S. Korean prosecutors say Yoon authorised ‘shooting’ during martial law bid

AFP- South Korea’s suspended president Yoon Suk Yeol authorised the military to fire their weapons if needed to enter parliament during his failed bid to impose martial law, according to a prosecutors’ report seen by AFP on Saturday.
The 10-page summary from former defence minister Kim Yong-hyun’s prosecution indictment report, which was provided to the media, also says Yoon vowed on December 3 to declare martial law three times if necessary.

Yoon, who was stripped of his duties by the National Assembly this month, is under investigation for his short-lived attempt to scrap civilian rule, which plunged the country into political turmoil and led to his impeachment.

Yoon’s lawyer Yoon Kab-keun dismissed the prosecutors’ report, telling AFP it was “a one-sided account that neither corresponds to objective circumstances nor common sense”.

As lawmakers rushed to parliament on December 3 to vote down Yoon’s martial law declaration, heavily armed troops stormed the building, scaling fences, smashing windows and landing by helicopter.

According to the prosecution indictment report, Yoon told the chief of the capital defence command, Lee Jin-woo, that military forces could shoot if necessary to enter the National Assembly.

“Have you still not got in? What are you doing? Break down the door and drag them out, even if it means shooting,” Yoon told Lee, according to the report.

Yoon also allegedly told the head of the Defense

Counterintelligence Command, General Kwak Jong-keun, to "quickly get inside" the National Assembly since the quorum for the martial law declaration to be lifted had not been met.

"So quickly get inside the National Assembly and bring out the people inside the chamber, and break down the doors with an axe if necessary and drag everyone out," the report quotes Yoon as saying at the time.

After lawmakers rushed inside parliament and voted 190-0 to nullify Yoon's declaration in the early hours of December 4, the report says Yoon told Lee, "Even if it's lifted, I can declare martial law a second or third time, so just keep going."

The report also included screenshots of senior defence officials' messages from the day of the martial law declaration.

It said there was evidence that Yoon had been discussing declaring martial law with senior military officials as early as March.

The declaration followed a budget tussle between Yoon's party and the opposition.

Days later, Yoon said in a speech that he apologised for the "anxiety and inconvenience" and promised that there would not be a second declaration of martial law.

Ex-defence minister Kim was arrested this month over his role in the failed martial law bid.

Opposition Democratic Party lawmaker Kang Sun-woo said in a statement on Saturday that "the prosecution has laid bare the undeniable ugly truth about Yoon Suk Yeol, the treasonous ringleader", adding that he must be "arrested immediately".

South Korea's Constitutional Court held its first preliminary hearing on the validity of Yoon's impeachment on Friday, with

the suspended president’s legal team attending.

The court will also decide the fate of Yoon’s replacement, Han Duck-soo, who was impeached Friday over his refusal to complete Yoon’s impeachment process and bring him to justice.

AFP