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Donald Trump's legal team in disarray after he parts ways with lead impeachment lawyers

'Mutual decision' comes just over a week before his senate trial is due to begin

By David Millward, US CORRESPONDENT

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Donald Trump has parted with his legal team just over a week ahead of his [second impeachment trial](#).

The move leaves the former president a matter of days to find lawyers willing to take on his case, which will be heard by the US Senate.

Mr Trump, who is accused of inciting insurrection in the indictment filed by the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives, is due to file a defence to the charges on Tuesday.

Two South Carolina attorneys, Butch Bowers and Deborah Barbier, were expected to join the team. According to reports in the US their decision to quit was mutually agreed.

It is understood that there was a dispute over strategy.

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[According to the New York Times](#), Mr Trump wanted his legal team to push his argument that the election was “stolen” – a claim which has been dismissed by senior Republicans including Mitch McConnell, the party’s leader in the Senate.

Jason Miller, Mr Trump’s spokesman, sought to play down the significance of the departures. “We have done much work, but have not made a final decision on our legal team, which will be made shortly,” he said.

Mr Bowers, who was seen as a mainstream Republican rather than an unquestioning supporter of Mr Trump, had agreed to represent the former president following the

intervention of South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham.

His appointment was seen as a shrewd choice, given the need to persuade Republican senators not to vote with the Democrats.

Several are likely to do so. Senators Susan Collins of Maine, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania all voted in favour of the impeachment trial taking place.

It would suggest that there will be a majority in favour of convicting Mr Trump, but that the Democrats will fall short of persuading 17 Republicans to vote with them to secure a conviction.

Impeachment expert, Frank Bowman, professor of law at Missouri University questioned whether the departure of the lawyers will have an impact on the outcome of the trial.

“It would appear that Senate Republicans are settling into the position that they won’t try to defend his conduct but hide behind by the rather thin argument that he is left office and there is no jurisdiction.

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“The fact he is somewhat short of defence lawyers seems to be his fault rather than otherwise.

“Assuming he is able to secure some lawyers who will argue on the floor of the senate that the election was stolen. It will alter the tenor of the proceedings, will make the trial more divisive than it might otherwise have been.”

The departure of the legal team is not the first time Mr Trump has fallen out with his lawyers, especially after his attempts to overturn the election in the courts were spectacularly unsuccessful.

Of the 62 suits filed, 61 were rejected – [in many cases by judges appointed by Mr Trump.](#)

At times the legal battle descended into farce, as when Rudy Giuliani, Mr Trump’s attorney, summoned the press to a briefing which he held at a [Philadelphia landscaping firm, sandwiched between a sex shop and a crematorium.](#)

Both Mr Giuliani and another Trump lawyer, Sidney Powell, are now facing costly defamation suits brought by Dominion Voting Systems, whom they accused of orchestrating an attempt to steal the election.

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Ms Powell's pushing of bizarre conspiracy theories – including suggesting that the election was rigged at the behest of the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez – was too much even for Mr Trump, who dropped her from his legal team.

Although Mr Trump is expected to avoid conviction a second time, the political atmosphere in Washington remains febrile.

Capitol Hill is still surrounded by massive protective fences, erected in the aftermath [of the January 6 riots which claimed five lives](#).

Democrats are also pushing for laws to ban members of Congress carrying weapons on Capitol Hill – ending an exemption which has been in place since 1967.

One newly-elected Trump-supporting member of Congress, Lauren Boebert, provoked outrage when she insisted on carrying a gun and refused to allow Capitol police to search her handbag.

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The Republicans remain divided between Mr Trump's loyal supporters, who are particularly strong in the House of Representatives, and the party establishment.

Adam Kinzinger, one of a minority of Republicans to vote in favour of the article of impeachment, defended his stand.

Speaking on Meet the Press, he said the Republicans were not a “Trump-first” party.

“This is a country first party. In some cases, you may support Donald Trump in that effort, but in my case, I believe that that's a whole new movement.”

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