SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE
JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF:  ANTHONY ORNATO

Friday, January 28, 2022

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held via Webex, commencing at 10:00 a.m.

Present:  Representatives Aguilar, Lofgren, and Cheney.
Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE
THE JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL:

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For ANTHONY ORNATO:

TOM HUSE

RONALD ROWE, JR.

BEN KRAMER
Ms. Dayananda. Good morning. This is Soumya Dayananda. I am one of the senior investigative counsels here on the Select Committee. This is a voluntary transcribed interview of Anthony Ornato conducted by the House Select Committee to investigate the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol pursuant to House Resolution 503. Joining me in the room is Senior Investigative Counsel Sean Tonolli, as well as Percy Howard, professional staff member, and Damon Marx. Joining me on video is Tim Heaphy, our chief investigative counsel, as well as Robin Peguero, investigative counsel, Jonathan Murray, who is also a professional staff member. I see Ms. Cheney is also present. Good morning, Ms. Cheney.

Ms. Cheney. Good morning. Good morning, Mr. Ornato. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Ornato. Good morning. Thank you for having me.

Ms. Dayananda. And I believe Ms. Lofgren also has joined on the call, on the video.

We appreciate your appearing voluntarily here today. Also joining me in the room is John Wood, senior investigative counsel with the committee.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Mr. Ornato, can you state your full name on the record and let us know who's in the room with you?

A Yes. Anthony Michael Ornato, Jr. And in the room with me is Tom Huse, our chief counsel.

Q And then if you can tell us then who all from Secret Service is appearing?

A Yes. Good morning. So in my office right now with me is Assistant
Q Is that it?
A That's it from my office.
Q Okay. Great. So just a couple of housekeeping items. We did provide a number of exhibits to Mr. Ornato. Do you have those? Did you have the opportunity to review those prior to this interview?
A I did review them, and I have them on a computer next to me. We were unable to print them. So I have -- I can view them on a computer next to me.
Q Okay. Perfect. There is a court reporter present who will create a verbatim record of what we discuss. With that in mind, it's important to respond to questions verbally. And, although, this interview is not under oath, you are required to answer questions before Congress truthfully. This requirement applies to questions posed by congressional staff in an interview. Specifically, 18 U.S.C. Section 1001 makes it a crime to make any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or representation in the course of a congressional investigation. And that statute applies here today. Do you understand that?
A I do.
Q We want you to answer these questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible. If you have any questions, or need to take a break and consult with counsel, please do so. If you need any of us to rephrase the questions, please allow us to clarify.
A I understand.
Q There will be two primary questioners, myself and Sean Tonolli. Obviously, the members have an opportunity to ask questions, and others may inquire also. But we will do it in a topical fashion and try to do it chronologically?
A Okay.

Q Okay. Before we start, I want to acknowledge the January 25th letter from the White House to Sean McDoss (ph) over at DHS, and this is concerning your interview here today. So I'll keep that and make it part of the record.

Mr. Huse. Soumya, could I add one preliminary statement to the record?

Ms. Dayananda. Sure.

Mr. Huse. And for the record, this is Thomas Huse, H-u, s- as in Sam, e- as in echo, Secret Service Chief Counsel. The Secret Service and the Homeland Security have made available to the committee, consistent with requests from the chairman, information and records that would not be publicly released. This includes information and records covered under the Privacy Act, personnel and other personal privacy information, For Official Use Only information, intelligence and law enforcement sensitive records, and raw intelligence information.

While the Secret Service and the Department have made this information and records available to the committee, we continue to assert that such information and records provided to the committee, and any discussion of such information or records during the course of the transcribed interview, is not intended for public disclosure. The Secret Service and the Department are not waiving any protections, and for the purposes of administrative efficiency, and to promote constructive dialogue during the transcribed interview, are making this assertion at the outset of the transcribed interview, to preserve all assertions or protection from public release, or disclosure over information or records used or discussed during the interview.

The transcript and any attachments are protected from further dissemination to the same extent as the documents and information that they are based on. Please consult with the Secret Service and the Department prior to any public release or...
disclosure of that information. Thank you.

Ms. Dayananda. Thanks, Tom. I appreciate you making that record. And we
will certainly do so before there is any publication of this transcript and its exhibits.

Anything else before we get started? Great.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Mr. Ornato, I know you've had almost a 30-year career in the Secret Service.
I was wondering if you could give us an overview of when you started and some of the
positions that you've held?

A Sure. Absolutely. You're making me older than I actually am, though,
only about 25 years.

Q Sorry about that.

A That's okay. I started in the 1997 under the New York field office, and a
resident office up in New Haven, Connecticut. I was there for approximately 3 to 4 years
where I then went to the George W. Bush detail. Since I was a resident of the New
Haven area, and timing worked out, his daughter Barbara Bush was going to college at
Yale, so I became a college student with Barbara Bush, and that was my 18 months or so
as -- they call it a satellite assignment on the Presidential detail.

So I did my satellite assignment first. And then I after the 18 months with
Barbara Bush at Yale, I then moved down to Washington, D.C. and was on George W.
Bush detail until approximately 2005.

In 2005 to 2007, I had a headquarters stint over in our Office of Protective
Operations. It's called our war room. It's our logistics and operations room.

From there, I was promoted and went back to the George W. Bush detail where
actually I ran operations for that detail. At the time, it was election 2008 election. And
President Obama was elected. And I worked on the transition of bringing the
Presidential, the new administration into the White House. So all the operations that
they needed to learn and everything, that was my part in that one.

President Obama I was with until 2010 or so, where I went back up to the New
York field office. I was a supervisor up in New York, ran the United Nations General
Assembly Operations for about 3 years.

And then after my stint in the New York field office, I was promoted back to the
Presidential Protective Division where I served as an assistant special agent in charge for
President Obama’s detail. So I was on PPD through the time of President Obama as a
GS-15. I was promoted to the DSAC there, the Deputy Special Agent in Charge of the
White House Complex.

From there, I rose to the rank of the DSAC of Operations, which is basically the
number two on the detail for President Obama. And then the election was happening,
at which time once President Trump had won the election, I was, for the interim, sent up
to New York to bring transition in that new administration as the deputy special agent in
charge.

About 6 months into President Trump’s new term, I then became the special agent
in charge for roughly about 2-1/2 years. I was then -- then came back to the
headquarters where then I was a deputy special agent in charge -- I’m sorry, a deputy
assistant director with the Office of Investigations.

After about a month or so there, I was let known from our director that I was
requested to be detailed back to the White House to run operations there as far as the
Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations for at least 6 months, possibly a year, to get them at
least through the next election. I transferred over to, as a detailee, back into that
Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations position. After that position was over, in January, I
came back to the Secret Service where, for the last year or so, I have been as the assistant
director of training. That's a lot in a nutshell.

Q Yes, that is a lot. That seems like 30 years, but it's 25 years.

A It does. It does.

Q And I won't get into your 18 months at Yale, but I wanted to recognize, you have obviously worked two transitions with administrations from G.W. Bush to President Obama. So it would be three, or do you see that as two?

A I see it as two. It's President Bush into President Obama, then President Obama into President Trump.

Q And we'll talk a little bit more about what it means for the Secret Service to do that transition. But can you just give an overview of, you said the Presidential Protective Division and what exactly that is and what the role is of that division?

A Sure. The Presidential Protective Division serves as the men and women of the Secret Service who are assigned to that division, protect the President of the United States, the First Family, and also any executive orders of protectees, which would be the Chief of Staff and the National Security Advisor, and sometimes the counselor, or senior advisor to the President, depending on the administration's titles. And that's all up to the President signing an executive order for who to protect.

But the men and women consists of approximately now, it's approximately 400 at the time, during the Obama administration. We were approximately just at the top of 200s. Obviously, when President Trump came in, we have multiple children that we had to pick up because you have the whole First Family, so we had to grow at that point. And we got to about 360 or so with my time there.

Q So that's 360 line agents who are assigned to PPD. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q And they're not assigned to buildings, it's just the protectees of the
President and his family and whoever else?

A Correct. And so, under -- when you're the special agent in charge of the Presidential Protective Division, you have kind of a dotted line reporting of the uniform division that is on complex during -- those are the officers that protect the complex, the buildings. They're the ones that do our special programs, our counter snipers, our K-9s. When we go on trips, they do our magnetometers. So they have kind of a dotted line to the SAC of PPD of how it's set up, but they report to a deputy chief over there at the White House Complex, who the deputy chief and the deputy special agent in charge of the White House are partnered up. And that's how that line goes to the dotted line goes to the SAC.

Q And can you just explain that a little bit? How does that work with the White House staff and the Secret Service staff in terms of what the delineation is in terms of their duties in protecting the President?

A You said White House staff.

Q The PPD folks are not located at the White House, correct?

A I am sorry. So is your question, the Uniform Division Officers and the agents, the difference between those?

Q Sure. We'll start with that.

A Okay. So the agents are -- we like to think of it as, our protection methodology is like an onion, right? The outer rings, the inner rings. On the outer ring, we have the officers at the White House. So they're our first line of defense. Outside the fence line at the booths, White House access control. The agents would be the inner ring, that they're going to be more around the Oval Office where the President is. Or if the Vice President is in his office, they're around -- that's the Vice Presidential detail, they're around his office. Those are the inner rings. They're responsible for the
moving of the protectees. So that's what they do. Where the officers are responsible for the 18 acre, more than 18, but 18-acre fence line there around the White House in the West and the East Wing. That's their responsibility as a whole. And they're responsible for everybody on complex where the agents are kind of -- they traveled with the protectee on the plane. The agents are around the protectee moving wherever they move, where, again, the Uniform Division Officers take up more of a perimeter of protection and assist with that access control protection.

Q So the special agent in charge of the PPD, the position that you had, oversees both the uniform and the agents?

A I had direct report with the agents. I did have some oversee capabilities with the officers, but, again, there wasn't a straight-line direct report, it was more of a dotted line where they reported to a deputy chief that reported to the chief of uniform division who are all under the Office of Protective Operations. So the assistant director of Office of Protective Operations oversees every -- UD and all the agents on all the details. That's where the straight-line reporting goes to.

Q Okay. So after you became the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations at the White House, so after December 2019, who was the point of contact at the Secret Service that you would be in touch with?

A So I was in touch with a couple of people. So I would be in touch with the assistant director to the Office of Protective Operations who was Kim Cheatle at the time, and then I would be in touch with the deputy director, Leon Newsome. And then, on campus, my, like, would be my liaison that I would deal with on campus for the Secret Service would be the SAC of PPD who was Robert Engel.

Q And it's our understanding Robert Engel was the detail leader for President Trump. Is that correct?
A He was after me, he became the special agent in charge, correct. That is -- detail leader is the person that's right next to the President at that specific time. So that could have been one of the DSACs on the trip. That could have been somebody else. It could have been ASAC around the house. But the title Special Agent in Charge is who was in charge of that detail at the time, and it was Robert Engel.

Q And he took over for you after you left. Is that right?
A That is correct.

Q And you had that position for 2-1/2 years?
A Yes, from June 1st, I believe, to November of -- so I think that was June of '18, to November of 2020, if I can remember exact correctly, I am sorry, on my years.

Q I think it's June '17 to December 2019.
A Okay. There you go. Sorry about that.

Q No, it's okay. Can you just describe how those two and a half years, what percentage of your time are you with President Trump?
A It all depends. So, I don't know percentage of my time. I can --

Q However you would want to describe to a non-Secret Service person?
A So 2-1/2 years, I was with the President on not every domestic trip. So any time the President left the White House, it would have to be myself, or my deputy special agent in charge who was Robert Engel. One of us would have to be with the President. If we were on a foreign trip, unless it was an overnight that we did one time to Switzerland, it would be both of us on the trip, because we would also work tantamount when we were overseas. However, it was either or one of us always with him. I really can't recall, you know, how much time I had. It was a lot to say.

Q Is it fair to say you developed a professional as well as a personal relationship with the President during that time?
A: I would say a professional relationship, yes.

Q: Not a personal relationship?

A: I would say as much as -- they're a protectee. So as much as you can be personal -- it's really not always a back and forth with the protectee as a personal, as friends, it's more of a business relationship, I would say.

Q: Did you ever have any outside social interaction with the President outside of your professional position with the Secret Service?

A: No, not that I can recall.

Q: So I want to talk about your appointment on December 7th of 2019. It looks like there was a tweet from the President congratulating you as the new Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. Can you explain how that came about, you taking on this position?

A: I have what I know of -- how it came about in about 2 hours for me was on the Friday prior to that tweet, I think that would have been -- that tweet, I think, was a Saturday, if I'm not mistaken. The Friday night I received a phone call from the current Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Dan Walsh, who was the former White House Military Office director. He was in that spot. So I've known Dan because we've worked together for -- he was a military aide prior. We worked together a while. So Dan had called and said, Hey, your name just got floated from my position. And I said, well, I'm over here at the headquarters, Dan, and I don't think that's possible. At which point, he says, No, there's a phone call going to the director right now. You are SES. You can be detailed across government. So I said, Well, I'll wait to hear from the director. In which, at that point, I believe the director didn't get a chance to call me because I think once he hung up with whoever, I received a phone call from the President, letting me know that I'm coming back in Dan Walsh's position, and congratulated me in getting that
position. And it was a whirlwind of a Friday night at 7 o’clock or so.

Q  Was Dan Walsh prior -- what job did he have prior to that deputy chief job?
A  He was the director of the White House Military Office and then he was --
Q  So he was not in the Secret Service at all?
A  No, he was not. He was in the Coast Guard. And I think he was a
commander in the Coast Guard when he led the White House Military Office. And then
Joe Hagin, who was a previously Deputy Chief of Staff, and Dan took over for him. Joe
placed him in there.

The thing of why Joe placed Dan in there, and I believe why Dan brought my name
in for it, is because that position controls all the classified and top-secret programs. The
White House Military Office director and the Secret Service Special Agent in Charge are
heavily briefed into all those programs. So that was -- they saw it as a natural fit,
because then they would not have to get anybody up to speed on all the classified
programs, which are extremely daunting, and also, they wanted somebody that knew the
programs like the back of their hand, and that could activate the programs if needed be.

Q  And when you say programs, you are talking about Secret Service programs
or just operations?
A  Operations -- so this would be White House Military Office programs that are
directed from the deputy chief. They are actually ran by the Chief of Staff of the White
House. However, the Chief of Staff gives his authority to the Deputy Chief of Staff of
operations to run those classified programs.

Q  Now, before you -- this Friday evening of December 7th, did you hear any
rumblings about the possibility of you getting this position?
A  No.
Q  Blindsided?
A I was blindsided.

Q Was there any sense that there was dissatisfaction with Dan Walsh at this job?

A No, I knew Dan was leaving, and I knew they were having a hard time -- he had announced he was leaving for a while. And they were backfilling him. I was under -- sorry. I was under the impression that when I had left, the talk was that another, I think, it was staff secretary Derek Lyons was getting that job, which, you know, made sense. Derek was in a high-regarded position over there at the White House.

Q Did you seek out the job in any way?

A I did not.

Q And when you were appointed this position, obviously, the Secret Service is known as an apolitical organization, and the agents pride themselves on that. Did it make you uncomfortable in any way that you were taking a pretty political spot right there in the White House?

A So I brought that up. I raised that with the director afterwards. I called the director after I got off the phone. And his understanding is he told me was that this was an operation position only. There would be no political things that I would have to get involved with, and I was just going to be there for operations, and to run that side of the house. And that the President and the Chief of Staff, I think, was Mick Mulvaney at the time understood that, that I was not to be in a political role. I would just be, like the White House Military Office director, is a -- he is an appointed officer in the executive office of the Presidency, so he is a DAP, as they call it, a deputy assistant to the President.

I am sorry with the acronyms.

Q Yeah, it's a lot.

A I know. There is so many. I'll try to spell them all out. So he was a
general, and he still is a general with the military. He is just detailed over in the operational role of the White House Military Office director, but he is still assigned a title in the administration as a deputy assistant to the President. I was taking the same type of role where I was detailed over, I would run operations, my title was an AP, was an assistant to the President.

Q Why did you feel that you needed to bring up that concern?
A Just to show that the parallel there, that this is -- even though it was the first time for this kind of role for the Secret Service, it's done across White House in many roles where there are Federal agencies and military that are detailed over to take career roles over there, or I'm sorry, in a political role. Because right now the head of the White House Military Office wasn't a military, it was a political appointee. So those roles have changed throughout the years.

Q I'm sorry. I missed who you had that conversation with. Who do you speak with?
A I had that conversation with the director to make sure that it was understood that this wasn't a political role. I'm not a political position. To make sure this was on the political role, and that this was an operations only.

Q And you said he reassured you at that time. Did you receive any other reassurance? You mentioned Mick Mulvaney or the President himself about this not being a political position.
A I was told that was explained to them. Dan Walsh also reassured me that everybody knows me coming over here that I would be in the operational role as well.

Q So you have mentioned the operations aspect of this job and the classified programs. Can you just explain what the job is on a day-to-day?
A Yeah, sure. So the job basically is a liaison job with the Secret Service, the
White House Military Office. And right there, the White House Military Office covers the White House Medical Unit, the White House Information and Technology, the White House Communications Association -- I'm sorry -- the White House Communications Agency, and also PAG, which is the Presidential Air Group under the WHMO, White House Military Office. And that is -- PAG is Air Force One, and then HMX, which is the helicopter squadron of Marine One. So it's all in making the planes and the trains run on time. And also the job entails receiving information to pass to the Chief of Staff to make sure the administration is aware of things that they need to be from either the Secret Service or the White House Military Office.

We held meetings three times a week. In that meeting would be the 10 groups, 10 or so folks that represented everything, and we would coordinate. And that's basically what it was, it was just coordinating any movements the President was having with the rest of these folks in these units.

So everybody was on the same page of what we were doing, 2, 3 weeks out sometimes, or sometimes, as we would call it, an off-the-record movement, this is the group that would make that happen.

Q And that group consist of who?
A That would be the Secret Service. That would be the White House Military Office which is in charge of all those things that I explained. And then it would be Monica Block, who is the director of M&A. She assisted for ANK (ph) complex things as well. And then staff, on the staff side was Director of Advance because, obviously, wherever the President goes, and Advance team goes prior, and they were also in that group.

Q Who was that person at that time?
A So we had a couple throughout, but at the end of the last year or so, it was
Max Miller, and then switched to Bobby Peede.

Q So let me just understand, did you have a staff that you oversaw?

A I had one assistant. Well, I did have a staff as far as -- I had Monica Block, who was director of M&A had reported to myself. Also, Bobby Peede, who was director of Advance would report to myself to my office. However, ultimately, everybody reported to the chief. I was kind of the person that they reported to, so the chief is not getting all the issues or everything on a daily basis, and I would basically funnel those issues to him.

Q Who was the chief when you first started?

A Mick Mulvaney was the Chief of Staff, and it switched to Mark Meadows.

Q So your supervisor in a kind of non-White House way would be the Chief of Staff?

A Correct.

Q Okay. So you mentioned this was a detailed position. And, obviously, as part of the documents you handed over, we saw the Memorandum of Understanding that the detailed position took. There was, I think, it's exhibit 14 or 15, there is the first 6 months, and then there was reupped, correct?

A Correct.

Q Was it viewed as a dual-hat position in any way with Secret Service and being the Deputy Chief of Staff for operations?

A No.

Q And how did you make that clear --

A Any time --

Q -- given your experience with the Secret Service?

A Sure. Any time the Secret Service question that, obviously, I know where
the Secret Service should be answering and not myself. You know, I was that relay and would go to the Special Agent in Charge if there was something, a movement or something that the President wanted to do, and then I would get the answer from him, because I would make that call. My job was to relay the information to the Secret Service and to the White House Military Office. If they had concerns, they would bring me the concerns. And then, at that point, we would talk about them, and then go to the Chief of Staff with any concerns we had for any trip or anything like that. But if anybody had asked me for my opinion or anything, I would always call over and putting the SAC of PPD into the conversation.

Q Were you asked for your opinion in any kind of situation with dealing with the movement of the President?

A No. As far as for trips or?

Q Correct. The way you described it as a messenger, a relaying of information, were there ever times naturally where people would say, Hey, you know, you have decades of experience with Secret Service, what do you think?

Mr. Ornato. There would be -- we would call, I don't know if you've heard this term before, the good idea fairies. So the good idea fairies, they would dream up these things and say, hey, do you think they would let us do that? And I would immediately say no. The Secret Service isn't allowed to do that. No.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Okay. That's precisely what I am talking about. You paused, relay it, and get an opinion and then --

A No, for something ridiculous, I would not even bother Mr. Engel with.

Q Fair enough. Okay. Were you involved, or did you get any of the briefings on the events or intelligence or anything like that in your position for any given event?
So mostly for -- yeah, for events or around the White House Complex, in our morning meetings, the Secret Service would give us a briefing of, Hey, this is what we're expecting today. They would let Monica Block know to make sure the staff knew that, let's say, A lot of times there is going to be a protest on Pennsylvania Avenue. Make sure for safety have the staff exit out the south gates, if they're going to leave. Make sure the staff doesn't go out the front gates and walk right into a protest. Or if there's going to be something going on, you know, on the Ellipse, or on 17th or 15th, make sure staff avoids that. And they'll give us a briefing. And then if there was something on a trip, like, Hey, yeah, we're getting reports, there's going to be three groups when we landed outside the airport that are protesting, or those types of things, they would give us a briefing in the morning meetings about it.

Q Who would be responsible for giving that briefing? Would it be Mr. Engel, the SAC, or somebody else from the --

A It would be whoever could attend that day, which would be either Mr. Engel, Mr. Cho, who is operations DSAC, or Mr. Arruda, who is the DSAC over the White House Complex.

Q Sorry. Can you say those last two names again and spell them for the court reporters, if you don't mind?

A Absolutely. So the Deputy Special Agent in Charge, David Cho, C-h-o, was in charge of the operations, and then the other DSAC would be Ted Arruda, A-r-r-u-d-a.

Q Was this a daily briefing or would it be dependent upon if there was an event or there has been a new President?

A It would be dependent on if there was something going on. It was three times a week we met, Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays, is normally when we met. And if they had anything, they would brief it. But, you know, it wasn't every day that
they had something.

Q  I want to skip forward to a few months in, about 6 months into your position there in the summer of 2020. I mentioned that your position got reupped after the 6 months. Was there any discussion for you to go back to the Secret Service in May?

A  No, there wasn't.

Q  Okay. And were you enjoying the job at that time enough to stay on for another 6 months?

A  I didn't have a choice, ma'am.

Q  So around the end of May of 2020, with the murder of George Floyd, there was civil disturbance protests across the country, and I wanted to take some time to understand what the White House positioning was there in terms of its response and your involvement, if any, in those discussions. Obviously, there was unrest here in D.C. what was your visibility into kind of decisionmaking around the response for the civil protesters?

A  Basically, my immediate area of concern was the White House Complex. And I would get daily updates from the Secret Service on what was taking place out there. And then I would pass them along to the Chief of Staff. So we had, I believe, it was the night before June 1st is when it first appeared. The Secret Service was holding the line on Lafayette Park where they had protesters trying to come into Pennsylvania Avenue, and that's where, I think, the first kind of outside the White House got physical, at which point it was only a handful of officers from the Secret Service that was involved. So in order to understand, outside the White House Complex, there is a lot of jurisdictions. Though the Secret Service has -- please stop me, if you already --

Q  No, please. Go on.

A  The fence line -- to the fence line is the Secret Service. It has grown over
the years to include somewhat some of the sidewalk. The park, it's called President's Park, which President's Park encompasses the Ellipse and Lafayette Park from 17th to 15th Street, from H down to Constitution. And that's President's Park, and that's controlled by Park Police. So when the Secret Service is engaged in holding off people trying to get Pennsylvania Avenue, which was closed at the time, because that's where their line was, was Pennsylvania Avenue because of the construction taking place on the fence, they had a hold on the sidewalk of Pennsylvania Avenue on Lafayette Park side. That's technically Park Police's jurisdiction. However, they allowed the Secret Service to also hold that for them as well.

Now, MPD comes into play because they have the streets. So that's where a lot of jurisdictions get crossed. So that night, I did one -- I was involved with -- I received a phone call from the Secret Service letting me know that our guys are out there and they're doing the best job that they can do. However, they need help. They need Park Police to come because they needed other resources and personnel. They asked me if there's any way I can reach out to the Department of Interior to have them assist because they were only mustering up so many people, and they were delaying showing up to the next day.

And that's where I had hit up, I believe, it was the deputy to DOI, the Department of Interior, and asked her if Park Police, or said Secret Service is kind of holding the line there. They need help. Can we get Park Police out there to help them so they don't lose the line that they are holding on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Q So just so I'm clear, this would be May 31st when this is happening?
A Correct. That was the first kind of outside of the White House, which the White House was obviously my main concern.

Q So at that time, May 31st, Secret Service, because of jurisdiction, was the
only Federal entity at Lafayette Park?

A They were there. I think Park Police had a couple of people there, but they weren't getting involved until they got more people, and that's what we were trying to assist with.

Q And did you inform, would it be, it would be Mark Meadows at that time, correct?

A Correct, yes.

Q And did you inform Mark Meadows about kind of what the security around the White House was looking at around that time?

A Yes.

Q What advice, if any, did he provide at that?

A Keep me posted.

Q Did you reach out to anyone other than Department of Interior?

A No. I reached back to the Secret Service to let them know that I reached out to him.

Q Did you reach out to MPD in anyway, or was it solely because it's Federal grounds, it was only the Department of Interior?

A It was only to Park because that was their jurisdiction.

Q And just walk us through then the next day, it's June 1st, what, if anything, changed? Obviously, there is the appearance of the President there. If you could walk us through how that came about?

A Sure. So the -- if I'm remembering correctly, the morning of June 1st is when the President put the Attorney General in charge of all Federal law enforcement. I believe that was Attorney General Barr. And Attorney General Barr held a meeting over at FBI headquarters with all the agencies and gave them what he wanted to see that day.
And that was at about 9 a.m. or so.

Q And let me just stop you there. So that would be the morning of June 1st. Did you attend that meeting at FBI headquarters?

A I did.

Q And who -- when you say all the agencies, can you just kind of tell us who was present?

A Yeah, from my recollection, MPD, it was Park Police, Secret Service, FBI, DHS representatives were there. I remember National Guard representatives, I remember Army representatives. I can't recall if the U.S. Marshals were there or not, but that was kind of the gist of the agencies that were there. There were probably some more that I just can't remember.

Q And do you know how AG Barr became kind of the lead in that effort?

A From my recollection, he was appointed by the President from what I remember.

Q Were you present for that, or for that discussion?

A No.

Q Were you told that?

A I was told that.

Q Okay. You said that's a 9 a.m. meeting at FBI headquarters?

A Around 9 a.m. I can't remember exactly.

Q At that time, was the National Guard had it been deployed, or was there a discussion to deploy the D.C. National Guard?

A I don't remember if they were already deployed or not. I would assume that morning they were being -- the D.C. Guard was being deployed.

Q Do you know who made that request?
A: I don't. I would assume -- I can't remember if it was the Mayor. I know the Chief of Staff and the Mayor talked a lot about that, because I remember there were just phone calls back and forth from the chief to the Mayor in getting the D.C. National Guard activated.

Q: And you think that was the same day of June 1st?
A: I believe so, because I believe -- yes, because the National Guard was out there June 1st because I remember General Milley going out to thank them.

Q: So after this meeting, did you go back to the White House, or what happened after that? I know that Lafayette Square walk with the President and General Milley, as you mentioned, was around 6 o'clock. So if you can kind of walk us through what happens and when was it decided that the President was going to make that appearance?
A: Sure. So after that meeting, I went back to the White House. Day's events were going on. I had received, I believe there was a call from the outer Oval Office that the President wanted to know if he can walk out and thank the law enforcement for he was seeing on TV the confrontation between law enforcement and the protesters on H Street and in Lafayette Park there.

So he wanted to go out there and thank them for what they were doing. I said, Let me get you the special agent in charge of the Secret Service. I then called Robert Engel and asked him to come over. That the President wants to go outside and thank law enforcement. And then the SAC of PPD came over. And they had conversation outside the Oval Office with the staff if Bob was going to allow them at that time.

Q: What did you think about the idea when it was first presented?
A: Oh, I thought it was a crazy idea to go outside the White House gates.

Q: Did you say so at the time?
A To probably members of my staff that were present, but, obviously, not to anyone else because that's pretty much what the SAC of PPD basically said was not right now, it's too volatile outside, and we cannot allow the President to go out. We all knew that at approximately from the meeting at 9 a.m., that the fencing that the Secret Service had procured was going to go up at Lafayette Park. And Bob said, Let's look at it later once we get a secure area, but not until -- that we can't even talk about him going outside in this area.

Q So could you approximate what time it was that this idea was first floated?
A I want to say it was afternoon, so it was probably 1:00-ish or so, around that time.

Q At some point, did the fencing go up?
A It went up later on in the evening of -- it was supposed to go up at 5:00, but it was late, and that's, I know, the AG wanted to go out and see why it wasn't going up yet. Probably around, I don't know, sometime after 4:00 or so, and himself, Milley, and the chief, myself, we had walked out to Lafayette Park.

Q When you walked out to Lafayette Park, was it decided that the President was going to make an appearance?
A No. It was still -- the Secret Service was still unsure if they were going to allow him to go out because the fence wasn't up yet. They didn't have a secure area. So, you know, it was -- if it was going to happen, it would be an off-the-record movement, it would be an OTR. So it would be a surprise to everybody anyhow. They weren't going to telegraph that.

Q Was it a surprise when it happened?
A Yes.

Q Did you, at any point before you got to Lafayette Square voice your concern
to either Mark Meadows or to the President himself about, Hey, this isn't a good idea?

A I did not to the President. I said to Mr. Meadows that, you know, I wouldn't bring him out here at this point. Once the fencing and everything was up and was in a more secure area to do so and it was contained, yes, it became so, and that's when the SAC of the detailed allowed him to, and that I felt was reasonable at that time.

Q Okay. So by the time the President got there around 6 o'clock, the fencing had gone up?

A They had started to move the protesters to put the fencing up, and they had enough of -- enough of an area that they -- of a perimeter around the area that they could allow him out there that was only law enforcement in Lafayette Park.

Q And was that decision ultimately made by Robert Engel at that time?

A Yes.

Q And apart from Robert Engel, did you have any contact with any other Secret Service folks in making that decision?

A No.

Q What happened once the President arrived?

A Well, we then got word when President made remarks in the Rose Garden, and we had gotten word that he wanted to go see the church as well to see if it was -- he wanted to see the burned-out building, which was bathrooms on Lafayette Park, and he wanted to thank law enforcement. And then he wanted to walk over to the church to see if the church had been vandalized.

Q So were you at the -- sorry, were you at the Rose Garden at the time or at Lafayette Square?

A I was outside the White House. That wasn't at Lafayette Square, it was on the north grounds of the White House, and I had received that word. So I had a couple
of advance guys. I think it was -- I had Max Miller out in front to make sure that law
enforcement -- there was a path to get to the law enforcement to thank them, and then
there was a path for the President to be able to go to the bathroom building there, and
also knowing that on the other side of Lafayette Park there is a chain that -- there is a
space that if he does walk over to the church area, that he's able to get over there. And
so I sent Max out ahead to make sure that was all set. And Max was partnered up with
Secret Service as well, so they knew where he was going and everything.

Q Right. You anticipated my next question. What the coordination was

with Secret Service at the time?

A Right. So Secret Service was reeling the information to us of this is what he
wants to do, because they were inside with the staff and with him. And so, Max was
partnered up with Secret Service. So they went and made sure they had the proper
routes, and they were okay, meaning they were safe to do so. So they had supervisors
out there, and the Secret Service controlled the area.

Q In that situation, do you and Mr. Miller see yourselves secondary to Secret
Service or as partners to the Secret Service?

A I see us as partners. However, a lot of times even when I was a special
agent in charge, if you're around the Chief of Staff or the President, they're just going to
tell the special agent in charge direct what they want. And, you know, I'm going to get
that afterwards. And that's fine. That's the job. That's the nature of it. And they
may have the best and the newest information, because, you know, if you're standing
next to the protectee or the Chief of Staff, that's who they're going to listen to and also
talk to. At that point, I'd be out of it.

Q I just have a couple more questions about this, but I just want to understand,
is that initial call came in around 1 o'clock about President Trump's desire to go to
Lafayette Square. When it ultimately happened at 6 o'clock, was it unplanned, or it appears that there is some hours beforehand so there was some planning that occurred?

A Sure. There was -- and I say 1 o'clock, it could have been 1:30, 2:00, it was after 1 o'clock. It was kind of in limbo if it was going to happen. Because the SAC of the detail said, No, not if it's looking like this, we're not going to do that. So it was kind of in limbo the whole time. And then, I believe, the staff asked the chief, asked Mr. Engel again. He checked on it later on again and said, You know, we're not looking good still to be able to allow him to walk out. So then it wasn't until later that when the AG's plan of the fencing going up and the perimeter being established, that's when the SAC had said, if this is up here, if we have this perimeter, then I'm okay with him going outside. And that's the delayed to do all that, the perimeter being put up was happening, like I said, the AG in the morning said he wanted at 5:00, I believe it was. And it got the perimeter ended up going at 6:00. Because to be honest, there was -- all the Federal law enforcement was in Lafayette Park waiting to set it up. There was no one giving directions in doing so. And the AG, when he went out there had to take control and get direction of -- so that the Federal agencies can get that perimeter up. Because it was decided on who would be on what corner, you know, hours before and who would hold what. And they just weren't executing the plan. The AG kind of whipped that when he went outside. And, ultimately, Park Police was responsible for clearing the area as that is their jurisdiction.

Q Understood. So it wasn't unplanned as the press kind of reported about that. But was the AG aware of the President's arrival to Lafayette Square?

A I'm not sure. I believe so because I believe he was with them. I believe he was in the gaggle that came, but I can't be sure about it.

Q Obviously, this incident was criticized, for lack of a better word, optics, of
what it was perceived. General Milley, I believe, a few months later, even apologized at a graduation about his appearance there. Did you have any qualms about that incident?

A I didn't have -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q Go ahead. No, go ahead.

A So, I was just fulfilling my job and my role. I didn't -- I don't -- I'm not a "should we do something?" That wasn't my office. My office is "can we do something?" I take myself out of a should or should we not? That wasn't my role. That's a political role that I didn't stick my foot in.

Q And before we move on off of this, did you see yourself as a decisionmaker or a planner of this appearance for the President?

A I did not. Although, I know news reports and books did, and, obviously, I don't have a platform to dispute that. I did not have -- I did not plan this event.

Q Right. And just on that, I just want to read to you a Washington Post June 5th, 2020, a few days later of how it describes your role. It says, quote, "Around the same time, a White House Deputy Chief of Operations, Tony Ornato, contacted the Secret Service to arrange for the President to make a brief, unplanned appearance outside St. John's Church, according to two people familiar with the plan. Following protocol, the Secret Service alerted other law enforcement agencies that it would need help clearing the area for the President's safety, they said."

Obviously, that puts you in an active role there. Do you want to -- can you clear that up any way more than you did?

A Sure. That I called the Secret Service to ask them if the President can do this, this is what the staff and the advisors are asking was my role. That was my role in passing that information to the service, for then the service to make a decision if that could be done. But that was basically my role in that whole day.
Q And it sounds like Robert Engel was the ultimate decisionmaker in terms of the arrival of the President. Is that fair to say?

A He was in charge of the President's security that day, yes.

Q Any questions on that topic before I move on?

Ms. Cheney. Soumya, I have a couple of questions. Thank you. And, Mr. Ornato, I first just want to say what tremendous respect I have for the Secret Service.

Having been a protectee myself for almost 8 years, I have to admit to you I was smiling when you described the satellite assignment with Barbara Bush at Yale University. As you know, a number of your colleagues had satellite assignments with my kids at preschool and elementary school. So you may have gotten the better of the satellite assignments. But just tremendous gratitude and respect for your service. So thank you for what you do.

Mr. Ornato. Oh, thank you.

Ms. Cheney. Absolutely. I just wanted to understand, I had a couple of questions just to clarify. In terms of the organizational structure, could you explain to me the relationship between the Vice President's detail and the President's detail? So the is person who is charge of PPD also responsible for the Vice President's detail?

Mr. Ornato. No, ma'am. So the Presidential Protective Division is run by a special agent in charge. The Vice Presidential Protective Division is also run by a special agent in charge. Those two special agent in charges report to a deputy assistant director over here at headquarters in the Office of Protective Operations. And then over that deputy assistant director is the assistant director to protective operations who oversees both details. But those two details do not commingle.

Ms. Cheney. Okay. And then, you mentioned when Soumya asked you about the extension of your detail, you said you didn't have a choice. And I just wondered if
you could expand on that a little bit?

    Mr. Ornato. Sure. In my role as a government employee and in my role in the Secret Service in taking an oath for this country, it is a salute and yes, sir. And so, I am asked a question, but it’s a rhetorical question. I was never asked if I would like to stay, I was just extended.

    Ms. Cheney. Then did Mr. Meadows talked to you about the extension?

    Mr. Ornato. No.

    Ms. Cheney. So when you came to the end of the detail, did you ask anybody if you would be extended or?

    Mr. Ornato. I actually didn't realize that the detail ended. I think on 6 months, I think originally I was told it would be 6 months or a year, and I think I say just had the year in my head and didn't even think of it. I did around August time let my deputy director know that, come January, whatever happens, I need to come back to the Secret Service. And the deputy director understood, and he would make that swap. He would get me back come after the election.

    Ms. Cheney. Okay. And then you also mentioned, just in terms of the Lafayette Square discussion that we were just having, that the President had put Attorney General Barr in charge, and that you were just informed of that. Can you tell us who told you that he was in charge?

    Mr. Ornato. I'm not sure if it was Chief Counsel to the White House, Pat Cipollone, or if it was Mark Meadows at the time because there was people in that cross hall all the time. And I remember I went over to the FBI headquarters with Pat Cipollone, chief counsel. I took him over there. So it could have been him, or it could have been him explaining to me what just took place and why the AG was in charge of all Federal enforcement, or if the chief had told me on the way out of his Oval back into his
office. I just don't recall.

Ms. Cheney. Okay. So when you went to the FBI with Pat Cipollone, that was
prior to the President walking to the church, just so I understand?

Mr. Ornato. Yes, ma'am. This was at approximately like 9 o'clock in the
morning.

Ms. Cheney. Okay. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Ornato. No, thank you.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Great. Anyone else before just moving on to the November timeframe?

Mr. Ornato, November 7th, Joe Biden was declared the President-elect by the major
networks. And then a couple of weeks later on November 23rd, GSA issued its
ascertainment, which green-lit the transition. Did that impact your job in any way, and
what new role did you take on?

A It did. I was placed on the transition team. I had the experience
transitioning a President, as we have noted before. And so I was asked obviously for the
operations part of it that I would -- I would work with the new Deputy Chief of Staff of
Operations coming in, General O'Malley Dillon and getting her up to speed and work with
the head of the transition team, which was Chris, I'm sorry, Chris Liddell, I believe, who is
head the transition team, and also our management and administrative director over the
Office of Administration, who is Monica Block. And those who I worked with for the
transition of the Biden administration coming in for the Trump administration.
[11:01 a.m.]

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q And so I'm clear, you're handling the operations. Just the White House operations, correct?
A Correct.

Q Is it also handling the Secret Service aspect of the transition, or just the White House operations?
A No. Just basically the Military Office classified program transition, because there's a lot to brief Ms. Jen O'Malley Dillon into and getting her up to speed on as quick as possible.

Q That's Jennifer O'Malley. Is that right?
A Jennifer O'Malley, correct.

Q Did you wait for the GSA ascertainment to begin that process, or did you kind of start the process after November 7th?
A I don't remember exactly when I was given -- I was given her phone number from the chief of staff, from Mark Meadows, who was talking with Chief of Staff Ron Klain and said, "This will be the person coming in doing operations. Please coordinate everything with her." And I don't remember if it was before or after the 20th, though. I'm sorry.

Q Was it Mr. Meadows who assigned you to be part of the transition team?
A Yes.

Q And was it your -- when you took on this role, was it your understanding that the Trump administration would be ending on January 20th?
A Yes.
Q: Can you describe the process -- it sounds very complex -- of the transition? Just generally --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- what do you have to manage -- and I'm asking specifically about the relationship with the Biden-Harris folks.

A: Sure.

So, with Ms. Dillon, we basically spoke often about what the role was as operations, how advances work for trips, how does the President travel, how does the President move around campus, what would be her role, you know, who does she oversee, or who do I oversee.

And then I actually brought her into the White House because we had to bring her into a SCIF and go through classified programs and to get her read in. So that is one of the biggest hurdles -- and nobody sees that, obviously, in the outside world -- having another person come in that never had experience with these types of programs, to be read into all of them, because they're going to be somewhat of a possible decision-maker in these programs.

So doing that took a while. But, also, if you remember, at the time in December, the vaccines started coming out. So I worked with her as far as distributing vaccines to careers. So the White House Medical Unit -- we vaccinated career staff that would be here when the Biden administration came in so then they wouldn't have to do that. We kept lists on that. It was any -- the military, the Secret Service, the Office of Administration, the NSC.

What we also had to do was, people that were important to the classified programs also had to be, obviously, vaccinated at that point in the COVID pandemic. So very few politicals are in those programs or are read into those programs, so mainly only
those read in were afforded a vaccine if they wanted it. But that was to keep them so
we could still run. It's basically, you've heard the terms "COOP" and "COG," continuance
of government and continuance of the Office of the President.

And that's the roles that she had to come into and play and what we had to brief
her on going forward.

Q Did you hear of any criticism of what was occurring at the Department of
Defense in terms of their transition?

A No, I did not.

Q Are you familiar with Kash Patel?

A I am.

Q How do you know him?

A Kash worked at the White House. He worked, I think, for DOI. It would
be Department of Intelligence.

Q Uh-huh.

A He was there. He was in the NSC. And then I knew him from, obviously,
just being around the West Wing.

Q From the reporting, it sounds like you and Ms. O'Malley had a good
relationship in terms of making this as smooth as possible. Is that fair to say?

A Absolutely.

Q The same cannot be said, reporting-wise, of Mr. Patel and his counterpart
with the Biden-Harris transition. Did you learn of any of those challenges or did you
learn from Ms. O'Malley or anyone else about that?

A I did not.

Q I want to ask you about exhibit 16. That would be in front of you. This is
a December 18, 2020, email.
A This one here?
Q Let me know when you have it.
A Sure. We're pulling it up right now.
Q Sure.
A It can't come up, but I believe -- I see the title, OA --
Q Yeah.
A Oh, here we go. Yes. This was with Monica Block. Correct.
Q Right.
A Yep.
Q So this is a December 18th email from Monica Block to Kash Patel, who was
at DOD at the time, and you're CC'ed, "Help with OA + DCNG." And I'll just read part of
it.
"Kash, I'm sorry to ping you again, but I was hoping you could help me with
something with my Office of Administration hat on. Last year, OA cemented a
relationship with the DC National Guard through an MOU that allows these Guardsmen to
directly support the President through support for the EOP. Our first Guardsman arrived
last December and we have been working to try and grow the DCNG footprint on
Campus. Specifically, we think the best place for the DCNG to grow their initial support
is in our White House Operations Center. The White House Operations Center allows
these Guardsmen to essentially continue their Title 32 duties by supporting on Campus
operations."
I'll stop there. Can you explain why there was a desire to grow the D.C. National
Guard footprint on the White House campus?
A Sure.
So, from what I remember on this is, this was something they were trying for a
while. Back when the Secret Service had the Joint Operations Center in the Eisenhower Building -- it was in the top floor of the Eisenhower Building -- there was always a seat for White House Operations, which is under Monica Block in the Office of Administration. There was always a staff seat.

It was never filled. They never had somebody -- because, under Monica Block, in the Office of Administration, mostly are interns, and there is very few career people there at all. So, in order for them to have the clearance to be in the Joint Operations Center, they just didn't have it.

And what that position would do is, it would coordinate with OA on anything that was going around the White House complex. The Secret Service is going to take care of the protectees on the complex, but they're not necessarily going to be able to huddle all the White House staff and make sure that they're getting to where they need to be, to be out of danger, or not going into danger.

That was OA's job. That was the Office of Administration operations people that would then help facilitate that in case of an emergency. They're responsible for all the 4,000 -- or anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 people on complex that aren't protectees.

So they were consistently trying to grow and develop a -- they wanted to call it a WHOC, a White House Operations Center. And in the White House Operations Center would be a member from the White House Military Office, a member from the Secret Service, a member from OA -- which, they wanted that to be a National Guardsman who would understand emergency situations, would understand how to push out information and to who for a chain of command and assist in growing the relationship on complex for a more secure environment and also a more communicative environment.

Well, they were trying to use different apps that would push out information to your cell phones as well, and that's one way that they were able to overcome this. But
they still didn't have a great sight picture from one room at which the Secret Service
would stand up often the -- they called it the EOC, the Emergency Operations Center,
which was in the EEOB. It was in the Eisenhower Building on the first floor.

So, when they would stand that up, they would want somebody from OA in there.
But the problem is, with OA, they wouldn't have somebody in there that may be a
decision-maker or, you know, can tell the staff or the senior staff to do something. And
that's where they wanted more of a stance of help from -- because they had this -- and
it's also, being government, they're trying to save money and not hire people and be able
to do all that, because there was a policy of this Title 32, that they can use National
Guardsmen to fulfill some duties on campus. And that was one of the ways they were
trying to fulfill one of those duties.
BY MR. DAYANANDA:

Q And do you know what triggered this request? Just by the timing of it, December 18th, you're looking at, you know, the last 30 days of the Trump administration there.

A Sure. Monica --

Q Go ahead.

A Monica Block. And, knowing Monica, Monica dots her i's and crosses her t's. She's trying to do this to set it up for the future for the Biden administration. She was on the transition detail as well.

And she was trying to set this up because the careers that were staying in OA still need this, still need this operations center. And Monica was trying to continue that even through the transition.

Q Let me understand. The White House Operations Center is set up, but this would be to add more Guardsmen to it?

A I wouldn't say it's set up, no. She was trying to. And --

Q I see.

A And that's why -- she was never able to get it going to where they wanted it. I believe the career Sam Price was there in OA, and he was kind of the head safety manager. Like, when we had, let's say, an Easter egg roll on the south grounds, they would set up decon tents on either side in case of any kind of mass casualty. They would set up these things. These were the preparedness people.

And this is what kind of is in the wheelhouse of National Guard. So that's why she wanted a member to represent that group.

Q Understood. Did it ever come to fruition before you left?
A Not that I remember.

Q And it sounds like this had been in the works for a while. The request had been made earlier than last --

A She was trying, yes. For, I remember, my whole time there she was trying to get this going.

Q During this time when you're obviously involved with the transition, in the November time period, there was a number of election fraud claims that were being purported after November 7th and that started before.

Did you have any knowledge of any of the investigations to investigate claims of election fraud?

A No. Just what I saw on the TV.

Q Were you aware of any discussions that were going on in the White House about the election fraud claims?

A No, I was not.

Ms. Dayananda. All right. I'm going to turn it over now to my colleague, who is going to talk about the Ellipse event. It's 11:13. We could take a break now before he starts, if you wish, or keep going.

Mr. Ornato. I'm good to keep going if you are.

Mr. Tonolli. Great.

Mr. Ornato, again, my name is Sean Tonolli. Thanks again for taking the time.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q Just a few questions at the outset to talk about the timeframe that we'll cover, which is roughly November of 2020 to January of 2021.

A Okay.

Q The meetings that you talked about, three times a week, where you would
have Secret Service and the various other parts of the Military Office there present, would the chief of staff attend those as well, Mr. Meadows?

A No, he would not.

Q Okay. Who would lead the meetings?

A I would.

Q Would you brief the chief of staff about the meetings afterwards as a practice or only if necessary?

A Only if there was something, an issue we were made aware of or some big event, but not necessarily.

Q Okay.

And it's our understanding that Max Miller, in the summer of 2020, transitioned from director of advance within the White House to a campaign staff role. Is that right?

A Correct. He left the White House and went to work for the campaign.

Q And that's when Mr. Peede stepped into his shoes as director of advance?

A Yes.

Q And then Mr. Miller came back to the White House in roughly the middle of November after the campaign and election were over?

A Correct.

Q And the title that he had when he returned, was it effectively assistant to the President? Or do you know what it was officially?

A I don't. It wouldn't have been an -- I don't think he was an assistant. You're only allowed to have 24 assistants to the President.

Q Okay.

A So, yeah, I don't think it was. I think he may have been a deputy assistant to the President.
Q What was his role when he returned?
A He was basically an advisor to Bobby Peede. He helped out on advance. That was Max's wheelhouse. He was an advance guy.

Q But, as we understand it, Mr. Miller did not report directly to Mr. Peede. Is that right?
A He didn't -- I don't really know who Mr. Miller reported to, actually.
Q Did he report to you?
A He probably fell under me, because we had him in the advance type of capacity, so he would've fell under my office.
Q And, speaking of offices, did Mr. Miller and Mr. Peede, respectively, have offices in the Executive Office Building?
A Correct. They were in the EEOB, correct.
Q And is that where you were based as well?
A I was in the West Wing.
Q Okay.

When Mr. Miller returned in the role to the White House in November, would he attend those three-times-a-week meetings?
A Sometimes. He would be there for Bobby, or maybe both of them would be there together, but not all the time.
Q Okay.

And before we get to the rally topics in November and then through January, your time with the President both on the PPD and then also in director of operations, I imagine you had occasion to attend quite a number of his political rallies through the years?
A Yes.
Q All right. And in your time at those rallies, can you describe for us the
effect, so to speak, of the President on the crowds or how those crowds would resonate
to him, just in your experience in observing that?

A Sure. The crowds would be energetic and listening to him, as all, you know,
Presidentional rallies are usually.

Mr. Tonolli. And I'd just note for the record that Mr. Aguilar has joined us.

Good morning and thank you, sir.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q And, Mr. Ornato, you said, "as all Presidential rallies." Are you speaking in
terms of just President Trump or across the various administrations you've served?

A So President Trump had probably a lot more rallies than President Obama or
President Bush. They would only mostly do them during campaign time. But those
types of rallies were usually all the same -- very energetic people, you know, responding
to the President speaking.

Q Okay.

When we move to November of 2020, are you aware of what I'll call the "Stop the
Steal" rallies, the first one occurring in D.C. on Freedom Plaza on Saturday,
November 14th of 2020?

A I remember a Freedom Plaza -- I don't know if there was an actual name for
it. I just remember Freedom Plaza. There was a heavy protest at Freedom Plaza.

Q And I'll refer to this November 14th one as the one where President Trump
drove by in the motorcade. Do you remember that?

A Yes, I do.

Q Okay. Now, again, this happened on a Saturday. And as you've described
the meetings you'd have three times a week -- roughly Monday, Wednesday, Friday?

A Correct.
Q All right. So do you remember that Friday or, you know, a day or two before that rally on the Saturday that this came up as a topic of discussion?

A It did not come up at a meeting. This was an off-the-cuff kind of thing. I remember receiving a phone call about it.

Q Okay. And you're talking about the motorcade. Is that right?

A To go by it, correct. I received a phone call on Saturday morning, it would've been.

Q But the rally itself, were you --

A Oh.

Q -- aware of it before it took place?

A Oh, yes. Yes. The Service briefed us of the protest that would be taking place outside the complex.

Q Did you have any conversations with the President about the rally before it took place?

A Not that I can recall, no.

Q To your knowledge, did anyone within the White House coordinate with the rally planners about that event on November 14th prior to it occurring?

A No, not to my knowledge.

Q And so could you describe for us how, so far as you know, it came to be that the President drove by in the motorcade?

A Sure.

I was not at the White House. I was off on Saturday. I received a phone call. I don't remember if it was from our staff person that was there or it was directly from Dave Cho, who was the DSAC at the time, and he was working.

I knew the President was supposed to go to golf that day. That was the OTR, was
to golf. And I remember receiving a phone call saying he wants to drive by the rally. And I don't remember if it was from staff that called and told me that or if it was Dave. I just remember talking to Dave and saying, "Did he ask this?" And Dave said, "Yeah, he asked me if we can do this." And I said, you know, "What can you do?" And he said, "Well, I think we have a route that we can go to the golf course and just kind of go by the -- he can see, you know, how many people are out there, and we're comfortable in doing that." I said, "Well, Dave, just let me know -- obviously I'm at home, but let me know whatever you need."

And that's typical, where the people there are going to just talk with the President directly and work it out.

Q And do you remember how long before the drive-by, so to speak, happened you were notified that this was possibly going to happen?

A Oh, probably within maybe 45 minutes to an hour or so before I was hit up. It wasn't that far before.

Q And when that kind of a movement by the President takes place through the streets of D.C., naturally, as we understand it, there has to be some coordination with the Metropolitan Police Department?

A Correct. Well, in this kind of scenario, where it's an OTR, they would most likely -- and I believe they did -- use a lot of Secret Service assets. Because on an OTR there's not a heavy Metropolitan Police presence.

So the Service would -- if they were going to go that route, they would probably have hit up Metropolitan Police to let them know that. Because they are -- I believe they lead with Virginia troopers as well, because they go into Virginia for golf, and so they would've assisted in the motorcade.

I don't know what they coordinated at that time, though.
Q And when the President makes a decision like this, that he wants to go by, can the Secret Service ultimately tell him no, or just consult --

A Yes.

Q -- with him and he ultimately makes the decision?

A No, he doesn't ultimately make the decision. I've been in that seat before -- it's not a fun seat to be in -- where you have to say no to the President of the United States. But you have to say no if you can't do it safely. That's your job.

Q And if you only have less than an hour or so, or whatever the timeframe is, but not days, in talking about this event, how is that assessment made, about whether it's safe for the President to do this sort of a movement that quickly?

A So I don't know exactly what happened on that day. But in some scenario like that, I imagine the Service would've asked their countersurveillance officers and agents that are out on the perimeter, what does it look like? They probably sent a couple of agents over from the field office.

What does it look like? Is it quiet? You know, is it everybody's being civil -- there's no civil unrest? Everybody's being calm? How many people are there? Is there 100 there, or is there 5,000 people there, you know?

And then they can basically make a decision on that, based on the real intelligence that they're getting from people out there.

Q Another "Stop the Steal" rally happened on Saturday, December 12th of 2020. It's the one where the President flew over in Marine One?

A Uh-huh.

Q Do you remember this rally?

A I do.

Q Okay. And same types of questions. Do you recall this rally being a topic
of discussion before it occurred as part of your meetings with the Secret Service?

A So I remember the rally -- or, again, they didn't give it to us as a rally. I was told there would be a protest on the Ellipse -- or, I'm sorry, not on the Ellipse -- on the -- I believe it was near the Capitol. There'll be -- however many people -- I don't remember -- is expected to attend.

I remember, you know, no -- they usually let us know if there's going to be opposing groups, so is there going to be any civil unrest or not. And, you know, on any of these, I don't think we had any civil unrest that was being reported. But that doesn't mean anything.

That was leading up to it. And then, if I may go on, the -- before we were about to -- I believe the President had a trip that day, was going to Joint Base Andrews to fly out to a trip. And I remember a request was made that, hey, the President saw that he has supporters up near the Capitol and wanted to know if he can now motorcade and not fly and if he can drive by that.

So, at which point, I brought in, again, whoever was working -- I don't remember, that day, who was working for the Secret Service -- I brought in the White House Military Office director and said, hey, this was the request.

We're supposed to fly. I remember, the timing -- we did not have enough time to get cars. We did not have enough time to do those types of things. Because there's only a small motorcade on hand when it's a good weather call, as we call it if the helicopters are able to lift. So I remember the Secret Service was like, "Yeah, after what had happened in November, we're not looking to drive through any of that again. We're not looking to do that."

So I remember relaying to the chief of staff that, hey, the Service is not looking -- we don't have enough time to get a motorcade together here in order to get
out to Andrews, so all we are doing is lifting out to Andrews.

The request was, well, then, can we lift where he can see the people out at the Capitol? So that request was made to the White House Military Office. Are we able to talk with HMX Durham?

Obviously, for multiple of reasons, but there are multiple ways off of the south grounds to Joint Base Andrews by helicopter. They have multiple routes. They choose a route, and then they let people know which route they're going to go, so everybody -- for -- I can't -- obviously, the classified stuff. So they choose a route to let people know ahead of time, so then people that need to do their jobs on the specific routes do so.

So we were before that. So they just picked a route closest to the Capitol, is what HMX had done at the time. And, at that point, it was deemed that we would fly. And I know the Service and HMX had a conversation about, "Hey, not looking to go in any handgun range," you know, making sure we were still at a good altitude, that our safety was not jeopardized in any way.

And I remember the Military Office passing that to HMX, HMX giving the thumbs-up that they're all set, they're going to do their normal route, just that's closer to the Capitol, in going to Andrews -- Joint Base Andrews. Sorry, I want to call it Andrews Air Force Base, but Joint Base Andrews.

Q Okay. So there's a few things in there to unpack, but thank --
A Yep.
Q -- you for that.

Who relayed to you the request that the President wanted to drive to the Capitol in the motorcade on December 12th?
A I don't remember if it was from outside Oval Office operations, which
would've been, like, a Nick Luna, or if it was the chief of staff.

I remember, ultimately, I did talk with the chief of staff about it, about that we
can't drive. Service has already said we can't get the cars. And so the chief, I believe,
asked, can we just fly but can he see it from the helicopter? And that was the
conversation.

Q Were you in the West Wing that day? Were you somewhere else? Do
you remember?

A I was in the West Wing that day, from what I remember.

Q And you said that the assessment that you then relayed back to the chief
was that they couldn't do the drive because of what had happened in November.

What had happened in November that gave concern, given that the President had
driven by Freedom Plaza on November 14th?

A Sure. From what I remember, the Service passed that the numbers that
they expected or were told were there had grown significantly by the time they went out
there, and they felt that people could've gotten hurt, because the cars had to go quicker
than they would've liked to to get through a crowded area, and there were no barricades
stopping anybody for coming out onto the street. And they didn't want to be in that
situation again.

Q The request about the President driving to the Capitol on December 12th,
was there any more specificity about what he wanted to do when he got to the Capitol on
that day?

A No. I was told he just wanted to see the crowd.

Q Okay.

Was any -- so, from what you described, it sounds like the good-idea fairy was
stopped right then and there. It didn't need to go out to Capitol Police or anyone else; it
was internally handled?

A  Correct.

Q  And who told you, Mr. Ornato, specifically told you, that this was a bad idea?

Do you remember who it was within Secret Service?

A  To drive?  I don't remember if it was the SAC of the detail, who's Bob Engel, or Dave Cho that was working that day.  But I just remember they didn't want to get caught in the position that they were caught in last time.

Q  And you mentioned, in talking about the flight path for the helicopter, you know, concern of being out of handgun range.

A  Uh-huh.

Q  Was that concern specific to the event that day on December 12th and the types of --

A  No.

Q  -- people that would be there, or is that a general concern?

A  That's a general concern.  Correct.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q  Did you become aware of any violence that occurred in connection with the rally on December 12th --

A  I don't recall any.

Q  -- after the fact?

A  Yeah, I don't recall.

Q  Do you remember when you first learned that there would be a -- what term would you use -- protest or a rally on January 6, 2021, in D.C.?

A  Both that day.  I heard there was a rally on the Ellipse but also there would be protests in the area.
Q Okay.

You know, there are several documents that you've probably seen that we've given you as exhibits that I think help frame the timeline. And if you'll indulge me, I think it's helpful to go through those first.

A Sure.

Q And then we can talk about, you know, what you know about those events. Okay?

A Okay.

Q So, if you look at exhibit 1, it's a collection of the President's tweets from an archive, since his Twitter was taken down, over the time of December 18th of 2020 through January 7th of 2021.

And, if you turn to the last page, which is page 12, or if you flip to it on the screen --

Mr. Huse. Counsel, it's Tom Huse. Bear with us. We're --

Mr. Tonolli. Sure.

Mr. Huse. -- working on a really slow computer to pull these up.

Mr. Ornato. Actually, it only goes to exhibit 2. I don't see --

Mr. Tonolli. This is exhibit 1, so --

Mr. Ornato. Yeah, we don't have exhibit 1 on here.

Mr. Huse. Counsel, is it possible to share that on the screen?

Mr. Tonolli. Yes. That'll be easier.

Mr. Ornato. Oh, great. Perfect.

Mr. Tonolli. It will just take a moment for us to bring that up.

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

Mr. Tonolli. You know, while we're bringing it up, Mr. Ornato, we might as
well -- we can continue.

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q Are you able to provide just an overview of your role in connection with what I'll call the rally on January 6th at the Ellipse?

A Sure.

So we knew that an organization was permitted and taking place and organized a stage and a rally type of event on the Ellipse on January 6th. But we didn't -- they invited the President to speak, but, from what I remember, prior to even New Year's, we did not know if the President was actually going to attend, because they didn't know how many people were going to be out there, and they didn't want the President talking to 100 people. They didn't know what the rally would bring in.

Q Understood. But, in terms of ultimately, because it does end up happening --

A Sure.

Q -- just at a high level, what was your role in connection with that event?

A Sure. Not much.

I, you know, held our morning meetings. Once we got word that there was going to be an event, it's like any typical-event normal for us. Our advance staff links up with the host committee and the Secret Service, and they start the planning of the event for the President's piece of it. So it would be, like, walkthroughs. Secret Service will have magnetometers, secure a perimeter.

If the President wasn't going, none of that would be done. So it was just making sure the logistical aspect was taking place once we got word that the President was going to attend.
Okay. And our understanding is that Jared Small on Mr. Peede's staff was responsible for advance. Do you remember that?

So I remember Jared Small left the White House, though, and went to work for the campaign. I don't remember if Jared Small was back at that point or he was still working. You all would know better than me --

Okay.

-- if he was. But I just remember he had left work for the campaign. I don't remember him coming back. I thought he was part of the organizers then. Or Bobby Peede could've had him work for him as a volunteer staffer, which happens all over the country. So that could've been the point as well.

Okay.

And then Max Miller, do you remember him being involved with the event?

He was involved with Bobby, yes.

Okay. And so, in the normal operating procedure, given their roles on advance and handling events, it was natural for the two of them to be hands-on with this event?

Correct. That's their job. Yes.

Right.

And I'll ask my colleague if we're ready to show.

Sean, could I ask a question while we're trying to pull that up?

Yes, Ms. Cheney.

Mr. Ornato, you mentioned that it wasn't clear before New Year's whether the President would speak, and I think you said because they just weren't sure, you know, it sounds like, whether the event would be worthy of him showing up.

Can you just explain, sir, how you knew that that was part of the assessment, the
crowd size?

Mr. Ornato. Sure. So we would ask schedule, you know, to ping the -- so the scheduler would get from either the chief of staff or Hope Hicks or outer Oval the request on what to put on the schedule. So we would ping the scheduler constantly of, "Hey, what have we got? What have we got?" Or you're asking them, "What are we doing?"

Because we want the Service and the advance staff and the White House Military Office to be on the ground as soon as possible to do something. We obviously want all the time in the world for them to do an advance, not rush time. So that was our daily routine of hitting schedule up for information.

And we kept being told what he was being told, like, "We haven't made a decision yet. We don't know if it's going to happen, if there's going to be people there. We don't know yet, and no one's committing to it."

This was pretty normal for big-size events, you know, these types of rallies, that, if they wanted to commit the President to, there had to be enough people for the President to actually -- it be worth the President showing up for.

Ms. Cheney. Okay.

So, when you were -- you knew this event was happening, but it wasn't clear whether or not he would attend. And so it would've been Hope Hicks or Molly Michael? Somebody --

Mr. Ornato. It would've been somebody -- it would've been Hope Hicks or the chief of staff that would've made the final decision to tell the scheduler. That's who the scheduler was required to wait for the okay from.

And if it was Hope Hicks, then the scheduler would check with the chief of staff to make sure that the chief was aware and good with it.

Ms. Cheney. And so it was Hope Hicks or Mark Meadows --
Mr. Ornato.  Correct.

Ms. Cheney.  -- basically, who had final sign-off on what went on the schedule?

Mr. Ornato.  Yes.

Ms. Cheney.  And were there certain types of events that Hope would be signing off on and some that the chief would be signing off on?

Mr. Ornato.  Mostly, I think, Hope was during the campaign.  She worked closely with the campaign for the events and then would bring the ideas to Mark Meadows, just from what I saw.

Ms. Cheney.  Okay.

And so there came a moment, obviously, or point in time where they said to you this is confirmed?

Mr. Ornato.  Yes.  The scheduler sent out an email to everybody that we are confirmed for the Ellipse event.

Ms. Cheney.  And did they tell you that they knew at that time that the crowd would be a sufficient size?

Mr. Ornato.  They still didn't know, but they figured it would be above -- I believe I had heard numbers from 5,000 and then I heard early on to 20,000.

And that's what actually gave us angst for the Secret Service to be able to plan for how many magnetometers they would need for the flow of people to get in.  That's all based off of time and numbers.  So that's why we wanted to try to nail down on the specific numbers, so they can do their job.

Ms. Cheney.  Okay.  Okay.  And I'm sure that Sean and Soumya are going to walk through all of that, but I appreciate it.  That's helpful.

Mr. Ornato.  Okay.

Ms. Cheney.  Thank you.
BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q  And, on that point, Mr. Ornato, we'll show exhibit 1 and see if you can see it.

Are you able to see the exhibit?

A  Yes.

Q  Okay. So what we're going to do is go down to the last page --

A  Okay.

Q  -- which is page 12. And, again, these are an archive of the President's tweets.

And I'm just going to focus your attention on the one highlighted in yellow on the screen, Mr. Ornato. Maybe you can see it on your computer now.

A  Yeah. Our chief counsel was able to pull this one up on the last page here.

Okay.

Q  So your technology is about in line with ours in terms of --

A  Unfortunately, government -- yes, yes, we are.

Q  So you see there, December 19, 2020, at 1:42 a.m., you know, the President references a report by Mr. Navarro, but we'll focus on the second half of that tweet: "Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!"

Now, I'll tell you this is the first time he references in a tweet a protest in D.C. on the 6th.

Do you remember this tweet when it went out?

A  I don't. I don't remember this exact tweet. It just, obviously -- the Peter Navarro name. Anything that had Peter's name attached to it wasn't taken seriously, as far as with the operations staff.

Q  It's -- what I'll say is, I am sure there will be questions by other of my
colleagues and the members on that point.

A Yes.

Q I'm going to stay focused on the rally for the moment, okay?

A Okay. Yeah.

Q But thank you for that.

A Sure.

Q Did you monitor the President's tweets, just to be aware of what he was saying?

A No, I didn't monitor it every -- not in this position, I really didn't. When I was the SAC, that's sometimes how I learned where our next trip was, so I did then, but not in this position. I was too busy with things to monitor Twitter.

Q Okay.

Now, this was a Saturday, the 19th was, which means that your next daily meeting would've been that Monday, the 21st.

A Sure.

Q And so I'll use that as a bookend. And if you can just go up two pages in the exhibit, and I'll show you -- you see highlighted on that page 10 of exhibit 1, Mr. Ornato, on December 27th at 5:51 p.m., President Trump -- this is the next time he tweets about the event.

A Sure.

Q "See you in Washington, DC, on January 6th. Don't miss it. Information to follow!"

And so, in terms of situating us, do you remember that the President was down in Mar-a-Lago for the holidays and was scheduled to be there roughly December 23rd through January 3rd?
A I do.

Q Were you with him down there?

A No. I remember, actually, because I was on vacation myself.

Q All right.

Between the time when he sends the tweet on the 19th before he left and when he sends this tweet on the 27th when he's in Florida, do you remember any discussion internally about the protest that was going to take place on the 6th and whether the President would attend?

A I don't recall any. If I -- probably was made aware of this, that he tweeted this, from Bobby Peede or Max. I probably -- I know Bobby Peede was down in Florida. I probably asked him, "Hey, so do we have a confirmation he's going to this, or what?"

And Bobby said, "No" -- I'm sure Bobby would've said, "No, he's just tweeting. We have no confirmation yet that he's actually gonna go."

From seeing this and knowing the history, I would think that they were trying to draw numbers there in order to get him to go speak at that time. Because I don't remember even before New Year's Day of having actual conversations about him tweeting out that he's going.

Like, we would've been all over this if this was true. Like, I would've had the Service and the military beating down my door, or my phone, actually, if this was a confirmation from him. So I imagine we followed up on it, and it was not. They were just trying to draw a crowd.

Q Okay. And we'll look at the followup. It's certainly different than the 19th tweet --

A Yeah.

Q -- where the President just says, "Big protest in D.C." Here, he's saying, on
the 27th, "see you there" and "don't miss it," "information to follow."

A Right.

Q It certainly suggests that he would be in attendance, right?

A Right. It does suggest that, yes.

Q Okay.

Now, I know you weren't with him in Florida, but, as we understand it, he was originally scheduled to stay in Florida until January 3rd but ultimately cut the trip short and returned home on New Year's Eve. Do you remember that?

A I do. Yes.

Q All right. And, given your role and having to know when the President is traveling and the details along that, do you know why he came home --

A Well --

Q -- sooner than he had planned?

A I don't remember. I do remember that they didn't want to go to Mar-a-Lago from the beginning, because it was going to be the -- possibly be the -- it was -- the last Christmas at the White House, and they wanted to stay there through the end of the month of December. Because we were even going back and forth on leaving, I remember. Were they going to go? Were they not going to go? That was still up in the air. And then they ended up going.

But whenever the President got down to Mar-a-Lago during this timeframe, as soon as -- from what I remember when I was with him as the SAC, as soon as he hit the ground there, he'd be asking, "When am I going back? When am I going back? People are going to think I'm not working. I want to go back." Even though, you know, he'd be working at Mar-a-Lago.

He was very antsy to get back. So this didn't surprise me, that he came back
early. And we have changed dates in the past as well. You know, we almost
telegraphed -- amongst our ops group, we would, you know, have a plan for, hey, if he
comes back early, who's working this? How are we doing this? And we would prepare
for that. Because it was a common kind of an occurrence, of these types of things
happening.

Q Certainly the President's prerogative, and understood. But --
A Correct.

Q -- we also understand that -- was it an annual tradition that the President
would host a New Year's Eve party at Mar-a-Lago?
A Yeah, he usually did.

Q Okay.
A Absolutely.

Q And, up until this year, had he attended those New Year's Eve parties during
his term in office?
A Yes.

Q Okay. And so, specific to this, did you understand that people had traveled
to and were present in Mar-a-Lago to ring in the new year with him on New Year's Eve?
A I wasn't following anything going on down there, to be honest with you.

Q Okay. Did you know that he would be attending the party that night on
New Year's Eve?
A I assumed he would be. I didn't know for a fact, but I assumed.

Q All right.

And, again, specific to the decision to cut this trip home, do you know why or did
someone tell you why he came back specifically?
A No, I wasn't. I was just told that he wants to be back. That's all I would
get told.

Q Okay.

And so, focusing on the time of that tweet and seeing it's at 5:51 p.m. on the 27th, you know, what we have in exhibit 2, if your counsel is able to pull it up, or agency counsel is -- we can also show it on the screen. It will be phone records from Max Miller's phone, his personal phone.

A Uh-huh.

Q And so, showing you page 1 of those -- and, if you can see, it's got columns of data, and we've added names to the phone records. It's a little bit small. We can --

A That's okay.

Q -- increase the focus.

A He's going to pull it up right here as well.

Q Sure. Sure. And I can tell you that the way the times are reflected -- you see on the left the date, the time.

A Uh-huh.

Q And then you see -- the first phone number you'll come across is the number that is called in the phone records, the person receiving the call. And the next phone number is the person placing the call.

A Uh-huh.

Q And then you had the length of time that the conversation lasts in seconds. And then we've added the name of the person who was speaking with Mr. Miller, whether they called him or he called them.

A Sure.

Q So, if you see, on December 27th at 5:15 p.m., so, you know, roughly 40 minutes before the President tweets out, you know, "See you in D.C., details to
follow," you see that Bobby Peede has a call with Mr. Miller for roughly, you know, 11 minutes.

A Okay.

Q And, again, the way you've described, they were working together on events generally. There's nothing --

A Sure.

Q -- nothing about that.

However, if you continue on, there's a series of calls after the President's tweet. So December 27th, starting at 6:19 p.m., there's a series of calls exchanged between Mr. Miller and Bobby Peede --

A Okay.

Q -- and also Justin Caporale.

And, for the record, C-a-p-o-r-a-l-e.

Do you know Mr. Caporale?

A I do. I know of him. Yes.

Q And how did you know of him?

A Yep. I didn't work with -- I knew him when he worked over on the First Lady side when I was with the Secret -- as the SAC of the Secret Service, but I knew him when he left and went to the campaign.

Q Okay. And did you understand him to have helped put on campaign events for the reelection for President Trump?

A Yes, he did.

Q All right. So, similar to Mr. Miller and Mr. Peede, that was his specialty, events, correct?

A Correct. Yes.
Q And did you come to learn that Mr. Caporale was running the event on the Ellipse that took place on January 6th?

A I did, yes.

Q Okay.

And so you see that Mr. Miller is talking with Mr. Peede, Mr. Caporale, Mr. Peede, and then you on the night of the 27th, you know, within less than an hour of the President's tweet.

A Sure.

Q Do you remember having the first conversation about this event at the time with Mr. Miller?

A I don't, but this is probably typical, because Max and Bobby -- obviously, Bobby being with him and Max on Twitter -- know that I don't necessarily always would see something. They would definitely call and let me know if they had information. Or, if I did happen to see something, I would call one of them and say, hey, what's going on there? We were typically each other's first phone calls.

Q Okay. And so it'd be natural and in the normal course for Max Miller to update you if there's a chance of the President having an event?

A Of something changing, an event or something, yes.

Q Okay.

A Or just calling in general, but yes.

Q Okay.

And the number that Mr. Miller uses to reach you is a phone number that -- I'll just say the last four digits are 3371. Is that your phone number?

A It is.

Q Okay. And is that a personal cell phone or a work?
A It is a personal cell phone, yep.

Q And I'll represent to you that the number that Mr. Miller was using was personal. The same is true for Mr. Peede. And, obviously, Mr. Caporale was in the private sector at the time.

Do you know why you, Mr. Peede, and Mr. Miller were using your personal cell phones at this time to talk about these events?

A I don't. I was -- I know I was -- at that time, December 27th, I was working -- I do just handy stuff around the house. I was working on a vacation place that I was at. So I don't know if he tried me on the other phone or -- but we'd talk on the personal phone anyhow all the time, so that wouldn't be anything out of the ordinary.

Q Okay.

And there's another person that Mr. Miller starts speaking with starting the next day, on the 28th, named Alexandra Stone, who we understood worked with Room One in the White House. Is that right? Do you remember Ms. Stone?

A I do, yes.

Q Okay.

A She would be with Room One, correct.

Q And what were her responsibilities, as a general matter?

A Mostly the complex. Mostly -- Room One kind of is the overall of everything. If something's broke on the complex, you know, she gets GSA to fix it. Those types of roles. She's over the complex. It's a pretty good size -- a big size role.

Q Okay.

And if we just flip down to the next page of that exhibit 2, by the next day, you see that, on the 28th of December, that Mr. Miller is having conversations with a woman by the name of Katharine MacGregor, who we understood to be the Deputy Secretary of the
Interior.

Q All right. So we can get into that, which is this: When you first learned about the event and before the President committed, where did you understand it was scheduled originally to take place?

A On the Ellipse. I remember we knew of the event that was going to be on the Ellipse, and I remember Max bringing up that they were looking to have the stage centered with the White House on the Ellipse, but that would be in line of the White House -- I can't remember the exact name -- what's the -- the White House --

Mr. Huse. The Jeffers- (ph) --

Mr. Ornato. -- to the Jeffers- (ph) -- yes, the site, and they had to be 30 feet over.

So I remember Max asking, who at DOI would Justin have to talk to if they wanted to do a waiver? Because there's been waivers done before. And I remember MacGregor's name coming up.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q Okay. But do you recall that the event by the organizers, the kind of the grassroots organizers, was originally scheduled to be on Freedom Plaza, just like the prior rallies in D.C. had been?

A I don't recall that.

Q Okay.

A I'm sorry.

Q So you don't have any knowledge of how the event got moved to the Ellipse?

A I don't remember that. No.
Q And on this issue of the placement of the stage for the Ellipse event, did you yourself talk to Deputy Secretary MacGregor or anyone else within the National Park Service or Interior about the issue?

A I don't remember exactly. I remember we discussed it. I don't remember how we ended it, if I was going to give her a heads-up that a request was coming or if we were going to give a heads-up to the Secretary of the Interior or if Max was just going to call her.

And, from looking at this, I think maybe it was that Max was going to call her and give her a heads-up, because they had worked on other national park sites together and he had a relationship.

Q Okay.

So, other than Mr. Miller updating you about this, as best you can remember, you didn't have any role in handling this with Interior?

A I don't recall if I was on an email thread or I sent any. I don't believe so, but I don't recall.

Q And you mentioned that what Mr. Miller described to you was a desire to have the White House directly behind the stage? Is that the reason why he wanted --

A Right.

Q -- the waiver?

A If I can remember, it was because, what if the President ends up going and speaking? You'd want the White House to be the backdrop for the President if he was to go. So, once the stage is set, it can't be moved if he decides towards the end to actually go. So they wanted to set it up in case he was going to go, is what I remember the conversation being.

Q So, again, you see here, by December 28th, Mr. Miller is having his
conversations with Ms. MacGregor. And am I right that there'd be no reason for
Mr. Miller to be doing this unless there is actually a chance that the President will attend?

A  Sure. So, again, our job was to anticipate this, right? We'd want to
anticipate. so Max was doing what we'd want. Like, hey, if the President's going to go,
we need to make sure that we're getting on the ground early.

So I know Max was probably -- Max was working with Justin to make sure that, if
the President decides to go, that things were already done that can't be changed ahead of
time. So he was anticipating this, from what I remember.

Q  Okay.

Now, we understand, Mr. Ornato, that by as early as, if not earlier, but at least by
December 29th, the White House -- and I use that term as a general term -- just the White
House was telling the event organizers and Mr. Caporale in particular that the plan for the
Ellipse event was for the President to speak and then tell the attendees of the event to
march to the Capitol.

Now, ultimately, the President does tell attendees to do that when he speaks on
January 6th, and he says, you'll march to the Capitol, after he was done speaking.

Do you remember becoming aware prior to the President's speech on January 6th
that that was his plan, to tell people to march to the Capitol?

A  I was not aware of that.

Q  So that never came up in any of the meetings that you had between, say,
December 27th and January 6th, that that was something the President would say?

A  No. I was actually out of pocket. I didn't get back into the White House
until January 4th.

Q  And so you were on leave between roughly Christmastime and January 4th?

A  I came back January 4th, yes.
Q Okay. And so the time that you were on leave, were you participating in those daily meetings -- or --
A No.
Q -- excuse me, those three-times-a-week meetings?
A No. We wouldn't have them when the President was outside the White House, because the people that normally would be in them would most likely be with him or out elsewhere. But we wouldn't hold those meetings.
Q Okay.
Now, he returned on December 31st, so, you know, roughly 5 days before you got back, right?
A Right.
Q So, given what you just said, I imagine the meetings would start back up once he was back on campus or at the White House?
A I probably postponed them to the Monday that I was back, January 4th. That would've been our first one back.
Q Okay.
A Because when the President goes out of the White House, most people that aren't going on a trip take their leave then. That's the only time you get a break.
Q Now, when do you remember it being confirmed that the President would, in fact, appear at the Ellipse event?
A I remember seeing, I think, a document here that -- was it here? I remember seeing when the scheduler, Mike Haidet, had sent out a confirmation. I knew it was -- I remember it being after January 1. I remember it being over the weekend, from what I recall, but I didn't recall exactly when.
Q So, if we look at exhibit 7 -- and just hold on one second. I don't know if
you can pull it up.

A We're trying right now.

Q Okay.

A I think we should be able to.

Q And if we go down to the bottom of the page -- it's now up on the screen.

A Okay.

Q And do you see that on December 31st at 9:00 a.m., 2020 --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- it's redacted for privacy purposes, but someone within, it appears, the President's protective detail writes to Bobby Peede and Max Miller?

A Sure.

Q And in the second paragraph, it says, "We are getting hit up from some of our counterparts (Park Police, etc) regarding a possible event on the Ellipse on 1.6. We haven't heard anything about this - can you please let us know what is being looked at regarding this event?"

A Right.

Q And then, if you go up just a little bit, Bobby Peede asks Justin Caporale to follow up.

And you can continue up. And this is all the same day, December 31st.

A Sure.

Q The person from the protective detail writes back and thanks Justin for the call.

And so, you know, as we saw, it looks like there was discussion and efforts by Mr. Miller and discussions with you at least a few days before December 31st, and the PPD has to come to Max and Bobby about this.
A Right.

Q Do you know why they were coming to Bobby and Max and why it wasn't escalated to them first, to the Secret Service from Bobby and Max?

A That's because -- that's normal.

So I was in operations for PPD, like I said earlier. And our partners -- Park Police -- our partners will get information before us, because the White House staff may not have it because they're not in -- it's an organization putting on an event, or something of that nature, where they're looking for local police help, which would be Park Police because that's their jurisdiction.

So Park Police would then want to know from the Secret Service, "Hey, is the President coming?" Or it's the rumor mill: "Hey, we're hearing the President's coming."

And so this is probably an operations person, which is Bobby's counterpart, on their normal day --

Q Sure.

A -- and that they always go back and forth. That's their match -- they're married up to each other. And I see John Crunkilton, who was the ASAC over operations, so I'm sure that's -- he would've CC'ed his supervisor.

So this is an operations person hearing from Park Police that, hey, we're being told -- and the operations agent is trying to draw out of the staff right now, "Hey, if you know something, you've got to tell us. We've got to start this event." That was a common thing that would happen throughout the year. Even when I was in operations, this is what you tried to do, because you wanted your guys in there from the minute you knew the President was going.

Q And, on that, this email doesn't include you, and this is December 31st while
you're still on leave.

A  Right.

Q  Did you have any direct interaction with Secret Service about the event, say, between December 31st and when you returned to work on January 4th that you recall?

A  Yeah, we had known at that point that it was confirmed, I think, over that weekend. So I would've been talking probably to the SAC. We probably would've had a conversation. I don't remember an exact conversation about it, but we probably would've.

Q  Okay.

A  But a normal course of an event being announced and then ops for the Secret Service and ops for White House staff, which is Bobby Peede, the advance ops, this is normal. They just work -- they get hit up. We have it confirmed. It goes out to about 100 people, and off they go running to do the event. This is kind of an everyday thing.

Q  And you said it was confirmed over that weekend. I think you're referring to the weekend before you returned to work on Monday the 4th. Is that right?

A  Correct, yes. I knew over, I believe, that weekend that it was confirmed.

Q  All right.

And the point I raised earlier about the President directing rally-goers to march to the Capitol after he was done --

A  Uh-huh.

Q  -- and I understand you said that that never came up and you weren't aware he was going to do that before he actually said the words. Is that right?

A  Yeah, I don't -- I didn't even -- I didn't hear it on that day as well. But, yeah, I didn't realize he was directing that.
Q If you had known that, is that something that would've been relayed, say, to law enforcement counterparts because of the jurisdiction of rally-goers marching from the Ellipse to the Capitol would cross over Park Service, MPD --

A Sure.

Q -- and the Capitol Police?

A Sure. If we had known -- I mean, that would've been passed in our Monday meeting if we had known that that was going to be the intention, but we had no idea of that.

Q Okay.

A Sure.

Q Okay. And we'll just kind of set the stage for -- there was quite a lot of discussion within the White House and with the event organizers about who would share the stage with the President at the rally event -- in other words, who would speak before him, because I know no one speaks after him -- but about who would be there to speak before he took the stage on the 6th.

Q Were you involved in any of those discussions yourself?

A No, I wasn't.

Q All right. Were you informed about any of those discussions?

A I knew Max was helping coordinate that with the organization. But I remember it being very secretive of who was talking, or who was speaking, and some of it being an unknown of who was speaking as well, that people -- it hasn't been signed off on, so to say.

Q Do you know a woman by the name of Katrina Pierson? Last name is P-i-e-r-s-o-n.

A I had heard the name at the time, it being the head of the organization that was hosting this event.
Q. Had you ever met her prior to that, given her work with President Trump on his campaign in prior years?

A. I don't ever remember meeting her.

Q. Okay. Did you ever learn before the event on the 6th that she had expressed concern about -- and quotes, because her words, not mine -- about the President sharing the stage with, quote, "crazies" or, quote, "psychos" or, quote, "the fringe"?

A. I'm not aware of that.

Q. All right. Did you ever speak to Chief of Staff Mark Meadows prior to the event on the 6th about the issue of who would be sharing the stage with the President?
[12:01 p.m.]

Mr. Ornato. No, I did not. That wouldn't be in my wheelhouse to do that.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q And the same question with regard to Dan Scavino, did you ever discuss that topic with him prior to the 6th?

A No, I did not.

Q On January 3rd, a meeting was scheduled to take place the next day on January 4th with President Trump and Ms. Pierson and others to discuss the question of speakers at the event. And, again, I just have to ask, did you, at the time, know that that meeting had been scheduled?

A I did not know.

Q And then when you held your first meeting when you were back to work on the 4th, which was the day this happened in the morning -- is that when you would hold the meetings in the morning?

A It would be, yes.

Q Were you aware that morning that Mr. Miller and Mr. Peede had been asked to meet with the President later that day to discuss the Ellipse rally at all? Did you know that they were going to do that?

A I knew they were going into the Oval for a meeting, but they didn't explain exactly what it was all going to be about.

Q And who told you they were going to do that?

A One of them did. I don't remember which one. That night we got a meeting in the Oval about the Ellipse, and that was it. I said, Okay. And that's normal for any kind of, as I call it, a campaign rally or something like that. They would brief him
all the time on those things.

Q  Did they raise any -- discuss in any way that there was going to be any sort of
hard decisions to be made or any concerns going into that meeting about what the
President's reaction to what they would be talking to him about would be?
A  No, they didn't raise any concerns.

Q  Now, as we understand at the meeting took place in the dining room off the
Oval Office the afternoon the January 4th.  And I'll just ask, you weren't there for that
meeting, right?
A  No, I was not.

Q  Were you briefed about that the meeting by anyone afterwards before
January 6th?
A  I was not.

Q  Okay.  As we understand it during the meeting on the 4th, there was
discussion of the speakers, but also the President raised wanting to go to the Capitol
himself after his speech at the Ellipse.  And so I'll stop there and ask, before January 6th,
did you become aware that the President had expressed a desire to travel to the Capitol
on January 6th after he was done speaking?
A  Not by the President expressing it.  Early on, it was one of those
hypotheticals from the good idea fairy, that, Hey, what if the President got into the limo
and drove to the Capitol to show that he would peacefully protest with his -- and at that
point I said, yeah, no, the President goes from the Capitol to the White House once every
4 years.  That's -- you can't do -- we're not doing that.  And it was -- I believe it was
Justin and Bobby and Max, or one of them.  Justin asked Max to ask.  And so I believe it
was Max and I having the conversation.  And Bobby was there or not.  But this
was -- this would have been probably the morning, maybe the morning of the 4th that
conversation came up, and at which point, I had called over Bob Engel and said, you know, would you be good with this? And it was an absolute not. And it was like all right, we had a try, and that was the end of that. It never came up again.

Q Okay. So I just want to stop there and ask, so on the 4th, you recall Mr. Caporale being present personally for the meeting?

A No, I'm sorry. He was not present. He had got -- I believe it was Mr. Miller had gotten asked by Mr. Caporale, and he was passing the ask.

Q And the ask was, if the President wanted to, could he travel to the Capitol?

A Correct.

Q So your initial reaction to that was no?

A No.

Q And you called Mr. Engel to discuss that?

A I called and just said, Hey, in case you get asked, this is what I have told them. And so we make sure we were on the same page. And I said I'm not speaking for you, correct? And he said, no, no, we would not want to do that. And I said, right, okay.

Q Why was that your reaction?

A Because it's ridiculous to think that a President of the United States can travel especially with, you know, people around just on the street up to the Capitol and peacefully protest outside the Capitol is what the ask was. I mean, to be able to secure something like that is, you would have to secure it like Inauguration Day. It's unheard of.

Q Yeah. And, you know, on that point, we also understand that the President, in that January 4th dining room meeting, said -- or asked whether 10,000 National Guard troops could be deployed on January 6th. Were you aware of that?
A    I was not aware of that.

Q    Well, then, going back to the traveling to the Capitol, between the 4th and the 6th, so the time that you said you discussed it with Max Miller the morning of the 4th, did it come up again as a topic of discussion for you prior to the 6th? So later on the 4th or at any point on the 5th?

A    No, it never came -- I never heard about it again.

Q    When it comes to the National Guard statement about having 10,000 troops or any other number of troops, do you recall any discussion prior to the 6th about whether and how many National Guard troops to deploy on January 6th?

A    I do recall a conversation, I believe, it was with Mr. Meadows and the mayor, Mayor Bowser. I remember he had -- he was on the phone with her, and we -- I had walked in for something, and I was there, and he was on the phone with her and wanted to make sure she had everything that she needed. Because I think it was the concern of anti and pro groups clashing is what I recall. And not anywhere near the Capitol, this was just out on the mall area or at the event; and wanted to know if she need any more guardsmen. And I remember the number 10,000 coming up of, you know, the President wants to make sure that you have enough. You know, he is willing to ask for 10,000. I remember that number. Now that you said it, it reminded me of it. And that she was all set. She had, I think it was like 350 or so for intersection control and those types of thing not in the law enforcement capacity at the time. And then that's the only thing I recall with that number 10,000 National Guard guardsmen.

Q    And I imagine my -- others will have questions maybe to follow up on that. But I'll just round out what I had been asking about. If we look at exhibit 8, Mr. Ornato. Let's see if you beat us to the punch.

A    Yeah, you did. Ultimate. Okay.
Q What I'll tell you is these are text messages between Katrina Pierson and Max Miller.

A Got it.

Q And, again, starting at the top, you see January 4th at what is 1608, so 4:08 p.m., what we understand to have been after the meeting in the dining room with the President about the speakers and these issues we've been talking about.

A Okay.

Q And, again, you see Ms. Pierson sends an emoji of her popping a bottle of champagne, and the response from Mr. Miller is "You did a great job killing some of those speakers." That's just to give you context. But further down, still on the 4th, you see right there, Mr. Miller say to Ms. Pierson, "Just glad we killed the National Guard in a procession." So in seeing those, and I know you weren't on these text messages, but is that consistent? You know, and understand that the context which the President brought these ideas up during the meeting, is that consistent with what you had told Mr. Miller about whether the President should travel to the Capitol on the 6th?

A That's consistent with what I had said, but I didn't know these were brought up in any other meeting.

Q Understood. Understood.

A Yeah.

Q So he met -- Mr. Miller never reported back to you that the President had expressed a desire to do this?

A No, I did not know the President -- this was brought up from the President.

Q Okay. And given the sensitivity of the President wanting to do something and it coming to the near end of his term, it wouldn't be natural for Mr. Miller to say, Hey, this might be something that the President or the Chief of Staff asks you about?
A: I wasn't -- I don't recall ever being asked. I definitely wasn't asked by the President. I don't recall talking to the Chief of Staff about any motorcade. I am trying to remember if the Chief actually -- now that we're saying it, I believe the Chief said, Hey, did Max get with you and ask from Justin? I remember that. Being that I assume that's what it was about, but he never specifically asked me.

Q: Okay. So if we go down to the next page of that exhibit, still exhibit 8, you see at the top, excuse me, down at the bottom relevant to what you just discussed, at 8:09 p.m. on the 4th, Ms. Pierson texted Mr. Miller a link to a political article about Mayor Bowser requesting a certain number of National Guard troops be deployed on the 6th?

A: Yes.

Q: And if we continue on the third page of this exhibit, Mr. Miller uses some colorful language in response to seeing the article. But his next comment is, if you stay there, "but chief had already had said no for days." We understand him to be referring to Chief of Staff Mark Meadows. Is that how he would be referred to?

A: Ah, yes.

Q: Okay. And then when he said, "the Chief had already said no for days," we understand that to be a reference to no to the idea of having National Guard troops deployed. And, again, he is saying for days. And this is on January 4th and understanding you had been on leave?

A: Right.

Q: To your knowledge, had this been a topic of conversation that the Chief of Staff was involved in?

A: I don't recall that. I wouldn't know that. I came back on the 3rd, and so I wouldn't have been in the Chief's office until it was the 4th or the 5th. He may have been having that conversation when I overheard it.
Q Is it possible that Mr. Meadows held those three-times-a-week meetings while you were gone after the President returned on December 31st, but before you got back on the 4th?
A No. He didn't.
Q Okay.
A Not with my group.
Q And then the second sentence, Mr. Miller says, "The man is never wrong," we understand that to be a reference to President Trump who earlier in the day had asked for National Guard troops. And so that call that you had with -- that you heard between Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and Mayor Bowser, do you know approximately when that was on the 4th?
A I don't remember if it was the 4th or the 5th. It would have been one of those days.
Q Given the article that was forwarded that came out on the night of the 4th, you tell me, but it would seem that that conversation must have happened before the article reported the troops that the Mayor was requesting?
A It could have been, yeah.
Mr. Tonolli. I think do you want to pick it up from there on the day of.
Ms. Dayananda. Yeah.
Mr. Tonolli. Thank you, Mr. Ornato. That takes us up, I think, through January 5th. Unless, and, again, we covered the issues, I'll stop there to see if there are any questions for the planning for the event before we get to the day of and what actually happened if anyone else has any questions.
Ms. Cheney. I have a question, Sean.
Mr. Ornato, what was your understanding that the President was going to do
when he got to the Capitol.

Mr. Ornato. The ask, again, was to peacefully protest is what I was told. And I said, Well, where was he going to do that? You said, it was kind of a back and forth of, you know, this is ridiculous. They said, Well, maybe they can get a little stage or something like that and put him on it. And I said, No, that's the most ridiculous thing ever. And that's where it ended. They were like okay, okay, okay. Max, I remember, just kind of yes'd me to death, okay, okay, I get it.

Ms. Cheney. So he suggested that they needed maybe a stage for the President?

Mr. Ornato. If that was what would help the Service. If we put him on a stage and the Service boxed him in with glass, it's not going to happen. That's the most ridiculous thing. You know, they were, again, this is that, I use the term "good idea fairy." This happens often of, you know, these ideas that come up, and that's where the Service or myself or the military is just like, no, that can't happen because of A, B, or C.

Ms. Cheney. Did he ask you about the possibility of the President doing something inside of the Capitol?

Mr. Ornato. No.

Ms. Cheney. Thank you.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Hi, Mr. Ornato. Before we start with January 6th the day of, I just wanted to go back briefly to that call between Mr. Meadows and the Mayor which you said was January 4th -- 4th, 5th?

A I believe, yeah.

Q Were you on that call, or were you told about that call?

A No, I happened to walk in to have to tell the Chief something, I remember, or hand him something, and I overheard it.
Q I just want to be clear that the Mayor Bowser's response to the -- how would you describe it? Was it an offer of National Guard, or an inquiry about whether she needed additional National Guard?

A From what I remember, it was the Chief just checking in with the Mayor, are you all set? Do you have everything you need type of thing? We can book to do the -- if you need more -- I know, I think the request was, like I said, 350 or so. But if you need more, the President threw out a number of 10,000. I just heard the Chief's conversation, but that's what it sounded to be. I just had heard his side obviously.

Q Right. And there wasn't any step taken after that? It sounded like chief from the -- from what you described earlier, the Chief said, We are all set. And did that seem to end this idea of this number that you said was thrown out there of 10,000 troops?

A Yes. Yes.

Q I just want to switch back to summer for one question. Were you aware of any effort by the White House to federalize the Metropolitan Police Department during the summer protests as part of the security posture?

A I was not. I am sorry, I am actually, I felt the Metropolitan Police Department was a federal type of -- because they're D.C., aren't they? I just assume they were, actually.

Q They're actually controlled by the Mayor, though?

A Yeah.

Q But if you're not aware of any effort, though?

A No, I wasn't. I obviously wasn't.

Q Yes. Yes. Your confusion by the question itself. So let's switch to when you came back to work on January 4th. I think you mentioned you did have that
Monday meeting. Is that right?

A  Correct.

Q  During that Monday meeting, can you just talk us through what the threat picture was, if anything was presented to you during that briefing about January 6th?

A  Yes, I remember the Service bringing up a lot of groups. I remember the number being astronomical the first time in a while. We had that many groups who were planning to protest. But after all that, there was obviously no civil disturbance expected, but there obviously would be the kind of threat of a clashing groups. Because if there's anti and that's just assumed -- if there is anti and there is pro, there is always a threat of clashing groups. But that was mainly it. There was, I want to say, somewhere between, if I can remember correctly, 50 to 100 different groups that were planning. The number sizes, you know, could be four in a group. But I just remember a lot of groups were planning that they briefed on, and there was a chance for pro and con, pro and anti groups to clash.

Q  Do you remember any groups in particular that stood out to you that could be problematic?

A  No, and they didn't read through every one of groups.

Q  Who did the briefing from the Secret Service, do you remember?

A  I don't remember who was there that day.

Q  Did you receive -- is it a verbal briefing, or do you receive an app?

A  It's verbal.

Q  So there is no intelligence briefing from the Protective Intelligence Division that's provided to you?

A  Not to me, no.

Q  Is that typical?
A Yes. That's typical.

Q Apart from these groups, was there a discussion crowd size, I believe, you mentioned earlier?

A Yeah, again, they were trying to, you know, nail it down. Was it going to be, I think, we're hearing numbers between 15- and 20,000, and then some people were saying 50,000 which, you know, there is nothing that can back that number up. So the magnetometers, you have to go with the most realistic number. And that's what they went with. I think it was between 15 and 20,000, if I'm not mistaken.

Q And when you say "they went with," you mean the Secret Service?

A I'm sorry, the Advance Team, the Service, and Bobby Peede, his Advance Team and the Service, yes.

Q So at the end of that briefing, are you receiving any other kind of threat assessment other than what the Secret Service is providing you?

A Not for any type of event in D.C. like that, no.

Q What was your expectation of potential violence for January 6th?

A Again, the clashing of the groups on the mall or inside. Worse would be inside the mags, but obviously people that are anti most likely wouldn't go inside the mags, they would stay outside and wait for the pros to come outside. That was what I was thinking.

Q So it sounds like the focus was on counter protesters?

A Correct.

Q Is that fair to say?

A Correct.

Q Is it fair to say that didn't bear out to be actually what happened on the 6th in terms of the counter protesters being the issue?
A: Correct. I'm not aware if there were any clashes like that.

Q: And what was that based on, that expectation of the focus on the counter protesters?

A: I just think they're the numbers of the groups that were pro and anti. It's just an assumption, obviously, when you get two groups together like that, or multiple groups, I should say, that anything could happen.

Q: Well, if that would be, what we say bear out during summer protests in D.C.?

A: Correct.

Q: Did that occur in the November, December rallies that my colleague talked about?

A: I don't remember if they occurred then.

Q: So it sounds like the threat picture going into January 6th from the perspective of your job was -- what was the worst-case scenario you were expecting?

A: Right. When he, you know, leaves there and comes back to the White House, is the White House Complex secure? Are we gonna have any issues? That's what I was looking at.

Q: Did you take any additional security measures for the White House?

A: I wouldn't. I would ask the Service do they feel comfortable? Do they feel secure? And if they're taking up any, which I don't believe any more than an ordinary day at that time except for the event. They had people down there, so they had extra people on being that it was around the event.

Q: Do you have a sense of the numbers of how many additional people Secret Service put for the event?

A: I don't.

Q: And would you have been involved in those discussions?
A No, I wouldn't have.

Q Were you involved in any of the interagency calls with DHS or the Bureau, or DOD, leading up to January 6th?

A No, I wasn't.

Q Did you learn of any of the planning or coordinating that was going on to prepare for January 6th?

A The only thing I remember with DOD and the National Guard was even though the Mayor didn't want any more National Guard in D.C., that a request was made to have kind of a, lack of better term, a quick reaction force out at Joint Base Andrews being that it was a military installation. I remember Chief Meadows talking to DOD about that, I believe, I remember Chief Meadows letting me know that, Hey, there was going to be National Guard that's going to be at Joint Base Andrews in case they're going to need some more, we're going to -- the Mayor would need any, we're going to make sure they're out there.

Q Do you think that ask was made for QRF based on the crowd expectation, the size?

A That was what my assumption was based upon all the groups that were coming in and attending. And, again, the crowd sizes were, you know, the organizers were saying, you know, there may be 50,000 here. So that's where it started, I think, to scare the Chief a little bit of how many people were coming in for this event, and wanted to make sure that they would be able to bring in National Guard if needed for this size of this many people inside D.C.

Q Was it your sense that that request, that QRF request was made, had been previously made, or that had been made by Chief Meadows?

A My assumption was it was made by Chief Meadows. I don't know who else
Q So let's just start with January 6th then the morning of, you said your office is at the West Wing. Is that correct?
A That is.
Q What time did you get to your office that morning?
A I don't remember exactly. I remember, though, I came in a few minutes early because I didn't want to get caught in any street closures or anything. And so, I usually work out in the gym in the EEOB, and then I go to my office. I would have been on complex probably by 6:30 in the morning at least.
Q Was that before or after you worked out?
A That's hopefully before. I don't, I don't remember if it was any earlier. Sometimes I'm in there earlier.
Q Was there anything unusual that you noticed on your commute in in terms of had the crowds already been forming?
A I didn't notice anything. I come in from the north end.
Q What time did you -- well, who was all -- who is present when you arrived there? I understand it was kind of a bare-boned staff around that time?
A Yeah, so that's what -- also, one of my jobs doing that, obviously, still working on the transition, Monica Block was -- we had days like January 1st. I remember January 5th. I think January 10th. It was like every 5 days an allotment of people would be off-boarded. So by the time we got to January 20th, there were only a few people left on the complex. So there was kind of a bare-bones crew on that morning, January 6th.
Q Who would that be?
A Oh, not from -- I remember seeing that day, I would say, obviously, Chief of
Staff Meadows, kind of his crew outside, his assistants outside his office that sit there. I believe I remember seeing the Family, the First Family was on complex. I remember seeing that, whether it was an email or seeing them personally. Don, Jr., and his girlfriend at the time, Kimberly. And then I believe Eric was also there, if I'm not mistaken. I'm not positive about that, Eric Trump. And then seeing some other staffers walk around; I remember White House counsel would be walking around Pat Cipollone; Robert O'Brien, I believe, may have been walking around. But those are kind of the senior level staff would have been there that I remember. I can't remember everybody.

Q Do you remember General Kellogg, Keith Kellogg being there?
A Yeah, he was there that day.

Q What time did you learn about -- well, let me just back up for a minute. Did you perceive this was going to be a typical normal day when you arrived?
A I did. I had plans for that day to actually while everybody was down at the Ellipse, I stayed back, and I was cleaning out my office and also getting -- because I knew everybody would be down there, I didn't want to be seen taking stuff out of my office. And then also, I remember dealing with, again, the transition. Big thing was I was trying -- we were working with -- I was working with Jen O'Malley Dillon, Jennifer O'Malley Dillon, to set up the first round of vaccinations for their core like 35 or so offsite. So we would get White House Medical Unit. So by the time the inauguration happened, they got their second COVID vaccinations, so the administration would be able to be up and running inside the White House.

So that was right around that time, but I don't remember exactly what day that was, but that's one of the things I was working on and especially still doing all the classified stuff with her.
Q: Now, were you aware of when the President left for the event at the Ellipse?
A: I don't remember the President leaving. I remember Mr. Engel, Bob Engel was walking around, they were delayed, and he was walking around the West Wing. But that's how I would have known the President had left, the agents would have left with him. So when I didn't see agents outside the Oval Office, I assume that's when I knew he wasn't here anymore.

Q: Where is your office in relation to where the Oval Office is?
A: I'm more west towards the Chief of Staff's office and the Vice President's office.

Q: Did you see the Vice President at all that day?
A: I don't recall seeing the Vice President that morning.

Q: So was your plan at all to kind of monitor the events of what was happening at the Ellipse or at the joint session?
A: No.

Q: And how did you first become aware of the situation at the Capitol, whether it was the first outer breach, or just walk me through your timing of when you focused on the Capitol rather than packing up your office?
A: Sure. Yeah, no --

Ms. Cheney: Can I interrupt for just a second?
Mr. Ornato: Sure.
Ms. Cheney: Soumya, can we just take a quick break before we leave the Ellipse event before we get to what's happening at the Capitol?
Ms. Dayananda: Sure.
Ms. Cheney: Maybe if you wanted to break for, it's 12:30 now, I am flexible, but, you know, if people -- 10 minutes or 15 minutes, whatever people would like.
Ms. Dayananda. Sure. Ten minutes is great. Does that work with you, Mr. Ornato?

Mr. Ornato. Sure. Absolutely.

Ms. Cheney. I see we have Lofgren. Did she want to ask a question before we take a break?

Ms. Lofgren. This isn't the right sequence, but we've had reports that in the morning before the rally, that Park Police encountered demonstrators outside of the Ellipse, like over at the monuments, who had weapons and aggressively attacked the Park Police. And I'm wondering was that reported into you or the Secret Service to give an idea of what the nature of what might be encountered later in the day?

Mr. Ornato. Ma'am, that's the first I've heard about it. I never heard that there was interaction like that outside on the Ellipse that morning, or outside the Ellipse.

Ms. Lofgren. Okay.

Mr. Ornato. I'm not sure if it was reported to the Secret Service.

Ms. Lofgren. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Cheney. So we'll come back in 10 minutes.

Ms. Dayananda. It sounds good. Okay. Thank you.

[Recess.]

Ms. Dayananda. I thank Ms. Cheney and Ms. Lofgren.

Ms. Lofgren, were you able to finish your questions before we start again? I didn't know if you had any follow-up.

Ms. Lofgren. No, I'm fine.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q I think we paused when we were about to talk about when you learned about the violence at January 6th, but let me back up. That morning of -- you essentially
thought it was going to just be an ordinary day, right, as you said?

A Correct.

Q And you were not aware if there was any order of deployment of troops, 10,000 troops by the White House on that morning?

A No.

Q And apart from that conversation that you overheard with Mayor Bowser and Chief Meadows, you did not learn of any other additional efforts or order regarding 10,000 troops?

A No, not 10,000 troops, no.

Q Okay. So I think we were -- what was your plan in terms of how you were going to be kept aware of the situation at the Ellipse or on the Capitol?

A So normal -- any time there is an event where the President travels, if anything were out of the ordinary that it happened, I would eventually get an email or a call from Bobby Peede or one of his Advance person, or Max if they were on the trip, or Bob Engel, or Dave Cho from the Secret Service if they were on the trip; eventually would send an email or something if something out the ordinary happened just to make me aware, but that would be what I would be expecting to occur if anything was going on down there at the Ellipse.

Q Prior to this, I know my colleague talked a little bit about this, but were you aware that there would be -- could potentially be the crowd of protesters going towards the Capitol?

A No, I wasn't aware that could -- that was a plan or that could have come up. I was just concentrating on, obviously, the Ellipse and around it, which would be like where the Washington Monument is, because of all that is close to the White House. My concern would be the White House. I actually checked in that morning, I believe
with Bobby Peede and Max Miller just to see how things -- you know, how is it looking, how is it going, mags are flowing, mags are open, those types of things, but I didn't get anything more than that in our general conversation.

Q But, again, prior to January 6th, were you aware that the actual event and the Protective Intelligence Division briefing was titled March to the Capitol?

A I don't recall that, if that was an actual title to anything. I wasn't -- if it was, I wasn't paying attention to that because my concentration was the Ellipse and the White House. That's what I was concerned with.

Q If you had been aware of it, would that have altered what you believe the security posture should have been for the President or the Vice President?

A I wouldn't have had that. I wouldn't have had that call. I mean, the people that would have that intelligence would make that call. That wouldn't be me.

Q Did you have any sense from Robert Engel that he or anyone on the President's detail was aware that the crowd, not the President, would be marching towards the Capitol?

A I didn't get awareness, no. I didn't know if they that awareness. I don't know that.

Q And what's your contact with Tim Giebels at this time on January 6th about who leads the Vice President's detail?

A None. I really would have contact with Tim Giebels in that capacity.

Q Did you have any contact with him on January 6th?

A No, I did not.

Q So you said you were getting updates about the magnetometers being open and the crowd flow coming in. We do have some emails where you are getting those updates and I --
A Right, I remember that. Yeah, there was updates on that stuff of how many are in, how many numbers, how many are in line, those types of things. And that's normal for any campaign rally. We have been through this, you know, through the whole campaign. That's kind of an email that is generated and just kind of sent.

Q Did you learn of any weapons being confiscated from folks at the mags?
A Not at that time. I wasn't aware of it.
Q Not during the day of?
A The day of, afterwards that there were stuff nuts. I got to say pretty normal. That there was sticks and I think there was helmets, if I am not mistaken, I think I heard body armor was confiscated. But that body armor is probably one of the first that I started there that -- but the Service was letting me know that so they were all aware.

Q So let me just, and we received information from the Secret Service about the types of weapons that were seized that day. They stated that there was 28,000 attendees who were screened. And from the individuals who were screened, you have blunt weapons, 30; body armor, six; Taser, 29; knives or blades, 269; pepper spray, 242. Was any of this conveyed to you in real time on January 6th?
A No, no. Nor would it be. I never have gotten any of that real time. I have been sent -- after a rally or so, I have been sent -- I have actually asked for a picture of everything at one rally in Houston one time, so I could show the campaign staff and the staff that this is why we need time to mag people, because this is what the officers of the Secret Service are taking off people as they're coming in. Like it's not just an easy process you can do 5,000 people in an hour. It's a process. And they have to search them. So I use that as a training tool of knowing the leeway of mag and everything. But I didn't know that. And I wouldn't be given that knowledge real time.
Q Are any of those -- you mentioned the body armor was different. Is any of this significant in terms of what was seized from that crowd, from your experience?

A In my experience, that's -- the body armor I don't remember so much in the past. However, holsters, stun guns, Tasers, handcuffs, brass knuckles, lighters, blunt weapons that has been taken off rallies throughout that I can remember. Then that's why we have uniform division officers magging everybody.

Q So it sounds like before we kind of go through a TikTok, it sounds like nothing -- when does anything become alarming to you, Mr. Ornato, in terms of the security there at the Ellipse?

A At the Ellipse, everything seemed to go as I would have expected at the Ellipse, until, I think, I get word that there are, I think, 28,000 or 25,000, whatever the attendees are, but there are thousands of people on the Washington Monument slope that aren't coming in and don't want to come in, they want to hang out from there. So that's where I thought we were going to have problems on the slope of the Washington Monument was kind of my first -- and I think Bobby may have relayed that to me, Bobby Peede.

Q Bobby Peede. How would he have known that information about the folks at the Washington Monument?

A He was out there. And then him and Max came back to my office once the event had started, and they had the President there and he was speaking. They came back because there was nothing else for them to do. They had a couple site guys there, and everything was pretty standard for a site like that. And I remember being cold, and they came back to the office and just said, you know, everything is going. He is going to finish up his speech, and he'll be back. And Bobby was saying that there were a bunch of people out on the slope that didn't come in, but that's probably the groups that -- the
Q Did Bobby Peede or Max Miller express any concern to you at that time about the growing crowd or the type of protesters who were present at the Ellipse?

A No, there was no concern. They didn't give me any concern.

Q Now, at this time, this would be after the President started his speech. Is that correct?

A Correct. He was -- that's what they said. He was speaking when they walked back.

Q Did you watch the speech?

A No, I didn't. That's typical. I normally don't watch the speeches.

Q So what were you doing at that time? This would be -- President Trump speech began at noon.

A I'm not sure exactly what I was doing. I was working, like I said, on a lot of things. It had to do with the transition, and also, off-boarding and people with Monica. So there was a lot of things going on.

Q Are there TVs on around you?

A I have a small monitor, computer-sized TV in my office that was usually on CNBC muted, and then any breaking comes across that is usually that's all on in my office. My office is very -- I have a very small office.

Q So you don't watch the speech. When did you first start to understand what was happening at the Capitol?

A My assistant had come into the office and said, Hey, turn on the news. There's protesters clashing with Capitol Police at the Capitol. And I was like, Wow. So I turned it on, and then that's where I saw the bike rack pushing and pulling type of thing outside the Capitol is the first I saw of it.
Q  So that was approximately, if you're talking the bike rack, that's around
1 o'clock.  Is that from --
A  Probably.  I'm not exactly sure.
Q  Now, from the whole morning up until that point, did you get any calls from
Robert Engel or anyone else in the Secret Service about what was happening at the
Ellipse?
A  No, not that I can recall.  There may have been emails that the event is over
or something.  Bob, I know, swung by my office after the President came back.  I said,
how did it go?  He said it was fine.  You know, we're back, and he said everybody is
dispersing.  And I think I added, you know, are we going to have any problem here?
And he says, no, we're good at the House right now.  And then that was the end.  And
then the first thing I had noticed was when my assistant came in and said, Hey, there is,
you know, people clashing at the Capitol right now.
Q  So just timing-wise, the President arrived back to the White House at about
1:20.  Did your assistant alert you to what was happening on the TV prior to 1:20 or
after 1:20?
A  No, it would have been after Bob came back.
Ms. Dayananda.  Ms. Cheney, do you have a question?
Ms. Cheney.  Yes.  Thank you, Soumya.  Mr. Ornato, I just wanted to go back
to understand the uniform division officers are running the mags.  And as they're taking
weapons off of people, who would they give that information to?
Mr. Ornato.  It would be their uniform division officer official that's there,
whether it's a lieutenant, captain, or inspector that was assigned that day, they would be
giving all that information.  The collection of the weapons would go to one of their
supervisors that's there.
Ms. Cheney. And then, what would that supervisor do with that information?

Mr. Ornato. I'm not sure exactly when the magnetometer program, when they report that to their uppers or their supervisors. I'm not exactly sure how that goes. Eventually, it trickles to the Office of Protective Operations. And then over, if there was anything wanted to be known or anything, then they would alert the detail. But unless there was any -- and they would also alert our Protective Intelligence Division whether you know -- but that's if they're stopping somebody with a gun or something of that nature, they probably would have alerted them to maybe the body armor, but the other stuff was pretty normal confiscation throughout magnetometer procedures.

Ms. Cheney. And how would the reporting work in terms of what you were seeing outside of the mags? Obviously, you got people who are seeing activity outside of the mags.

Mr. Ornato. Sure. So, again, in my capacity that I was in that day as the Deputy Chief of Staff, I wouldn't have had any insight to that. The Secret Service -- my assumption here is the Secret Service, Park Police, MPD, the officers, and everybody that's out there would be -- would know all that, and they would be filtering that to each other. They would be sharing all that information of what's going on and talking to each other, because they would have a centrally located security room with a representative from each agency in there, is my assumption.

Ms. Cheney. And so, and I want to be careful about sensitive information about --

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

Ms. Cheney. -- how the protection process works, and we can ask you that perhaps in a different setting. But in terms of the communication between, if there are people who see things outside the mags and describing what's going on. For example, if
people were aware that there were people intentionally not bringing their backpacks in through the mags, setting up kind of a sentry system, what would the communication be to the President's detail?

Mr. Ornato. I'm not sure what it was that day, if there is something that the Protective Intelligence Division, that whoever is doing that, that site for that day felt there was something to pass, they would pass it to the supervisor of the Presidential Protective Division. So that would be either the ASAC or the SAC or the DSAC, whoever is there. That would have been the SAC at the time was there, Bob Engel. And then there would have been two other supervisors that they may have passed or could have passed the information to. And usually, they will if there's anything to highlight and for them to know, they would definitely pass that information.

Ms. Cheney. And so if they passed that information, then, is that something that the head of the President's detail would share with you, or would share with the Chief of Staff?

Mr. Ornato. No, normally, that's a security role, a security function. There wouldn't be anything really unless there was an immediate threat. But if it was something that wasn't immediate to the President, the SAC of the detail may share it with the Chief of Staff rep that's there at the time. I believe Meadows was down at the site there. So he may have shared it with them, I don't know. But that would be something onsite if the SAC of the detail felt it was necessary. But, normally, I wouldn't know myself if I was there if they passed, they probably wouldn't have passed that information to me.

Ms. Cheney. And did they pass that information to you that day?

Mr. Ornato. No, they did not. Not that day, I didn't know that. I learned later on of things that were confiscated.
Ms. Cheney. Okay. And the same goes for things that were left intentionally outside the mags?

Mr. Ornato. Correct. Again, I wouldn't have known at the time.

Ms. Cheney. Okay. And then, you mentioned few minutes ago that you had concern about people on the Monument grounds. Can you just explain what your concern was about them?

Mr. Ornato. Sure. Well, that was what we had given the intelligence about. There were so many groups coming to D.C., you know, 100 groups or whatever it was. And my concern was, well, if they're outside the mags, that means we don't know what they have. You know, I'd rather everybody be inside the mags, because then you know they don't have weapons if they're inside the mags. So if they're outside the mags and there is large, large numbers, well, there may be something in there that, you know, you know you're not really truthfully knowing what can happen, because you are not controlling that situation.

So, again, that gave me pause for the White House because they are in close proximity to the White House, a large group like that.

Ms. Cheney. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ornato. Yeah.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Just to follow up on that, Mr. Ornato, did it give you pause about the Vice President, who was already at the Capitol at that time?

A No, and again, my role isn't with the Vice President as far as the operations and everything I run would be for the President. They have a Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff and everything themselves. So I wouldn't -- I don't know the Vice President's daily events or anything like that. I would never have that kind of
information, or even bother with that information at that time.

Q Sure. I understand that. I'm just curious whether when you're seeing
that and learning that from Mr. Miller and Mr. Peede, whether it raises a broader alarm,
understanding your lane is the White House --

A Sure.

Q -- and whether you would --

A At that time, the first time I asked about the Vice President was when there
was clashing taking place outside the Capitol. That's when I asked about the Vice
President to the President's detail. Do we have any word on what's going on inside with
the Vice President?

Q Got it. And we'll get to that. I just want to -- you mentioned that when
Mr. Engel came back to the White House, you had a conversation with him. Did he
come to your office?

A Yeah, because you walked by it to exit, so he walked by and just poked his
said in and said, Hey, we're back, you know, everything went fine, and, you know,
everybody dispersing. And that was it.

Q Did you ever learn that there was an intention of the President to go to the
Capitol after the speech ended?

A No. I did not know that. I mean, I don't think -- that couldn't have
happened. Nobody had -- nobody would be prepared for that. There would be no
security to do that. There would be no -- I mean, that was like I said, talked about a
couple of days, whenever it was prior, and it was scoffed at and moved on, and I never
heard about it again.

Q So apart from that conversation you described earlier, you did not learn of
any intent on January 6th the President to go?
A No. I did not.

Q And if there had been a conversation on January 6th, would you have learned about it?

A Maybe not. It all depends. Usually somebody would, you know, report it up or report over, like, Hey, this is what I overheard or something, but I never heard anything like that.

Q And the conversation with Mr. Engel was it -- again, this was about 1:20, 1:30, did everything seem status quo at that time?

A It did.

Q And there was no cause for alarm conveyed by Agent Engel?

A No, I don't remember any cause for alarm at that point.

Q When did you learn, because prior to that around 1:10, there was a pipe bomb sound at the DNC? Do you remember learning about that?

A Yeah, I did hear about that. It wasn't -- I didn't get it real time. I heard about it later on. I think I heard about two, if I'm not mistaken, later on, from some emails that I believe were eventually sent. There was some confusion after the clashing started at the attack at the Capitol. And some reporting was false. And there was just some confusion. And then once the emails from the Emergency Operations Center started, I think that's when I started to learn more of what was going on and what was found.

Q So you did not learn about that in real time?

A I did not know that real time. That's all I can remember. Eventually, I think I got an email about it.

Q From whom?

A It would have been, I believe, the Service would have forwarded that email
and let me have known that. I shouldn't say an email. They may have called me. I don't recall offhand.

Q Were you aware that Vice President-elect Kamala Harris was in the DNC at the time?

A Yes, I was. I passed that to the Chief as well, that that was found. She was in there, and I believe they relocated her.

Q Did you find that out in real time, or were you relaying it to Chief Meadows after the fact?

A After. It was after. It wasn't while it was happening. There is going to be delays for reporting, obviously, by the time it gets to certain people. By the time I get it, it's going to be delayed.

Q So can just talk me through how you're receiving information? You, obviously, turn your TV on once Ms. Block comes into your office?

A Right. So then I see that happening, and then I asked the detail -- I ask Bob Engel, you know, Where is the Vice President? What are they doing with the Vice President in there? Let me find out. And then eventually he called back and from -- and this is where, again, fog of war happens. The relay was the Vice President was evacuated to his residence, to the VPR, the Vice President residence. So in hearing that, I walked over to the Chief's office and let the Chief know, Hey, the Vice President, they have taken him out of the Capitol -- or he is being evacuated to his residence. Chief said, okay. Thank you. And then, from there, we just were waiting and trying to monitor what was going on.

Q Well, let me stop you there.

A Yeah.

Q Who told you that the Vice President had relocated to his residence?
A It would have been Bob Engel is who would have passed the information.

Q Are you aware of how he learned that information?

A I was not.

Q And, obviously, we know that not to be true, correct?

A Right.

Q Did you ever go back to Agent Engel to figure out what the communication gap there was?

A Yeah, so then, I don't know however time longer, the Chief poked his head back in, the Chief of Staff poked his head back in to me and say, Hey, the Vice President is still up there. They're holding up there. And I said, okay. I said, I'm sorry, let me get back to you. And then I called over and Engel said, yeah, they're still there. They relocated at the Capitol to where they relocated to. If they evacuate, they're going to the residence. And I said, okay. I said, just let me know if that were to happen, and he said okay. And he said, did you not have that update? I said, no, I guess, it was corrected. And he said, I'll have the Emergency Operations Center start putting you -- or I'll start forwarding you the emails that our guys in the EOC are getting. And I said, Okay, in the Emergency Operation Center. I said perfect. And then, sometime after 3:00, 3:00, 3:30 or so, I started to get those emails and see what was happening, and that's where I had now some site picture of what was going on up there.

Q Is there a reason why you weren't on that EOC list from the beginning of the day?

A Because it was Secret Service specific, and they wouldn't have put me on there. That's not my role. They wouldn't have had me on there in normally.

Q So I'm just trying to get a sense of the timing of when the information came to misinformation about the Vice President at his residence. When you are alerted to
turning your TV on, do you start watching what is occurring in real time?

A  Correct.

Q  Were you watching when the Vice President was rushed off the stage in the Senate Chamber?

A  No, I didn't see any of that. I just saw the outside clash. And I was going in and out as well trying to get a site picture of, you know. I remember going over to the White House Military Office and seeing what they have because, obviously, some of our programs touch up at the Capitol and just making sure, you know, what are we seeing here, and what does everybody have for a site picture.

Q  So describe that scene at that point. Who is present there to kind of give you what that site picture looks like?

A  Whenever I went to watch military, it was General Howerton that I saw. And the General basically said, Hey, you know this is where we're at, this is what we have, and we're holding. So a lot of our programs resolve, obviously, around the President. And so the President, one of the programs, it's not a -- the name of it -- it's not classified or anything like that. But just the Presidential successor program, right? But the President is secure. So that's what our main focus is, is the President is in the White House, the President is secure, how is the White House Complex? Our site picture looking around the White House at that time to make sure we're not going to be compromised in any way.

Q  And did the General's name that you mentioned, what his last name?

A  Oh, I am sorry, Howerton. I believe it's H-o-w-e-r-t-o-n.

Q  And he works out of the White House, the military office there?

A  He was at the time. He was the director of the White House Military Office.
Q Now, I get that the President is at the White House, your lane is the White House, everybody seems secure. But clearly you're watching --

A Sure.

Q -- the escalating violence of what's occurring at the Capitol. What impact does it have on you? Are you speaking to people? Are you calling people? Are people calling you?
[1:15 p.m.]

Mr. Ornato.  For the most part, right now, to be honest, I'm appalled, obviously.

I've got a pit in my stomach, and I want to be there with fellow officers trying to defend it.

That's first.  So --

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q  I understand kind of going through this day can bring out a lot of emotions, and if you need a moment, I'm happy to give you one.  But this is important to understand, really what your view is here of what occurred and what the steps that you took --

A  Nope.  I'm okay.  I'm okay.  Sorry.  It's the first time --

Q  No --

A  -- kind of talking about it.

Q  I appreciate that.

A  So, again, I'm looking at, how are we -- and, again, I know you understand that I'm concerned about the White House.  I am concerned about the Capitol, I am concerned about everybody out there, but I don't have the reach there.  I don't have any authorization or jurisdiction there.  Now my only thing is asking, how could we get more people there to stop this?

So I know there was a Federal -- an order went out.  I remember calling the -- I talked to the Secret Service.  I think it was Bob Engel who told me -- I'm not sure exactly, but somebody told me the Federal order went out:  Any law enforcement person in the area, respond to the Capitol.

So then I remember the chief saying, hey, I'm calling Secretary of Defense to get that QRF in here.  Because I didn't know at the time -- I just thought it was still outside
the Capitol, but they had breached the Capitol. The chief had told me that. I didn't
know that. Once they breached the doors, the chief, somewhere in that -- and, again,
it's fog of war, right? Everything that's happened is very fast, of everything going on.

The chief said he was making sure Secretary Esper -- I'm sorry, it wasn't
Esper -- the Acting Secretary --

Q Miller.
A -- Miller would get the QRF from the National Guard that was holding at JBA,
would get them in. And so I remember him saying to me, "Try to get Miller on the
phone." "I'll try."

So my immediate is -- I know I can get Kash Patel, usually, so I called him. And I
got Kash. I said, "Hey, are you near Secretary Miller?" And he said, "I can get to him."
I said, "Chief wants to talk to him now." So, as I was walking into the chief's office with
my phone, the chief got Miller on the phone. And so then I said, "Kash, he's talking to
him," and I hung up.

So that was kind of what was going on. And then I remember the chief telling
Miller, get them in here, get them in here to secure the Capitol now. And that's where I
remember the National Guard being, you know, ordered by the chief.

Q And, now, at that time you walked into Chief Meadows' office, who else is
there?
A I don't recall who was there. I mean, his outer there was his assistants, but
I don't recall if anybody else was in there. He was, at the time, obviously, running back
and forth between the Oval and his office.

Q Where was the President at the time?
A In the Oval area, as far as I can tell.

Q Did you go into the Oval at any point on the 6th?
I went in one time when I got a report that two Capitol Police officers were hurt.

And you conveyed that to the President in the Oval Office?

No, I never talked to the President that day. I handed the chief a note that said, "Two officers down. En route to hospital."

Ms. Dayananda. We can take a minute, Mr. Ornato. We'll take a minute.

Mr. Huse. We'll be right back.


Mr. Huse. Thank you.

[Recess.]

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Mr. Ornato, I know it was a hectic day and it brings out --

Yeah.

-- a lot of emotions, so I appreciate you going through it with this level of detail.

We paused when you said you went to the Oval and passed a note.

Sure. So --

Can you -- go ahead.

So I wrote down on a piece of paper that two officers were down and unconscious. I believe I -- and I wrote that on just, like, a little card and walked into the Oval. They weren't in the Oval. They were in the back dining room.

If you look down, the back dining room has a hallway from the Oval. I can see the chief sitting at, kind of, one side of the table, the head of the table on one side, which I assumed the President was at the other side, head of the table.

So, as I walked in, I looked at the chief to -- I got his attention. The chief gave
me, you know, kind of, one of these. I handed him the note, and I turned around and walked out.

And that was my extent of going into the Oval that I can recall at that day and dealing with anything on in there.

Q And who was in that dining hall area at that time?
A I just remember seeing the chief, and the President was off to the left at the other head of the table. That's all I can recall seeing.

Q Did you have any conversations with the President at all on January 6th?
A I don't recall any. And that was the only time, I think, I was in his presence, so I don't believe I can recall having any.

Q When you handed that note to Chief Meadows, was there a response from him?
A No. Later on -- he just read it, and he looked at me and kind of, like, you know, thanks for letting him know, as I saw him through the hallway.

He then came back out, and he said, "Hey, what do we know? How bad?"

And I said, "One I was told isn't breathing. We're getting" -- usually first reports are always wrong, so I was hopeful that that was a wrong report. But I said, "We're getting more information. I'll get it to you when it comes in."

And then anytime I had gotten something from the emails forwarded to me by Mr. Engel, by Bob, I would -- if it had anything to do with an officer being injured -- or, I remember, a shot was fired inside the chambers, that later to find out what had happened, but we didn't know at the time. All we knew, a shot was fired. That information there I would brief the chief on.

But, other than that, that was kind of the only -- what I would take out of those emails.
Q: When you're providing these updates on officer security to Chief Meadows, are you conveying what I would assume is urgency to end this violence that's occurring to Chief Meadows?

A: Yes. Like, you know, the constant was, you know, where is the National Guard? Why isn't -- you know, we've got to get control of this. And, obviously, everyone has to take part to get control of this, but there was only so much I could do from sitting where I was.

And, also, now we have to -- as a Service, you know, the mindset is, is this one attack or now is there going to be an anti-coming at the White House? So that becomes a concern. So --

Q: I understand that, but can you describe what that conversation is like between you and Chief Meadows?

A: It's extremely quick, because he's running back and forth. It's in the hallway of him passing my office, of what's going on.

But, you know, he understood the urgency, that's for sure. And he kept, you know, getting Miller on the phone, wanting to know where they were, why aren't they there yet.

Q: And, at this time, are you going back and forth from your office to the Oval Office?

A: No. I don't go to the Oval Office again that I can remember.

Q: You stay in your office in the West Wing?

A: I stay in that end of the wing, yes.

Q: Who's on that end of the wing watching what's occurring?

A: I don't recall who was actually -- I know outside the chief's office was his assistants, but my assistant was in my office with me.
But it's kind of -- I know Robert O'Brien is down that way, but I don't remember -- I remember the NSA was going back and forth -- I don't remember what Robert O'Brien actually was doing. I don't know -- you know, I wouldn't report to him or anything, so I wasn't looking for him.

Q Uh-huh.

A It was the chief that I would always ask Bo, is he back, is he back? And my assistant, I'm sorry, is Bo Harrison, and -- William Harrison. He goes by "Bo."

So I would always ask, is he back? And he's like, yeah. Update? And then I'd give him, hey, this is what's going on. He's like, all right. And that was it. It was that quick of an interaction.

Q Are you getting updates from individuals that you know from your law enforcement career, or are you getting updates from the EOC emails?

A I'm getting updates pushed to me from Bob Engel that are being pushed to him from the EOC.

Q Who are you in contact with, though, on your phone? We've learned, speaking to many people, that a lot of --

A Sure.

Q -- the stuff that was happening in terms of urgent communications were over people's phones and not relying on emails of JOC updates or NOC -- whatever updates there are from these operations centers.

A Sure.

Q So who are you hearing from?

A I'm talking -- if I'm on the phone, I'm calling over to the White House Military Office, just, again, checking with them. I would check with them, the White House Medical Unit, and the Secret Service detail leader.
I think later in the day I talked to the deputy director of the Secret Service, sometime later in the day. At that point, I think it was just a -- he was calling to say, are you guys all set over there? Do you need anything else from us?

And I remember asking, you know, how many of our guys -- how many Service guys are up there? And whatever, in the hundreds, responded. And that was kind of the conversation. He was just checking in. But there's --

Q Did you --

A Yep.

Q Did anyone from -- let me go back to the -- the White House Military Office person, is it always General Howerton that you're in touch with?

A It could've been General Howerton, or it could've been Brad Hoagland, who was the deputy director, or the chief of staff there was Colonel -- he goes by "Rainman" -- Colonel Howerton -- I'm sorry -- Colonel Hoffman.

Q And, as far as the Secret Service, it sounds like you and Mr. Engel are in communication with each other.

A Yeah. If I remember correctly, it would've been Mr. Engel or Mr. Arruda, because I believe Mr. Cho was doing the transition detail. He was with President-elect Biden at the time, from what I remember.

Q But isn't Mr. Engel in the White House with you, with the President?

A No. His office is in the EEOB.

Q Okay. So he's not with the President at that time.

A No. No. The shift and the supervisor on duty is below the President in their "down room," as we call it, W16.

Q I want to shift to the Vice President's location, which you mentioned briefly.

A Uh-huh.
Q  During any conversations with --

Mr. Heaphy.  Soumya, before you do that --

Ms. Dayananda.  Sure.

Mr. Heaphy.  Soumya, I'm sorry, could I just jump in with another question --

Ms. Dayananda.  Yeah, of course.

Mr. Heaphy.  -- or two about the dining room?

BY MR. HEAPHY:

Q  And, Mr. Ornato, it's Tim Heaphy on the phone.

But I just wanted to quickly go back to the dining room and ask if you remember a television being on when you went back to hand Chief Meadows the note and he was back there with the President?

A  I'm -- I don't recall.  I'm assuming it was on, but I don't recall.  I really have a tunnel vision of a view of Mr. Meadows at that time, because that was my view of focus.  I wasn't looking around.  I did not want to catch anybody else's eyes, meaning the President's eyes.  I was deemed to hand Mr. Meadows that note and walk out.

Q  Okay.  There is a television on the wall in the dining room.  Isn't that right?

A  That is correct.  That would've been to the right of Mr. Meadows.  That would've been behind him, to the right.

Q  Okay.  Yeah.  Okay.

And was it, in your experience, Mr. Ornato, working in the White House, kind of standard for the President himself to be back in the dining room watching television?  Was that an occurrence that you observed on multiple occasions?

A  Not necess- -- I tried to stay out of the Oval, to be honest with you.

Q  Yeah.
A And if the President was back there, I didn't -- that's his private space. I try not to go back there.

If I had to go back there for any kind of -- like I said, handing a note on that day.

But, in general, if I went back there on another day, which was extremely rare, the television would be on.

Q Okay. All right. That's helpful. Thank you, Mr. Ornato.

A Yep, absolutely.

Ms. Cheney. Soumya, I --

Ms. Dayananda. Oh, go ahead.

Ms. Cheney. I just wanted to see -- to get some more, sort of, specificity, Mr. Ornato.

In terms of the communications that you received from the EOC, could you give us a sense, first of all, of, you know, how often, how many times you got an email that made you understand you needed to go immediately and convey that information?

Mr. Ornato. Sure. Sorry, ma'am. I don't recall how many the reoccurrence it was, whether it was maybe, you know, once-an-hour update or something of that nature unless something had happened. I don't recall.

But I remember passing about the officers, I remember passing about the shot being fired inside, and I remember getting an update that at some point the National Guard, however many members, were en route with also, like, State police from surrounding areas and some police, and I passed that. So roughly about four times of having to pass information in maybe 3 or 4 hours at that point.

Ms. Cheney. And those all would've been after the first time you went to see Mr. Meadows, which was spurred by what you saw on television, the bike racks?

Mr. Ornato. I didn't see him for that. He had poked his head in and let me
know that they breached a door, the Capitol door. He had gotten that before -- I didn’t know that.

Ms. Cheney. So what did you do when you saw the reporting about the bike racks?

Mr. Ornato. I had asked. He said, "Yeah, Capitol Police is up there. They're asking for more units." The Service was sending over people that I know of. I know Park Police was sending over people. I was just being told this information from the Service, that they were getting it from listening to their partners.

Ms. Cheney. So you asked Mr. Engel?

Mr. Ornato. Correct.

Ms. Cheney. Okay.

And, in terms of the information coming from the EOC, was that coming to you by email?

Mr. Ornato. It was. It was being forwarded to me on email, correct.

Ms. Cheney. Okay.

All right. Thank you.

Mr. Ornato. Yes.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Mr. Ornato, when my colleague Mr. Heaphy was asking about you entering the dining hall, you stated you didn't want to catch the President's eye. Can you explain what you mean by that?

A Oh, just because, at that point, that's not my role. I didn't want to be asked any questions. This is -- again, I did not want to have to be asked about anything, whether it was political or whether it was what's going on.

My voice was, to the President, at that point, was not going to be -- shouldn't have
been asked. It's the chief of staff who has his ear. The chief of staff is talking to him.

I am out of that scenario. It's not a place for me to be in.

Q What concerned you, though, about what he may ask you?

A I don't know, and that's why I -- things, you know -- I don't want to be asked any questions at that point.

I'm also, as I've shared, pretty emotional about what's going on, as well. So, you know, that these are people that were at the Ellipse and people that were on the monument, you know, if they were here to see him and now they're doing this, I'm obviously disturbed by it and pretty appalled. So I didn't want to have any conversation at that point.

Q Did you feel that the President could have taken steps to stop the violence that was occurring?

A Again, I don't know if that's the case. It's not my place to say that, if he could've or he did or he didn't. I, again, am concerned about my operations and the people that are doing it. I don't get involved. That's not my role, to get involved in that.

Q Understood, but, as you said, the protesters who came there came to see him. So, having the power to get the folks to come there to see him, did you think there was a possibility that he could tell them to then leave?

A That never actually crossed my mind for that. When mobs get together, it doesn't matter who's saying what. It's a mob mentality takes over. And we've seen that throughout, I think, in a lot of -- in history with groups like this.

When a mob mentality is attacking one area, that group is going to do it no matter if the leader is there or not. If there is a leader in that group of whatever protest group that started this, even if they were there at the Capitol saying, "Hey, stop," it's a mob
mentality. Nobody's listening anymore; everybody's acting. So I'm not thinking that, yeah, the President can shut this down. That's not coming to my mind at that point. There's too many other things I'm doing.

Q Were you aware of some of the tweets that the President put out on January 6th?

A Later on. My assistant was monitoring Twitter and stuff, and he had told me that they were going -- they went out.

Q One of those tweets -- and I'll just read it to you and not bring it out -- at 2:38, so this is after folks had entered the Capitol, not just the bike rack breach, quote, "Please support our Capitol Police and Law Enforcement. They are truly on the side of our Country. Stay peaceful!"

A Uh-huh. I heard that after.

Q Did you consider this an order by the President to leave or a direction by the President to those protesters to leave?

A Yeah, I mean, it was what it was. He was trying to gain peace again. He was trying to -- you know, from what I was seeing, he's trying to put something out there to have people back down of what they're doing.

But do I think it's going to help? At the time, I don't think it was going to help. Again, this mob mentality. They were inside. Who's looking at Twitter that's attacking police officers? They're not looking at their phones. They're doing what they came here to do, and that's the thing.

I don't see how anything that he tweeted out -- or they've, even if -- whatever he did, they're going to see this and all of a sudden stop. That's not the mentality I would see happening to these people.

Q I understand that. I just want to walk you through --
A Sure.

Q -- to get your point of what impact -- I think your point is, what impact, if any, would these tweets have had? Is that fair to say?

A Correct, yeah. Who's seeing them? Who's, you know --

Q Sure.

A People aren't picking -- yeah, exactly.

Q So, at 3:13, another tweet by the President: "I'm asking for everyone at the U.S. Capitol to remain peaceful. No violence! Remember, WE are the Party of Law & Order -- respect the Law and our great men and women in Blue. Thank you!"

Now, at this point, 3:13, obviously this has been -- this is after Ashli Babbitt had already been shot. Secret Service had already responded, as you mentioned, hundreds of law enforcement --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- Secret Service agents, I think is what you said. And it's still not an order or a direction to go home. In fact, it says "remain peaceful."

Again, do you think that could've been a stronger statement by the President at that time?

A I actually didn't even think about it till you just said it that there wasn't an order to go home.

Again, the President, doing what Presidents do, try to gain control and order. But I don't -- I put on my law enforcement hat. You know, there's nothing you're going to be able to put out or say to these people to stop this attack, even if you're a President of the United States. These people aren't seeing it. They're not hearing it. They're involved in an actual assault.

So I really don't give credence or -- to what the President could say or what do.
That's just seeing -- people that are seeing that are people sitting at home watching this on TV or looking at their phones and not involved in the actual attack.

You know, there's -- up at the Capitol -- the National Guard is what we were trying to do. Obviously, Meadows was trying to get the National Guard in there. And that was a constant of, "Hey, when's the Guard getting there?" and trying to get updates. And I was getting it from the EOC that, you know, 1,100 Guard, or whatever the numbers are, en route, en route. And I kept telling them, "Hey, they're coming," but it seemed like forever, that they never came.

So, you know, that was a frustrating point. I remember passing that over to the White House Military Office to--

Q Sure. And let me just--

A People are going to be the only thing that are going to stop them from attacking at this point.

Ms. Cheney. Soumya?

Ms. Dayananda. Go ahead.

Ms. Cheney. Yeah.

So, Mr. Ornato, you know, we actually know from a number of sources, including the filings with U.S. attorneys on the website that are public filings of the criminal defendants, that they were, in fact, impacted by the President's tweets.

Mr. Ornato. Oh. Okay. I was not aware of that, ma'am. I'm sorry.

Ms. Cheney. Yeah. And I wonder, as you're analyzing the President's tweets that day -- you know, this tweet at 2:24: "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution."

What's your assessment of that tweet?

Mr. Ornato. Well, again, in my personal capacity, I don't have-- in my Secret Security Capacity.
Service or my deputy chief of staff of operations capacity, I'm not paying attention to politics and those kind of tweets and those kind -- I just don't. I don't get involved.

That's not my job to do that.

You know, personal capacity, do I think those are necessary and do I think those are helpful? Absolutely not. That doesn't help the country. It doesn't help anything. I don't think those are helpful.

But there's nothing I can do in any capacity to stop any of that. There's nothing I can bring forward to stop the President from tweeting those things.

Ms. Cheney. I understand that. I'm actually just trying to get your assessment.

And I know that you are aware -- and you mentioned Presidential succession -- that you're aware the Vice President is first in line of succession.

Mr. Ornato. I am.

Ms. Cheney. Speaker of the House, second in line of succession.

Mr. Ornato. That's right.

Ms. Cheney. So -- and I appreciate that it was an emotional day and that it's emotional talking about the law enforcement officers --

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

Ms. Cheney. -- who were brutally assaulted --

Mr. Ornato. Uh-huh.

Ms. Cheney. -- by a mob that the President had summoned to Washington and then told to march on the Capitol.

And I want to just mention one thing that I found very emotional. There's a video -- I'm sure you probably have seen it -- of the Vice President and his family being evacuated --

Mr. Ornato. Uh-huh.
Ms. Cheney. -- down the steps. Are you familiar with that video?

Mr. Ornato. I saw a picture, not a video, but I saw a picture of it.

Ms. Cheney. When I saw that video, I was reminded of a very similar photograph of my father --

Mr. Ornato. Yep.

Ms. Cheney. -- and Jimmy Scott --

Mr. Ornato. Uh-huh.

Ms. Cheney. -- who was in charge of his detail, who evacuated him from the West Wing into the bunker on 9/11, a very similar photo of them moving down the stairs.

Mr. Ornato. Right.

Ms. Cheney. So, as you assess what was happening that day and this notion that somehow, "Gosh, nobody could've done anything," you know, I would just ask you to really reflect on the gravity of that moment.

And certainly this was not just a political issue, if the Vice President of the United States is under a direct threat.

Mr. Ornato. Uh-huh. Yep.

Ms. Cheney. So the Vice President of the United States is under direct threat, and the President was aware of the violence when he sent that tweet out. So, in your view, would you still say that's just a political tweet?

Mr. Ornato. No, I wouldn't, but I didn't -- I don't know if the President actually knew that the Vice President was at the Capitol, because I had let the chief of staff know that the Vice President was at his residence, and there was confusion in the beginning. And I'm not making an excuse, but I don't know if that was actually passed, if he was there or not. Because the initial passing was he was evacuated to his residence.

Do I think the tweet is appalling? Absolutely.
Ms. Cheney. Well, even if he'd been --

Mr. Ornato. But --

Ms. Cheney. -- evacuated to his residence, he was --

Mr. Ornato. Yep.

Ms. Cheney. -- just having left the floor of the Senate at the time of the tweet.

So, under any circumstances, whether he was --

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

Ms. Cheney. -- evacuated to the parking garage or whether he was evacuated to his residence, that would not have happened at the time the President sent the tweet.

So my question is, as you are thinking about the Presidential succession --

Mr. Ornato. Uh-huh.

Ms. Cheney. -- and understanding that the Vice President himself was under threat at the Capitol, you know, your concern about your fellow officers who were there defending the Vice President, defending the Members of Congress, is very important, but I wonder whether you had similar concern for the Vice President.

Mr. Ornato. I did, ma'am. And I was assured that the Vice President -- later, when I realized that he was at the Capitol, I was told he was secure and there was no threat at that time.

So the successor program was not enacted due to the -- the number one of it being the President was secure. So there was no successor program that would've been enacted, obviously, for the Presidency.

The White House Military Office, though, assured me that they had routes in and out if they needed to get to different -- the House Speaker, if things needed to go where they have another program to call in, even though the areas of concern, meaning the west and the east slopes there at the Capitol, had people, that they would still be able to
get assets in, into another area.

I was told that the Members were being -- tried to be -- they were being evacuated, they were going to one of the local military installations, that the Capitol Police was bringing them, and then that the Vice President, eventually I found out, was secure. He was fine where he was. And if they were to leave, they were going to his residence, but he was okay. And the Service sent additional assets to secure his perimeter.

So, based upon my training as a detail leader, as a special agent in charge and everything, you know, Tim Giebels did what he was trained to do. He relocated the Vice President to a secure location. He then holds, because we teach building defense, so you hold, because you don't want to be forced out of anywhere because you can be forced into an ambush. You hold, and you hold your perimeter. You hold that until the building or the perimeter starts degrading around you, in which then you would move to another location.

So that I know the Vice President was in a holding pattern in that area of the Capitol and that they had that secure. So I knew that they were secure at that time.

Ms. Cheney. And, Mr. Ornato, have you talked to Keith Kellogg about your appearance in front of this committee?

Mr. Ornato. I have not.

Ms. Cheney. Have you talked to Keith Kellogg since January 20th?

Mr. Ornato. I have not.

Ms. Cheney. Have you talked to anybody else about your appearance in front of this committee?

Mr. Ornato. Sure. Members of my agency and my wife and some friends know that I was going to be talking.
Ms. Cheney. Anybody else who's appeared in front of the committee?

Mr. Ornato. Yep. Mr. Miller and Mr. Peede knew that I was appearing in front of the committee.

Ms. Cheney. And have you discussed your testimony?

Mr. Ornato. No, ma'am, I have not.

Ms. Cheney. Did they discuss their testimony with you?

Mr. Ornato. No, ma'am, they did not.

Ms. Cheney. Thank you.

Mr. Ornato. Yes, ma'am.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Just to follow up on that, did you have any -- did anyone from Mr. Trump's legal team contact you about your testifying here in front of the committee?

A No, ma'am.

Q And, again, to follow up on Ms. Cheney's questions about the Vice President's location, it sounds like from what you said -- did you think it was safe for the Vice President to stay at the Capitol?

A I was being told it was. So that's not my determination to make. That is the Secret Service's determination.

Q Did you --

A And if you're going to get to, hopefully, the General Kellogg statement, so I can correct that?

Q Sure. Go ahead.

A Okay.

Q So let me just set it up for you.

A Please. Sure.
Q Did you ever make a recommendation that the Vice President should be moved out of the Capitol?
A No, I did not.

Can I give you the scenario that is going to differ from Keith Kellogg's book or whatever news reports --

Q Sure.
A -- that were out there, but can I give you the events that I recall took place that day with that conversation?

Q Sure. Of course. Go ahead.
A So, once I learned that the Vice President was being moved to his residence -- this was early on, obviously; false report, but misinformation -- I then walked into the chief of staff's office, in the hallway. I was still kind of in the doorway. He was on the phone. At a distance, I can see him on the phone, and he looked at me. So I yelled to him that the Vice President was being evacuated to his residence. He gave me a thumbs-up.

As I turned around, Keith Kellogg was coming down the hallway, at which point he said -- and he's hard of hearing. He does have hearing aids. And he said, "Where is the Vice President going?" I said, "They're bringing him to the VPR." He said, "Okay, good." And he walked down the hall towards the NSA's office to go down the stairs.

That's the last I saw of Keith Kellogg and had that conversation.

For him to say that I was bringing him to JBA, I think he said, and then to Alaska is absolutely ludicrous. And the reasons why are: Number one, all the locations a protectee goes to, there are predetermined locations that they would be brought to for safe havens. That is part of a program. So that is predetermined. The reason why they're predetermined is so no outside influences can influence a protectee being
brought to any location.

The people that are making that decision to bring a protectee to another location due to an imminent threat are going to be five people. They're going to be people that are with that protectee. It's the detail leader at the time for the Secret Service; it's the military aide; it's the chief of staff rep, whoever is filling that role at that particular time; and it is the NSA rep; and then the doc if it's a medical emergency. Those five people are the team that would move the protectee to one of the predetermined locations. No outside influence can happen.

So that conversation, that's a false conversation. He may have had that with somebody else, but it wasn't with me.

And, you know, knowing the programs and how I know them and being in the positions I was in, I would have no influence, I would have no reason to call anybody on the Vice President's staff or Vice President's detail to move the Vice President. That's just not my role, and that's not anything I would do against any of the programs.

Q And let me just get on the record what you're trying to clarify here. I think this was the Huffington Post and it's been reported elsewhere that "Mr. Ornato, who oversaw Secret Service movements" -- I'm quoting here from an article in Huffington Post on July 16, 2021, "reportedly told White House senior official Keith Kellogg in the West Wing that agents were planning to move Pence to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland."

And you're saying you never said --

A I did not say that. Absolutely not.

Q Then General Kellogg responded, "You can't do that, Tony. Leave him where he's at. He's got a job to do. I know you guys too well. You'll fly him to Alaska if you have the chance. Don't do it."

A That -- that's absolutely false.
Q So you don't remember General Kellogg making that statement to you in regards --
A I do not recall any of that statement being made or any of that interaction with me. He may have had it with somebody else, but it was not with me.
Q Okay.
And the last part of that is General Kellogg saying, "He's going to stay there."
Quote, "If he has to wait there all night, he's going to do it."
A Right.
Q Did you ever have a conversation about -- apart from, it sounds like what you're saying, relaying the information that the Vice -- the false information that the Vice President was going to be relocated to his residence, did you have any other conversation with General Kellogg?
A No. Not that -- about anything like that, I did not.
Q Did you have a conversation with General Kellogg about the ability to put 3,000 marshals on the streets?
A No, I don't recall that as well. I wouldn't -- I don't have that. That's the Attorney General they report to. I wouldn't have anything to do with the U.S. Marshals.
Q I just want to read -- as you're aware, General Kellogg did testify in front of the committee. I just want to see if this will jog your memory. This is what he said. "Well, it's something I heard. That's what they were talking about. And the timeline is when I mentioned earlier, is when, back in the, I believe it was Oval, I was talking to Kayleigh, came back in the Oval, and that's when Mark Meadows came out and said to me, 'Where is the National Guard?'"
You didn't mention Kayleigh McEnany, by the way. Did you see her?
A I don't recall. I don't recall seeing her. I may have. I just don't recall.
Q Okay. Let me go back to the transcript.

And then he says in response to Mr. Meadows' question, where's the National Guard: "And I have no idea. That's when Matt Pottinger came in. But that's also when -- it was about that time that I found for the first time I'd ever heard of it that Tony Ornato, who was the chief of operations, former chief agent for the Secret Service, said, you know, I can put 3,000 marshals on the street immediately."

A No. That is not true. I would have nothing to do with the U.S. Marshals. They're under the Justice Department with the FBI and under DOJ. That would have nothing to do with anything.

And, again, I may have relayed to the chief of -- I don't know if he overheard me saying that they've called a Federal order that any law enforcement respond to the Capitol. I relayed that. But, no, that "I can put 3,000" -- that's ridiculous.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Did you reach out to any law enforcement colleagues that you had about asking them what their deployment was in terms of agents or officers?

A No. I just talked with the deputy director at the time of the Secret Service, and he was just filling me in on -- but, no, I didn't reach out to anybody.

Q And, also, just so the record's clear, that's what Mr. Kellogg testified to in front of the committee, and it was also reported in the book "Peril." And, in the book, it states that you said, "We've got 2,000 marshals that we can call up right now and put them out there."

A That is not true.

Q Okay. Did you mention any number of any other law enforcement, forgetting that it was the marshals?

A No. I did not.
Q And, as you mentioned, the marshals are obviously under DOJ, which was not the agency you were affiliated with.

A Correct.

Q I want to go back to -- obviously, you talked about who you saw that day at the Oval Office, in the dining hall area, and as well as in the White House generally.

After Mr. Miller and Mr. Peede came back from the Ellipse event, were they also around?

A I think Mr. Peede was. Bobby Peede, I think, went over to the EEOB to his office. And, from what I remember, Max went home. He was done for the day.

Q Did you have any contact with the Senate Sergeant at Arms or the House Sergeant at Arms --

A No.

Q -- Mr. Irving or Mr. Stenger?

A No, I did not.

Q Did you have any contact with any House or Senate leadership?

A No, I did not.

Q So, just so I'm clear, it sounds like the people that you're chiefly in contact with are Mark Meadows, Bobby Engel, your deputy director, and -- anyone else that you're in contact with, either by phone, email -- obviously you're getting the EOC's -- or text messages?

A General Howerton.

Q Right. From the Military Office?

A Right.

And the deputy director, I think I talked to him one time. It wasn't like I was in constant contact.
My assistant, William Harrison, he was there.

Q You mentioned you made one phone call to Kash Patel at DOD.

A Oh, that's right. Yes.

Q Was there any additional contact with Mr. Patel during the day?

A Later on, I believe, yes, he reached out for a Secret Service contact for fencing.

Q Later that evening?

A Correct.

Q You mentioned that you were waiting for the National Guard to arrive. What was your sense of what was happening? Obviously, you mentioned that Mr. Meadows had a phone call with Secretary Miller. Did you have any discussions with Mark Meadows or with anyone at the office about this time lapse that was occurring?

A No. You know, we kept -- every time the chief would ask, what's taking so long, it would be, like, you know, this isn't just start the car and we're there. We have to muster them up, we have to -- so it was constant excuses coming of -- not excuses, but what they were actually doing to get them there. So, you know, we only have so many here right now. They're given an hour to get ready.

So there's, like, all these timelines that was being explained to the chief. And he relayed that, like, you know -- he's like, I don't care, just get them here. You know, and get them to the Capitol, not to the White House.

So that was mainly what I remember.

Q Who were those conversations with on the DOD side?

A From what I remember, it was Acting Secretary Miller. There could've been -- I mean, there could've been conversations with Kash Patel. I wasn't in there for the conversation.
Q And I know we talked a lot about the tweets that the President put out in that 2:24 to 3:13 and that 4:17 video that was finally put out. And I'm wondering if there was anything -- from your perspective, from your law enforcement experience, what could've been done prior to have avoided what occurred at the Capitol that day?

A Not have an event and bring that many people into D.C. would've been one thing. But I don't know what else prior -- to think of right now, what else prior could've been done to stop that. I mean --

Q You mentioned that the event, when we talked about what was seized of the magnetometers, were, I think you used the word "normal" seizures. And would that be normal for events that you were familiar with from the Trump administration, or is it normal for rallies from prior administrations as well?

A Sure. From prior as well. It depends what area of the country you're going to is what you see different things come up through the magnetometers. You know, if you're in a State that has an open carry law, you'll see empty holsters coming in, and you have to confiscate the holsters, because they'll usually lock their guns up in their vehicle but they keep their holster on. And a lot, you know, have knives or, you know, those types of things. So that's pretty normal.

Q Were you aware of any discussion about additional messaging from the President in terms of holding a press conference on January 6th or getting out?

A I wasn't. I wouldn't be involved in any of those conversations.

Q Okay.

Ms. Dayananda. One moment.

Mr. Ornato, John Wood, one of the senior investigative counsels, has some questions.

BY MR. WOOD:
Q Thank you, Mr. Ornato.

You mentioned earlier that, I think while the President was speaking at the Ellipse, you may have been packing up your office, and you, sort of as an aside, said you didn't want to be seen packing up your office. Why didn't you want to be seen packing up your office?

A Well, if you can remember, there was press coverage of people bringing stuff to their cars, and I tried to stay under the -- which obviously didn't happen too good, but I tried to stay under the press radar at all times. So I knew the press was down there with him, so I can get a couple boxes I wanted to get into my car to be brought over to the headquarters here.

Q Okay. Did the fact that you were packing up some boxes from your office, did that mean that you anticipated that on January 20th President Biden would be sworn in?

A Yes. I was working on the transition for that to happen since I was given that, I think, sometime in November.

Q And had any kind of message been sent that people were not supposed to be looking for other jobs or expecting to leave because there would be a second Trump administration?

A I did hear a rumor that some of our staff people were saying that they were hearing they can't look for other jobs, which -- I made sure Monica Block told our staff people that they absolutely should be looking for other jobs. But I didn't pay attention to that.

Q Okay. Do you remember, when you heard that rumor, was it a rumor that somebody in particular had said people shouldn't be looking for other jobs?

A No. I just heard it as a general rumor.
Q Okay. Do you remember who you heard it from?
A I don't. It was brought to me from Monica, who -- she was hearing from her staffers that were saying, hey, are we not supposed to be looking for jobs? And I said, no -- you know, she brought it to me. I said, tell them, absolutely, they need jobs.
Q Okay.
I want to pick up on another thing you said in passing. You mentioned that things that Peter Navarro said were not taken seriously by the operations staff or something to that effect. Could you explain what you meant by that?
A Yeah. I mean, Peter is very -- an excitable person. And throughout just things all the time and -- like, hey, I'm getting -- this was during, like, campaign time -- like, hey, I'm getting the President to go here, where he's going to do this, this, and this. And, you know, it was just -- he was a good-idea fairy. He would throw those things out there, and they would never articulate into anything. And he just liked to think of crazy things that never came about.
You know, he always asked to travel, which he wasn't -- there was no need for him to travel. So he was never manifested at times to different areas.
But, yeah, it was just -- it was common that he would try to drum up crazy things, which we just didn't pay attention to.
Q Do you recall whether he had any crazy ideas that related in any way to the events on January 6th, whether it was the rally or the protests or the joint session of Congress?
A I don't recall anything to January 6th. Obviously, seeing that tweet that he was telling the President there's going to be, you know, thousands and thousands of people, that's how he always talked. So that I could definitely -- yeah, I don't recall that, but if he was saying that, I wouldn't put it past him.
Q Okay.

My colleague Sean asked you about calls with a cell phone that ended in 3371.

A Correct.

Q And I think you said that was your personal cell phone.

A Correct.

Q Do you recall, did you send and receive texts on that phone as well?

A I can send and receive texts, correct.

Q Okay. First of all, did you ever text with President Trump?

A Text with him? No.

Q Do you know whether he texted with people?

A I don't. I don't believe so. I don't know, to be honest.

Q And I'm not suggesting he did. It's just, obviously, if there are such texts out there, that would be of interest to us. But, to your knowledge, he did not send or receive texts on a cell phone?

A No.

Q Did he carry a cell phone with him?

A He had a cell phone, yeah.

Q Do you know whether that was issued by the government or a personal cell phone?

A It was a government phone.

Q Okay. How do you know that?

A We had given him it from the day he was President-elect. And then, when he became President, the White House Communications Agency supplied multiple government phones for them to be in places and also for the mil aide to carry. So there was always a government phone and no personal phone to be used.
Q Okay. But do you know if, in addition to having a government phone, if he also had a personal phone?

A I'm not sure. I would not know if he had a personal phone.

Q Okay. Do you know, when he left office, did he turn that phone in to someone?

A I would assume so. I'm sorry, I don't --

Q Yeah.

A I don't know. Yeah.

Q Do you know who it would be that he would turn it in to?

A That would be -- the White House Communications Agency would've received it.

Q Okay.

And then, obviously -- you made some reference to emails earlier in your testimony. Was that a reference to a White House email account?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Did you also have a Secret Service email account?

A I did.

Q Okay. But did you have access to it when you were detailed to the White House?

A I did, but very little. I mean, I can't carry three phones around, so very, very little did I use the Secret Service email for the White House job. I'd want it on the White House account, so I wouldn't use the Secret Service email.

Q Got it. So you typically would carry two phones -- a personal phone, which you just mentioned, and then a government-issued phone that had your White House email in it.
A Correct. I would have the Secret Service phone as well, but not so much paying attention to that one, because everybody knew to email me on the White House phone.

Q Okay. So any emails relevant to the kinds of things we're discussing on January 6 are likely to be only on your White House email, not your Secret Service email.

A Correct. Yes.

Q Okay. And what about your personal email? Would you have received any or sent any personal -- any emails on your personal --

A No.

Q -- account related to --

A No.

Q -- official business?

A No. Absolutely not.

Q Okay.

And we do know from other sources -- so this is not from your phone, but -- that you sent some texts, I believe, to Mark Meadows in the evening of January 6th. A couple of them were just to Mark Meadows. And then a couple of them, it looks like, you were on a chat with -- a text chat, that is -- with Ben Williamson and Mark Meadows. This is not meant to be a memory test, but --

A Sure.

Q -- do you recall -- and if you'd like, if you have your phone with you and want to look at it to refresh your recollection, you're welcome to. But do you remember what those were about?

A No, I don't. But that wouldn't be uncommon, that just checking in or, you know, the next day events, "Hey, what time are you going to be there in the morning?" or
something like that, I mean, but I don't remember what they were about.

Q   Okay. Would you be willing to, if you still have those texts, share them
with counsel, you know, Secret Service counsel, and they can determine whether -- if
they're relevant to the kinds of things we're asking about, they could send them to us?

Obviously, if they're completely unrelated to the things we are asking about, we
don't need to see those. But if you could just share those with counsel and if they could
let us know whether they're relevant to what we're looking into, that would be great.

A   Actually, I don't know if I can, because I have a new phone from this fall, and
I don't save my texts. So I don't know if that's possible.

Q   Okay. Just do what you can. We understand.

A   I will. I'll try -- I'll definitely go with my counsel.

Q   Yeah.

A   And, as far as you know, all your emails from your White House email have been
properly saved and are with the Archives?

A   Correct.

Q   Okay.

BY MR. TONOLLI:

Q   But just so I can follow up, were you using an iPhone, Mr. Ornato?

A   Yes.

Q   Okay. Same phone number, the 3371?

A   Right.

Q   Okay. And so, just to be clear with Mr. Wood's question, it's beyond
January 6th. I think if you could just look, say, going back to when discussion of the rally
would've taken place, so mid-December, through the days after January 6th.

A   Okay.
Q Okay?

And then, also, I imagine you were backing your phone up, as most folks do when they have an iPhone?

A I don't.

Q You don't?

A Because my pictures took up all my storage.

Q Yeah. So, when you flipped, did you just upgrade to a new iPhone? Is that what happened?

A I did.

Q Right. Okay. And so I imagine all your information came over with the phone, like, your contacts and the like, when you switched to the new phone?

A I did. Yes.

Q Okay. So did you have a practice of deleting text chains?

A I deleted so my storage would stay low. But, yeah, I never really kept texts or even emails. I'm one of those people that can't have any emails unread. Like, I have to click them that they're read.

Q Yeah.

A I'm type A like that, or erase things when they're done, just to clean my plate.

Q No doubt you want to see what's coming in. But, in terms of --

A Right.

Q -- text messages, did you have a practice of actually deleting them after you read them?

A Eventually, yes. I would -- on the plane or something, I would clean up my storage. I would delete texts, yes.
Q Okay. All right. So do you have any reason to think you would've deleted
texts from around the time we're talking about?

A I don't know specifically. I can look for sure --

Q Okay.

A -- and definitely get with counsel.

Q Great.

BY MR. WOOD:

Q My colleague Soumya made reference to the President's video statement,
which I think was released around 4:17 p.m. on the 6th.

A Uh-huh.

Q Do you know who was there when that video statement was filmed?

A I don't. I wasn't in there. It would've been somebody from the White
House Communications Agency that would have set that up with the social media side of
the House, which was run under Dan Scavino.

Q Okay.

And Soumya also asked you some questions about your interactions with the
President on the 6th while the attack on the Capitol was going on. It sounds like those
were very limited.

But did you ever hear from anybody else at the White House about whether they
made efforts to encourage the President to issue a statement asking people to leave the
Capitol?

A I didn't.

Q You also said earlier that, over the summer of last year, in the context of the
Black Lives Matter protests, that Attorney General Barr was put in charge of Federal law
enforcement. Was anything similar done with regard to January 6th, to your
knowledge?

A No. After January 6th, I know they extended the NSSE for the inauguration to cover earlier. The Secret Service had that role. But January 6th, no, I'm not familiar with anything like that happening.

Q Okay.

I think that's all I have.

Ms. Dayananda. I believe Ms. Cheney had some final questions as well, Mr. Ornato, but we're wrapping up.

Mr. Ornato. Okay. Great.

Ms. Cheney. Thanks, Soumya.

Mr. Ornato, the emails that you were receiving from the EOC, would that have included the report that the Metropolitan Police declared a riot at 1:49?

Mr. Ornato. I didn't start receiving them until after 3:00-ish, so I wouldn't have -- I don't remember seeing that.

Ms. Cheney. So, in terms of prior to 3:00, your contact with Secret Service would've been by email with Mr. Engel?

Mr. Ornato. Email or phone or walking over, yes.

Ms. Cheney. And did you talk to anybody else prior to 3:00 outside of the complex, in terms of did you speak to anybody at the Secret Service besides Mr. Engel?

Mr. Ornato. Not that I recall. I don't remember if -- later on, after 3:00, I remember having, like I said, that conversation with the deputy, but I don't recall any other conversation before that or with anybody else.

Ms. Cheney. Okay.

And the committee will obviously get access to these records, and we'll follow up, certainly, with the Secretary of Homeland Security about -- because your emails, as
Mr. Wood is pointing out, from your White House account are covered by the Presidential Records Act.

Mr. Ornato. Right.

Ms. Cheney. Secret Service, Homeland Security emails are subject to the committee's request --

Mr. Ornato. Right.

Ms. Cheney. -- for documents. So the entire range of emails around the EOC, not just to you, but all of the documents connected to what was happening that day and the Service response are documents that the committee expects to receive from the agency.

Mr. Ornato. Right. Yeah, I wish I had the EOP account, that I was able to review any of the documents or emails prior to them to refresh my memory. But, obviously, NARA has all that information.

Ms. Cheney. And so the texts -- you know, you mentioned earlier -- and I know Mr. Wood was asking about this -- the texts that you exchanged, and you said it was normal for you to be texting with Mr. Miller on your personal cell phone.

Have you turned over those texts that would be covered by the Presidential Records Act, official business on your personal cell phone?

Mr. Ornato. Not -- my personal phone. Usually if I'm texting with Mr. Miller, it would be personal. He wouldn't text me anything that I can remember work-wise. That would be a phone call. It would be easier to pick up the phone to talk to me or email me on the work email, but not necessarily receiving a text.

I don't remember turning over any texts to the Presidential Act there for work stuff, because if they were -- I don't remember ever receiving one for work, but if they were covered under my regular email, they would be on that.
Ms. Cheney. Well, thank you, Mr. Ornato. We'll follow up on that, too, because I think you did say earlier that you received a text from Mr. Miller about the event at the Ellipse prior to the event at the Ellipse --

Mr. Ornato. Did I?

Ms. Cheney. -- on your personal cell phone.

Mr. Ornato. I'm not sure. I don't remember if it was a text on or a phone call.

I know a phone call, yes.

Ms. Cheney. Well, okay, we'll make sure that you and your counsel have --

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

Ms. Cheney. -- Counsel McGahn's guidance about Presidential records and --

Mr. Ornato. Sure.

Ms. Cheney. -- what needs to be turned over.

Mr. Ornato. Absolutely. Thank you.

Ms. Cheney. And just to confirm again, you did mention you'd spoken to Mr. Miller. What have you spoken to Mr. Miller about?

Mr. Ornato. Personal stuff. He's getting married. He informed me of that.

Those types of things.

Ms. Cheney. Not about January 6th?

Mr. Ornato. No. Today is the first time I actually have gone through all the day's events of January 6th with anybody.

Ms. Cheney. Thank you.

Ms. Dayananda. John?

BY MR. WOOD:

Q So you said another thing I wanted to ask you. Just want to make sure I understand.
You mentioned that you passed -- on the 6th, that is -- passed, I think you said, three or four notes to Mark Meadows with updates, I think things like "shots being fired," updates on the National Guard and police on their way. But I think you said you only went into the Oval area, specifically the dining room, one time. So how did you pass the other notes to him?

A Verbal as he walked by my office or I went into his office. It was a verbal passing.

Q Got it. Okay. So you did not actually see the President those times.

A No. No.

Q Okay. And so, when you say verbal, so those weren't actually notes. You would've just told him --

A It was only the one note that I passed to him, correct.

Q I understand. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Cheney. Soumya, I'm sorry, I just have one other question --

Ms. Dayananda. Sure.

Ms. Cheney. -- for Mr. Ornato.

So whose -- and I understand you were in an unusual situation because you were detailed from the Secret Service.

Mr. Ornato. Uh-huh.

Ms. Cheney. So whose responsibility would it normally be to keep the chief of staff informed about security issues connected to the President or the Vice President?

Mr. Ornato. So the detail leaders of both details have an open communication with the chief of staffs of each detail. So the chief of staff for the Vice President is talking to the -- it would be Tim Giebels on the V.P. side of the house, and the detail leader, Bob Engel, would talk directly to Mr. Meadows.
The deputy chiefs of staffs, they didn't have to go through us. They could have a
conversation or an email exchange with the actual chief of staff directly. They would let
them know of anything going on.

Ms. Cheney. So, when the Vice President was evacuated from the Chamber, from the Senate Chamber, is that the kind of thing you would expect the White House chief of staff to be notified?

Mr. Ornato. Maybe eventually I would expect him to know that, sure. That's why, once I got it, I immediately let him know of what happened. I didn't realize he was on the Chamber floor at the time and was evacuated.

Ms. Cheney. But I think, just so we understand, it's not -- in the position that you were in, it's not your -- you were doing it because you --

Mr. Ornato. Oh.

Ms. Cheney. -- got information flow, but you're --

Mr. Ornato. Correct.

Ms. Cheney. So would you expect that the person responsible for doing that, the detail leader -- you know, if the Vice President is evacuated, the detail leader would inform the chief of staff?

Mr. Ornato. So the chief of staff of the President, I would assume -- and there's no direct line of information, of flow, that way. I would assume he would get it from the chief of staff of the Vice President, because that's who is a direct report to the chief of staff, is the Vice President's chief of staff. They talk often.

So I would've assumed that would've been a phone call from the staff to the staff. By the time security does their job and gives notification, it's going to be later than somebody on the staff picking up the phone and talking to Mr. Meadows.

So, for the detail leader or anybody on the Vice President's detail to relay that,
that's not going to come direct from them over to PPD, VPD to PPD. It's going to go up to headquarters, and headquarters is going to put out an alert or going to let everybody know what had happened. And then the Presidential detail SAC would then make either myself or the chief aware of it.

So it would take time for that notification to take place if it was being done by the Service.

Ms. Cheney. So, when that alert goes out, who would receive that alert?

Mr. Ornato. It all depends how the Intelligence Division is sending that alert. Sometimes it's D.C.-wide for all supervisors, sometimes it's all, or sometimes it's just the director's staff. And then sometimes it's phone calls to make sure that the details are tracking.

But it would come from our Protective Intelligence Operations Center to the details. And, also, if the details are on a trip, they have somebody tied to them that is of Protective Intelligence that would be getting that direct from the PIOC. They would be getting that direct from the Protective Intelligence Operations Center.

Ms. Cheney. And their chains of information flow presumably would be affected by the gravity of the situation, right? So --

Mr. Ornato. Correct.

Ms. Cheney. Okay.

Mr. Ornato. Yeah, they reported that he was being relocated or evacuated up the chain quickly from the PID agent, the Protective Intelligence Division agent, that was with the Vice President's detail at the time at the Capitol. That would've been out of our Washington field office. They would've then relayed that back up here.

Ms. Cheney. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ornato. Yes, ma'am.
BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q Mr. Ornato, we thank you for your time.

I just wanted to ask you -- obviously, you've had experience in law enforcement as well as now from the White House -- whether -- part of the mandate of the House committee is to look prospectively and think about, you know, what lessons learned we can take from January 6th. And I wanted to give you an opportunity to offer your perspective on that.

A Sure. Obviously I don't think I'm going to bring anything that hasn't been covered.

You know, overall coordination, event-wise, we've seen -- just like we learned after 9/11 with the intelligence community needing more coordination, D.C. is compiled of so many Federal agencies, and often at times there are silos built into these agencies.

Now, a lot of agencies, you know, will share information, and we -- we're a warehouse. We don't collect protective intelligence. A lot of the times, we're a warehouse. And if I'm speaking out of context, forgive me. But we take in all the reporting from all the intel community, and then we decide there -- and, also, we monitor social media and those kinds of things for threats on protectees.

But, as you can imagine, tweets, Instagram, all of those things that go out, it is extremely difficult to monitor all of those accounts and get all that information in. You know, as we go on in the technical world, there has to be more coordination or a centralized location that is collecting all of these and also then pushing them out to the agencies that they represent. Because every agency has a piece of the pie and something different.

And I think an overall coordination is definitely something to come for the future, and which the NSSEs do a great job of it, because that's where everybody's brought
together for subcommittees. The problem is, the NSSEs obviously need so much personnel, so much money. And, you know, they have to -- because if everything is important, then nothing is important. So there still has to be that group that deems what is an NSSE, what can be an NSSE, what's a SEAR type of event, and elevate it too.

But, again, you need time to do that. So, you know, for this event, there was not a lot of time in knowing that to build up to an NSSE type of role, which takes sometimes weeks, sometimes months -- mostly months -- to do those types of events. To get that coordination, it's a lot of time.

And that's what I think in the future here -- you know, better coordination for a longer time and knowing what all the threats are out there.

Q Do you think, going forward, an NSSE designation for the joint sessions would be advisable?

A I would think, if the intel -- because the intel group, you're going to know the intel coming up to that. Then, if the intel drives it, then it's definitely advisable.

Q So --

A If the intel doesn't drive it, then, you know, you still have to put mechanisms in place and assets in place for if the intel is not there but you still want to be prepared for it and have a plan for if something does happen that wasn't projected.

Q And it sounds like, from what you testified to earlier, the intel was not there from what you were receiving from the Secret Service.

A What I was receiving, I didn't predict -- I couldn't predict what was going to take place there at the Capitol. I wish I could have.

Q And one more question about that. In your position at the White House for the operations piece, is it always relying on domestic intelligence provided by Secret Service? Or was it by virtue of you being prior Secret Service, that's who you were
receiving intelligence from?

A Nope. The deputy chief of staff does get an intelligence brief from the Agency, from the CIA, almost like the Presidential briefing that takes place. It's usually mostly international stuff, usually doesn't cover too much domestic, because that's what the Agency does, is overseas.

But the FBI briefings and stuff, I didn't receive those. But that goes in, I would assume, into the daily briefing, intel briefing, for the President and the chief.
[2:26 p.m.] BY MR. DAYANANDA:

Q And just so I am clear, that's -- institutionally, the director of operations does not receive an intel briefing?

A Not the whole intel briefing. Like I said, I think it was a couple times a week, the agency would bring over the intel book and make me aware of things of, like, if we were going to certain areas of the world of what was taking place or what could be taking place. A lot of it was cyber here domestically from outside the world. Any of these groups if I asked about, Hey, who are you guys seeing for this? It was mainly again, a lot of groups are being seen in D.C., a lot of people, but that's all they were seeing.

Q But did you receive any intel briefing from the Bureau about January 6th?

A No, I did not.

Q And there was nothing about the groups that you were aware of, whether it was certain groups affiliated with domestic violence extremism that raised a flag for you?

A No, at that point, I didn't know each specific group. Like I said, there were so many that is was just brief stuff, large numbers, and just kind of a generalization.

Ms. Dayananda. Ms. Cheney, did you have anything?

Ms. Cheney. Yeah, I wanted to just follow up on that, Soumya.

So I understand, Mr. Ornato, that -- well, let me ask you this way: When you came into work on the 6th, is it your assertion today that you really just thought that there was nothing to be concerned about.

Mr. Ornato. I was concerned about -- like I said, my concern was the White House Complex, having -- I didn't know how many people were going to show up. So
coming in that day, I actually was betting on the lower end, because people were blowing this up that there was going to be 50,000, 80,000 people out there. And, you know, those are the people that are always trying to blow up the events. Sorry, I am using that term, but trying to say that there is going to be more than actually shows to get people excited about the event in the White House. However, from my dealings with rallies and going on through the year, the percentage-wise was always about 20 to 25 percent of what those people said actually showed up. So, I did not think we were going to have that large of a crowd. I knew there was going to be, you know, anti and pro groups out there. That was my concern was the clashing of the groups outside of the Ellipse.

Ms. Cheney. So you were concerned about potential for violence?

Mr. Ornato. Of the groups, correct. But not necessarily the Capitol. I did not predict or could not predict anything that was going to take place at the Capitol.

Ms. Cheney. Thank you.

Mr. Ornato. Yes, ma'am.

BY MS. DAYANANDA:

Q And just to put one final point on that, is the concern about the protesters, was that information relayed to you from the Secret Service briefing or from other information that you were aware of?

A No, that was just from the Secret Service briefing.

Q Understood. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that we should have, Mr. Ornato?

A No, you asked me more than actually I could have remembered until you jogged some of my memory. So, no, I think you've gone through everything.

Q And we'll follow up on those EOC documents with Mr. Hughes and Mr. Kremer. We appreciate your time today, but I think at 2:29. If there is nothing further,
we're off the record. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 2:30 p.m., the interview was concluded.]
Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing _____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

_____________________________
Witness Name

_____________________________
Date