



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: OCTAVIO JONES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES; MADDIE MCGARVEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Show of Strength and No-Show Protesters

Government buildings around the country were fortified and on high alert this weekend, and the number of pro-Trump demonstrators was small. Clockwise from top left: St. Paul, Minn.; Lansing, Mich.; the U.S. Capitol, in Washington; Columbus, Ohio. Page A19.

Republicans Spin Capitol Attack With Barrage of Misinformation

By ASTEAD W. HERNDON

Immediately after the attack on the U.S. Capitol, all corners of the political spectrum repudiated the mob of President Trump's supporters. Yet within days, prominent Republicans, party officials, conservative media voices and rank-and-file voters began making a rhetorical shift to try to downplay the group's violent actions.

In one of the ultimate don't-believe-your-eyes moments of the Trump era, these Republicans have retreated to the ranks of misinformation, claiming it was Black Lives Matter protesters and far-left groups like antifa who stormed the Capitol — in spite of the pro-Trump flags and QAnon symbology in the crowd. Others have argued that the attack was no worse than the rioting and looting in cities during the Black Lives

Matter movement, often exaggerating the unrest last summer while minimizing a mob's attempt to overturn an election.

The shift is revealing about how conspiracy theories, deflection and political incentives play off one another in Mr. Trump's G.O.P. For a brief time, Republican officials seemed perhaps open to grappling with what their party's leader had wrought — violence in the name of their Electoral College fight. But any window of reflection now seems to be closing as Republicans try to pass blame and to compare last summer's lawlessness, which was con-

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FOX NEWS The network amplified lies that radicalized Trump supporters, Ben Smith writes. PAGE B1

We Just Followed Trump's Cue, Several Accused in Rioting Say

By ALAN FEUER and NICOLE HONG

In the two weeks since a raging mob stormed the Capitol, President Trump has shown no sign that he believes he shares responsibility for the worst incursion on the halls of Congress in more than two centuries. Shielding him further, his loyalists have started shifting blame for the attack to an array of distracting boogymen: far-left anti-fascists, Black Lives Matter activists, even vague conspiracies of a setup involving Vice President Mike Pence.

But one group of people has already come forward and directly implicated Mr. Trump in the riot at the Capitol: some of his own supporters who were arrested while taking part in it. In court papers and interviews, at least four pro-Trump rioters have said they joined the march that spiraled into violence in part because the president encouraged them to do so.

In the past few days, a retired firefighter charged with assaulting members of the Capitol Police force told a friend he went to the building following "the president's instructions," according to a criminal complaint, and a Texas real estate agent accused of breaching the building told a reporter that by protesting in Washington, she had "answered the call of my president."

A Virginia man has told the F.B.I. that he and his cousin marched on the Capitol because Mr. Trump said "something about taking Pennsylvania Avenue." And a lawyer for the so-called QAnon Shaman — who invaded the building in a Viking costume — said that Mr. Trump was culpable and that he planned to ask the White House for a pardon.

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In Battle of Wills With Putin, Navalny Is Jailed in Moscow Return

By ANTON TROIANOVSKI and IVAN NECHEPURENKO

MOSCOW — Aleksei A. Navalny returned to his home country Sunday, five months after a near-fatal nerve-agent attack, and was arrested at the border, a show of fearlessness by Russia's most prominent opposition leader and of anxiety by President Vladimir V. Putin.

In hours of live-streamed drama that played out in Berlin, in the air and at two Moscow airports, Mr. Navalny careened headlong into near-certain detention after deciding to leave the relative safety of Germany, where he had been recovering from last summer's poisoning.

Hundreds of people braved the bitter cold outside Moscow's Vnukovo Airport to greet Mr. Navalny, but the low-cost Russian airline he was flying was diverted just before landing to a different Moscow airport. There, at passport control, Mr. Navalny was confronted by uniformed policemen in black masks.

He embraced his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, before being led away.



Aleksei A. Navalny before his flight left Berlin on Sunday. He had been in Germany since August.

"I am not afraid," Mr. Navalny told reporters just before he was detained, standing in front of a neon sign at the airport that portrayed the Kremlin. "I know that I am in the right and that all the

criminal cases against me are fabricated."

Mr. Navalny's arrest had been expected, but the day offered some of the most dramatic images of recent years underlining both

Russia's rising domestic discontent and the Kremlin's jitters over it.

Scores of riot police officers in camouflage uniforms and shiny

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400,000 Deaths in a Year And Failure at Every Level

With No Unified Virus Plan, States Battled Experts, Lobbyists and the Public

This article is by Sarah Mervosh, Mike Baker, Patricia Mazzei and Mark Walker.

The path to beating the coronavirus was clear, but Kelley Vollmar had never felt so helpless.

As the top health official in Missouri's Jefferson County, Ms. Vollmar knew a mandate requiring people to wear masks could help save lives. She pressed the governor's office to issue a statewide order, and hospital leaders were making a similar push. Even the White House, at a time when President Trump was sometimes mocking people who wore masks, was privately urging the Republican governor to impose a mandate.

Still, Gov. Mike Parson resisted, and in the suburbs of St. Louis, Ms. Vollmar found herself under attack. A member of the county health board called her a liar. The sheriff announced that he would not enforce a local mandate. After anti-mask activists posted her address online, Ms. Vollmar installed a security system at her home.

"This past year, everything that we've done has been questioned," said Ms. Vollmar, whose own mother, 77, died from complications of the coronavirus in December. "It feels like the Lorax from the old Dr. Seuss story: I'm here to save the trees, and nobody is listening."

For nearly the entire pandemic, political polarization and a rejection of science have stymied the United States' ability to control the coronavirus. That has been clearest and most damaging at the

federal level, where Mr. Trump claimed that the virus would "disappear," clashed with his top scientists and, in a pivotal failure, abdicated responsibility for a pandemic that required a national effort to defeat it, handing key decisions over to states under the assumption that they would take on the fight and get the country back to business.

But governors and local officials who were left in charge of the crisis squandered the little momentum the country had as they sidelined health experts, ignored warnings from their own advisers and, in some cases, stocked their advisory committees with more business representatives than doctors.

Nearly one year since the first known coronavirus case in the United States was announced north of Seattle on Jan. 21, 2020, the full extent of the nation's failures has come into clear view:

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BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Protesting lockdowns in Huntington Beach, Calif., last May.

Theory Buckles, But QAnon Fan Hangs On Tight

Every morning, Valerie Gilbert, a Harvard-educated writer and actress, wakes up in her Upper East Side apartment; feeds her dog, Milo, and her cats, Marlena and Celeste; brews a cup of coffee; and sits down at her oval dining room table.

Then, she opens her laptop and begins fighting the global cabal.

Ms. Gilbert, 57, is a believer in QAnon, the pro-Trump conspiracy theory. Like all QAnon faithful, she is convinced that the world is run by a satanic group of pedophiles that includes top Democrats and Hollywood elites, and that President Trump has spent years leading a top-secret mission to bring these evildoers to justice.

She unspools this web of falsehoods on her Facebook page, where she posts dozens of times a day, often sharing links from right-wing sites like Breitbart and The Epoch Times or QAnon memes she has pulled off Twitter. On a recent day, her feed included a rant against Covid-19 lockdowns, a grainy meme accusing Congress of "high treason," a post calling Lady Gaga a Satanist and a claim that "covfefe," a typo that Mr. Trump accidentally tweeted three years ago, was a coded intelligence message.

"I'm the meme queen," Ms. Gilbert told me. "I won't produce them, but I share a mean meme, and I'm kind of raw."

These are confusing times for followers of QAnon, a deranged conspiracy theory birthed in the bowels of the internet. They were told that Mr. Trump would be re-elected in a landslide, and that

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Pardon Season Enriches Allies Of the President

By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT and KENNETH P. VOGEL

WASHINGTON — As President Trump prepares to leave office in days, a lucrative market for pardons is coming to a head, with some of his allies collecting fees from wealthy felons or their associates to push the White House for clemency, according to documents and interviews with more than three dozen lobbyists and lawyers.

The brisk market for pardons reflects the access peddling that has defined Mr. Trump's presidency as well as his unorthodox approach to exercising unchecked presidential clemency powers. Pardons and commutations are intended to show mercy to deserving recipients, but Mr. Trump has used many of them to reward personal or political allies.

The pardon lobbying heated up as it became clear that Mr. Trump had no recourse for challenging his election defeat, lobbyists and lawyers say. One lobbyist, Brett Tolman, a former federal prosecutor who has been advising the White House on pardons and commutations, has monetized his clemency work, collecting tens of thousands of dollars, and possibly more, in recent weeks to lobby the White House for clemency for the son of a former Arkansas senator; the founder of the notorious online drug marketplace Silk Road; and a Manhattan socialite who pleaded guilty in a fraud scheme.

Mr. Trump's former personal lawyer John M. Dowd has marketed himself to convicted felons as someone who could secure pardons because of his close relationship with the president, accepting tens of thousands of dollars from a wealthy felon and advising him

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A new wave of violence and a growing uncertainty about the country's future have left Kabul on edge. PAGE A9

Guatemala Battles Caravan

A group of up to 7,000 migrants hopes to reach the United States, where asylum rules may later change. PAGE A10

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400,000 Excess Deaths in U.S.

Deaths nationwide were 18 percent higher than normal from March 15 to Dec. 26, an analysis of data from the C.D.C. shows. PAGE A4

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Facebook was going to compete with Google on ad sales, but a deal changed that, court documents say. PAGE B1

Where's That Peloton?

Deliveries of the exercise bikes have been delayed, sometimes by months, angering new customers. PAGE B1



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The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches have a particular resonance after a tumultuous year. PAGE A13

The New Inner Circle

A look at President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s 28 cabinet nominees and senior advisers. PAGE A22

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Exploring Black Identity

Adrienne Kennedy's plays are never easy, but a four-play retrospective reminds us they're worth the effort, Maya Phillips writes. PAGE C1

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Chiefs and Buccaneers Advance

With Patrick Mahomes injured, Chad Henne sealed Kansas City's win over Cleveland. Tampa Bay beat New Orleans in the other N.F.L. playoff game. PAGE D3

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Kara Swisher

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Influential Music Producer

Phil Spector generated a string of pop hits in the 1960s. However, in 2009, he was convicted of murder and sentenced to 19 years to life. He was 81. PAGE D8

