

Trump supporters warned not to bring guns to protests

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Members of the violent Proud Boys group are expected to attend a last-ditch rally for US President Donald Trump in Washington, US, on January 6, 2021. (Photo by AP)

Washington, January 5 (RHC)-- Washington DC has called up National Guard ahead of planned protests by President Donald Trump supporters against congressional certification of Joe Biden's victory in the November election.

City officials warned Trump supporters not to bring guns to protests this week and enlisted hundreds of National Guard troops to help keep security and order. His supporters are planning to rally on Tuesday and Wednesday to bolster the outgoing president's claims of widespread voter fraud.

DC police warned that carrying any sort of firearm is illegal, with acting police chief, Robert Contee, asking residents to warn authorities of anyone who might be armed. "There are people intent on coming to our city armed," Contee said on Monday.

The police arrested Enrique Tarrio, leader of violent far-right group the Proud Boys in DC and charged with firearms offence and destruction of property – related to a previous pro-Trump protest. Tarrio was "in possession of two high capacity firearm magazines" at the time of arrest, a police statement said.

Thousands of Trump supporters, including far-right nationalist groups that openly carry arms at protests elsewhere, are expected to converge on the US capital on Tuesday a day before the official congressional vote to certify Trump's election loss to Democrat Biden.

Acting police chief Robert Contee warned the pro-Trump protests could be bigger than November and December rallies, which were marred by stabbings and brawls as hundreds of Proud Boys, a group of self-described "Western chauvinists," and other Trump loyalists clashed with counter-protesters and Black Lives Matter activists.

Washington DC mayor Muriel Bowser, on Monday, asked that local residents stay away from downtown DC, and avoid confrontations with anyone who is "looking for a fight." She warned, "We will not allow people to incite violence, intimidate our residents or cause destruction in our city."

Trump has encouraged this week's protests and said he may get personally involved. He retweeted over the weekend: "I will be there. Historic Day!" Organizers plan to rally on Tuesday evening and again all day Wednesday, with expected attendees including high-level Trump supporters such as Texas attorney general Ken Paxton and Republican strategist Roger Stone, a longtime Trump devotee whose three-year prison sentence was commuted by Trump.

Stone was convicted of repeatedly lying to Congress during the investigation into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election. During pro-Trump protests in December, several local Black churches had Black Lives Matter banners torn down and set ablaze.

Contee said the hate-crimes investigation into those incidents at pro-Trump protests was ongoing and that his officers would be out in force this week around churches to prevent similar attacks. At least 140 Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives are expected to object to the Electoral College vote on Wednesday when Congress meets to certify Trump's defeat.

Trump refused to concede the November election to Biden, who defeated him in both popular and electoral votes by wide margins. Trump has repeatedly claimed that the election was rigged and mounted multiple legal challenges to overturn the results.

Republican Josh Hawley of Missouri has become the first senator to say he would mount an objection, a move that will force lawmakers in both chambers to vote on whether to affirm Biden as the Electoral College winner and the next president.

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