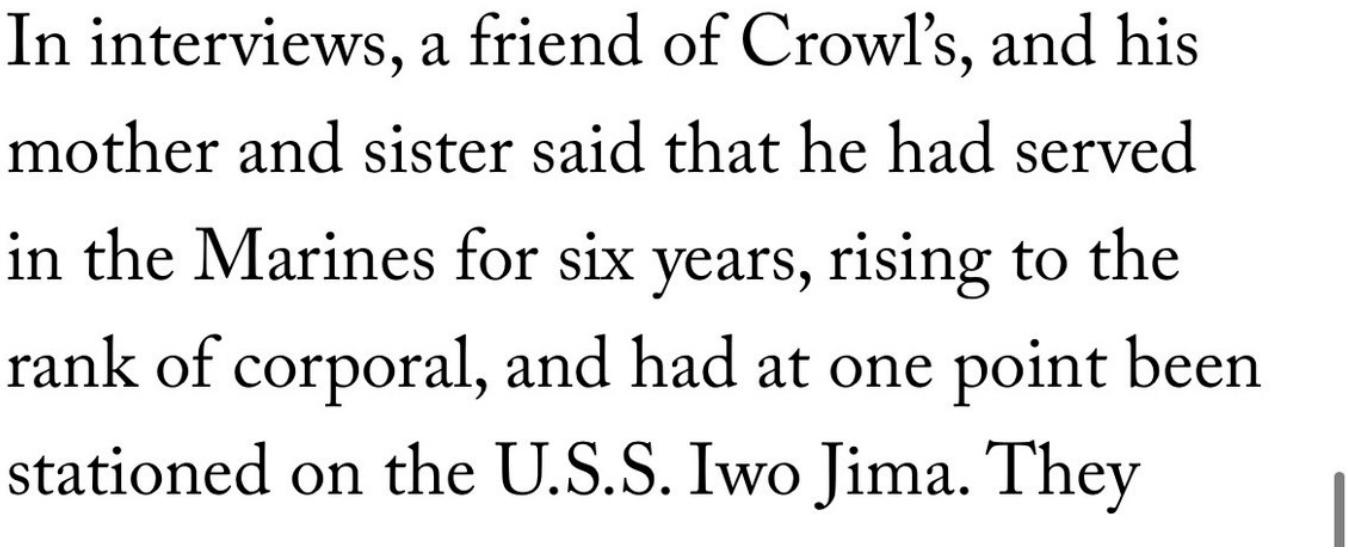
Twitter Thread by Ronan Farrow



Ronan Farrow
@RonanFarrow

NEW: A former US Marine, Donovan Crowl, stormed the Capitol as part of an organized militia. My latest for @newyorker, on what he reveals about the role of far-right groups last week and beyond:

Crowl, whose name and role in last week's events are being reported for the first time in this story, is fifty years old and served in the Persian Gulf in 1990.


In interviews, a friend of Crowl's, and his mother and sister said that he had served in the Marines for six years, rising to the rank of corporal, and had at one point been stationed on the U.S.S. Iwo Jima. They

Crowl was wearing the crest of the Oath Keepers, a far-right group that recruits former and current law enforcement and military officials. He is also a member of a local Ohio militia that has shown up at political events, sometimes armed.

Crowl identified himself to me as a member of both the Oath Keepers and the Ohio State Regular Militia, and said that he had attended events representing those groups. “I went to Columbus, Ohio,” he said. “I’ve been to Louisville, when the B.L.M., when they came.” He

These are among a number of sometimes overlapping extremist groups that were present last week.

headsets to communicate. Far-right groups at the Capitol included the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters, the Proud Boys, and the Boogaloo Bois, as well as smaller local organizations.

Far-right militias have deep roots in American history, and while several experts I spoke with said Trump had ignited those groups, they also did not believe their fervor would wane after Trump’s departure.

protests. McCord, the former acting Assistant Attorney General, said that she anticipated more activity from militia groups like Crowl's after Biden takes office. "A Democrat Administration coming in typically means a resurgence," she told me. "These groups are going to be figuring out their next play." Crowl said that his group

Crowl's mother and sister, as well as a friend, said he had become increasingly radical and enamored of Trump and pro-Trump conspiracy theorists, and recalled him making racist remarks (something Crowl denied).

for domestic violence. During the Obama Administration, the family members and friend recalled, Crowl expressed fury at the President, along with wider animosity toward Black people. “The only good Black person is a dead Black person,” his mother, Teresa Joann Rowe, a retired nurse, recalled Crowl saying—though she stipulated that Crowl used a racial epithet. She said that she had become estranged from her son owing to his views and had not been aware of his involvement in the attack on the Capitol until she saw photos. “I would have called the Ohio state police if I had known he was going to that place,” Rowe told me. “I’m sitting here sick to my stomach.”

In an 80-minute interview, during which Crowl was drinking, he confirmed he had entered the Capitol, but said his intentions had been peaceful. (He also threatened me, told me he wanted to eat the faces of my family members, and said some stuff about phrenology.)

beating his ass." Crowl made vague threats during the interview, telling me, "I already know where you live." He repeatedly denied that he harbored racist views or had made racist comments, but he said that he believed in phrenology, the discredited pseudoscience that infers intellectual ability from skull shape, and told me that he had responded to *The New Yorker*'s request for comment after examining pictures of my head. As people involved in the riot began

Crowl said his local militia had no plans related to the Inauguration, but also emphasized that his group and others like it will not be going away. His sister said she was ID'ing him in part because of fears related to future attacks.

country. "I don't want him to come after me," Denissa Crowl told me. "But I'd rather he come after me than a bunch of people at the Inauguration."

Crowl was also the subject of intense scrutiny from a group of digital sleuths and citizen journalists. Thank you to everyone who shared their insights as I reported, and to @jsrailton, who has continued his efforts.

enforcement. A group of Twitter users, none of whom wished to be named publicly, used Watkins's posts and other social-media evidence to establish Crowl's identity. The group set up a chat on the messaging platform Discord, titled "Capitol Terrorists Exposers," and examined images of Crowl and his associates. "I was a lifelong Republican until Trump descended that escalator," one user said. "Now I'm fighting to make sure that my worst fears of him destroying our democracy do not come to fruition." John Scott-Railton, a researcher at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab, also investigated Crowl, and later referred his name to the F.B.I. "When looking for men in military gear, I came across a lot of people who appeared to be playing dress-up," Scott-Railton told me. "But, again and again, military veterans kept flagging this guy, saying he looks like the real deal."