

Ynet-News, January 11, 2021 – Monday

01.11.21 – Mo - - - News Placed in Jan 11 spot – Monday

Gantz urges liberal parties to unite as he continues to divide against Netanyahu

01.11.21 – Mo - - -

Egypt, Germany, France, Jordan revive Palestinian talks under Biden office

01.11.21 – Mo - - -

Orthodox schools clash with police in Ashdod & Jerusalem over lockdown rules

01.11.21 – Mo - - - News

PM office advanced plans on West Bank homes where Biden opposed in the past

01.10.21 – Su - - - News Placed in Jan 10 spot – Sunday

Scottish group de-mined West Bank to reopen Jordan River site of Jesus' baptism

01.10.21 – Su - - - News

Daily Israel drones & jet mock raids over Beirut, seeking Hezbollah facilities

01.10.21 – Su - - - News Placed in Jan 09 spot – Saturday

Israel Railways closed south of Tel Aviv three weeks for electrification project  
(preparing for Jan 24 Prophecy, separating the South)

01.11.21 – Mo - - - News

Pelosi Democrats pushing impeachment to oust Trump blocked by Republicans

01.11.21 – Mo - - -

Biden taps Burns as CIA head to negotiate Iran deal, if confirmed by Senate

01.11.21 – Mo - - -

Two hundred thousand Trump fans blamed for riot breach of fanatical few

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Gantz urges liberal parties to unite as he continues to divide against Netanyahu

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Gantz urges center-left parties to unite into one bloc against Netanyahu

Former IDF chief says he is 'ready to sacrifice a lot' to initiate the move as Blue & White crashes in the polls and manages to barely hover over the electoral threshold

i24NEWS| Published: 01.11.21 , 22:31

Blue & White leader Benny Gantz on Monday urged center-left parties to unite in a bid to oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the upcoming March 2021 elections, saying he was "ready to sacrifice a lot" to initiate such a move.

Gantz's statement comes as Israel prepares for a fourth election round in just under two years after its emergency unity government failed to reach an agreement over the state budget in December - leading to its automatic dissolution.

"I shook the hand of this man whom I pledged to replace, I shook the hand of a serial promise-breaker," the former military chief said in a televised address to the nation. "I shook it because the State of Israel is at war and I am foremost its soldier. I was wrong. While a real and lethal pandemic is raging and threatening the lives of all of us, [Netanyahu] continued to divide and incite because it serves his personal interest and so he can escape his day in court."

"We cannot allow him to disperse us into fragments of parties - there is great danger that the opportunity will pass if we remain scattered across so many factions."

Following his speech, opposition leader Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party released a laconic statement, saying "we will make every effort toward mergers that will lead to a sane and liberal government that will change the country."

Yisrael Beytenu head Avigdor Liberman, however, dismissed Gantz's offer, saying that "we already had an opportunity to replace [Netanyahu] but you chose to become a reserve prime minister. The only thing you can do now for the country is to announce you are not running for Knesset."

01.11.21

Egypt, Germany, France, Jordan revive Palestinian talks under Biden office

01.11.21

Egypt, Germany, France, Jordan meet to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks

Cairo says aim of meeting is to urge Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate 'just and comprehensive political settlement', while Germany says they want to discuss steps to 'build trust' between the two nations

Associated Press| Published: 01.11.21 , 15:44

Egypt on Monday hosted the foreign ministers of Germany, France and Jordan to discuss ways to revive peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, a week before U.S. President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

In Cairo, the Foreign Ministry said the aim of the meeting was to urge the Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate a "just and comprehensive political settlement" on the basis of achieving a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital on territory Israel captured in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The **Palestinians** suffered numerous **setbacks under** the outgoing administration of U.S. President Donald **Trump** and complained about what they say were pro-Israeli steps from Washington.

**Trump** has sidelined the Palestinian Authority, recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the U.S. Embassy there from Tel Aviv, slashed financial assistance for the Palestinians and reversed course on the illegitimacy of **Israeli settlements on land claimed by the Palestinians**.

Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi said last month that Cairo has been working toward a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, "taking into account the regional and international changes." He was apparently referring to Biden's election and the establishment of ties with Israel by four Arab countries — the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

**France's** Foreign Ministry said the meeting would **discuss ways** to have Israelis and Palestinians embark on talks, building on "the positive regional context" related to the recent normalization deals.

"It is a question of contributing, at the same time, to a resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, with a view to resolving the conflict in the framework of international law," the statement said.

**Germany's** Foreign Minister Heiko Maas tweeted before **leaving for Cairo** on Sunday that the ministers would discuss "which concrete steps" that could help "build trust" between Israel and the Palestinians.

In September, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called for an international conference early in 2021 to launch a "genuine peace process," based on the UN resolutions and past agreements with Israel. The Palestinians **no longer see the U.S. as an honest broker**.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said last month that the Palestinian Authority was **ready to cooperate with the incoming Biden** administration, and urged Israel to return to talks based on a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**01.11.21**

**Orthodox schools clash with police in Ashdod & Jerusalem over lockdown rules**

**01.11.21**

**Haredim clash with police in Ashdod over yeshiva lockdown closure**

Ultra-Orthodox movement Bnei Torah issues statement, **calling the shuttering of the Grodno Yeshiva 'criminal'**, warning if police officers don't stand back, **they will call** on the **entire sector** to come out en masse **to protect the school**

Matan Tzuri| Updated: **01.11.21** , 15:11

**Th-Orthodox** residents **of Ashdod** clashed with police officers on Monday after **authorities closed** a yeshiva that was operating in **violation of lockdown** orders.

Israel entered a full lockdown last week in an effort to bring down the worrying rise in coronavirus cases but some radical factions in the Haredi sector have refused to adhere to government orders, illegally reopening schools and staging mass events.

The police in the southern city were called to the scene by the municipal inspectors who shut down the religious school that operated illegally. Police said they arrested several protesters who rioted, blocked roads and clashed with the officers. The Ashdod Municipality said the rioters "attacked the municipal security forces with rocks and sticks."

In response, the Bnei Torah Movement slammed the police, refusing to take any responsibility. "The ultra-Orthodox public throughout the country is appalled to hear about the criminal attempt by the Ashdod police to shut down the Grodno Yeshiva and evict hundreds of yeshiva students," said the statement.

The movement warned if the police officers don't stand down, they will call on the entire sector to come out in protest.

"A discussion is taking place at the residence of Torah scholars at this time about the possibility of calling on the [Haredi] public from all over the country to come to Ashdod en masse and physically prevent the horrific and terrible injustice, which is the closure of the yeshiva."

The incident came a day after Ynet revealed that yeshivas in some of Jerusalem's Haredi neighborhoods reopened despite the tightening of the lockdown that saw the shuttering of the country's education system.

For instance, in the Mea Shearim neighborhood in the capital, it was "business as usual" on Sunday, with the extremist Hasidic factions that predominantly live there, refusing to obey the lockdown rules.

In addition, a mass "seven blessings" event - the heart of the Jewish wedding ceremony - was held at Mea Shearim on Saturday evening for the granddaughter of the community's leading rebbe.

The senior rabbi also called on the sector to "strive to pray outside", but did not say it was a binding instruction, which has led to illegal prayer gatherings in confined spaces in recent days.

01.11.21

PM office advanced plans on West Bank homes where Biden opposed in the past

01.11.21

Israel announces 800 new settler homes, risking Biden's anger

PM's office says at least 100 homes will be built in a settlement where an Israeli woman was killed last month in a suspected terror attack; PA says Israel 'races against time' to expand settlements before Trump leaves office

Associated Press| Published: 01.11.21 , 14:34

Israel on Monday advanced plans to build 800 new settler homes in the West Bank, a move that could strain ties with the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced the move, saying it would include 100 homes in a settlement where an Israeli woman was killed last month in an attack allegedly carried out by a Palestinian assailant.

The announcement will burnish Netanyahu's right-wing credentials in a tough campaign ahead of March elections, but it could anger Biden, who is opposed to settlement expansion and has clashed with Israel over it in the past.

Israel captured the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 war, territories the Palestinians want for their future state. Nearly 500,000 Israelis live in settlements scattered across the West Bank. The Palestinians view settlements as a violation of international law and an obstacle to peace, a position with wide international support. The Palestinian Authority's Foreign Ministry condemned the latest announcement, accusing Israel of "racing against time" to build settlements before President Donald Trump leaves office.

Trump's administration provided unprecedented support to Israel, including by abandoning a decades-old U.S. policy of opposing settlements. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last year became the first top U.S. diplomat to visit a West Bank settlement.

Biden has pledged a more even-handed approach in which he will restore aid to the Palestinians that was cut off by Trump and work to revive peace negotiations. The two sides have not held substantive peace talks in more than a decade.

The opposition leader Yair Lapid, who hopes to unseat Netanyahu in March, called the settlement announcement an "irresponsible step" that would spark a "battle" with the new U.S. administration.

"The Biden administration has not yet taken office and the government is already leading us into an unnecessary confrontation," he tweeted. "The national interest must also be maintained during elections."

The greatest threat to Netanyahu in the coming vote comes from the right, where Gideon Saar, a former ally and staunch supporter of settlements, has broken away and vowed to end his long rule. Polls show Netanyahu's Likud winning the most votes but falling short of a majority coalition in Israel's 120-seat Knesset, or parliament.

The announcement said 100 homes would be built in Tel Manashe, a West Bank settlement where Esther Horgan, a 53-year-old mother of six, was killed last month while jogging in a nearby forest. Israel says it has detained a Palestinian suspect in the attack. It was not immediately clear how soon the homes would be built, as such construction usually requires approval from several government bodies and a tendering process.

01.10.21

Scottish group de-mined West Bank to reopen Jordan River site of Jesus' baptism

01.10.21

Mine-free River Jordan shrine ends 50 year wait for Epiphany

Cleared minefield in the former war zone between Israel and Jordan allows once-abandoned Christian holy site to reopen in the area believed to be the site of Jesus' baptism

Reuters| Published: 01.10.21 , 22:56

A shrine near the traditional site of Jesus' baptism on the River Jordan hosted an Epiphany procession for the first time in more than 50 years on Sunday after it was declared free of landmines.

Father Francesco Patton, the custodian of the Holy Land for the Roman Catholic church, led Franciscan friars towards a shrine in what was once a war zone between Israel and Jordan.

Although the two countries have been at peace since 1994, seven churches laid abandoned for more than 50 years in the area of de-mining operations. The area lies about a kilometer (0.62 miles) from the Qasr al-Yahud baptism site in the West Bank, which is a major draw for Christian pilgrims.

"Today, we are back to pray," Father Ibrahim Faltas, one of the clergymen at the ceremony, said. Attendance at the procession, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, was capped at 50 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Israeli de-mining efforts began in 2018 and included support from the Halo Trust, a Scottish-based mine clearance group, an Israeli official said.

As of 2021, "the danger has been completely removed," a branch of Israel's defense ministry said.

After visiting the shrine, the friars passed fading signs reading "DANGER - MINES!" in English, Arabic and Hebrew as they went down to the river to pray.

01.10.21

Daily Israel drones & jet mock raids over Beirut, seeking Hezbollah facilities

01.10.21

Daily low flying Israeli jets over Lebanon spreading jitters

The frequency of low flying IAF warplanes over Lebanon's capital of Beirut has intensified in the last two weeks, as tensions run high in the region on the final days of Donald Trump's administration

Associated Press| Published: 01.10.21 , 21:20

Israeli military jets carried out several low flying flights over Beirut as reconnaissance drones also buzzed overhead Sunday in what has become a daily occurrence.

Israel regularly violates Lebanon airspace, often to carry out strikes in neighboring Syria. On Christmas Eve, Israeli jets flew low late into the night, terrorizing Beirut residents who are no strangers to such flights. They were followed by reported Israeli strikes in Syria.

The frequency of low flying warplanes over the capital has intensified in the last two weeks, making residents jittery as tensions run high in the region on the final days of President Donald Trump's administration.

Israel rarely comments on these reports.

Many fear conflict may erupt in the area before Trump leaves office in retaliation for the U.S. killing of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani in Iraq last year, or to scuttle efforts by the incoming administration of Joe Biden to negotiate with Iran.

On Friday, the Lebanese army recorded an Israeli flight that lasted nearly six hours in the country's south.

A Twitter account that tracks aircraft movement in the Middle East, #Intel\_Sky, has recorded dozens of Israeli jets flying over Lebanon, including mock raids, since the start of the year. #Intel\_Sky called Sunday's flights "mock raids."

At one point this summer, the Lebanese army said Israel violated its airspace nearly 30 times in two days, flying reconnaissance drones and jets into Lebanese territory.

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon says Israel enters Lebanese airspace on a daily basis in violation of U.N. resolutions and the country's sovereignty.

Between June and October 2020, UNIFIL recorded a daily average of 12.63 airspace violations, totaling 61 hours and 51 minutes in flight time, a significant increase from the previous four months. Drones accounted for approximately 95% of the violations, UNIFIL said.

Israel and Lebanon are technically at war. Hezbollah, the powerful Lebanese militant group backed by Iran, is a sworn enemy of Israel and the two have had a series of confrontations, including a full-scale war in 2006.

Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, in a year-end interview, said Israel's efforts to curb his group's ability to acquire precision-guided missiles have failed. He boasted that Hezbollah now has twice as many such missiles as it had last year. Israel has in recent months expressed concern that Hezbollah is trying to establish production facilities to make precision-guided missiles.

01.10.21

Israel Railways closed south of Tel Aviv three weeks for electrification project (preparing for Jan 24 Prophecy, separating the South)

01.10.21

Israel Railways work leaves half of country without trains for weeks

Company's management says in order to complete the railway's electrification project those living in the south will find themselves without access to train service from January 12 until February 3

Asaf Zagrizak | Published: 01.10.21 , 15:26

The infrastructure work on many Israel Railways lines will leave half the country without access to trains for at least three weeks, the company's management announced Sunday.

The management said they are using the current nationwide lockdown, when the movement between the cities is already limited, to complete the railway's electrification project. As a result, stations across mostly central and southern parts of Israel, will be closed from January 12 until February 3.

Tel Aviv Hagana train station will be the southernmost station for anyone arriving from the north, while those living in the south will find themselves unable to use the train service altogether.

The stations that will remain closed for the duration of the infrastructure works are: Rosh HaAyin North, Petah Tikva Segula, Petah Tikva Kiryat Arye, Bnei Brak, Lod, Lod-Ganei Aviv, Kfar Habad, Modi'in Center, Pa'ate Modi'in, Jerusalem Yitzchak Navon, Holon Junction, Holon Wolfson, Bat Yam-Yoseftal, Bat Yam-Komemiyut, Ramla, Beit Shemesh, Be'er Yaakov, Rishon LeTsiyon Rishonim, Rishon LeTsiyon Moshe Dayan, Rehovot, Yavne East, Yavne West, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Sderot, Netivot, Ofakim, Mazkeret Batya, Kiryat Malachi-Yoav, Kiryat Gat, Lehavim Rahat, Be'er Sheva North, Be'er Sheva Center, Dimona.

"The work will be carried out along many lines in the center of the country and the south and will include infrastructure, maintenance and development work, replacing railway track components, restoring existing tracks and more," Israel Railways said in a statement.

In response, Israel Railways workers' union said the unilateral decision will result in one fifth of the company's employees being left without work for almost a month. The union said if the issue is not resolved they will boycott the infrastructure works.

01.11.21

Pelosi Democrats pushing impeachment to oust Trump blocked by Republicans

01.11.21

House preps impeachment; GOP blocks ouster-by-Cabinet call

Democrats in the House are pushing VP Pence and Cabinet to oust Trump, after he encouraged a protest march that turned into a mob that ransacked the U.S. Capitol

Associated Press | Published: 01.11.21 , 21:07



A House resolution calling on U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to invoke constitutional authority to remove President Donald Trump from office was blocked Monday by Republicans.

Democrats in the House are pushing Pence and the Cabinet to oust Trump, saying he is unfit for office after encouraging a protest march that turned into a mob that ransacked the U.S. Capitol in a deadly siege.

Republicans refused to allow a vote on the Pence measure Monday, although a vote still could occur as early as Tuesday.

Pence has given no indication he is ready to proceed on such a course, which would involve invoking the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, including a vote by a majority of the Cabinet to oust Trump before he leaves office on Jan. 20. Democrat President-elect Joe Biden will be sworn in on that date.

With just days left in Trump's presidency, the House also is preparing to impeach Trump this week. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is trying first to put pressure on Republicans to tell Trump it's time to go.

Trump would face a single charge - "incitement of insurrection" - over the riot at the U.S. Capitol, according to a draft of the articles obtained by The Associated Press.

Lawmakers were set to introduce the legislation Monday, with voting mid-week.

The four-page impeachment bill draws from Trump's own false statements about his election defeat to Biden; his pressure on state officials in Georgia to "find" him more votes; and his White House rally ahead of the Capitol siege, in which he encouraged thousands of supporters to "fight like hell" before they stormed the building on Wednesday.

A violent mob of Trump supporters overpowered police, broke through security lines and windows and rampaged through the Capitol, forcing lawmakers to scatter as they were finalizing Biden's victory over Trump in the Electoral College.

"President Trump gravely endangered the security of the United States and its institutions of Government," the legislation said.

The bill from Reps. David Cicilline of Rhode Island, Ted Lieu of California, Jamie Raskin of Maryland and Jerrold Nadler of New York, said Trump threatened "the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power" and "betrayed" trust.

"He will remain a threat to national security, democracy, and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office," they wrote.

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Cal., said Monday on CBS, "We need to move forward with alacrity."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says the House will proceed with legislation to impeach Trump as she pushes the vice president and the Cabinet to invoke constitutional authority to force him out, warning that Trump is a threat to democracy after the deadly assault on the Capitol.

A Republican senator, Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, joined Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska over the weekend in calling for Trump to "resign and go away as soon as possible."

Lawmakers warned of the damage the president could still do before Joe Biden is inaugurated Jan. 20. Trump, holed up at the White House, was increasingly isolated after a mob rioted in the Capitol in support of his false claims of election fraud. Judges across the country, including some nominated by Trump, repeatedly dismissed cases and Attorney General William Barr, a Trump ally, said there was no sign of any widespread fraud.

"We will act with urgency, because this President represents an imminent threat," Pelosi said in a letter late Sunday to colleagues emphasizing the need for quick action.

"The horror of the ongoing assault on our democracy perpetrated by this President is intensified and so is the immediate need for action."

During an interview on "60 Minutes" aired Sunday, Pelosi invoked the Watergate era when Republicans in the Senate told President Richard Nixon, "It's over."

Iowan Trump supporter Doug Jensen, clad in a QAnon sweatshirt, gestures to a Capitol

Pence has given no indication he would act on the 25th Amendment. If he does not, the House would move toward impeachment.

Toomey said he doubted impeachment could be done before Biden is inaugurated, even though a growing number of lawmakers say that step is necessary to ensure Trump can never hold elected office again.

"I think the president has disqualified himself from ever, certainly, serving in office again," Toomey said. "I don't think he is electable in any way."

Murkowski, long exasperated with the president, told the Anchorage Daily News on Friday that Trump simply "needs to get out." A third, Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., did not go that far, but on Sunday he warned Trump to be "very careful" in his final days in office. On impeachment, House Democrats would likely delay for 100 days sending articles of impeachment to the Senate for trial, to allow Biden to focus on other priorities.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said that instead of coming together, Democrats want to "talk about ridiculous things" like "Let's impeach a president" with just days left in office.

Still, some Republicans might be supportive.

Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse said he would take a look at any articles that the House sent over. Illinois Rep. Adam Kinzinger, a frequent Trump critic, said he would "vote the right way" if the matter were put in front of him.

The Democratic effort to stamp Trump's presidential record -- for the second time -- with the indelible mark of impeachment advanced rapidly after the riot.

Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., a leader of the House effort to draft impeachment articles accusing Trump of inciting insurrection, said Sunday that his group had 200-plus co-sponsors.

Potentially complicating Pelosi's decision about impeachment was what it meant for Biden and the beginning of his presidency. While reiterating that he had long viewed

Trump as unfit for office, Biden on Friday sidestepped a question about impeachment, saying what Congress did "is for them to decide."

01.11.21

Biden taps Burns as CIA head to negotiate Iran deal, if confirmed by Senate

01.11.21

Biden taps veteran diplomat, Iran negotiator as CIA head

U.S. president-elect hails William Burns as 'exemplary diplomat with decades of experience'; Russian and Arabic speaker is specialist on Moscow and Mideast and led secret talks for Obama that paved way to 2015 Iranian nuclear deal

Reuters| Published: 01.11.21 , 20:33

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden will tap a former career diplomat in William Burns to lead the CIA, his transition team said on Monday, as the Democrat races to put a national security team in place before his inauguration.

Over a 33-year career as a U.S. diplomat and eventually deputy secretary of state, the Russian, Arabic and French speaker honed specialties in Russia and the Middle East.

Burns worked as an ambassador to the United States' old Cold War adversary from 2005 to 2008 and led secret talks that paved the way to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, under former Democratic President Barack Obama.

That background will be critical at the spy agency in a new Biden administration that has vowed to punish Russia if it is found responsible for a massive cyber breach affecting U.S. government agencies. The Kremlin has denied responsibility.

Biden, who served as vice president under Obama, has also said he would restore the Iran nuclear deal, which Republican President Donald Trump abandoned.

The Iranian and American representatives Saeed Jalili, left, and William J. Burns, third from right, in Geneva

William Burns, 2nd right, attends American-Iranian talks in Geneva during the nuclear deal talks in 2008 (Photo: Reuters)

Burns, who is currently president of the international affairs think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, will also help the Biden administration decide where it can cooperate with China and where to confront the rising Asian power.

"Bill Burns is an exemplary diplomat with decades of experience on the world stage keeping our people and our country safe and secure," Biden said in a statement announcing his last major personnel appointment.

Biden, who promised to pick a team of tested officials ready on day one, is unlikely to have a full complement of permanent national security officials when he takes office.

Biden's transition was delayed by Trump contesting the Democrat's November election victory.

Burns **must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate**, where Biden's fellow **Democrats narrowly** hold the **majority**. Biden has asked lawmakers to confirm his national security team as close to his Jan. 20 inauguration as possible.

Yet a **move by** congressional **Democrats to seek** Trump's **impeachment** over a violent assault on the Capitol by his supporters could further **delay action on the appointment**. Biden took months to make the CIA pick. Early contenders like former Central Intelligence Agency deputy director Michael Morell faced **concerns** about **supporting** the use of **torture and drone strikes** following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States **by al Qaeda**.

**01.11.21**

**Two hundred thousand Trump fans blamed for riot breach of fanatical few**

**01.11.21**

**Fanatical Trump fans fueled U.S. Capitol takeover, records show**

Despite right-wing claims, the insurrectionist **mob** that **stormed** the **American seat of government** overwhelmingly included GOP officials and political donors, far-right militants, white supremacists, and QAnon conspiracy theorists

Associated Press| Published: **01.11.21** , 15:18

They came from across America, **summoned** by defeated U.S. President Donald Trump **to march on Washington** in support of his false claim that the November 2020 election was stolen and to stop the congressional certification of Democratic President-elect Joe Biden as the victor.

“Big protest in D.C. on January 6th,” Trump tweeted a week before Christmas. “Be there, will be wild!”

The insurrectionist mob that showed up at the president’s behest and stormed the U.S. Capitol was overwhelmingly made up of longtime Trump supporters, including Republican Party officials, GOP political donors, far-right militants, white supremacists, and adherents of the QAnon conspiracy that the government is secretly controlled by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophile cannibals.

Records show that **some** were heavily **armed** and included convicted criminals, such as a Florida man recently released from prison for attempted murder.

U.S. President Donald Trump told supporters to march on the Capitol at a Jan. 6 rally in Washington to protest the certification of the November election results (Photo: Reuters) The Associated Press reviewed social media posts, voter registrations, court files and other public records for more than 120 people either facing criminal charges related to the **Jan. 6** unrest or who, going maskless amid the pandemic, were later identified through photographs and videos taken during the melee.

The evidence gives lie to claims by right-wing pundits and Republican officials such as Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., that the violence was perpetrated by left-wing antifa members rather than supporters of the president.

“If the reports are true,” Gaetz said on the House floor just hours after the attack, “some of the people who breached the Capitol today were not Trump supporters. They were masquerading as Trump supporters and, in fact, were members of the violent terrorist group antifa.”

Steven D’Antuono, the assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Washington field office, told reporters that investigators had seen “no indication” antifa activists were disguised as Trump supporters in Wednesday’s riot.

The AP found that many of the rioters had taken to social media after the November election to retweet and parrot false claims by Trump that the vote had been stolen in a vast international conspiracy.

Several had openly threatened violence against Democrats and Republicans they considered insufficiently loyal to the president. During the riot, some livestreamed and posted photos of themselves at the Capitol. Afterwards, many bragged about what they had done.

As the mob smashed through doors and windows to invade the Capitol, a loud chant went up calling for the hanging of Vice President Mike Pence, the recent target of a Trump Twitter tirade for not subverting the Constitution and overturning the legitimate vote tally.

Outside, a wooden scaffold had been erected on the National Mall, a rope noose dangling at the ready.

So far, at least 90 people have been arrested on charges ranging from misdemeanor curfew violations to felonies related to assaults on police officers, possessing illegal weapons and making death threats against House Speaker Nancy Pelosi D-Calif.

Among them was Lonnie Leroy Coffman, 70, an Alabama grandfather who drove to Washington to attend Trump’s “Save America Rally” in a red GMC Sierra pickup packed with an M4 assault rifle, multiple loaded magazines, three handguns and 11 Mason jars filled with homemade napalm, according to court filings.

The truck was found during a security sweep involving explosives-sniffing dogs after two pipe bombs were found and disarmed Wednesday near the national headquarters of the Republican and Democratic parties.

Coffman was arrested that evening when he returned to the truck carrying a 9mm Smith & Wesson handgun and a .22-caliber derringer pistol in his pockets.

Federal officials said Coffman is not suspected of planting the pipe bombs, though he was charged with having Molotov cocktails in the bed of his truck.

His grandson, Brandon Coffman, told the AP on Friday his grandfather was a Republican who had expressed admiration for Trump at holiday gatherings. He said he had no idea why Coffman would show up in the nation’s capital armed for civil war.

Also facing federal charges is Cleveland Gover Meredith Jr., a Georgia man who in the wake of the election had protested outside the home of Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, whom Trump had publicly blamed for his loss in the state.

Meredith drove to Washington last week for the “Save America” rally but arrived late because of a problem with the lights on his trailer, according to court filings that include expletive-laden texts.

“Headed to DC with a (s—) ton of 5.56 armor-piercing ammo,” he texted friends and relatives on Jan. 6, adding a purple devil emoji, according to court filings.

The following day, he texted to the group: “Thinking about heading over to Pelosi (C—’s) speech and putting a bullet in her noggin on Live TV.”

He once again added a purple devil emoji, and wrote he might hit her with his truck instead. “I’m gonna run that (C—) Pelosi over while she chews on her gums. ... Dead (B—) Walking. I predict that within 12 days, many in our country will die.”

Meredith, who is white, then texted a photo of himself in blackface. “I’m gonna walk around DC FKG with people by yelling ‘Allahu ak Bar’ randomly.”

A participant in the text exchange provided screenshots to the FBI, who tracked Meredith to a Holiday Inn a short walk from the Capitol. They found a compact Tavor X95 assault rifle, a 9mm Glock 19 handgun and about 100 rounds of ammunition, according to court filings. The agents also seized a stash of THC edibles and a vial of injectable testosterone.

Meredith is **charged with transmitting a threat**, as well as felony **counts for possession of firearms and ammunition**.

Michael Thomas Curzio was arrested in relation to the riots less than two years after he was released from a Florida prison in 2019 after serving an eight-year sentence for attempted murder. Court records from Florida show that he shot the boyfriend of his former girlfriend in a fight at her home.

Federal law enforcement officials vowed Friday to bring additional charges against those who carried out the attack on the Capitol, launching a nationwide manhunt for dozens of suspects identified from photographic evidence

The FBI has opened a murder probe into the death of Capitol Police Officer Brian D. Sicknick, who was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, according to law enforcement officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the ongoing investigation publicly. He died at a hospital.

The Trump supporters who died in the riot were Kevin D. Greeson, 55, of Athens, Alabama; Benjamin Philips, 50, of Ringtown, Pennsylvania; Ashli Babbitt, 35, of San Diego; and Rosanne Boyland, 34, Kennesaw, Georgia.

Boyland’s sister told the AP on Friday she was an adherent of the QAnon conspiracy theory that holds Trump is America’s savior.

Her Facebook page featured photos and videos praising Trump and promoting fantasies, including one **theory that a shadowy group was using the coronavirus to steal elections**.

Boyland’s final **post on Twitter** — a retweet of a post by White House social media director Dan Scavino — was a picture of thousands of people surrounding the Washington Monument on Wednesday.

“She would text me some things, and I would be like, ‘Let me fact-check that.’ And I’d sit there and I’d be like, ‘Well, I don’t think that’s actually right,’” Lonna Cave, Boyland’s sister, said. “We got in fights about it, arguments.”

The AP's review found that QAnon beliefs were common among those who heeded Trump's call to come to Washington.

Doug Jensen, 41, who was arrested by the FBI on Friday in Des Moines, Iowa, after returning home from the riot. An AP photographer captured images of him confronting Capitol Police officers outside of the Senate chamber on Wednesday.

Iowan Trump supporter Doug Jensen, clad in a QAnon sweatshirt, gestures to a Capitol

Jensen's older brother, William Routh, told the AP on Saturday that Jensen believed that the person posting as Q was either Trump or someone very close to the president.

"I feel like he had a lot of influence from the internet that confused or obscured his views on certain things," said Routh, of Clarksville, Arkansas, who described himself as a Republican Trump supporter. "When I talked to him, he thought that maybe this was Trump telling him what to do."

Jensen's employer, Forrest & Associate Masonry in Des Moines, announced Friday that he had been fired.

Tara Coleman, a 40-year-old mother who lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was arrested at the Capitol for a curfew violation and for unlawful entry. On her Facebook page, Coleman re-posted articles supporting the QAnon beliefs about a "deep state" conspiracy to target children.

The AP could not find a working phone number for Coleman and her attorney, Peter Cooper, did not respond to an email seeking comment.

And Jake Chansley, who calls himself the "QAnon Shaman" and has long been a fixture at Trump rallies, surrendered to the FBI field office in Phoenix on Saturday. News photos show him at the riot shirtless, with his face painted and wearing a fur hat with horns, carrying a U.S. flag attached to a wooden pole topped with a spear.

Chansley's unusual headwear is visible in a Nov. 7 AP photo at a rally of Trump supporters protesting election results outside of the Maricopa County election center in Phoenix.

In that photo, Chansley, who also has gone by the last name Angeli, held a sign that read, "HOLD THE LINE PATRIOTS GOD WINS." He also expressed his support for the president in an interview with the AP that day.

The FBI identified Chansley by his distinctive tattoos, which include bricks circling his biceps in an apparent reference to Trump's border wall. Chansley didn't respond last week to messages seeking comment to one of his social media accounts.

The insurrectionist mob also included members of the neo-fascist men-only group known as the Proud Boys, whom Trump urged to "stand back and stand by" when asked to condemn them by a moderator during a presidential debate in September.

Nicholas R. Ochs, 34, was arrested Saturday after returning home to Hawaii, where he is the founder of the local Proud Boys chapter. On Wednesday, Ochs posted a photo of himself on Twitter inside the Capitol, grinning broadly and smoking a cigarette.

According to court filings, the FBI matched photos of Ochs taken during the riot to photos taken when Ochs campaigned unsuccessfully last year as the Republican nominee for a seat in the Hawaii statehouse.

Proud Boys leader Henry “Enrique” Tarrío was **arrested** Monday in Washington on **weapons charges** and ordered to stay out of the nation’s capital. Tarrío is accused of vandalizing a Black Lives Matter banner at a historic Black church last month.

Jay Robert Thaxton, 46, was arrested near the Capitol for curfew violations on Wednesday. A North Carolina man with the same name has also been linked to the Proud Boys. He told The Stanly News & Press in 2019 that he was a Proud Boys supporter but wouldn’t say if he was an official member of the group.

Another North Carolina newspaper, The Jacksonville Daily News, published a photo of Thaxton wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat at a 2019 protest over the removal of Confederate statues.

A man who answered a telephone number associated with Thaxton hung up on an AP reporter. The recipient of a text message to the same number responded with an expletive. Also arrested at the Capitol was William Arthur Leary, who owns a manufactured housing business in Utica, New York.

In an interview Friday, Leary told the AP that he strongly believes the election was stolen from Trump and that he went to Washington to show his support.

**Leary** said he doesn’t trust information reported by the mainstream media and that one of his **main sources of information** was **Infowars**, the far-right conspiracy site run by **Alex Jones**. He denied he ever set foot in the Capitol and complained that he was **held for more than 24 hours and had his cell phone seized**.

“They treated us like animals,” he complained. “They took all our phones. I didn’t get to make a phone call to tell anybody where I was.”

Leary said he remembers seeing a woman, Kristina Malimon, 28, sobbing at the detention center because she had been separated and not allowed to translate for her mother, who primarily speaks Russian. Both women had been charged with curfew violation and unlawful entry. According to a video posted on her Instagram account, the younger Malimon says she was born in Moldova, where her family had faced persecution under the Soviet-era regime for their Christian beliefs.

Malimon, who traveled to D.C. from Portland, Oregon, is vice chairwoman of the Young Republicans of Oregon, according to the group’s website and is also listed as an “ambassador” for the pro-Trump group Turning Point USA.

Her social media feeds are full of photos taken at Trump events, including the earlier “Million MAGA March” held in Washington last month. She also posted photos of herself posing with Donald Trump Jr. and Roger Stone, who was convicted of crimes including obstruction of justice and pardoned by Trump on Christmas Eve.

Media reports from Oregon quoted Malimon in August as the primary organizer of a Trump boat parade on the Willamette River, where big waves created by speeding boats flying Trump flags swamped and sank a smaller boat that was not participating, throwing a family into the water to be rescued by the sheriff’s department.

“Oregon, today you came out and showed your love and support for our wonderful President, Donald J. Trump thank you!” Kristina Malimon wrote on Facebook following the parade.

**Malimon** also served as a **Republican poll watcher in Georgia** and **spoke** at an event organized by the Trump campaign in December, **claiming to have seen voting machines and tabulation computers in Savannah, Georgia**, with suspiciously blinking green lights



she interpreted as a sign they were being secretly **controlled by outside hackers** — a claim **debunked** as **false by GOP election officials** in the state.

A phone number listed for Kristina Malimon rang without being answered on Friday. At the address listed for her in southeast Portland on Friday night, her teenage brother answered the door as other family members, including young children, ran around. The family spoke Russian to each other and the brother, Nick Malimon, translated. He said his sister was still in Washington but had called the family following her release from jail and didn't seem upset about her arrest.

But others are facing consequences even beyond their arrests.

A Texas sheriff announced Thursday that he had reported one of his lieutenants to the FBI after she posted photos of herself on social media with a crowd outside the Capitol. Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar said Lt. Roxanne Mathai, a 46-year-old jailer, had the right to attend the rally but he's investigating whether she may have broken the law. One of the posts Mathai shared was a photo that appeared to be taken Wednesday from among the mass of Trump supporters outside the Capitol, "Not gonna lie.....aside from my kids, this was, indeed, the best day of my life. And it's not over yet."

A lawyer for Mathai, a mother and longtime San Antonio resident, said she attended the Trump rally but never entered the Capitol.

Attorney Hector Cortes said Mathai's contract bars her from speaking directly with the press but that she welcomes an FBI investigation and that her actions were squarely within the bounds of the First Amendment.

Brad Rukstales, a Republican political donor and CEO of Cogensia, a Chicago-based data analytics firm, was arrested with a group of a half-dozen Trump supporters who clashed with officers Wednesday inside the Capitol. Campaign finance reports show Rukstales contributed more than \$25,000 to Trump's campaign and other GOP committees during to 2020 election cycle.

He told a local CBS news channel last week that he had entered the Capitol and apologized. He was fired Friday and did not respond to calls and emails seeking comment.

Derrick Evans, a Republican recently sworn in as a delegate to the West Virginia House, resigned Saturday following his arrest on two charges related to the Capitol riot. He had streamed video of himself charging into the building with the mob.

"They're making an announcement now saying if Pence betrays us you better get your mind right because we're storming the building," Evans, 35, says in the video, as the door to the Capitol building is smashed and rioters rush through. "The door is cracked! ... We're in, we're in! Derrick Evans is in the Capitol!"

On Saturday he issued a statement saying he regretted taking part.

"I take full responsibility for my actions, and deeply regret any hurt, pain or embarrassment I may have caused my family, friends, constituents and fellow West Virginians," the statement said.