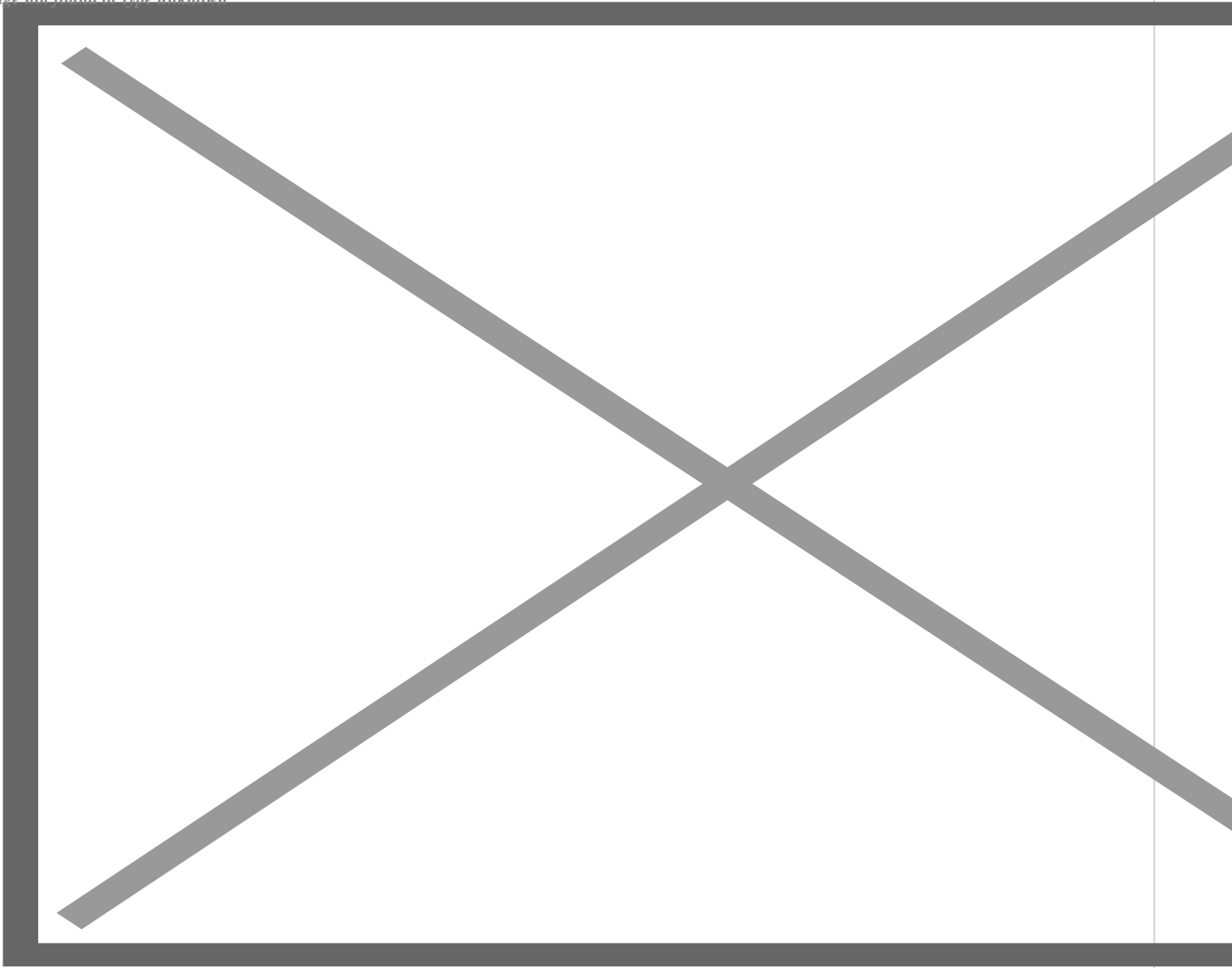


Trump says he will not form new party, vows to unite Republicans

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Former U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando, Florida, on February 28. (Photo: Octavio Jones/Reuters)

Orlando, February 28 (RHC)-- Former U.S. President Donald Trump has said he has no plans to form a new political party, vowing instead to unite a Republican Party that has splintered after his supporters carried out a deadly riot at the United States Capitol.

In his first major speech since he left the White House last month, Trump said the GOP is “going to unite and be stronger than ever before.”

“I am not starting a new party. That was fake news,” he told the crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) on Sunday afternoon. “We will be united and strong like never before. We will save and strengthen America and we will fight the onslaught of radicalism, socialism and indeed, it all leads to communism,” said Trump, who spent much of his speech hitting out at U.S. President Joe Biden.

Trump supporters have dominated this year’s conference, held in Florida due to the state’s loose restrictions on gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the country’s largest annual gathering of Republicans and conservatives, CPAC typically shows the direction of the Republican Party and its supporters.

While past meetings have served as a forum for debate between a broad coalition of US conservatives, attendees of this year’s meeting devoted the weekend to expressing their commitment to Trump and affirming his ongoing dominance in the party.

The event comes as the Republican Party has splintered after a deadly riot at the US Capitol on January 6 and weeks of false claims by Trump that November’s presidential election was stolen from him. Trump was impeached in the U.S. House of Representatives for “incitement of insurrection” in relation to the riot, but later acquitted in the U.S. Senate.

Al Jazeera’s John Hendren, reporting from Orlando at the weekend, said the conference has brought together “the pro-Trump side of the Republican Party,” which he said is currently “at war with itself.”

Pro-Trump Republicans defended Trump amid accusations he incited the mob of his supporters that overran the Capitol building last month, while others publicly criticised him and some even voted for his impeachment.

Republican legislators who have been critical of Trump, including Congresswoman Liz Cheney and former Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, were not welcome at the conference, Hendren said.

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