

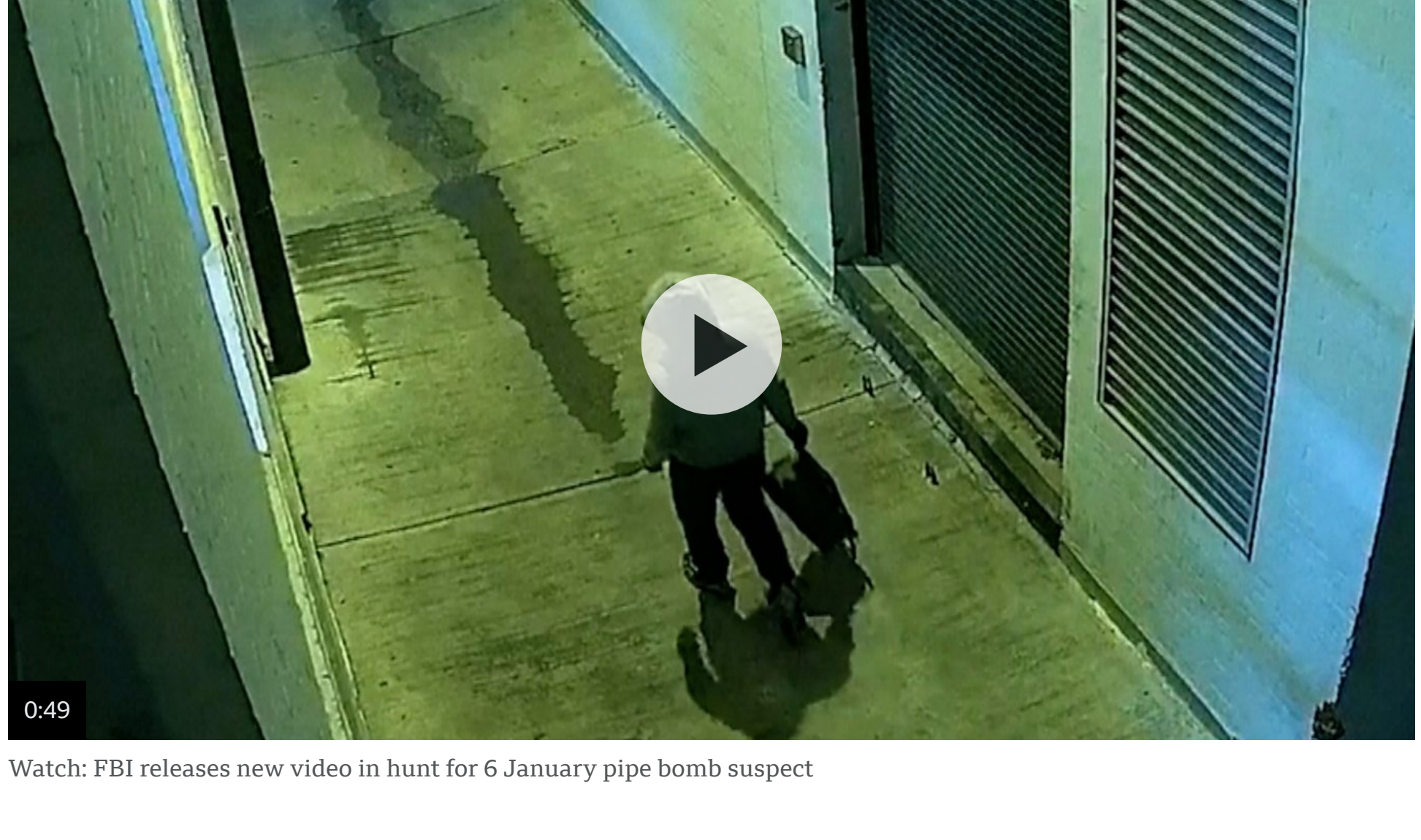


# What we know about suspected pipe bomber on eve of 2021 US Capitol riot

1 day ago

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BBC News



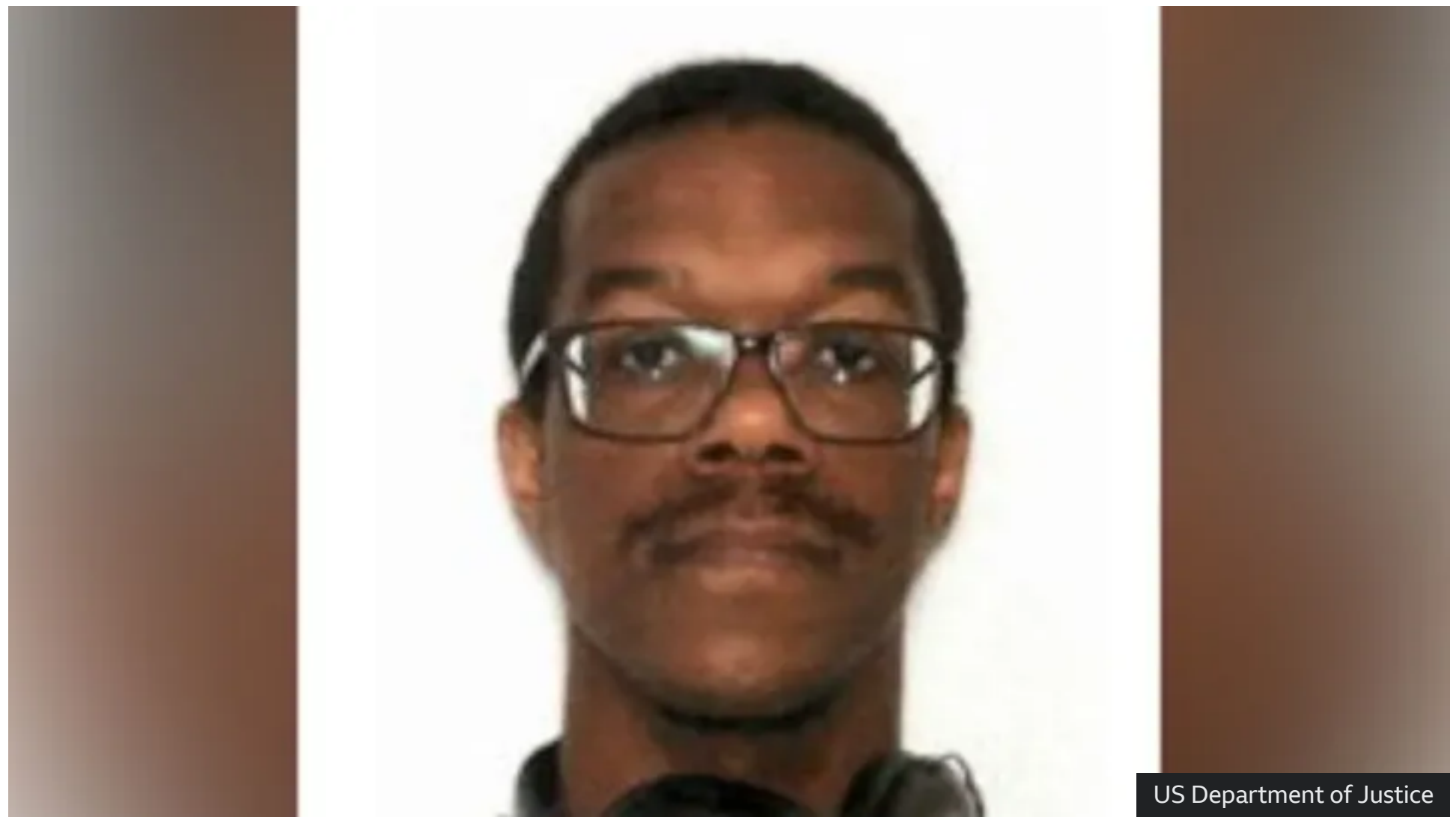
Watch: FBI releases new video in hunt for 6 January pipe bomb suspect

A picture is beginning to emerge about the suspect accused of planting two pipe bombs next to Democratic and Republican headquarters on the eve of the 2021 Capitol riot, following his arrest on Thursday.

Neighbours and family members described Brian Cole Jr, 30, as "naive" and a "quiet guy" who often walked a chihuahua in their Washington DC suburb. He also told investigators he thought the 2020 election was "rigged", US media reports say.

Authorities arrested Mr Cole and charged him with attempted malicious destruction with explosive materials. The bombs did not detonate.

Authorities did not provide a motive. A lawyer representing Mr Cole at a court hearing on Friday declined to comment on the case.



Federal agents in armoured vehicles descended upon Mr Cole's family home on Thursday morning. He lives with his mother and others in Woodbridge, Virginia, about 20 miles (32km) outside of Washington DC.

He was arrested without incident, US Attorney General Pam Bondi said.

A neighbour who was an eyewitness to the arrest told NBC that Woodbridge is "like Sleepytown" and "nothing ever happens here".

Another neighbour, speaking to the New York Post, said Mr Cole "would wear shorts all winter long, no matter how cold it was".

"We all knew him as the guy that walked the Chihuahua," the neighbour said.

According to court documents, Mr Smith works for a bail bond company, a type of firm that helps people get out of jail by posting bail on their behalf for a fee.

Mr Cole's grandmother Loretta told the New York Post the business is called Brian Cole Bail Bonds, named for and owned by his father, Brian Cole Sr. FBI agents raided the company's office on Thursday, Loretta said.

She described Mr Cole as "very naive" and "almost autistic-like".

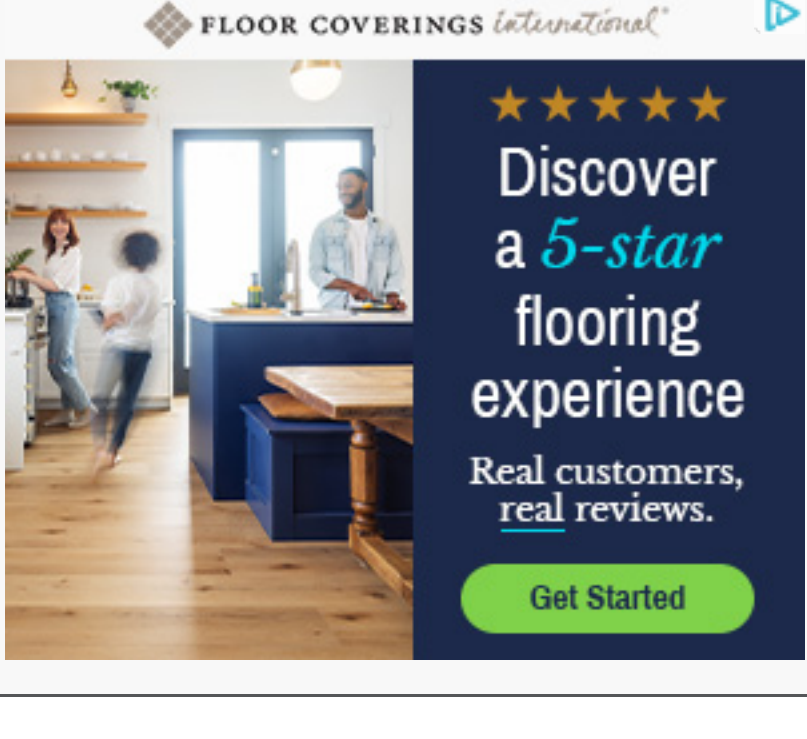
"He would not hurt a fly. He's just not that kind of person," she said.

Mr Cole told FBI investigators during interviews that he believed the 2020 election was stolen, CNN reported, echoing US President Donald Trump's false mantra that the election he lost to Joe Biden was "rigged".

Investigators have not detailed what they believe his motive was for allegedly placing the pipe bombs, but his statements to investigators provide the first glimpse of why he may have chosen to plant the explosives outside the Democratic National Committee and Republican National Committee headquarters on the eve of Congress's certification of the election results.

Kamala Harris, who was the US vice president-elect at the time, was evacuated from the Democratic National Committee headquarters shortly after the devices were found.

The bombs in question were placed on the night of 5 January 2021 and were only discovered the following afternoon as Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol in the last days of his first presidency.



Watch: Neighbour reacts after pipe bomb suspect is taken into custody

To arrive at an arrest, nearly five years after the incident, authorities said they had to comb through a mountain of evidence, including millions of lines of data.

FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino described the effort to Fox News on Friday morning as "an extensive amount of work".

Bongino said the FBI "had chased down thousands of leads, six thousand-plus interviews had been conducted" and "hundreds of tips" had been received, before he was sworn in this year, pledging on day one to "find this guy".

Investigators found mobile phone data that showed Mr Cole was near the locations of the pipe bombs when they were planted between 19:39 and 20:24 local time on 5 January 2021.

His car - a 2017 Nissan Sentra with a Virginia licence plate - was also seen by a licence plate reader less than half a mile (0.8km) from the location where the individual who placed the devices was first observed in the area.

Investigators said both pipe bombs were manufactured using end caps, with US Attorney Jeanine Pirro saying there were 233,000 black-end caps of the type used in the plot.

"I want you to think about the act that the FBI had to go through the sale of every one of them," Pirro said.

The suspect's shoes were believed to be Nike Air Max Speed Turfs, leading investigators to go through thousands of pairs of shoes distributed through more than two dozen retailers.

During the court appearance on Friday, Mr Cole was joined by his lawyer John Shoreman and several relatives, according to CBS News, the BBC's US partner.

US Magistrate Judge Moxila Upadhyaya read the charges against him, including transporting an explosive device across state lines with unlawful intent. He will remain in custody until a detention hearing on 15 December.

His relatives told him "I love you" as he was escorted out.

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