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12 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
13 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**
14 **SOUTHERN DIVISION**

15 JOHN C. EASTMAN

16 Plaintiff,

17 vs.

18 BENNIE G. THOMPSON, *et al.*,

19 Defendants.

20 Case No. 8:22-cv-00099-DOC-DFM

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25
26 **Exhibit J**
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4 SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE
5 JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL,
6 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
7 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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11 DEPOSITION OF: BENJAMIN WILLIAMSON

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Tuesday, January 25, 2022

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Washington, D.C.

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The interview in the above matter was held via Webex, commencing at 10:07 a.m.

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Present: Representatives Aguilar, Lofgren, Murphy, Cheney, and Kinzinger.

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2 Appearances:

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5 For the SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE

6 THE JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL:

7

8 KATIE ABRAMS, STAFF ASSOCIATE

9 RICHARD R. BRUNO, ADMIN ASSISTANT AND SCHEDULER

10 DANIEL A. GEORGE, SENIOR INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

11 TIMOTHY HEAPHY, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

12 JOE MAHER, DETAILEE, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

13 EVAN B. MAULDIN, CHIEF CLERK

14 GRANT SAUNDERS, STAFF ASSOCIATE

15

16

17 For BENJAMIN WILLIAMSON:

18

19 MIKE HOWELL

1 Mr. George. Sure. That's all very fair, and I guess part of it I would ask
2 Mr. Williamson when he first learned about any events going on at the Capitol that
3 precipitated violence or that included violence. So I think it's been widely reported and
4 known that rioters went to the Capitol, breached the barricades around the Capitol,
5 ultimately broke into the Capitol and were inside the Capitol for a long period of time.
6 There were violent episodes throughout that. So that's what I'm talking about when I
7 talk about the attack on the Capitol.

8 BY MR. GEORGE:

9 Q And to your point, I'll first say, when did you first learn that rioters were
10 either approaching or had proceeded past any barricades at the Capitol?

11 A I was in my office and I had the TV on in the office, which was on a quad
12 screen setup, four networks, one in each corner. And I was in my office eating lunch,
13 and I don't remember what time exactly, but there was a point where I saw the situation
14 starting to devolve over at the Capitol a little bit from there.

15 Q Okay. Do you remember what you saw that made you think it was starting
16 to devolve?

17 A Yes. There was a pepper spray exchange between some of the group that
18 was over at the Capitol and Capitol Police, I don't remember from which direction. And
19 there were obviously barricades that were being used against Capitol Police that I could
20 see on the screen. And that's the last thing that I remember seeing.

21 Q All right. Now, and forgive me because we had the break, but were you
22 with Ms. Matthews at that point? Do you remember?

23 A I don't remember exactly at that point, Dan. I don't remember.

24 Q Do you remember being with Ms. Matthews, seeing what was happening at
25 the Capitol and then you split off essentially, she went to talk to Ms. McEnany and you

1 went to talk with Mr. Meadows? Do you remember anything like that?

2 A I don't remember exactly when. At some point when that was going on, I
3 know she was in my office. I don't recall her ever splitting off to seeing Ms. McEnany.
4 That's possible. And I -- to answer the last part of your question, I don't remember if
5 that coordinated for -- with when I went to go see Mr. Meadows.

6 But individually, I can answer those two things. I don't remember what Sarah
7 exactly did, but at some point, I did go off to split off and see Mr. Meadows, that's
8 correct.

9 Q All right. Before you split off or before you went off to see Mr. Meadows,
10 what was the conversation like? What were you talking about with Ms. Matthews?

11 A I don't remember much of what was said if anything at all. I think obviously
12 we were both, you know, upset about what we were seeing, but I don't recall exactly
13 what was said between the two of us.

14 Q Can you explain that. Why were you upset?

15 A Oh, it just -- obviously, it was a difficult situation at the Capitol. It was -- it
16 looked like the situation was devolving, and so that was really it. And obviously both
17 Ms. Matthews and I used to work at the Capitol, so naturally we were concerned about
18 what was going on there.

19 Q You still had friends there, I imagine?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Do you remember when, relative to events at the Capitol, you went and
22 spoke to Mr. Meadows? And I guess I'll use breaking windows at the Capitol as a
23 moment in time. Do you remember if you spoke to him before the rioters began
24 breaking windows?

25 A I don't remember exactly what time or where it was in relation to the broken

1 windows, no.

2 Q All right. You did say that you went -- broke off and went to speak to
3 Mr. Meadows. Why did you do that?

4 A I believe I had sent him a text saying that we may want to put out some sort
5 of statement because the situation was getting a little hairy over at the Capitol. And
6 then it was common for, after I would text him, I would just go down and see him in
7 person for really anything, just, you know -- just not knowing whether he would have his
8 phone on him or not. And so that was why I went down to see him was just to kind of
9 follow up after I sent a text about what was going on.

10 Q All right. So let's pull up exhibit No. 7. And while that's coming up, you
11 think you went to speak with him after you sent this text?

12 A Yes, I'm fairly certain that's correct.

13 Q Do you remember seeing him or talking to him before you sent this text,
14 which is at 2:02 p.m., on January the 6th, and up on the screen?

15 A I don't remember, no. I don't remember.

16 Q Okay.

17 Mr. George. Ms. Cheney, I see you turned on your camera.

18 Ms. Cheney. I just wondered, Mr. Williamson, do you remember seeing bike
19 racks being breached?

20 The Witness. Yes, on the TV, correct, Congresswoman.

21 Ms. Cheney. Okay. And that would've been before you went to talk to
22 Mr. Meadows?

23 The Witness. I don't remember exactly what time, but I believe so, yes. I
24 believe seeing that on the TV before I went over.

25 Ms. Cheney. Okay. Thank you.

1 BY MR. GEORGE:

2 Q All right. So we've pulled up exhibit No. 7, which is the text message I
3 believe you've been referring to and that I just mentioned, 2:02 p.m., on January the 6th.
4 You say, "Would recommend POTUS put out a tweet about respecting the police over at
5 the Capitol -- getting a little hairy over there," as you just mentioned. That's a tweet
6 that you -- or, excuse me, a text message that you sent to Mr. Meadows?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And just for context, the recipient, at least that's shown on this text message
9 at the top, says "OLD Mark." You also provided a text message to just Mark Meadows.
10 Is there a difference between that? Are there two different phones you were texting?

11 A No. There was only one phone -- well, that would've been his work phone
12 at the time, which I don't think I had texted him on. I think when I took these screen
13 shots at two different periods I had labeled it differently in the process of gathering
14 documents for you all just to make it clear. If there's a discrepancy there, I apologize.
15 But these should all be from the same number, other than I think one document, which I
16 think was a text exchange in our work phones, but I'm not sure if there is or not.

17 Q I see. But this is certainly Mark Meadows?

18 A Yeah, this is Mark Meadows, correct.

19 Q So you -- you made that comment about putting out a tweet. Can you
20 explain why, what you thought that would -- or what you hoped that would accomplish
21 and what it should be?

22 A Oh, I think I say it in the text there that it would be -- would recommend
23 putting out something about respecting the police, because I could see that there was a
24 group of people there that were obviously engaging in behavior toward police that was
25 inappropriate.

1 Q And why a tweet in particular was your recommendation?

2 A It'd be common way of putting out a statement that was easily distributed.

3 Q Did -- was there a difference in your mind between a tweet or a press
4 conference or a video as far as reaching people the fastest?

5 A Not necessarily, no. I -- generally, when the President wanted to get
6 something out quickly, we would talk about doing a tweet, and that's all that I was
7 thinking of in the moment.

8 Q And is that because, to your understanding, the President's supporters
9 followed him on Twitter?

10 A No, not necessarily. It's -- again, it's just the way that we would talk about
11 getting something out the quickest was through the President doing a tweet.

12 Q All right. You went down to speak with Mark Meadows after this. What
13 was that conversation?

14 A Very brief. I went down and told him the same thing I have in the text, that
15 I can recall. And I don't remember anything that was said between us other than I told
16 him that. And to my recollection, he immediately got up and left his office.

17 Q Do you know where he went?

18 A Yes. I followed him down the hallway, and I followed him into the outer
19 Oval corridor, which is the hallway between the Oval Office hallway and the outer Oval
20 section of the Oval Office. I followed him into that little corridor hallway. I saw him
21 walk into outer Oval. I maybe took a step into outer Oval and then left. And I don't
22 know where he went outside of that, but it looked like he was headed in the direction of
23 the Oval Office.

24 Q So did you actually see him enter the Oval?

25 A I did not. I turned around and left because I needed to get back to my staff.

1 Q In that conversation, you said there was little exchange with Mr. Meadows.
2 Did he -- did he do anything to indicate whether he agreed with your recommendation or
3 disagreed?

4 A Yes. He immediately looked like he had heard what I had to say and was
5 jumping to it. He got up and immediately walked down the hallway. And like I said, I
6 followed him in that direction. And that was all that I could remember from that.

7 Q But you don't remember what he said to you, though, other than just
8 saying --

9 A I do not. I don't. And I apologize for interrupting. I don't. I don't
10 recall anything that was exchanged back and forth other than what I had said, which is
11 depicted in the text you just had put up on the screen earlier.

12 Q Now, I understand that the President may have been in the dining room off
13 the Oval. Do you know where the President was at that time?

14 A I do not.

15 Q Did you ever see the President that afternoon in the Oval Office?

16 A I did not.

17 Q Did you ever see him in the dining room?

18 A I did not. It's possible that I may have passed him at some point while he
19 was in there, maybe a door was open or something. But I did not see him that
20 afternoon in the dining room, no.

21 Q If the President was in the dining room when Mr. Meadows walked in that
22 direction, would Mr. Meadows have to go the route he took to get to the dining room, or
23 is there another way to the dining room?

24 A There are two entrances to the dining room. I don't know which way he
25 would've taken. You could take one through the Oval or you could take one through the