

U.S. judge orders ex-Trump chief of staff to testify

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Atlanta, October 27 (RHC)-- Donald Trump's ex-chief of staff has been ordered to testify in an investigation into the former U.S. president's alleged efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election results in the U.S. state of Georgia.

A South Carolina judge on Wednesday ordered Mark Meadows to testify in the probe, which was launched by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis early last year. Meadows is one of a number of high-profile associates and advisers of the former president whose testimony Willis has sought in her investigation into actions taken by Trump and others to overturn his loss to Joe Biden.

Because Meadows does not live in Georgia, Willis had to use a process that involves getting a judge where he lives in South Carolina to order him to appear. She filed a petition in August seeking to compel his testimony.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney, who is overseeing the special grand jury, signed off on the petition, certifying that Meadows is a “necessary and material witness” for the investigation.

Circuit Court Judge Edward Miller in Pickens County, South Carolina honoured McBurney’s finding and ordered Meadows to testify, Willis spokesman Jeff DiSantis confirmed.

Bannister argued in a court filing this week that Willis was trying to get his client “to divulge the contents of executive privileged communications with the President” – referring to US presidents’ authority to keep secret certain types of internal communications within their administration.

Trump has falsely claimed the 2020 election was marred by widespread fraud – an allegation that he continues to repeat and that many of his supporters still believe.

A petition seeking Meadows’ testimony stated that Meadows was on the phone when Trump called Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in January 2021 and unsuccessfully urged him to “find” enough votes to reverse Biden’s victory in the state.

Willis also wrote in the petition that Meadows attended a December 21, 2020, meeting at the White House with Trump and others “to discuss allegations of voter fraud and certification of electoral college votes from Georgia and other states.” The next day, Willis wrote, Meadows made a “surprise visit” to Cobb County, just outside Atlanta, where an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes was being conducted. He asked to observe the audit but wasn’t allowed to because it wasn’t open to the public, the petition said.

Over the past several months, US courts have had to compel testimony from former members of Trump’s inner circle in the Georgia probe. In August, Trump’s former personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani testified before the grand jury in Georgia’s investigation under a court order.

Earlier this week, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas temporarily blocked a judge’s order requiring Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a top Trump ally, to testify in the investigation. Thomas put the case on hold on Monday pending further action either from the justice or the full Supreme Court on a request by Graham, who has argued that his Senate post shields him from having to answer questions related to his actions as part of the legislative process.

Meanwhile, Trump also faces several other legal issues, including a Justice Department investigation into his possible mishandling of classified documents. A special Congressional committee also issued a subpoena last week demanding the former president’s testimony in its investigation into the January 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot in Washington, DC.

Lawmakers say the former president was at the “centre” of the violence carried out by a mob of his supporters that day, but Trump has rejected their probe as politically motivated.

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