

Trump watched Capitol takeover on TV, rebuffed calls to stop violence

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An image of President Donald Trump appears on video screens before his speech to supporters from the Ellipse at the White House in Washington on January 6, 2021, as the Congress prepares to certify the electoral college votes. (Photo by Getty Images)

Washington, July 22 (RHC)-- Former U.S. President Donald Trump sat watching television in the White House and refused to contact law enforcement authorities when his unruly supporters stormed the US Capitol on January 6 last year, witnesses have told a congressional committee.

They said the former U.S. president even rebuffed calls from his family members and advisers to urge his supporters to halt the violence. The testimony was presented at the eighth hearing session of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Thursday.

During the testimony, witnesses recounted the details of the attack from the 187 minutes between the end of Trump's inflammatory speech at a rally urging supporters to march on the Capitol until the release of a video telling them to go home.

"Our hearings have shown many ways in which President Trump tried to stop the peaceful transfer of power in the days leading up to January 6," said Democratic Representative Elaine Luria. "President Trump sat at his dining table and watched the attack on television while his senior-most staff, closest advisors, and family members begged him to do what is expected of any American president."

Trump's eldest son, Don Jr., was said to have appealed in a text message to Trump's chief of staff, Mark Meadows, that "he's got to condemn this s**t ASAP. They will try to f*** his entire legacy on this if it gets worse."

When asked about Trump's actions during the attack and whether he had called the secretary of defense, the attorney general or the head of Homeland Security, former White House counsel Pat Cipollone answered "no" to each question.

Asked for his assessment of the riot, Cipollone said in the testimony that it could not be justified in any way, stressing: "It was wrong and it was tragic and it was a terrible day for this country."

Representative Adam Kinzinger, one of two Republicans on the committee, said Trump had no interest in calling off the rioters, adding that the mob was "accomplishing President Trump's purpose, so of course he didn't intervene."

Sarah Matthews, a deputy press secretary in his White House, who resigned in the hours following the riot also confirmed Trump's inaction and his tacit support for the attackers. "If the president had wanted to make a statement and address the American people, he could have been on camera almost immediately," Matthews testified. "If he had wanted to make an address from the Oval Office, we could have assembled the White House press corps within minutes."

The U.S. Congress has been holding hearings on the January 6, 2021 protest march on the Capitol when thousands of people marched against the certification of the November 2020 election which placed Joe Biden in office as the current U.S. president.

The nine-member Democratic-led House of Representatives select committee's public hearings intends to put up a case against Trump that he was responsible for the January 6 violence, starting with knowingly spreading lies around the election, seeking to overturn the results, assembling the mob in the Capitol and failing to act to stop the violence.

The committee is trying to build a case that Trump's efforts to overturn his defeat amounted to illegal conduct, far beyond normal politics.

Trump has maintained that he lost the election only because of widespread fraud that benefited Biden. He and his supporters denounce the January 6 panel as a political witch hunt. The former U.S. president claimed that he won the 2020 presidential election and that there was "massive" voter fraud. The former president claimed that he ordered 10,000 National Guard troops to protect the Capitol.

The attack on the Capitol led to several deaths. More than 850 people have been charged with taking part in the riot, with more than 325 guilty pleas so far.

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