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USA

House Committee Says Trump Was at Center of Attempted Coup

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For the first time, an element of the U.S. government has accused former president Donald J. Trump of being the leader of an attempted coup d'état. The chairman of the House select committee to investigate the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, Democrat Bennie Thompson, stated that, "Donald Trump was at the center of this conspiracy." He added, "Two and a half centuries of constitutional democracy are at risk."

The hearing's revelations represent a landmark in American history. Only former president Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal, involving his agents' break-in at Democratic Party headquarters and other dirty tricks to win the 1974 presidential election, even comes close. And when threatened with impeachment, Nixon resigned.

Now we have a U.S. president accused of a seditious conspiracy and organization of a coup d'état, the first such attempted interruption of the peaceful transfer of power in 234 years under the Constitution. While the media had previously made this case and many on the left believed that Trump was responsible for the insurrection on January 6, no government body had previously said so. The House hearing, the first of five that will be broadcast, puts tremendous pressure on Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Justice Department to indict Trump, who still leads the Republican Party and has declared himself a candidate for the presidential election in 2024. Garland has said, "We will follow the facts wherever they lead," but he seems to be reluctant to indict Trump.

The two-hour television broadcast carried by all major channels except Fox, watched by twenty million people, included videotape of the violent attack on the Capitol and both taped and live testimony, making clear that the events of January 6 were not a peaceful protest demonstration run amuck, but a planned attack. Fox News, which supports former president Trump, aired without commercial interruption rightwing commentators Tucker Carlson who called the House hearings "lies."

The Republican Party opposed holding the hearings and only two Republican congressional representatives, Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger, participated in the committee. The Republicans subsequently voted to expel Cheney from the party leadership. Both Cheney and Kinzinger are viewed by Trump and his followers as traitors.

What happens now?

The political problem is that over 40 percent of Americans have been convinced by Trump's "big lie" that he won the election, even though every court ruled against his election challenges. Those people are unlikely to have their minds changed by the hearings.

So, the question arises: What happens if the Department of Justice indicts Trump and tries him? There is among some liberals the fear that indictment of the former president will in the current climate will inevitably be perceived as a partisan persecution of Trump. If Trump is put on trial, they argue, this could both further divide the country and incite his followers to more violent action. On the other hand, many progressives believe that Trump should be indicted. Some Democrats fear think that if the Justice Department doesn't indict Trump, Biden will continue to be perceived as weak and ineffective, as well as irresponsible. The far left is too small to have any effect on these debates, and hasn't said much about them.

It doesn't seem that these hearings will have much impact on the mid-term elections of November 2022 that the

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Republicans are expected to win, which would give them control of both houses of Congress and the power to shut shot down the House investigation of January 6. Trump, who still leads the Republican Party and is running for president in 2024, could win. All of this makes the Attorney General's decision critical, but even indictment and conviction would not stop Trump from running for president. There would have to be a change in the minds of the American people.

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