

A massive pro-Trump protest was expected. The Humvees waited, and rolled away at 5 sharp.



Ronald Faust, a supporter of President Trump, standing by the Capitol building in Madison, Wis.

[Kay Nolan for Insider](#)

Kay Nolan

Jan 17, 2021, 6:47 PM

- **In the aftermath of a mob violently storming the Capitol, US cities were on high alert on Sunday ahead of the Jan. 20 inauguration.**
- **A heavy security presence awaited protesters in cities like Madison, which saw huge pro-Trump protests in 2020.**
- **Here's what the day was like in Madison.**

MADISON, Wis. -- In Wisconsin, where freezing temperatures or clouds have never deterred noisy political protests, and where rallies that have attracted thousands of people have been occurring with increasing frequency, Sunday's expected pro-Trump rally was all but a no-show.

Police vehicles and military Humvees were stationed all day at the entrances of the Capitol, a massive dome with four stately wings.

Ground-level windows had been boarded up with plywood ahead of expected protests. Temporary concrete barriers and red anti-ramming devices were erected near the entrances. Police had temporarily blocked off streets closest to the Capitol. But morning came and went, as well as mid-afternoon, and not a Trump flag was in sight.

Only groups of news reporters and a few curious residents and students from nearby University of Wisconsin-Madison strolled about in lightly falling snow. On the park-like lawns between the Capitol wings, which had teemed with crowds on a chilly day last April in protest of Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' stay-at-home and mask-wearing orders, and in February 2011 in protest of then-Republican Gov. Scott Walker's Act 10 orders, which stripped most public-sector employees of bargaining rights, as well as numerous other rallies since, only a few squirrels were scampering about in the snow.

A few lone young men -- one wearing a plate-carrying vest and the other holding a large sign that was folded under his arm, circled the Capitol, scowling and looking confused. One could be heard complaining into a cellphone that police were "prepared," and wondering why they weren't as prepared for Black Lives Matter protests.

Two men -- on opposite sides of the political spectrum -- waited patiently for hours, however, each surprised at the lack of attendance.



Jesse Ransom came to the Wisconsin capital on Sunday hoping to counter Trump supporters.

[Kay Nolan for Insider](#)

Jesse Ransom, 39, said he was there to counter Trump supporters. "They are usually here by about noon," Ransom said of the pro-Trump rallies that he has frequented. He said he came prepared with a "trauma kit" that he said was designed to treat gunshots or stab wounds.

"I usually show up for Black Lives Matter protests," said Ransom, who is white. "A lot of what Trump says does not resonate with me. This rally here is pretty much supporting fascism and racism for the next four years, and I'm not ok with that."

Ransom, who wore a dark blue jacket and green knit cap, said he was not armed but feels that his "white privilege" affords him a sense of safety. "I can get away with a lot and that's one of the reasons I'm down here," he said. "I know I have privilege," he said, "compared with people of color. I don't mind driving around, like, Trumpers and you know, telling them to piss off because I can get away with that."

Ransom, a mechanical engineer who grew up in Alaska, but attended college and has worked in Madison since age 18, said he thinks there is racism in Wisconsin "as a whole," but says, "Madison is one of the most racist cities in the country."

"Years ago, I used to work at Dane County Detox, and we were up here (near the Capitol) feeding the homeless guys and (then-Mayor Paul) Soglin sent out his police officers with full gear and they started checking everybody's ID. I was like, what the literal fuck? Why are you doing this, checking everybody's ID that's just coming through the food lines? And a lot of the homeless guys are minorities."

"Up here on State St., they mainly like white college students," said Ransom, pointing to a busy commercial corridor of shops and restaurants that connects the Capitol square with the university campus. "If you're thinking of sending your kids to school here, you walk up and down State St. When you have people who are homeless, that doesn't resonate with the image they want to send." Now there are metal sculptures and spikes that prevent people from sitting on low walls, he said, all designed to deter the homeless. "That's pretty racist when you think of it," he said.

But Ronald Faust, 70, who was also circling the Capitol on Sunday and waiting for protesters to show up, had the opposite observation.

"I think people in Madison are very intolerant of conservatives and conservative thought," he said. "I've been called a Nazi, I've been called a terrorist, I've been called a traitor, just by people walking by," added Faust, who wears a red MAGA-style cap that says "Make America Holy Again" on the front and "I'm Going In" on the back and whose car boasts a "Make Babies Great Again" poster, as a pro-life statement.

He said the "I'm Going In" phrase is a reference to the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas school shooting in Florida where police reportedly did not go in. "'I'm going in' means I'm putting myself in harm's way to help people," he explained.

Faust, an electronics engineer who lives in the Madison suburb of Cross Plains, had been praying and marching around the Capitol earlier Sunday, as part of a group called Jericho March.



The security presence in downtown Washington DC on Sunday, ahead of the Jan. 20 inauguration.

[Alan Chin for Insider](#)

The group has supported Trump, and Faust said he still believes the election was "stolen" from Trump. "There were certainly irregularities," he said. "I was hoping there would be something you could really hang your hat on" to prove it," he added. "There's something very suspicious about this." Still, Faust called last week's violence at the nation's Capitol in Washington "deplorable."

"It's horrible," he said, quickly adding, "but we think the same of the rioting and burning and shooting that's been going on all summer long -- that's also deplorable."

He said he doesn't think Trump incited last week's riots, and believes people began breaking into the Capitol before the president had finished speaking to the public that day.

As for the president's previous calls for his supporters to "fight" and "stop the steal," Faust said, "Politicians have been rallying crowds since time immemorial. If every

politician who rallied a crowd with some fiery speech was barred from the Capitol, it would be empty."

As for charges of racism among Trump supporters, Faust says he has seen "not one bit" in his group. He speculated however that in general, "The rhetoric about racism is now more inflammatory."

Racism was "on the run," and "in its dying embers," he said, citing gains such as school choice initiatives and criminal justice reform. "Those were a big boon for the Black community. There was great progress being made. I think the dying embers of racism are being fanned into a flame by those who see a way to benefit from them -- that's power and they'll use any means necessary to get it -- it's sad," he said.

At 4:30 p.m. as the snow faded to a rainy mix and the sky darkened, three youths carrying rifles and an American flag with 13 stars in a circle had shown up, but were walking away dejectedly from the empty sidewalks in front of the Capitol.

Police had already removed the street barricades. News crews were packing up to leave.

The Humvees rolled away at 5 sharp.