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Brian Cole Jr.'s physical presence, posture, mannerisms are no match to FBI's hoodie-clad pipe-bomb suspect

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Video analysis shows stark physical differences between Cole and the FBI's original unknown subject in bomb case.

Despite his reported confession to placing explosive devices at two sites on Capitol Hill on Jan. 5, 2021, Brian Cole Jr.'s physical dimensions, gait, posture, and mannerisms are at stark odds with video clips of the hoodie-clad bomb suspect first released by the FBI more than five years ago.

A full analysis of the hoodie-wearing suspect has been complicated by poor video quality, a manipulated video frame rate, black-and-white images, and cropping of some of the original footage. A careful viewing of the substandard video, however, still reveals clues that don't fit the allegations that Cole is the bomber.

'Two eyewitnesses ... described the gray hoodie suspect as a white male.'

Blaze News analyzed video of the hoodie suspect released by the FBI, photographs and video of Cole, and evidence culled from independent investigations. This analysis indicates stark physical differences between Cole and the hoodie suspect, including the manner of walking, body shape and features, eyesight, shoe size, neck length, and mannerisms.

Cole, 31, of Woodbridge, Va., won't be back in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., until April 21 for a status hearing on the two explosives-related felony charges that have kept him behind bars since his Dec. 4 arrest. He awaits a ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals on his challenge to the detention order that is keeping him behind bars until trial.

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Brian Cole Jr. denied involvement in the pipe-bombs case for two hours in an FBI interrogation, then changed his story, the DOJ claims.

FBI, Prince William County Police Department photos

The FBI says that after two hours denying involvement in the pipe-bomb case, Cole suddenly gave a detailed confession during a Dec. 4 interrogation. His defense team, however, retorted in an appeals court filing seeking his release from custody that their client "contests each of the government's factual claims."

The hoodie-clad suspect went to some length to conceal identity, including a COVID-style face mask and a ball cap, but tools — including forensic podiatry and gait analysis — can shed valuable light on the investigation.

One of the most glaring conflicts in the case is an eyewitnesses who described the hoodie suspect as being a white male. Cole is black.

At a January hearing of the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Remaining Questions Surrounding Jan. 6, Chairman Barry Loudermilk (R-Ga.) said information received from the FBI leaves key questions unanswered.

"There are still critical details regarding this case that must be understood," Loudermilk said at the opening of the first and only hearing since the subcommittee was impaneled in September 2025.

"The FBI operational updates note two eyewitnesses who described the gray hoodie suspect as a white male. Did this influence the FBI's investigation?"

Blaze News examined the charges against Cole to see if his arrest and prosecution fit with the case history and facts developed by independent investigators. The list of conflicts, problems, contradictions, and lingering questions is extensive — and growing. This is Part 3 of our series. **Part 1** was published Jan. 16, and **Part 2** was published Feb. 6.

Autism disclosure a game-changer?

Among the most telling clues offered in Cole's defense was the disclosure by his attorneys that he is afflicted with autism spectrum disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Each condition manifests in unique ways that can aid in identifying an individual on video or explain seemingly odd behaviors like wiping a cell phone back to factory settings more than 940 times over a three-year period, as Cole did.

Motion-based intelligence becomes especially useful in a case like the Jan. 6 pipe bombs where a suspect tries to disguise appearance by wearing oversized clothing, covering the face with a scarf, gaiter, or mask, or wearing a ball cap or other type of head covering under the sweatshirt hood. Clues can still be culled from the evidence.

Gergely Hanczar, a London-based expert in gait analysis, says the human body betrays itself, providing clues even if a person is trying to disguise identity. "Your body is a snitch," Hanczar wrote in a recent Substack column.

"Before a single word is spoken, bodies have already decided what they want," wrote Hanczar, an expert in biometric identification using digital tools. "The dilation of a pupil, a micro-adjustment of posture, the involuntary synchrony of breath are signals no sensitivity training can rewrite.

The gait of pipe-bomb suspect Brian Cole Jr. is starkly different from the hoodie-clad suspect sought by the FBI since January 2021.

"We are uncomfortable with movement-based intelligence probably because it exposes the primal reality of our hierarchies," he wrote. "The body does not care about political correctness. It communicates a truth your lawyer would advise you to bury."

Cole's comportment and physical presence differ in many ways from the hoodie-clad suspect, from eyesight to manner of walking.

Cole does exhibit traits and mannerisms, however, that are consistent with those identified in research as common to individuals with autism spectrum disorder. A defense expert in the case provided an affidavit to the court in January stating that Cole suffers from autism and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

'Criminals cannot hide their gait.'

According to the American Psychiatric Association, autism is a highly diverse neurodevelopmental disorder that manifests as "persistent social impairment, communication abnormalities, and restricted and repetitive behaviors." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of autism among children age 8 rose from 1 in 150 in the year 2000 to 1 in 31 in 2022.

The abnormalities found in autistic individuals were documented as far back as 1943 in a pioneering study by psychiatrist Dr. Leo Kanner, who profiled 11 children who displayed a "powerful desire for aloneness and sameness." Kanner noted some of the children he profiled "were somewhat clumsy in gait and gross motor performances."

Cole observed on body camera

There is ample video of the hoodie suspect on Capitol Police security cameras to use for comparisons. Police video of Cole at the scene of a 2024 Virginia traffic accident provides valuable clues about his physical demeanor that can be contrasted with the original suspect, a Blaze News analysis showed.

The 48-minute bodycam video, obtained by Blaze News under a Freedom of Information Act request, shows Cole interacting with a Prince William County Police Department officer and another driver. Cole's vehicle rear-ended a pickup truck owned by a local church. The video has short segments that show Cole walking and standing.

The video shows that Cole walks with an outward foot angle, a stance sometimes referred to as a duck walk. The outward angle of his feet was also evident when he was standing and not in motion. An outward foot angle was not seen with the hoodie-clad bomb suspect in the footage that captured the masked bomber walking on Capitol Hill the evening of Jan. 5, 2021.

A relative told Blaze News that Cole has long had the outward foot angle in his walk.

Based on more than 20 minutes of video showing the hoodie suspect, that individual tends more to an inward foot angle, often referred to as being pigeon-toed. At several points during the walk around Capitol Hill on Jan. 5, the feet of the hoodie suspect cross over each other when their stride width is minimal. This is sometimes called "tightrope walking" or line walking.

The crossover of feet is especially noticeable in perhaps the most famous piece of video of the bomb suspect striding south on Rumsey Court before making a hard turn right toward the Capitol Hill Club. The hoodie suspect walked with a consistent, definitive right-leg drag — seen across more than 20 minutes of video.

These characteristics are not present in the limited amount of public video that shows Cole's gait.

A 2024 research study of older children and adolescents with autism found that they had greater step width than the control subjects with no autism. Common traits in autistic individuals included shorter step length, increased cadence, and wider step width, according to the study, published in the journal Sports Medicine and Health Science.

The authors said the unusual gait patterns seen in autistic individuals were in part compensation for lower-extremity weakness.

'I know him by his walk.'

"This unique gait pattern may represent a movement strategy used by the individuals with ASD to compensate for the weakness associated with their knee extensor muscles," the study said. "Individuals with [autism spectrum disorder] who demonstrate these unique gait deviations may face reduced postural stability and an increased risk of fall-related injuries."

"Risks related to muscular and coordination deficits may be exacerbated as movement difficulty increases (e.g., running, stepping stairs, carrying school bags)," the study said.

Cole appears to have a shorter stride than the hoodie suspect. The independent investigator known online as Armitas estimated the hoodie suspect's stride (two consecutive steps) at 57 inches. Video and video stills of Cole at the 2024 accident scene show a fairly compact stride length compared to the hoodie suspect, he said.

Cole showed a pronounced lean of his head and neck, often to the left but sometimes to the right, both standing and walking, the video showed. The hoodie suspect shows no such posture on the FBI video. Cole tended to walk with his torso leaning forward, and he kept his arms close to his body while walking and standing, video showed.

He also exhibited a posture sometimes crudely referred to as "duck butt," with a forward torso and a protrusion of the rear. A 2018 study in the journal Frontiers in Psychology found that children with autism showed a greater forward tilt of the pelvis throughout the gait cycle compared to a control group.

A 2025 study from Greece said motor impairments affect up to 80% of individuals with autism spectrum disorder. The study, which reviewed findings from 17 research papers on autism and gait, said "individuals diagnosed with ASD generally demonstrate reduced coordination."

Children with autism, the study said, tend to have "a less fluid and more effortful gait."

'Agents wondered if the injury could have accounted for the odd gait seen on security footage.'

Cole's shoes appear much larger than the Nike Air Max Speed Turf shoes worn by the hoodie-clad bomb suspect. In late December, Blaze News took measurements of the sidewalks and gutter pan along the Virginia street where Cole's traffic accident occurred and of the sidewalk trod by the hoodie suspect outside the DNC building on Jan. 5. Based on those measurements, Cole's feet are as large as size 12.5 — substantially larger than those of the hoodie suspect.

It appears that Cole's feet are also disproportionately large for someone who stands 5 feet, 5 inches or 5 feet, 6 inches tall. The hoodie suspect's feet, however, appear proportionate to that individual's 5-foot, 7-inch frame.

Witnesses describe Cole's walk

Two witnesses who have observed Cole's gait over the span of at least a decade in his hometown told Blaze News that Cole's walk is vastly different from that of the hoodie suspect.

Sunny Sandhu, owner of a 7-Eleven store on Minnieville Road in Woodbridge, not far from the Cole family home, said he has watched Cole come to and go from the store a "a minimum of two to three times per week" during at least a 13-year period.

After Cole's arrest, Sandhu said he watched the FBI video of the hoodie suspect walking down an alley to place the second pipe bomb near the RNC.

"I go, 'No way. The kid doesn't walk like that,'" Sandhu said. "This kid has no confidence in his stride at all."

Cole has a "goofy walk" that does not resemble the FBI's bomb suspect, Sandhu said. "There's no way."

'He was always very robotic and socially awkward.'

Cole was a consistent regular at the 7-Eleven, always asking for two Cokes and a pizza, Sandhu said.

"Every time he came in here, it was always the same thing, same routine," Sandhu told Blaze News in an interview. "Always had his headphones on. Always made it the same order, bought two Cokes and a pizza."

A law enforcement source who lives in the same area as the Cole family told Blaze News that he saw Cole on a regular basis out walking his little dog in the neighborhood. He described Cole's demeanor as "awkward."

"We were super surprised to hear he was the subject arrested for the Jan. 6 pipe bombs," the source told Blaze News. "The immediate thought was: There is no way he had the mental ability to plan and prepare something like that. He was always very robotic and socially awkward around the neighborhood.

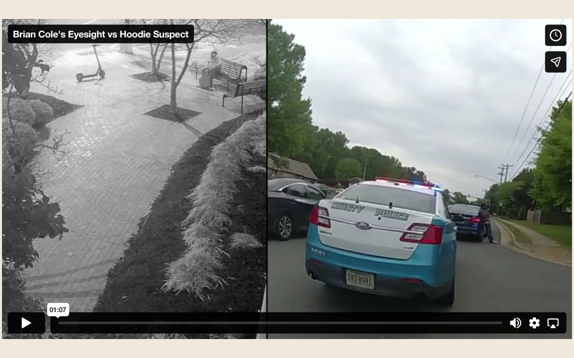
"My second thought was, seeing how he behaved around the neighborhood, how could he function in downtown D.C.?" the source said. "I had no doubt he was the wrong guy and complete doubt that the FBI did a proper investigation to identify him."

A Blaze News reporter and an investigator who witnessed Cole walk into a February court hearing in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., said Cole's gait appeared distinct from the hoodie suspect's.

Eyesight appears different

In the Virginia bodycam video, Cole kept his phone about six to eight inches from his face, indicating a likely nearsighted condition.

The hoodie suspect, in contrast, held the cell phone in the lap while sitting on the park bench behind the DNC building. This was about two feet from the eyes, which could indicate that Cole's eyesight is significantly different from the eyesight of the hoodie suspect.



History of gait analysis

The FBI and state and local law enforcement agencies have used gait analysis in a variety of investigations. In fact, the FBI used gait analysis early in the pipe-bombs case to help rule out a suspect, according to "Injustice," a 2025 book by two Washington Post reporters.

The FBI's investigation of who purchased the same Nike Air Max Speed Turf sneakers worn by the hoodie suspect led the bureau to a gym employee who lived in the area near the crime scenes.

"The person came under further scrutiny after he initially lied to agents about a leg injury,

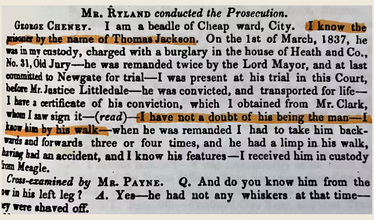
according to people familiar with the investigation," wrote Carol Leonnig and Aaron Davis. "Agents wondered if the injury could have accounted for the odd gait seen on security footage."

The FBI later concluded that the man had no other possible ties to the case and ruled him out as a suspect, Davis and Leonnig wrote.

More recently, gait analysis was used on security footage in the February 1 disappearance of Nancy Guthrie, mother of NBC "Today" show co-anchor Savannah Guthrie.

Gait analysis has been used in criminal cases in the West as far back as the 1830s. In an 1837 case in London, burglary suspect Thomas Jackson, 36, was convicted based in part on a policeman's testimony describing his gait, according to the 1840 Central Criminal Court Minutes of Evidence.

Patrolman George Cheney told the court that he arrested Jackson on March 1, 1837, charged with the burglary of Heath and Company. Security guard William Meagle detained Jackson after discovering him overnight on the main floor of the building.



MR. RYLAND *conducted the Prosecution.*

GEORGE CHENEY. I am a beadle of Cheap ward, City. I know the prisoner by the name of Thomas Jackson. On the 1st of March, 1837, he was in my custody, charged with a burglary in the house of Heath and Co., No. 31, Old Jury—he was remanded twice by the Lord Mayor, and at last committed to Newgate for trial—I was present at his trial in this Court, before Mr. Justice Littledale—he was convicted, and transported for life—I have a certificate of his conviction, which I obtained from Mr. Clark, when I saw sign it—(*read*)—I have not a doubt of his being the man—I know him by his walk—when he was remanded I had to take him backwards and forwards three or four times, and he had a limp in his walk, having had an accident, and I know his features—I received him in custody from Meagle.

Cross-examined by MR. PAYNE. Q. And do you know him from the bow in his left leg? A. Yes—he had not any whiskers at that time—they were shaved off.

Two police officers identified burglary suspect Thomas Jackson by his gait in this 1837 case in Great Britain.

Central Criminal Court Minutes of Evidence

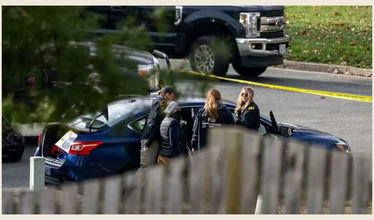
"I have not a doubt of his being the man — I know him by his walk," Cheney said in court testimony. "When he was remanded, I had to take him backwards and forwards three or four times, and he had a limp in his walk, having had an accident, and I know his features."

Police constable Philip Parish told the court that Jackson had a "bow leg." Sergeant George Teakle said the suspect had suffered a broken leg. "I observed him rather limp on one side," Teakle recounted. "I said, 'You have had a broken leg.' He said, 'I have not.'"

Forensic gait analysis has been used in criminal cases in the U.K. much longer than in the United States. It is sub-specialty of forensic podiatry. Forensic podiatrist Michael Nirenberg described forensic podiatry as "the application of sound and researched podiatry knowledge and experience in forensic investigations, to show the association of an individual with the scene of a crime."

Nirenberg has testified in several criminal trials, using gait analysis and footprint and footwear evidence to tie defendants to crime scenes.

His testimony was key to the conviction of an armed robbery suspect in Wayne County, Tenn., in January 2017. Three men robbed the Berrys One Stop convenience store. Detectives did not find any physical evidence such as fingerprints or DNA. One of them did notice something peculiar about one man on surveillance video: his walk.



FBI officials search Brian Cole Jr's 2017 Nissan Sentra for evidence in the Jan. 6 pipe-bombs case, in Woodbridge, Va., on Dec. 4, 2025.

Andrew Leyden/Getty Images

Detective Dusty Malugen asked Nirenberg to compare the robbery surveillance video to video of a subject who came into the convenience store days before the crime. Nirenberg found a match by observing the men.

"You can see how he's walking," Nirenberg told the Journal & Courier newspaper. "His feet and knees are out-toed. You can see the way his head is positioned on his shoulders. His head hangs forward."

Nirenberg's analysis was presented to a local grand jury, which indicted a suspect. Confronted with the evidence, the man confessed to the robbery and rolled over on his two accomplices. All three were sent to prison.

Nirenberg assisted police and the FBI with gait analysis in the April 2016 murder of Missy Bevers, 45, a fitness instructor in Midlothian, Texas. That case remains unsolved.

AI and forensic gait analysis

The use of artificial intelligence to analyze the movements of individuals shown on surveillance video is an emerging method that claims up to near-perfect accuracy. Europe-based consultant Cursor Insight says its gait-recognition system achieved 98.3% accuracy using video of a single gait cycle, measuring only thigh and shank flexion angles of both legs.

Using other factors such as segment lengths and analyzing several gait cycles can increase accuracy to 99.9% or higher, the company reported in a 14-page case study.

The AI-powered gait analysis has advantages over biometrics such as facial recognition, which often fails when the subject is far away, covered in darkness, or wearing a face mask, the case study said.

"Our AI-powered gait-analysis technology can transform seemingly worthless video into reliable forensic evidence," the case study said. "Even when facial recognition fails — we can identify individuals by analyzing body dimensions, body pose, and motion patterns such as walking or running."

> 'Cole contests each of the government's factual claims.'

Nirenberg said gait analysis will become a more prominent part of criminal investigations.

"The admission of video evidence in criminal matters will continue to grow, and with it, those perpetrating crimes will increasingly take measures to conceal their identity," he wrote in Criminal Justice magazine. "Even so, criminals cannot hide their gait. This is a significant fact for attorneys on both sides of a criminal case."

A U.S. intelligence community source told Blaze News that gait recognition technology is much farther advanced in China.

"Gait recognition will eventually be used as the most important law enforcement tool in identifying criminal suspects from the increased proliferation of CCTV," the source said. "The downside is that it will also be used by authoritarian governments in establishing their social credit scores — tracking jaywalkers in crowded cities and other such undesirable behaviors."

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