

Twitter worker says he tried to sound alarm on Trump tweets

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A video of a recording from a Twitter interview is displayed as the House select committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol holds a hearing at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, July 12, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

A Twitter employee told the House committee investigating the riot at

the U.S. Capitol that he spent a sleepless night on Jan. 5, 2021, worrying that people might die the next day during a rally that former President Donald Trump regularly promoted with angry rhetoric on his social media accounts.

The Twitter employee's worst fears were confirmed when nine people were left dead during and in the aftermath of the ensuing riot that broke out when Trump supporters violently stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6.

He raised repeated concerns with his employer about Trump's tweets leading up to the rally, the Jan. 6 committee revealed during its latest public hearing Tuesday. The employee's voice was altered and his name was withheld to protect his identity in a prerecorded interview. His testimony did not indicate whom he told of his concerns about Trump's tweets.

After Trump tweeted a Dec. 19 invitation for his followers to gather in Washington to protest the U.S. election results, a torrent of responses, including violent threats, followed, the Twitter employee testified.

"It felt as if a mob was being organized and they were gathering together their weaponry and their logic and their reasoning behind why they were prepared to fight," he said.

Responses to Trump's tweets included references to being "locked and loaded" and calls for "[civil war](#)," the employee noted.

Twitter said in an emailed statement that it took "unprecedented steps" to respond to threats during the 2020 election and suspended accounts linked to far-right extremist groups. The company said it has had "ongoing, productive engagement" with the House committee.

In the days leading up to Jan. 6, Trump regularly used Facebook and

Twitter to encourage his followers to travel to the Capitol to protest the [election results](#). Last year, The Associated Press identified a series of responses to the president's posts, which included multiple calls to "fight" and references to militias.



A video of a recording from a Twitter interview is displayed as the House select committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol holds a hearing at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, July 12, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

By then, after four years in office, the president had regularly violated the platforms' policies around misinformation and inciting violence. Both Twitter and Facebook had removed or covered some of Trump's

most egregious posts, but they did not go as far as kicking him off their platforms until after the Capitol riot.

In Twitter's case, the employee told the committee, that was because they enjoyed the attention Trump's [tweets](#) brought the platform.

"I believe Twitter relished in the knowledge that they were also the favorite and most used service of the former President and enjoyed having that sort of power within the social media ecosystem," the employee said.

But those messages had power over everyday people, too, including Ohio man Stephen Ayres, who pleaded guilty last month to disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building.

"I was pretty hardcore into the [social media](#)," Ayers told the committee Tuesday. "I followed President Trump on all of the websites. He basically put out: Come to Stop the Steal rally. I felt like I needed to be down here."

The day before Ayers and hundreds of others stormed the Capitol, the Twitter employee described to the committee a deflated message he sent to another colleague:

"When people are shooting each other tomorrow, I'll try to rest in the knowledge that we tried."

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