

“ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA:” WHAT WE KNOW OF THE OATH KEEPERS’ JANUARY 6 QUICK REACTION FORCE

On Twitter yesterday, some folks asked me whether there’s any credibility to the government’s claims that the Oath Keepers had an armed Quick Reaction Force ready to rush to DC in case things devolved to armed battles on January 6.

At first, it appeared that the government might just be unduly crediting the wild boasts of Thomas Caldwell, who spoke repeatedly of arranging such a force in the days leading up to January 6. But over the course of a series of filings, the government has shown that after a sustained discussion about whether Oath Keepers should come armed to DC for the insurrection, it was decided to instead amass guns in (at a minimum) the Ballston, VA Comfort Inn. The evidence thus far submitted shows that multiple participants knew of the stash, called it the QRF, and deposited their own weapons at the stash. The record is less certain about what plans the Oath Keepers had to transport that arsenal to DC, but in a remarkable comment on January 3, Kelly Meggs – who appears to have played a key role in organizing security for Roger Stone, inter-militia negotiations, and The Stack that pushed into the Rotunda on January 6, and who may have paid for two rooms to use for the QRF – suggested two rally points to receive the weapons: “1 if by land North side of Lincoln Memorial 2 if by sea Corner of west basin and Ohio is a water transport landing !!”

This post will pull together the evidence shown to date.

On December 25, according to the Fourth

Superseding indictment and other filings, Kelly Meggs noted on Facebook what a lot of other militia members were at the time: guns are prohibited in DC. "We are all staying in DC near the Capitol we are at the Hilton garden inn but I think it's full. Dc is no guns. So mace and gas masks, some batons. If you have armor that's good."

But within days, on December 30, Thomas Caldwell (who is not a member of the Oath Keepers but who coordinated closely with, at least, contingents from Ohio and North Carolina) told Jessica Watkins that an Oath Keeper from North Carolina had committed to serve as the Quick Reaction Force in Virginia – he was aiming to get reservations at the Comfort Inn in Ballston. The idea was he'd bring weapons into Virginia in his truck.

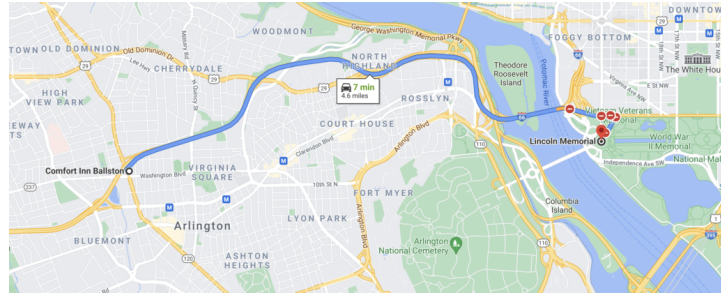
As we speak he is trying to book a room at Comfort Inn Ballston/Arlington because of its close-in location and easy access to downtown because he feels 1) he's too broken down to be on the ground all day and 2) he is committed to being the quick reaction force and bringing the tools if something goes to hell. That way the boys don't have to try to schlep weps on the bus. He'll bring them in his truck day before

Over the course of that same conversation, Caldwell updated Watkins that the North Carolina Oath Keeper had indeed gotten reservations at the Ballston Comfort Inn. "Just got a text from him he WAS able to book a room in that hotel I recommended which is on Glebe Road in Arlington."

The next day, Meggs seems to have come to the same understanding. On December 31, he asked someone else if they were bringing weapons to DC. "You guys Gonna carry?" After the other person said, "No," they weren't, Meggs explained that the Oath Keepers had a Quick Reaction Force 10 minutes away. "Ok we aren't either, we have a

heavy QRF 10 Min out though.”

The Comfort Inn in Ballston would be a 7-minute drive without traffic.



That same day, December 31, someone offered up to Joshua James assistance from friends close to DC if the Oath Keepers got in trouble. “i have friends not far from DC with a lot of weapons and ammo if you get un trouble i ca. Coordinate help.” James suggested they might not need it on account of the QRF, “That might be helpful, but we have a shitload of QRF on standby with an arsenal.” The next day an Oath Keeper asked James how to get the guns to VA if the Alabaman Oath Keepers were staying in DC. “Hey we told to bring guns and maybe stage them in VA?? But you are showing hotels in DC for Alabama. Are we bring guns or no if so how will that work?” James suggested a farm might still be in play. “Were working on a Farm location Some are bringing long rifles some sidearms... I’m bringing sidearm.” By that point, then, it appears the Oath Keepers had committed to keeping weapons in VA with a QRF. But the logistics of it remained uncertain.

On January 2, Kelly Meggs texted a Leadership Signal chat with those two proposed meeting points for the QRF in DC: the Lincoln Memorial if the bridge was still open, and south of there at Ohio and West Basin if the bridges did get shut. “1 if by land North side of Lincoln Memorial 2 if by sea Corner of west basin and Ohio is a water transport landing !! QRF rally points Water of the bridges get closed.” The next day, Caldwell sent out a text message to a Three Percenter looking for a boat to ferry weapons.

Can't believe I just thought of this: how many people either in the militia or not (who are still supportive of our efforts to save the Republic) have a boat on a trailer that could handle a Potomac crossing? If we had someone standing by at a dock ramp (one near the Pentagon for sure) we could have our Quick Response Team with the heavy weapons standing by, quickly load them and ferry them across the river to our waiting arms. I'm not talking about a bass boat. Anyone who would be interested in supporting the team this way? I will buy the fuel. More or less be hanging around sipping coffee and maybe scooting on the river a bit and pretending to fish, then if it all went to shit, our guy loads our weps AND Blue Ridge Militia weps and ferries them across. Dude! If we had 2 boats, we could ferry across and never drive into D.C. at all!!!!

But the next day, January 3, Caldwell sent an email with maps to the person in charge of the QRF with the subject line, "NEW MAPS RELATIVE TO HOTEL AND INGRESS FOR QRF," that seemed to assume he would drive from the hotel to "the target area," via a route that went nowhere near the Lincoln Memorial. "These maps walk you from the hotel into D.C. and east toward the target area on multiple roads running west to east including M street and P street, two of my favorites"

Similarly, it remained unsettled whether or not individual participants would contribute their own weapons to the stash. On January 2, for example, Mark Grods asked Joshua James if he should bring weapons to insurrection. "So, I guess I am taking full gear less weapons? Just reading through all the posts. Would rather have it and not need it." James instructed him to leave his weapons home, because the QRF would have weapons. "Yeah full gear... QRF will have

weapons Just leave em home.”

On January 3, Jessica Watkins told Bennie Parker that they didn't need to bring weapons because the QRF would be there. “We are not bringing firearms. QRF will be our Law Enforcement members of Oathkeepers.” But then that same day she reversed the instruction. “Weapons are ok now as well. Sorry for the confusion.”

On January 4, Stewart Rhodes made the Oath Keepers' plan to have a QRF nearby public.

As we have done on all recent DC Ops, we will also have well armed and equipped QRF1 teams on standby, outside DC, in the event of a worst case scenario, where the President calls us up as part of the militia to to assist him inside DC. We don't expect a need for him to call on us for that at this time, but we stand ready if he does (and we also stand ready to answer the call to serve as militia anytime in the future, and anywhere in our nation, if he does invoke the Insurrection Act).

Both Watkins and Grods appear to have brought their own weapons. On January 4, before she got to the Comfort Inn, Watkins asked the Florida Signal list where to drop weapons off before any operations. “Where can we drop off weapons to the QRF team? I'd like to have the weapons secured prior to the Op tomorrow.” According to Mark Grods' Information, he “brought firearms to Washington, D.C.” – which may have exposed him to further criminal liability – “and eventually provided them to another individual to store in a Virginia hotel.”

Kenneth Harrelson also appears to have dropped guns at the Ballston Comfort Inn. On the 5th, Harrelson asked for the location of the “QRF hotel.” Kelly Meggs responded by asking for a DM. Three hours later, Harrelson showed up at the Comfort Inn for an hour.

Caldwell, too, appears to have dropped off a

weapon to the QRF room, as this surveillance video from mid-afternoon on January 5 suggests (the government alleges he is holding the long sheet-wrapped item).



After Caldwell returned from the Capitol on January 6, the North Carolina Oath Keeper brought a similarly blanket-wrapped long item to Caldwell's room.



The newly accused alleged Stack participant David Moerschel also appears to have left a gun at the Comfort Inn. Early on January 7, according to his complaint, Moerschel made two comments on the Oath Keepers' "OK FL DC OP Jan 6" Signal chat about leaving stuff for others at

the QRF – the Ballston Comfort Inn.

“We have your bag, We will leave it with Kane at the QRF. We are en route there now.”

“Anyone else leave anything in the white van? We can leave it for you at QRF.”

Moerschel sent the first text, saying “we are en route” at 6:35AM. Twenty-four minutes later, a person that the government alleges is Moerschel appeared in Comfort Inn surveillance video carting a gun case around.



According to a detention memo for Joseph Hackett, he and Kelly Meggs, along with another person, showed up shortly thereafter.



Kenneth Harrelson got a later start than the others. At 8:55 on January 7, he texted to the Florida Signal chat, asking where his “shit” was at.

So we’re just leaving DC and I would like to know where my shits at since it seems everyone’s gone already.

In response, someone replied,

We are headed out now. Did you leave it [his shit] at Comfort Inn in that room?

Starting twenty minutes later, Harrelson was at the Comfort Inn along with Jason Dolan, with whom Harrelson drove in a rental car.



In Moerschel's complaint, the North Carolinians alleged to have watched this QRF room while others were at insurrection are described without comment as co-conspirators. None have been charged (at least not publicly). But if and when they are, I imagine we'll see still more video of weapons being moved around the Ballston Quality Inn.

Again, the precise plan for all these weapons remains unclear. But the government has provided evidence that at least six people already charged (Caldwell, Watkins, Moerschel, Harrelson, Grods, and Dolan) dropped off weapons. Given that Kelly Meggs paid for two hotel rooms there even though he stayed in DC, the implication may be that the same guy planning, "1 if by land, 2 if by sea," paid for the rooms in question.

Update, August 18: Added footage with Hackett and Meggs.