

Ex-leader of Proud Boys found guilty of January 6th seditious conspiracy



Members of the far-right Proud Boys, including leader Enrique Tarrio (C), rally in support of U.S. President Donald Trump to protest against the results of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, in Washington.

Washington, May 4 (RHC)-- The former leader of the far-right Proud Boys group, Enrique Tarrío, and three other deputies have been found guilty of seditious conspiracy in an alleged plot to attack the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, and prevent a peaceful transfer of power.

A jury in Washington, DC delivered the guilty verdict on Thursday against Tarrío, Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs, and Zachary Rehl.

However, the jurors were unable to reach a verdict on seditious conspiracy – a relatively rare charge that can carry up to 20 years in prison – against a fifth defendant, Dominic Pezzola. The jury could also not reach a verdict for Pezzola on a separate charge of conspiracy to obstruct the US Congress, despite finding the other four defendants guilty.

All five men also were found guilty of an array of lesser crimes, including obstructing Congress, civil disorder and destroying government property. The defense had argued that Tarrío and the other Proud Boys were being scapegoated for the deadly storming of the U.S. Capitol, which followed claims by former President Donald Trump that the 2020 US election that he lost to Joe Biden had been stolen.

“It was Donald Trump’s words. It was his motivation. It was his anger that caused what occurred on January 6th in your beautiful and amazing city,” defense lawyer Nayib Hassan said during closing arguments.

Tarrío was not in Washington, DC during the Capitol riot because he had been arrested two days earlier in a separate case and ordered out of the city. But prosecutors alleged that he organized and directed the attack by Proud Boys who stormed the Capitol that day.

Prosecutor Conor Mulroe said the Proud Boys leaders “saw themselves as Donald Trump’s army, fighting to keep their preferred leader in power no matter what the law or the courts had to say about it” and were prepared for “all-out war.”

Prosecutors hinged their case on a trove of messages that Proud Boys leaders and members privately exchanged in encrypted chats – and publicly posted on social media – before, during and after the Capitol riot. Lawyers for the defense argued that the prosecution had not presented sufficient evidence given the severity of the seditious conspiracy charge.

Nicholas Smith, a lawyer for former Proud Boys chapter leader Nordean, said during closing statements that prosecutors had built their case on “misdirection and innuendo.”

But Mulroe, the prosecutor, argued during the trial that conspiracy can be an unspoken and implicit “mutual understanding, reached with a wink and a nod.”

Trump had also helped to stoke the perception that the Proud Boys were taking direct commands from him.

“Proud Boys – stand back and stand by,” Trump said during a September 2020 presidential debate, when asked to explicitly condemn the far-right group of self-described “Western chauvinists.”

More than 1,000 people have been charged so far in relation to the storming of the U.S. Capitol, while the Department of Justice has also continued to probe Trump’s role in the incident.



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