

Steve Bannon sentenced to 4 months in prison for contempt of Congress

Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon was sentenced to four months in prison for contempt of Congress after defying a subpoena from the Jan. 6 committee. He was also fined \$6,500. Bannon will not have to serve the sentence until the appeal of his conviction plays out, the federal judge said, fulfilling the ex-Trump aide's request. Bannon was also seeking probation. The sentence is less than what federal prosecutors sought. The Justice Department wanted Bannon be sentenced to six months and be fined \$200,000.

Bannon was found guilty in July of two counts of contempt of Congress. Friday's sentencing is a milestone moment in the DOJ's Jan. 6 response, as prosecutors say by "flouting" the subpoena, Bannon "exacerbated" the assault on the rule of law that the US Capitol attack amounted to. Cameras were not allowed in the Washington, DC, federal courtroom where US Judge Carl Nichols announced ex-Trump adviser Steve Bannon's sentence on Friday.

CNN sent sketch artist Bill Hennessy to capture the scene inside the courtroom as the sentencing proceedings unfolded.

Bannon can be seen sitting alongside his attorney David Schoen as the federal judge announces the sentence after Bannon's team and federal prosecutors spoke in court.

Factbox: Is the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine about to be blown?

Oct 21 (Reuters) - Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of planning to blow up the Kakhovka hydro-electric dam on the Dnipro River, a step that would unleash a devastating flood across a large area of southern Ukraine.

What is the Kakhovka dam, is it about to be blown and what impact would that have?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAM

* The dam, 30 metres (yards) tall and 3.2 km (2 miles) long, was built in 1956 on the Dnipro river as part of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant.

* It holds an 18 km³ reservoir which also supplies water to the Crimean peninsula, annexed by Russia in 2014, and to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, which is also under Russian control.

* The volume of water in the reservoir is about equal to the Great Salt Lake in the U.S. state of Utah.

* Blowing the Soviet-era dam, which is controlled by Russia, would unleash a wall of devastating floodwater across much of the Kherson region which Russia last month proclaimed as annexed in the face of a Ukrainian advance.

ALLEGATIONS

* Sergei Surovikin, the commander of Russian forces in Ukraine, said on Tuesday he had information that Ukrainian forces were preparing a massive strike on the dam and had already used U.S.-supplied HIMARS missiles of a major strike, he said, could be a disaster.

"We have information on the possibility of the Kyiv regime using prohibited methods of war in the area of the city of Kherson, on the preparation by Kyiv of a massive missile strike on the Kakhovka hydro-electric dam," Surovikin said.

Ukrainian officials said the allegation was a sign that Moscow planned to attack the dam and blame Kyiv.

* Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Thursday that Russia had mined the dam and was preparing to blow it, a step he compared to the use of weapons of mass destruction.

"I informed the Europeans today, during the meeting of the European Council, about the next terrorist attack, which Russia is preparing for at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant," he said. "Destroying the dam would mean a large-scale disaster."

Blowing the dam, he said, would also destroy the water supply to Crimea and thus show that Russia had accepted that it could not hold onto the peninsula.

Kirill Stremousov, the Russian-installed deputy head of the annexed Kherson region, said Kyiv's allegations that Russia had mined the dam were false.

Liz Truss will have a claim to being the U.K.'s shortest-serving prime minister

Liz Truss is expected to leave office as the United Kingdom's prime minister in the coming days. That tenure, which likely will fall short of 60 days, would give her a claim to being Britain's shortest-serving prime minister. George Canning, who is usually thought to hold the record, served for 119 days in 1827 until his death from tuberculosis.

Truss had an eventful time in charge. Just days after she took office, Queen Elizabeth II died after 70 years on the throne. Truss presided over a national mourning period, speaking at the late monarch's funeral, and she traveled the nation with the new King Charles III.

The U.K. will have 5 prime ministers in just 6 years. What's gone wrong? Soon afterward, Truss launched a "mini-budget" with her finance minister at the time, Kwasi Kwarteng. The plan would lower income taxes for the highest earners and cut some other taxes, while increasing spending. This upset the markets, as investors felt the plans weren't credible, and it forced several U-turns after just a few days. First Kwarteng was forced out, and now Truss has been defenestrated.

While Canning is generally considered the shortest-serving prime minister, others have had even briefer stints linked to the top job. William Pulteney was prime minister for only two days in February 1746, while James Waldegrave lasted only five days in 1757. However, because neither man ever actually formed a government to serve with him, these are not usually considered true prime ministries.

The longest-serving prime minister was Robert Walpole, who was in the role for 20 years and 315 days, from April 3, 1721, to Feb. 11, 1742.

Jan. 6 Panel Issues Subpoena to Trump, Setting Up Legal Battle Over Testimony

While the former president has suggested he might testify live before the committee, it was far more likely that the demand would lead to a protracted legal battle over whether he could be compelled to cooperate.

WASHINGTON — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack issued a subpoena on Friday to Donald J. Trump, taking its most aggressive step yet and paving the way for a potentially historic court fight over whether a former president can be compelled to answer questions before a legislative panel looking into matters related to a continuing criminal investigation.

The subpoena drastically escalated the stakes of what was already the most consequential congressional investigation in decades. Coming weeks before the midterm elections, the subpoena threatened to thrust Mr. Trump and the Jan. 6 committee into a protracted legal battle that could ultimately be decided by the United States Supreme Court.

The subpoena to Mr. Trump requires him to turn over documents by Nov. 4 and to appear for a deposition on Nov. 14.

Representative Liz Cheney, Republican of Wyoming and the committee's vice chairwoman, said this week that if Mr. Trump refused to comply, the lawmakers would "take the steps we need to take after that," although it was unclear how successful their enforcement efforts would be, particularly if Republicans take control of the House in January and disband the committee.

The panel voted unanimously last week to issue a subpoena to Mr. Trump, and staff members worked for several days preparing the demand. Committee lawyers were in contact with representatives for the former president, inquiring about which of Mr. Trump's many lawyers would be willing to accept service of the subpoena.

After much internal discussion, Mr. Trump's team tasked the Dhillon Law Group, which has represented several witnesses before the Jan. 6 committee, to handle the matter, according to a person familiar with the decision.

The former president last week released a lengthy, rambling letter that attacked the committee's work and reiterated false claims of widespread voting fraud but did not address whether he would comply with the subpoena.

Mr. Trump has indicated privately to aides that he would be willing to testify to the House panel, but only if he could do so live, according to a person close to him. Committee and staff members have suggested that they are open to the idea, believing the panel could most likely elicit some significant disclosures from the former president's testimony.

Mr. Trump could put himself in legal jeopardy if he testifies. He has a penchant for stating falsehoods, and it is a federal felony to do so before Congress. It was revealed by a federal judge on Wednesday that Mr. Trump had signed a document swearing under oath that information in a Georgia lawsuit he filed challenging the results of the 2020 election was true, even though his own legal team made him aware it was false.

Putin's martial law orders signal changes to Russian life may only just be starting

LONDON — President Vladimir Putin's declaration of martial law has left residents in occupied Ukrainian regions facing new restrictions and uncertainty. But the same is also true in Russia, where the decree tightened security and left open the possibility that broader, deeper changes could follow.

From the start of its invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin has gone to great lengths to paint it as less than a war, calling it a “special military operation” that did not require great sacrifice from most of the public.

That has been especially true of major cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg, where the conflict has been treated as something that did not require a disruption to daily life.

That thinking still holds, according to some analysts, but it’s a line that Putin is struggling to walk as his war in Ukraine falters and he turns to more radical measures in a bid to stabilize and sustain it.

Members of the Russian National Guard secure the area around the Kremlin in Moscow on Thursday. Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP - Getty Images

Almost immediately after Putin signed the orders, the governors of the Russian regions affected by them lined up to assure their constituents that there were currently no plans to enact the same types of restrictions contained in the decrees and most likely to be imposed in annexed southern and eastern Ukraine.

Chief among these voices was Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin.

“We will take the necessary measures to improve the security of civilian facilities and critical facilities,” Sobyenin wrote on Telegram Wednesday. “At the same time, I must state that at the moment no measures are being introduced to limit the normal rhythm of the city’s life.”

Few in the capital seem reassured.

Putin’s troop call-up was a shock for city residents, who for seven months had done their best to carry on with their lives. Tens of thousands of men from Moscow are estimated to have fled the country.

“One can believe or not believe politicians, they will do whatever they consider useful at any moment, so no, I am not reassured,” Alexandra, a 56-year-old retired accountant in Moscow who asked that her last name be withheld due to fears of reprisal, told NBC News. “However, I doubt that life in Moscow will change much even if martial law is imposed — it never has, even in WWII!”

Pavel Chikov, a prominent Russian human rights lawyer, warned his followers on Telegram that the answer to whether wartime restrictions can now be taken across the country is, “Yes, they can.”

More Americans are getting news on TikTok, bucking the trend on other social media sites

A small but growing share of U.S. adults say they regularly get news on TikTok. This is in contrast with many other social media sites, where news consumption has either declined or stayed about the same in recent years.

In just two years, the share of U.S. adults who say they regularly get news from TikTok has roughly tripled, from 3% in 2020 to 10% in 2022.

The video-sharing platform has reported high earnings the past year and has become especially popular among teens – two-thirds of whom report using it in some way – as well as young adults.

Adults under 30 are the most likely group to say they regularly get news on TikTok. About a quarter of Americans in this age group (26%) say they regularly get news there, higher than in 2021 and 2020. This compares with 10% of those ages 30 to 49, 4% of those 50 to 64 and just 1% of those 65 and older.

More of TikTok's U.S. adult users are getting news there as well. Currently, a third of TikTok users say they regularly get news on the site, up from 22% who said the same in 2020. Still, TikTok users remain far less likely than users of Twitter or Facebook to get news on the site.

Fox News C.E.O.'s Strategy at Center of \$1.6 Billion Lawsuit

Before the committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection held its first prime-time hearing in June, Suzanne Scott, the chief executive of Fox News Media, called Lachlan Murdoch, her boss, to tell him how her network planned to broadcast the event.

They wouldn't, she said. The channel would stick with its usual prime-time lineup of Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity and Laura Ingraham. Mr. Murdoch, the executive chairman of Fox Corporation, was fine with Ms. Scott's decision, according to an executive with knowledge of their conversation.

As a business move, Ms. Scott's call was the right one for Fox News in the end. As many viewers tuned in as they would on a regular night. And Fox still managed to best CNN in the ratings.

The decision was true to form, according to interviews with more than a dozen current and former colleagues. Since Ms. Scott took over the top job at Fox News in 2018, her colleagues said, she has managed from behind the scenes with a simple mantra: Respect Fox's audience. Often, that involves sparing conservative viewers what they don't want to hear — even when that means ignoring one of the biggest stories of the year.

That strategy has helped Fox News succeed not just as the most-watched cable news network in the country but also as a multibillion-dollar consumer brand with a suite of businesses that, according to a recent company promo for one product, offers fans "The World According to Fox." In addition to the Fox News and Fox Business cable channels, Ms. Scott has introduced Fox News Books, a publisher of meditations on Christianity; Fox Nation, a \$5.99-per-month streaming service that produces a reboot of "Cops" and an original special from Mr. Carlson, "The End of Men," that purports to explore a nationwide decline in testosterone rates; and Fox Weather, a new app and cable channel.

Ms. Scott told her boss, Lachlan Murdoch, right, that the network wouldn't broadcast the first Jan. 6 prime-time hearing in June. Mr. Murdoch is the son of Rupert Murdoch, the chairman of News Corp and Fox.

Ms. Scott told her boss, Lachlan Murdoch, right, that the network wouldn't broadcast the first Jan. 6 prime-time hearing in June. Mr. Murdoch is the son of Rupert Murdoch, the chairman of News Corp and Fox. Credit...Drew Angerer/Getty Images

But Ms. Scott's Fox News — a sanctuary for conservatives where few unpleasant facts intrude and political misinformation has spread — also looms large in a case that threatens Fox's business, and possibly Ms. Scott herself. She has emerged as one of the central figures in the \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit against Fox by Dominion Voting Systems, in which the voting company accuses Fox executives of juicing ratings and profits by repeatedly airing false information about Dominion machines siphoning votes away from former President Donald J. Trump.

According to several people closely involved in the case, lawyers for Dominion are expected to depose her soon. A judge has granted Dominion access to her emails and text messages from the period after the 2020 election when Fox anchors and guests amplified some of the most outrageous falsehoods about Dominion and its supposed role in a plot to steal the election.

So far, those messages contained at least one instance in which Ms. Scott expressed skepticism about the dubious claims of voter fraud that her network had been promoting, a recent court proceeding revealed. That kind of evidence is what Dominion hopes will ultimately convince a jury that Fox broadcast information it knew to be false, which would leave the company on the hook for significant damages.

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People who have heard Ms. Scott speak in meetings say she has been critical of Mr. Trump's election denial claims, though she mostly keeps her personal politics private. (She is registered as unaffiliated.) One colleague recalled that in a meeting shortly after the 2020 election, Ms. Scott seemed in disbelief as she described how people she considered otherwise serious and rational thought there was any chance Mr. Trump could legitimately stop President Biden's inauguration.