

Two years since the Jan. 6 insurrection, extremist groups are fragmented, but live on

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As thousands of angry supporters of then-President Donald Trump swarmed the U.S. Capitol two years ago today, the scene was one of chaos.

But among that crowd were members of well-known extremist groups, some of whom had been planning their moves in the insurrection for months.

They included members of the paramilitary group the Oath Keepers, wearing head-to-toe body armor, whose co-conspirators waited across the Potomac with a stash of weapons. Members of the extremist street gang the Proud Boys were decked out in bright orange beanies, tattoos and more body armor. QAnon conspiracists carried banners and wore garb emblazoned with the conspiracy theory's nonsensical slogans.

Members of these factions would go on to be charged with some of the most serious crimes of the insurrection. A Proud Boy would grab a riot officer's shield and use it to break one of the first windows of the riot. Oath Keepers would march in a military-style "stack" formation into the building, hands on one another's shoulders, carrying out a plan they had been hatching for months. A QAnon adherent would lead a vicious mob against a Capitol police officer.

In the two years since that day, these groups have come to define much of what is known about the insurrection. Members of the Oath Keepers, Proud Boys and the extremist movement the Three Percenters have faced seditious conspiracy charges — the most high-profile cases to come out of that day. The man known as Jacob Chansley or Jake Angeli — the furry-horned-hat-wearing Arizona QAnon disciple who marched, bare-chested through the Capitol — would, for people across the world, become a human emblem of Jan. 6.

Now, two years later, these groups are fractured and leaderless.

Stewart Rhodes, founder of the Oath Keepers, was convicted of seditious conspiracy late last year and faces decades in prison. With his demise, his organization has all but disappeared from public view.

The Proud Boys, with their leaders facing similar charges, have largely abandoned national politics and large protests in favor of smaller, localized gatherings.

And QAnon – with its figurehead, Trump out of office, increasingly shunned by Washington and facing multiple investigations – has largely shrunk back into the dark corners of the internet whence it came.