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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *We won't miss Rex Tillerson but Trump's new picks for Secretary of State and CIA Director have disqualifying pasts and should be rejected.*
- *As Senate vote on Yemen war nears, DOD struggles to make its case.*

TRUMP'S AMERICA: A WAR HAWK AS TOP DIPLOMAT AND A TORTURER LEADING THE CIA

Donald Trump has chosen former Congressman and current CIA Director Mike Pompeo to replace Secretary of State Rex Tillerson -- whom he fired via tweet this week -- and Deputy CIA Director Gina Haspel to replace Pompeo, moves that are already garnering [stiff push back](#). Pompeo's general penchant for conspiracy theories and disdain for diplomacy, and Haspel's direct involvement in the Bush-era torture program point to dangerously disqualifying track records. Progressives should be unequivocal in calling for the rejection of both nominees.

In fact, both Haspel and Pompeo have already received bipartisan opposition with one Republican senator [announcing](#) his opposition to both picks. Given the 1-vote GOP majority in both the full Senate and on the relevant committees, there is a **real possibility that Trump may have to look elsewhere to fill Tillerson's shoes.**

It was the Pompeo confirmation as CIA director, in fact, that [lit the spark](#) of progressive enthusiasm to hold Democrats accountable for voting for Trump's cabinet nominees and signaled to Democrats that voters wanted them to resist normalizing hate and bigotry in the White House.

MESSAGING/RESEARCH

MIKE POMPEO

TOPLINE: Pompeo has pushed hawkish policies against Iran and North Korea, doesn't accept climate science, and has a history of extreme Islamophobia, all of which disqualify him to be our nation's top diplomat.

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Pompeo wants to kill the Iran nuclear deal and take a more aggressive approach to Iran.

- Pompeo [counseled](#) Trump to declare that the Iran deal is not in America's interests. Trump decertified the deal and is now threatening to rip it up, a move that could put the U.S. back on the path to war.
- Despite assurances last Spring from U.S. intel and the IAEA that Iran is complying with the deal, Pompeo reportedly [said](#): "Good. But we know they're cheating anyway -- we're just not seeing it."
- As CIA director, Pompeo [played politics with intelligence](#) by working with a hawkish anti-Iran deal think tank to release documents from the Osama bin Laden raid purporting to establish a link between al Qaeda and Iran. (The reality is the Iran-AQ relationship is "not one of alliance" but "[highly antagonistic](#)" ...)
- Back in 2014, just after the U.S. reached an interim agreement on Iran's nuclear program, Pompeo said the U.S. should consider a military strike. "In an unclassified setting," he [said](#), "it is under 2,000 sorties to destroy the Iranian nuclear capacity. This is not an insurmountable task for the coalition forces."

Pompeo isn't a strong supporter of diplomacy with the Kim regime in North Korea.

- While Rex Tillerson was an advocate for diplomacy with North Korea, Pompeo has taken a more hawkish view, [suggesting](#) as recently as last year that regime change is an option.

Pompeo has a long history of Islamophobia.

- Pompeo [frames](#) counterterrorism as a clash of civilizations between Christianity and radical Islam and once [claimed](#) that President Obama is on the side of radical Islam.
- Pompeo [subscribes](#) to the conspiracy theory that radical Muslims are infiltrating the U.S.
- Pompeo was [forced to apologize](#) for calling his congressional opponent a "Turban topper."

Pompeo denies the scientific consensus on climate change.

- In 2013, Pompeo said: "There are scientists who think lots of different things about climate change. There's some who think we're warming, there's some who think we're

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cooling, there's some who think that the last 16 years have shown a pretty stable climate environment." He [stood by](#) that claim during his confirmation hearing last year.

Pompeo was also a Benghazi conspiracy theorist and is reportedly already recruiting staffers with military backgrounds causing concern that he will "over-militarize" the State Department. [\[SOURCE\]](#) [\[SOURCE\]](#)

MORE BACKGROUND/RESOURCES ON POMPEO

- "Trump's CIA Pick Pompeo Could Bring Agency Back to its 'Darkest Days,'" Global Progressive Hub, 11/22/16 [\[LINK\]](#)
- "Cotton, Pompeo and Trump Are A Recipe for War With Iran," by Trita Parsi and Ryan Costello, Huffington Post, 11/30/17 [\[LINK\]](#)
- "Good Riddance to CIA Director Pompeo," by Ned Price, Foreign Policy, 3/16/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- "With Mike Pompeo at the State Department, Are the Uber Hawks Winning?" by Robin Wright, the New Yorker [\[LINK\]](#)
- "Tillerson's Ouster Could Kill the Iran Nuclear Deal," by Michael Crowley, Politico 3/13/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- STATEMENT: "Trump Nominates War Hawks To Lead American Foreign Policy," Win Without War [\[LINK\]](#)
- STATEMENT: "Senators Must Reject Nomination of Extreme Hawk Pompeo to Lead State Department," J Street [\[LINK\]](#)
- STATEMENT: "Pompeo Nomination Threatens Iran Deal, Increases Risk of War," NIAC [\[LINK\]](#)

ACTIONS

- [CREDO](#): "Tell the Senate: Block and resist Pompeo's confirmation as secretary of state."
- [NIAC](#): "Defeat Pompeo to Stop Trump's Push Toward War!"
- [WIN WITHOUT WAR](#): "Tell Congress: Oppose Haspel and Pompeo Nominations."

GINA HASPEL

TOPLINE: Gina Haspel played a pivotal role in the Bush administration torture program by leading a black site in Thailand just after 9/11 and overseeing the waterboarding of at least one terror suspect. The Senate should reject Haspel's nomination because while it's one thing that we have failed to hold the proprietors of torture accountable, it's another thing to reward them for it.

Haspel oversaw a secret CIA prison in Thailand after 9/11 where a terrorism suspect, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, was waterboarded. [\[SOURCE\]](#)

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Haspel also drafted the order to destroy video tapes documenting the torture at the Thailand prison. [\[SOURCE\]](#)

In 2017, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights asked for warrant for Haspel's arrest because of her role in torture. [\[SOURCE\]](#)

MORE BACKGROUND/RESOURCES ON HASPEL:

- "Gina Haspel's Troubling Role in the CIA Torture Program," the Project on Government Oversight, 3/13/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- "Backgrounder: Gina Haspel, Nominee for CIA Director," Human Rights First, 3/14/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- "What Happened at the Thailand 'Black Site' Run by Trump's CIA Pick," the Atlantic, 3/14/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- STATEMENT: "CAP's Kelly Magsamen Urges Senate to Reject Nomination of Gina Haspel to Head CIA" [\[LINK\]](#)
- LETTER: A coalition of more than two dozen national organizations call for Haspel's role in torture to be declassified. [\[LINK\]](#) [\[REPORT\]](#)

SENATE NEARS VOTE TO ROLL BACK U.S. ROLE IN SAUDI WAR IN YEMEN

The Senate is nearing a pivotal vote on America's future role in Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen and it's looking like the measure will have strong support.

Indeed, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Republican leadership appear so concerned that the bipartisan measure -- co-sponsored by Sens. Mike Lee, Bernie Sanders, and Chris Murphy -- could pass, that they're trying to [delay the vote](#).

DOD BRIEFING BACKFIRES

Officials from the Defense Department, which has already presented a [laughable defense](#) of its military operations in Yemen, [went to Capitol Hill this week](#) to make their case. Based on reports from the briefing, it didn't go well.

Murphy [tweeted](#) that Trump's team "left out loads of important information that would have ruined their case to continue the US bombing of Yemen."

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“I don’t think it was that convincing,” Sen. Tim Kaine [said](#), emerging from the DOD briefing this week.

“I am continuing to support the resolution,” said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, referring to the Lee-Sanders-Murphy measure.

For his part, Sen. Sanders [challenged](#) Senators who oppose his resolution this week, saying: “If you think it’s a good idea to wreak havoc on Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the world, then come down to the floor and say so.”

MILITARY LEADERS CONTRADICT ONE ANOTHER

In a [letter](#) to the Senate this week, Defense Secretary James Mattis said U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition “is focused on improving [Saudi] coalition processes and procedures, especially regarding compliance with the law of armed conflict and best practices for reducing the risk of civilian casualties.”

Yet the very same day Mattis sent his letter, Gen. Joseph Votel, the head of U.S. Central Command, which oversees American forces in the Middle East and East Africa, [admitted](#) during a hearing that CENTCOM has no idea whether U.S. munitions or fuel were used in Saudi-coalition air strikes that killed civilians or took out hospitals and food supplies.

MORE RESOURCES AND BACKGROUND:

- “The Lesson the Trump Administration has Failed to Learn about Yemen,” by Eric Eikenberry and (Win Without War Policy Director) Kate Kizer, Just Security, 3/12/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- “Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief,” Win Without War, 3/2/18 [\[LINK\]](#)
- “Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief,” Win Without War, 3/9/18 [\[LINK\]](#)

BURIED LEDES

[RSVP!](#) for the **Global Call for Peace** to discuss North Korea with Sen. Bernie Sanders and other leading experts.

With **the 15th anniversary of the start of the Iraq war just around the corner**, the Center for International Policy’s Bill Hartung [takes a look at the costs](#).

ICYMI: Sen. Sanders “[wants to know](#) why **so much of taxpayer dollars are going to the CEOs of defense companies.**”

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If Trump pulls the U.S. out of the Iran deal, Iran's deputy foreign minister [said](#) **Iran will quit too.**

While Trump was [telling](#) Bibi Netanyahu that he'll quit the Iran deal, U.S. Army General Joseph Votel, the head of U.S. Central Command, was [signaling](#) **his support for it.**

CNAS's Ilan Goldenberg and Elizabeth Rosenberg [write](#): **"How to save the Iran nuclear deal."**

[NYT](#): "How Trump's Disdain for the Iran Deal **Makes a North Korea Pact Even Harder.**"

A [veteran](#) of nuclear diplomacy **has some advice for Trump on North Korea.**

MUST READ: How right-wingers [created a smear campaign](#) against a career State Department official **because of her Iranian descent.**

The White House [released a report](#) this week confirming that **the U.S. military is officially fighting wars in seven countries.**

And finally, it [looks like](#) we may not have seen the last of **the infamous mustachioed war hawk.**