

Bill Kaplan: Specter of insurrection hangs over Derrick Van Orden

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On the first anniversary of the January 6, 2021 assault on the U.S. Capitol it is critical to remember the condemnation from the U.S. military's Joint Chiefs of Staff on January 12, 2021: "The violent riot in Washington, D.C. on January 6, 2021 was a direct assault on the U.S. Congress, the Capitol building, and our Constitutional process. We mourn the deaths of the two Capitol Policemen and others connected to these unprecedented events. ... As Service Members, we must embody the values and ideals of the Nation. We support and defend the Constitution. Any act to disrupt the Constitutional process is not only against our traditions, values, and oath, it is against the law."

Earlier, nine former secretaries of defense, all but two Republicans, said: "The time for questioning the results (of the presidential election) has passed; the time for the formal counting of the electoral college votes, as prescribed in the Constitution and statute, has arrived." Trump did not listen: "The President of the United States summoned the mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack. Everything that followed was his doing" (Wyoming GOP Representative Liz Cheney).

About 140 Capitol police officers were injured by the mob using "flagpoles, bike racks and projectiles" (Washington Post). Some rioters had guns and crude bombs. More than 725 mob members have been arrested and charged, including six Wisconsinites. Many have pleaded guilty. However, Trump's attempt to prevent Joe Biden's being confirmed as president nearly succeeded. Trump did nothing to stop the violence for hours, while watching the riot on TV. It's likely he hoped members of Congress would be assaulted, perhaps even Vice President Pence. All of this is a stunning refutation of the lies and perfidy of GOP Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, former state Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman, GOP Senator Ron Johnson and 3rd congressional district (CD) GOP candidate Derrick Van Orden.

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Van Orden, a former U.S. Navy SEAL, endorsed by Trump, is running for the open 3rd CD seat. He acts like a human flame-thrower, full of vitriol and character assassination. Opponents are disparaged as socialists. Van Orden is nothing like the decent capable legislators, including Democrat Al Baldus, Republican Steve Gunderson and Democrat Ron Kind, who have represented the 3rd CD in Congress. Worse, Van Orden improperly used campaign funds to travel to the January 6th insurrection “to stand for the integrity of our electoral system” Code for illegally overturning Trump’s presidential election loss and the will of most voters.

Voters should heed Admiral William McRaven, U.S. Navy (Ret.) who was in charge of the SEAL raid that killed Osama bin Laden. McRaven, also a SEAL, said: “Trump is actively working to undermine every major institution in this country. He has planted the seeds of doubt in the minds of many Americans that our institutions aren’t functioning properly.” McRaven also compared Trump to an “autocrat”.

Voters must reject a dangerous demagogue such as Van Orden to represent the 3rd CD.

— *Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.*