News Item

‘Hashtags come to life’: How online extremists fueled Wednesday’s Capitol Hill insurrection | POLITICO

By Tina Nguyen & Mark Scott
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> No one was safe from their anger.
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> White nationalist Proud Boys users on Telegram called the U.S. Capitol Police “f—ing coward[s]” while others livestreamed themselves running amok in the halls of Congress to their loyal online fanbases. Others were captured on video calling the police “traitors” and “pigs,” threatening their deaths. False rumors flew that the Chinese Communist Party had actually instigated the attack, or that antifa, the amorphous label for any leftist counterprotester, had disguised themselves in a false flag operation.
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> They even questioned the motives of ostensible Trump allies who still wanted to challenge last November’s election. “A lying traitor in two tweets,” tweeted American Priority vice president Tom Shadilay, posting screenshots from Sen. Ted Cruz’s account: a clip of him repeating claims of election fraud, and a statement condemning the violence at the Capitol 12 hours later.
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> The riots also made the woman who died during the rampage an instant martyr for the far-right cause, with her Facebook pages flooded with QAnon supporters praising her actions, calling her a “patriot” who had been killed by the cops. Conspiracy theories that accused the police of executing her in cold blood soon gained traction among fringe social networks, with multiple Telegram channels postponing bogus claims that were quickly circulated by others.
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> Soon, the extremist rhetoric crept from the fringe into the power centers of MAGA Nation.
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