

3 denied bond in alleged plot to kidnap Michigan governor

By David Eggert and Kathleen Foody
Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Members of anti-government paramilitary groups implicated in an alleged plot to kidnap Michigan's governor over measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus during a fraught election year also discussed abducting Virginia's governor during a June meeting, an FBI agent testified Tuesday, Oct. 13.

During a hearing in a Grand Rapids federal court to review the evidence against the five Michigan defendants, Magistrate Judge Sally Berens ordered Kaleb Franks, Daniel

Harris and Brandon Caserta to be held without bond until the trial. She said she would rule at a later date on the bond status of the other two Michigan men, Adam Fox and Ty Garbin. A sixth defendant from Delaware, Barry Croft, was ordered Tuesday to be transferred to Michigan to face the charges.

Berens' ruling came after a hearing in which FBI agent Richard Trask revealed details about investigators' use of informants, undercover agents and encrypted communication in the alleged plot to kidnap Michigan's Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer, before Election Day.

"They discussed possible targets, taking a sitting governor, specifically issues with the governor of Michigan and Virginia based on the lockdown orders," Trask said, noting that the roughly 15 people at the June 6 meeting in Dublin, Ohio, were unhappy with the governors' responses to the coronavirus pandemic.

Trask said Fox, who authorities say was one of the ringleaders and who was the only defendant without a mask at the hearing, said after his arrest that he considered taking Whitmer from her vacation home out onto Lake Michigan and stranding her there on a disabled boat.

The FBI learned of the June meeting while investigating anti-government groups, leading to the months-long case in Michigan, according to the criminal complaint and Trask's testimony.

It wasn't clear if the talk of targeting Virginia's Democratic governor, Ralph Northam, went beyond the June meeting, and nothing from the criminal complaint or Trask's testimony indicated that anyone had been charged with plotting against Northam.

The complaint noted that Croft and Fox were among people from four or five states who were there.



Michigan Office of the Governor via AP
Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer addresses the state Thursday, Oct. 8, 2020, in Lansing, Michigan. The governor spoke after the Michigan Attorney General, Michigan State Police, U.S. Department of Justice and FBI announced state and federal charges against 13 members of two militia groups who were preparing to kidnap and possibly kill her.

Supreme Court halts census in latest twist of 2020 count

By Mike Schneider
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday, Oct. 13, stopped the once-a-decade head count of every U.S. resident from continuing through the end of October.

President Donald Trump's administration had asked the nation's high court to suspend a district court's order permitting the 2020 census to continue through the end of the month. The Trump administration argued the head count needed to end immediately so the U.S. Census Bureau had enough time to crunch the numbers before a congressionally mandated year-end deadline for turning in figures used for

gressional seats each state gets.

A coalition of local governments and civil rights groups sued the Trump administration, arguing minorities and others in hard-to-count communities would be missed if the count ended early. They said the census schedule was cut short to accommodate a July order from Trump that would exclude people in the country illegally from the numbers used to decide how many congressional seats each state gets.

Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor dissented.

"Moreover, meeting the deadline at the expense of

the accuracy of the census is not a cost worth paying,

especially when the government has failed to show why it could not bear the lesser cost of expending more resources to meet the deadline or continuing its prior efforts to seek an

extension from Congress,"

Sotomayor wrote. By sticking to the Dec. 31 deadline, control of the apportionment count would remain in the hands of the Trump administration no matter who wins the presidential election next month.

History, mistrust spurring Black early voters in Georgia

Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. — They came by the thousands to vote early, descendants of slaves, children of the civil rights era and other Georgians standing in line for hours when all could have been somewhere else.

Yet in a year when issues including prejudice, racial justice and voter suppression are at the forefront, the Black voters saw giving up time to cast a ballot for the next U.S. president as worth the trade — even early in the voting process and during a pandemic that made merely going to a polling place a risky act.

Still waiting three hours after she showed up to vote in Savannah on Wednesday, Khani Morgan, 75, wasn't taking any chances with her health months after suffering a stroke: she wore a mask and a plastic shield that covered her entire face.

But Morgan said the importance of voting was drilled into her as a girl by great-grandmother Sally Williams, who was born a slave in 1850 and lived to be more than 100. Morgan felt compelled to vote early to register her support for Democrat Joe Biden over President Donald Trump.

"I won't let anything get in the way of me and this opportunity," said Morgan, who coordinates an adult literacy program.

The willingness of many Black voters to queue up instead of coming back another day is a measure of their determination and their skepticism about the system. Those in Georgia acknowledged they could have voted by mail or returned to a polling place at a different time; but with no expectation of voting becoming easier in the weeks to come, they saw waiting as a necessary step to ensure their votes get counted.

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