

U.S. charges ex-Trump aide Steve Bannon for defying court subpoena



The House panel investigating the January 6 riot at the US Capitol has sought documents and testimony from Steve Bannon, ex-President Donald Trump's former chief strategist [File: J Scott Applewhite/AP Photo]

Washington, November 13 (RHC)-- The U.S. Justice Department has charged Steve Bannon on two counts of contempt of Congress for failing to comply with a subpoena issued by a House of Representatives panel investigating the January 6th Capitol insurrection.

Bannon, a former top adviser to ex-President Donald Trump, was charged with one count of contempt of Congress involving his refusal to appear for a deposition and another involving his refusal to produce documents, the Justice Department said on Friday.

The 67-year-old right-wing activist had cited Trump's insistence that his communications are protected by the legal doctrine of executive privilege -- an argument that President Joe Biden's administration rejected last month as "unwarranted."

"Since my first day in office, I have promised Justice Department employees that together we would show the American people by word and deed that the department adheres to the rule of law, follows the facts and the law, and pursues equal justice under the law," U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. "Today's charges reflect the department's steadfast commitment to these principles."

The panel has pushed for records and testimony from several former Trump allies as part of its effort to understand the events leading up to the attack on January 6th. That day, Trump gave a fiery speech in Washington, DC, to thousands of his supporters and urged them to march on the Capitol, where US legislators were meeting to certify Biden's election victory. Trump was later impeached for "incitement of insurrection" after a mob stormed the building.

So far, the House panel has interviewed more than 150 people across government, social media and law enforcement as part of its investigation. But some former Trump allies, such as Bannon, have refused to testify.

The committee has said it has reason to believe Bannon has "information relevant to understand important activities that led to and informed the events at the Capitol." It pointed to his presence at activities focused on blocking Congress's certification session the day before, when he said: "All hell is going to break loose tomorrow."

Bannon's indictment was announced just hours after Trump's former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows refused to appear for a deposition before the committee, risking being also found in contempt of Congress.

Bannon, a prominent figure in conservative media circles who previously headed the Breitbart News website, served as chief strategist for Trump in the White House after playing a senior role in his 2016 election campaign. Bannon continued to offer Trump advice even after leaving his White House post in 2017.

It is the second time in two years that Bannon has faced criminal charges. Bannon was charged in 2020 with defrauding donors to We Build the Wall, a private fund-raising effort to boost Trump's wall project along the US-Mexico border.

Trump subsequently issued a pardon to Bannon before that case could go to trial.



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