

United States: Violent Attack on Speaker of House, Threats of Political Violence from Top to Bottom

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On October 28, a man named David DePape, 42, broke into the San Francisco home of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat who holds the third most powerful position in the U.S. government. The intruder shouted, "Where's Nancy?" and then attacked her husband Paul Pelosi, 82, with a hammer. Local police responded immediately arresting DePape and charging him with attempted homicide. Paul Pelosi was taken to the hospital where he was operated on for injuries to his skull, arm, and hand and is now recovering. Nancy Pelosi herself was in Washington, D.C. at the time of the assault.

The attack seems to have been driven by DePape's rightwing views. DePape had written hundreds of posts on Facebook and 4chan attacking Jews, Blacks and transgender people, the mass media and Democrats. He claimed that COVID vaccines were deadly and supported the Q Anon conspiracy. DePape also seems to be deranged and suffering from delusions.

Whatever DePape's mental state, the attack is part of a pattern of rising rightwing violence. The pinnacle of the violence so far was the attempted coup on January 6, 2021 when thousands of Trump supporters, led by rightwing militias like Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, invaded the Capitol to prevent the counting and certification of the vote that would make Joseph Biden president. Rioters threatened to kill then Vice-President Mike Pence. They also went through the congressional offices shouting, "Where's Nancy?" One of the rioters said at that time, "We were looking for Nancy to shoot her in the frickin' brain. But we didn't find her."

Progressive congressional representatives who are women of color like Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, loathed by the right, have received innumerable death threats.

In October of 2020 the FBI arrested thirteen men from a paramilitary organization called Wolverine Watchmen, for plotting to kidnap Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan. Two of the men were convicted of a plan to kidnap her and provoke a national insurrection.

Officials who oversee state elections have been threatened because their election results showed that Biden had defeated former president Donald Trump in 2020. Arizona Secretary of State and Democratic nominee for governor Katie Hobbs, received this threat: "Attention ALL Corrupt and Treasonous Government Officials...If you Cunt Lickers continue to fuck with the integrity of the AZ Elections...I guarantee you, We the People will remove you from office...We will find you through the Tax Assessors Website...Remember the French revolution of 1799??"

A voicemail for Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich on Sept. 27, 2021, said, "When we come to lynch you, you stupid lying Commie son of a bitch, you'll remember that you lied on the goddamned Bible, you piece of shit. You're gonna die, you piece of shit. We're going to hang you."

Election workers are also threatened. In Vermont, a man told an election worker, "This might be a good time to put a fucking pistol in your fucking mouth and pull the trigger." There have been hundreds of such threats.

Republicans are mobilizing an army of poll watchers to intimidate voters on November 8. In reaction, in Florida, Od'Juan Whitfield of a group of black churches called Faith in Public Life says, "We are sending pastors to the polling sites to be peacekeepers, to make sure that if any voter has any questions or any concerns that they can be answered, because protecting and expanding our freedom to vote and honoring the will of the people is our moral duty."

The attack on Pelosi is just the latest event in a growing pattern of rightwing violence aimed mostly at Democrats. Republicans with few exceptions do not criticize the violence and sometimes tacitly approve it. While American democracy is imperfect, dominated by corporate money and marred by suppression of Black voters, it remains a political democracy, but the rising tide of political violence could in the not-too-distant future sweep it away unless there is a united front to oppose it.

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P.S.

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