



## Oath Keepers: Patriotic Defenders of the Republic?

Oath Keepers is a nationwide association of currently serving members of the armed forces, national guard units, police officers, and veterans of the same that have recently united with the declared purpose of unequivocally and without fear or favor staying true to the oath to defend the Constitution of the United States of America "against all enemies, foreign and domestic."



In other words, according to the group's website, Oath Keepers "won't just follow orders."

Stewart Rhodes is the founder of Oath Keepers. He has all his conservative and constitutional bona fides, viz: he is a former member of Congressman Ron Paul's Washington, D.C., staff, as well as a graduate of the Yale School of Law and a former Army paratrooper disabled during a night jump. While at Yale Law School, Rhodes received an award for his paper entitled, "Solving the Puzzle of Enemy Combatant Status." He continues to teach on military history, the Constitution, as well as writing articles on similar topics for numerous publications. Rhodes started Oath Keepers because of his belief that the time is fast approaching when Americans must decide whether to remain free or be slaves to a government that grows and grasps daily, stealthily robbing Americans of their birthright of liberty and mocking their unalienable rights of life, liberty, and property. To prevent such a slouch into despotism, Rhodes has organized Oath Keepers and called upon the military and local police to stand up for the principles of freedom as declared in the Constitution and to refuse to follow orders that would enslave the American people or encroach upon the sovereignty of the several states. Specifically, the Oath Keepers asks its



adherents to make and defend the following  
"Declaration of Orders We Will Not Obey."

- 1. We will not obey any order to disarm the American people.** Oath Keepers believe that any attempt to deprive the people of their weaponry is treasonous and is an act of war upon the people of the United States.
- 2. We will not obey any order to conduct warrantless searches of the American people, their homes, vehicles, papers, or effects — such as warrantless house-to-house searches for weapons or persons.** Basically, Oath Keepers refuse to violate the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution that forbids unlawful searches and seizures.
- 3. We will not obey any order to detain American citizens as "unlawful enemy combatants" or to subject them to trial by military tribunal.** According to the organization's website, the Oath Keepers hold that military tribunals are not to be used in the trial of citizens not in the military and furthermore, the only constitutionally endorsed means of trying a citizen accused of treason is Article III wherein the requirements for the trial and punishment of one accused of treason is set forth.
- 4. We will not obey orders to impose martial law or a "state of emergency" on a state, or to enter with force into a state, without the express consent and invitation of that state's legislature and governor.** Simply, the Oath Keepers state that the attempt to impose martial law on the people of Massachusetts was one of the principal causes of the American War for Independence and that the right of the national government to declare military rule is "nowhere enumerated in the Constitution."
- 5. We will not obey orders to invade and subjugate any state that asserts its sovereignty and declares the national government to be in violation of the compact by which that state entered the Union.** This is perhaps the most controversial of the Oath Keepers avowals. The organization's members hereby swear to uphold the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, as well as espouse the principle of states' rights as contained in the "Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions."
- 6. We will not obey an order to blockade American cities, thus turning them into giant concentration camps.** The group equates such an order with an act of treason and to be redolent of the stench of similar tactics used by the Nazis and Japanese to enslave their own people.
- 7. We will not obey any order to force American citizens into any form of detention camps under any pretext.** Oath Keepers explains this tenet thus: "Oppressive governments often use the internment of women and children to break the will of the men fighting for their liberty — as was done to the Boers, the Jewish resisters in the Warsaw Ghetto, and to the Chechens, for example."
- 8. We will not obey orders to assist or support the use of any foreign troops on U.S. soil against the American people to "keep the peace" or "maintain control" during any emergency or under any other pretext. We will consider such use of foreign troops against our people to be an invasion and an act of war.**
- 9. We will not obey any orders to confiscate the property of the American people, including food and other essential supplies, under any emergency pretext whatsoever.** Citing again one of the British atrocities against Americans that was one of the underlying causes of the American War for Independence, the Oath Keepers swear to never deprive the American people of their food.
- 10. We will not obey any orders which infringe on the right of the people to free speech, to**



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**peaceably assemble, and to petition their government for a redress of grievances.** The Oath Keepers hereby promise never to be a tool in silencing the voice of those patriots who would "set brushfires of freedom in the minds of men."

As the foregoing tenets illustrate, the Oath Keepers target audience are those enlisted in the military, as they see them as the first line of defense of the principles of freedom upon which our republic was founded. The literature produced by Oath Keepers attempts to identify patterns in the early acts of various rulers and governments of history that they assert were "tripwires" or warnings of the impending imposition of despotism. Their goal, then, is to alert the American people when these tripwires are sprung in our country and to prevent the enslavement of Americans by recruiting likeminded servicemen and sheriffs who refuse to become the pawns of tyranny. "The whole point of Oath Keepers is to stop a dictatorship from ever happening here," said Steward Rhodes in a statement to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

Predictably, the Oath Keepers and the oaths they promise to keep are controversial and have drawn attention from many who see the organization as nothing more than an extremist, anti-establishment militia bent on overthrowing the government. The Southern Poverty Law Center, for example, monitors the group's activity on their "Hate Watch" blog and in a July report described them as a "particularly worrisome example of the Patriot revival." To the Southern Poverty Law Center, it seems, patriotism is something onerous and hateful. Other similar leftist "watchdogs" have declared the Oath Keepers to be an embryonic revolutionary force that, but for the fact that the group is so small, would use its military influence to impose its own narrow version of the Founders' ideal government on the majority and thus become that which they claim to loathe — despots.

The very existence of the Oath Keepers, however, whether they be the true guardians of the republic or misguided patriots, is evidence of the fear and distrust of government felt by Americans and of their legitimate concern that the national government consistently and unrepentantly marches with heavy boots across constitutional boundaries and is willfully concentrating power into an executive that without much effort could assume all power into a single hand and then use that strength to finally and irreparably break free from the fetters placed upon it by the Constitution and to obliterate the walls of protection erected by our Founders around the highest and final citadel of sovereignty — the American people.



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