

**Hearing on the Weaponization of the Federal Government**  
**Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government**  
**Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**  
**12:00 PM, Thursday, February 9, 2023**  
**2141 RHOB**

The central premise of this select subcommittee is that right-wing lawlessness is the new law and order.

The subcommittee will be a forum to attack federal agencies for investigating, prosecuting, and securing convictions of violent right-wing extremists, including insurrectionists and domestic terrorists.

Many Republicans hate that nearly 500 people have been convicted of crimes related to the armed insurrection on January 6, 2021. They would like that number to be zero. Not because they wish January 6<sup>th</sup> never happened. But because they wish no one guilty of committing violence that day was forced to suffer the consequences of attacking our democracy.

In fact, one of our Senate witnesses today maintains that January 6<sup>th</sup> was not an armed insurrection at all. He said that to a Rotary Club in his state. But I wonder if he would be willing to say the same thing to the families of people who died because of the violence that day.

The Republicans on the subcommittee will say: this subcommittee is not about political retribution for holding January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrectionists accountable for their violent and dangerous actions. However, the architects of this subcommittee, as a condition of their vote for Speaker of the House, made Speaker McCarthy assure them that the subcommittee would be provided with at least as much funding and staffing as the January 6<sup>th</sup> Committee.” This is absolutely about retribution.

The Republicans on the subcommittee are going to attack efforts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to quantify and counter the threat of violent white supremacists in America. The attacks will seem innocuous at first. They might accuse the FBI of overestimating the number of white supremacist groups in the United States. Or they might start to question whether or not these groups should be considered domestic terrorists.

Little by little, Republicans are going to attempt to chip away at our shared understanding of the work done by the FBI and other investigative agencies to keep Americans safe from right-wing violence. For example, what do we think Republicans are doing when they call convicted insurrectionists patriots? They are dangling amnesty in front of violent right-wing political movements. They are saying to these criminals that if we had control of the agencies that are investigating, vilifying, and arresting your members, you would have nothing to worry about. Charlottesville? Have at it. January 6<sup>th</sup>? Sure, if it serves our political ends again. And my fear is

that this message, from an official body of the House of Representatives, could very well have the impact of undermining the rule of law in America.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle say they are concerned about the persecution of the right-wing by the FBI. Anyone who knows the history of the FBI knows this is ahistorical paranoia and a case study in projection.

In 1919 and 1920, Woodrow Wilson's Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, hired J. Edgar Hoover to conduct a series of notorious raids called the "palmer raids" to round up dissidents and so-called "radicals" and "political subversives" such as "anarchists, socialists, strike organizers, the occasional mail bomber, etc." J. Edgar Hoover would stay on at the FBI for the rest of his life, rising to run the Bureau as FBI Director for 37 years, from 1935-1972.

Following investigations and lengthy reporting in the years since his death, it was discovered that Hoover had erected a clandestine program aimed at "disrupting" and "neutralizing" left-wing and civil-rights organizations throughout his time in office. Through counterintelligence operation COINTELPRO, the FBI, infiltrated left wing organizations to discredit and defame the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements and their leaders. As the Ku Klux Klan lynched Black Americans in the South, Hoover and the FBI targeted the Civil Rights Movement. As Nixon dropped 110,000 tons of bombs on Cambodia in 1969-1970, Hoover and the FBI organized against the anti-war movement. And today, what building do agents at the Bureau Headquarters walk into every morning? The J. Edgar Hoover Building. The notion that the FBI targets conservatives is not only untrue, it is historically inaccurate.

This select subcommittee has one agenda – to attack law enforcement officers while protecting criminals in a manner that will have the effect of conveying immunity for right-wing violence. It is no coincidence the latest Republican addition to this Committee sought a pre-emptive pardon from former President Donald Trump per the sworn testimony of former White House staff.

Right-wing lawlessness is the new law and order.