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JAN. 6 COVERAGE

Journalist Says DOJ Targeting Him for His Aggressive Post-Jan. 6 Commentary



A munition detonates at protesters' feet on the west front of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. (Courtesy of Steve Baker)



By [Joseph M. Hanneman](#)

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Print

Independent journalist Steve Baker says he was recently warned that his aggressive reporting and commentary about Jan. 6 have created growing ire at the U.S. Department of Justice that could lead to his prosecution for being at the Capitol on that fateful Wednesday in 2021.

Since Jan. 6, Baker, 62, of Raleigh, North Carolina, went through two hours of FBI questioning and faced the looming specter of being added to the list of now more than 1,000 Jan. 6 criminal-case defendants.

He said his recent coverage of Jan. 6 cases and pointed criticisms of the DOJ have once again painted a target on him.

“I got a call from another journalist who has a friendly source inside the Department of Justice there in D.C.,” Baker told The Epoch Times.

“He called me up and said—this is a paraphrase, but he said—‘Your friend in Raleigh, tell him to be careful. He has awakened a couple of people’s attention to his work, and they’re not happy about it at all.’”

The ominous early-morning heads-up got Baker’s attention.

“First of all, when you get a call at 6:30 in the morning from somebody relaying that message, they must have thought that was really important to get a hold of me,” he said. “So the impact of the timing of the delivery was significant.



D.C. Metropolitan Police Department riot officers clash with protesters on the west front of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. (Courtesy of Steve Baker)

“The journalist who gave me the information has a very large national audience and would be the kind of person who would have those types of sources,” Baker said. “...So I had to take it seriously.”

The Epoch Times asked the U.S. Department of Justice for comment on Baker’s contention but did not receive a response.

Documented Intense Scenes

Baker spent much of Jan. 6 in Washington, D.C., capturing video for his news-and-commentary blog, [The Pragmatic Constitutionalist](#). He had a front-row view of some intense scenes, including the initial bombardment of munitions aimed by police at the huge crowd on the Capitol’s west front.

His video work appeared in Jan. 6 films by HBO, The New York Times, and [The Epoch Times](#). It has been syndicated worldwide on Storyful.

Baker filmed the debut of a Metropolitan Police Department “hard squad” and the violence that broke out as the riot-gear-clad officers rolled and rumbled through the dense crowd like a bowling ball through a 10-pin set.

He stood in the corner of the Capitol’s south entrance as officers drew firearms near him and a group of protesters after a radio call about shots fired in the House of Representatives.

Baker’s outspokenness was on full display. He challenged two officers who drew their service weapons and shouted at unarmed protesters. The building was on high alert after reports that someone had been shot outside the Speaker’s Lobby.

“Are you going to use that on us?” Baker asked one USCP officer who charged at the group. “None of us have a gun. We’ve got cameras.”

As the officer explained why the dozen or so law-enforcement officials in the lobby had weapons ready, Baker intoned dryly, “The only shots fired have been fired by you guys.”



Paramedics from the D.C. Fire and EMS Department perform CPR on protester Ashli Babbitt, who was shot by police near the Speaker's Lobby on Jan. 6, 2021. (Courtesy of Steve Baker)

That statement turned out to be true. At the entrance to the House Speaker's Lobby one floor above, USCP Lt. Michael Byrd shot unarmed Air Force veteran Ashli Babbitt, 35. She died about a half-hour later.

What was displayed on Jan. 6 became a hallmark of Baker's work covering the aftermath of the protests and violence at the Capitol. His analysis and commentary often cut to the quick.

'Just Want the Truth'

On podcasts and social media, Baker says things most other journalists are afraid to say. He does not suffer fools gladly. That has earned him a growing following—and some critics—from various sides of his libertarian leanings.

He describes his approach to Jan. 6 as a drive for truth—partisanship and politics be damned. That's a trait he learned from his father, George O. Baker, who spent more than 30 years as a private investigator based in Shreveport, Louisiana.

“I don’t care where the facts lead,” Baker said. “To Trump’s desk, Pelosi’s desk, darker forces within the government, left- or right-wing antagonists, or simply a grand organic accident.”

He said his latest focus has been “government incompetence that allowed it, or even a sinister plan to initiate the violence.”

“I just want the truth,” he said. “Now I’m focusing on the weaponization of the DOJ against the innocent people who’ve been caught up in the politicized aftermath.”

Baker said if he ends up facing DOJ prosecution for being at the Capitol, it will be just the latest example of the government targeting right-of-center journalists to the exclusion of so-called mainstream media.



Metropolitan Police Department Sgt. Frank Edwards fires a munition shell toward protesters on the west side of the Capitol on January 6, 2021. (Courtesy of Steve Baker)

Looking over a [list of hundreds](#) of Jan. 6 journalists compiled by Sedition Hunters, Baker said he could not find an example of a mainstream journalist targeted for criminal charges.

Meanwhile, independent and right-leaning journalists such as J.D. Rivera, Sam Montoya, Stephen Horn, Will Pope, and Shawn Witzemann have faced DOJ prosecution.

“The most obvious characteristic of that list is that none of those that worked for major media, left-wing sources, have been prosecuted,” Baker said. “But you can’t say the same on the other side of the ledger.”

Taking Aim

If Baker’s intense focus on Jan. 6 news has created waves, he says to blame the COVID lockdowns for his weaponization. The government-enforced loss of freedoms helped to destroy his business playing trumpet with the Bull City Syndicate, Captain & The Keels, and the American Bowie Experience. He turned the sudden overabundance of time into full-time journalism.

Baker’s live coverage of the Oath Keepers seditious-conspiracy trial from September through November 2022 was unique because he shared his thoughts from observing the press room and how legacy media covered the trial.

Five Oath Keepers defendants, founder Stewart Rhodes, Kelly Meggs, Jessica Watkins, Kenneth Harrelson, and Thomas Caldwell—were prosecuted for allegedly conspiring to attack the Capitol and prevent certification or counting of Electoral College votes from the 2020 election. Rhodes and Meggs were found guilty of seditious conspiracy, while the rest were convicted of various Jan. 6 charges

On Oct. 19, Baker posted how many of the reporters laughed at defense attorney Brad Geyer during his cross-examination of Oath Keeper Jason Dolan, who was testifying for the prosecution against Geyer’s client Harrelson and his co-defendants.

“Media room journos break out laughing their a**es off when Geyer asks Dolan to let him know when [he] “sees something amiss”. . . and a reporter exclaims in [the] room: ‘I can tell you what’s amiss!’ –the most blatant eruption in the media room thus far in the trial.”

Baker also described how the legacy media gathered around each other's computers during the trial and—on many days—how similar were the headlines on their stories. He called it “the single most dark moment of realization that I had.”

“This group of palace guards that I'm sitting amongst inside that room, they are protecting the narrative,” Baker said.



Steve Baker plays trumpet for The Bull City Syndicate in Raleigh, N.C., his full-time job until COVID and Jan. 6. (Courtesy of Steve Baker)

After the ninth day of trial, he described the prosecution's introduction of highly personal and graphic texts between Rhodes and former Oath Keepers general counsel Kellye SoRelle—content that FBI agents had promised Rhodes would not be made public.

“Completely salacious and immaterial to the case,” Baker wrote on Twitter. “What do you think the MSM headlines were about that day?”

In addition, to live micro coverage on Twitter, articles on his Locals page, and [video updates](#), Baker made regular radio appearances on Truth News Network (TNN) with Dan Newman. Baker often ridiculed the DOJ's theory of the case, commenting early in the trial that he believed the facts were not there to support prosecution for conspiracy.

Baker's daily take on the trial was often quite different than that published by corporate media. Commenting on Oct. 25, Baker told the TNN radio audience that defense attorneys got the main FBI agent in the case to admit that Rhodes never ordered any Oath Keepers to go into the Capitol on Jan. 6.

"There's been no connection made between the Oath Keepers and anybody who breached the barricades, kicked a door in, busted a window, or attacked a single police officer," Baker said.

Gaining Media Reach

Baker collaborated on a [Jan. 10 report](#) in The Epoch Times featuring former Capitol Police Lt. Tarik Johnson and his description of leadership breakdowns that led to a dangerous delay in the evacuation of Congress on Jan. 6.

He followed that with a [three-part series](#) on the Capitol Police, putting forth his belief that rank-and-file officers were "sacrificial pawns" who were not given critical intelligence or posted in sufficient numbers at the Capitol.

Producers of "Tucker Carlson Tonight" at Fox News contacted him when they were researching the more than 40,000 hours of Jan. 6 video using access granted by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.).



Independent journalist Steve Baker appeared on “Tucker Carlson Tonight” on March 21, 2023. (Screenshot via The Epoch Times)

Baker suggested they interview former Lt. Johnson. On March 7, Carlson aired an extended interview with Johnson, who detailed how he had to evacuate the Senate and House because former Assistant Chief Yogananda Pittman ignored his radio calls for authorization.

After Baker was issued the warning about possible DOJ charges, he appeared on Carlson’s highly-rated show and described how he first got on the DOJ’s radar.

Baker said his attorney, Brad Geyer, likens his public profile and Jan. 6 appearances to building himself a medieval fortress.

“One of the things that he has told me for so long is that my aggressive offensive positioning, from the very first day as to my threats from the Department of Justice [on] charges against me, was building a moat around me and keeping them at bay,” he said.

“It’s like, ‘Crap, [if] we go after this guy, we’ve got to deal with the First Amendment issue. And it’s gonna be a legitimate fight. It’s gonna look like we’re attacking a journalist.’”