one heavily Republican rural county declined to certify its own election results, forcing Hobbs to sue.

Lake said in a video posted to social media this week that Hobbs “is now threatening counties with legal action if they do not crown her governor by certifying the election that she botched. You simply can’t make this stuff up.”

Hobbs defeated Lake by a little more than 17,000 votes, and there has been no evidence that voters were disenfranchised, or that the result was in any way inaccurate. Every county in the state except

one — Cochise County, in the state’s southeast corner — has certified its results. Hobbs’ lawsuit against the county has its first hearing Thursday.

While most Republicans around the country who lost after spreading baseless claims about the 2020 presidential election conceded, Lake has not. She has embarked on a campaign on social media and conservative outlets to claim the election was tainted by problems in Maricopa County, which includes the Phoenix area and accounts for more than 60% of the state’s registered voters. County officials say everyone was able to cast a ballot and that all legal votes were counted.

STATE VISIT

Biden, Macron to break bread, nibble cheese

BLOOMBERG NEWS

Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron will dine on lobster, caviar and an Oregon cheese named the best in the world while listening to Grammy-winner Jon Batiste at the U.S. president’s first state dinner on Thursday.

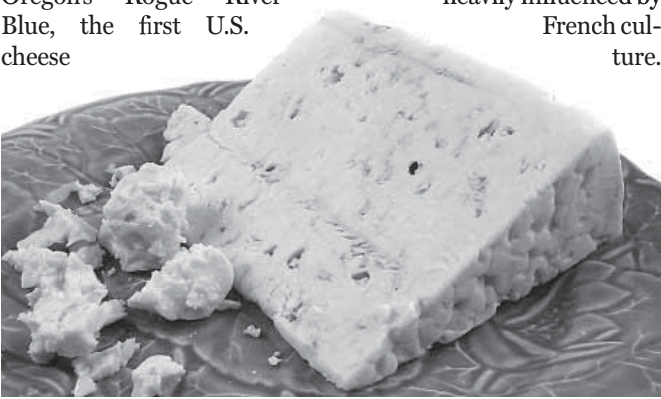
Batiste, one of the nation’s most decorated musicians, will perform with his father, Michael Batiste, according to first lady Jill Biden’s office. The menu will include a cheese course highlighted by Oregon’s Rogue River Blue, the first U.S. cheese

to ever win the World Cheese Awards, according to White House executive chef Cristeta Comerford.

The dinner courses will include Maine lobster, American caviar, ravioli, steak and potatoes, the first lady’s office said.

Between 300 and 400 guests will join Biden, Macron and their wives in a large heated tent on the South Lawn of the White House.

On Friday, the Macrons head to New Orleans, a city heavily influenced by French culture.



2005 File Photo /Staff



Agence France-Presse

IN THE KNOW Bread is heritage

The baguette, a French staple, has been deemed eligible to join UNESCO’s “Intangible Cultural Heritage” list, an award given to practices or traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. It includes rituals, performing arts, traditional crafts, and specific food dishes.

The baguette joins other traditional foods including Ukrainian borscht, kimchi, flatbread, Belgian beer culture and Neapolitan pizza. Other “intangible” traditions given the status include Chinese acupuncture, dry stone walling and capoeira.

Bloomberg News

NATIVE AMERICANS

Biden reaches out to tribal nations

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Wednesday pledged to give Native Americans a stronger voice in federal affairs, promising at the first in-person summit on tribal affairs in six years that he will bolster tribal consultations, inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in decision-making and funding for communities struggling

with the impacts of climate change.

Biden spoke on the opening day of the two-day White House Tribal Nations Summit to representatives from hundreds of Native American and Alaska Native tribes, reiterating and announcing a series of new commitments. The summit coincides with National Native American Heritage Month, which is

celebrated in November.

Among the pledges from the Biden administration is to establish uniform standards for federal agencies to consult with tribes and go beyond a “check the box” exercise, finalize a 10-year plan to revitalize Native languages and strengthen tribal rights like hunting and fishing that are outlined in existing treaties.

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TODAY’S EDITIONS
Vol. 174, No. 62,
4 sections

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ISSN 2578-0859; Published daily by The Dallas Morning News, Inc., a subsidiary of DallasNews Corporation (dallasnews.com, Nasdaq: DALN)

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