

Trump aides sought military vehicles for inaugural parade

By our reporter
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The campaign aides and millionaire supporters who planned Donald Trump's inaugural ceremony wanted "military tactical vehicles"—tanks and armored cars—to participate in the parade on inauguration day, January 20, when Trump and his family walked down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC after he took the oath of office.

While Trump aides have repeatedly denied seeking such vehicles for the parade, the Huffington Post filed a Freedom of Information Act request that obtained emails between the Presidential Inaugural Committee and the Pentagon confirming Trump's interest in a display of military power during the inauguration.

One Pentagon official wrote in an email to a colleague December 13 that the inaugural committee "is seriously considering adding military vehicles to the Inaugural Parade." He related that "The conversation started as 'Can you send us some pictures of military vehicles we could add to the parade?'"

The official said the Pentagon had been "extremely reluctant" to provide the list, let alone provide the vehicles. He wrote: "I explained that such support would be out of guidelines, and the costs associated with bringing military vehicles ... would be considered reimbursable." The military's opposition was so obvious that eventually the Trump committee decided not to make a formal request.

Previous press reports have noted that Trump wanted missile launchers, tanks and other high-visibility vehicles, and that he was "legit thinking Red Square/North Korea-style parade" for Inauguration Day. The Pentagon objected on both public relations and practical grounds, concerned that comparisons to parades in the former Soviet bloc would be made, and also that heavy tanks would damage the streets of the capital.

The Trump campaign ultimately settled for flyovers by warplanes, which have been a feature of previous inaugurations, but these were canceled due to bad weather.

Extracts from the emails made public by the Huffington Post underscore the consternation at the Pentagon over the unprecedented request from the Trump campaign, and suggest that Trump himself was the driving force behind it.

The same Pentagon official wrote that he was "concerned that we as a command need an opportunity to staff this request and to make deliberate decisions about vehicle choice and configuration, paint scheme, uniform for crew members, etc. before we start providing pictures which might be regarded as binding."

He added that the discussion with Trump aides was still preliminary and "completely off the record ... But the establishing guidance has come from the highest level. I do believe they will be making the request."

The last comment indicates that Trump or one of his closest aides, such as Stephen K. Bannon or Reince Priebus, had initiated the inquiry about the military vehicles.

Two weeks later, on December 27, after the inaugural committee decided not to formally request the use of military vehicles, a Pentagon official commented that it was "great news."

The Huffington Post report certainly adds fuel to the fire in regard to the unprecedented appearance of a group of military officers behind Trump during the initial portion of his inaugural address. Ten soldiers lined up behind the president for about 45 seconds, grouped so that he was speaking against a background of military uniforms, before another officer approached them and apparently told them to move, and they left

the scene.

The *World Socialist Web Site* called attention to this incident, which was virtually ignored in the corporate-controlled media. The officers assembled in apparent response to a cue from Trump himself, suggesting that this was a deliberate effort to provide a militaristic framing for the fascistic rant that Trump delivered January 20.

It is well known that Trump obsesses about the camera angles and backgrounds for every event, and particularly a major one such as the nationally televised inaugural address. The appearance of the soldiers could not have been accidental.

It seems likely now that Trump arranged for the soldiers to array behind him after failing to obtain the more spectacular deployment of tanks, armored cars or missile launchers for the inaugural day parade.

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