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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *Trump's War Cabinet is taking shape with John Bolton's appointment as National Security Advisor.*
- *With Bolton on board, the world is counting on the Senate to block Trump's War Cabinet by opposing Haspel and Pompeo.*
- *The Senate sent a strong bipartisan message to Saudi Arabia: Your war in Yemen must end.*
- *The Iraq war turned 15 this week. Have we learned nothing?*

IT'S TIME TO SOUND THE ALARM: TRUMP ROUNDS OUT WAR CABINET WITH JOHN BOLTON

After weeks of speculation, Donald Trump finally asked John Bolton to be his National Security Advisor, revealing once and for all who he really is: a reckless and dangerous president bent on dragging the United States into more wars.

Trump's pick of Bolton is the latest in a long line of personnel decisions that all point in one direction, Donald Trump is assembling a war cabinet. Whether it is the ouster of pro-diplomacy voices like Rex Tillerson, the nominations of the hawkish Mike Pompeo and pro-torture Gina Haspel, and even the revoked nomination of Victor Cha over his opposition to Trump's plan for preventative war with North Korea, these moves combine to paint a picture that diplomacy and the rule of law have no place in Donald Trump's administration.

Read our statement [here](#), and share it on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

TOPLINE MESSAGES:

Bolton is a dangerous warmonger who will only serve to reinforce Donald Trump's worst impulses.

- Bolton has actively and openly pushed for war with Iran, North Korea, and Syria.

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- Bolton is an unrepentant cheerleader for the Iraq war and still believes to this day that it was the right thing to do.
- Bolton in fact thinks the Iraq War went so well that we should use the same strategy to deal with Syria, North Korea, and Iran.

Bolton helped blow up a deal with North Korea before, there's no indication he's interested in a deal now.

- In 2002, as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control, Bolton foreclosed further diplomatic engagement about a secret North Korean enrichment program. Instead of seeking a follow-on agreement to the Agreed Framework that had frozen North Korea's nuclear program for 8 years, Bolton declared the report "the hammer I had been looking for to shatter the Agreed Framework." [[SOURCE](#); [SOURCE](#)]
- As recently as this month, Bolton said current talks with North Korea are "a waste of time," mean "nothing," and supports them only to make an unrealistic ultimatum for instant denuclearization to justify subsequent military action. [[SOURCE](#)]

Bolton is so toxic that a Republican-controlled Senate refused to confirm him as ambassador to the U.N. in 2005.

- In 2005, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee kicked Bolton's nomination to the Senate floor without recommendation. When the full Senate refused to even vote on his nomination, Bush installed Bolton through a recess appointment. [[SOURCE](#); [SOURCE](#)]

Bolton has close ties to anti-Muslim extremists Pam Geller, Robert Spencer, and Frank Gaffney.

- Bolton chairs the Gatestone Institute, whose purpose is mainly to publish myths and falsehoods about Islam and fear mongering about Muslims. [[SOURCE](#)]
- In 2012, Bolton went on anti-Muslim conspiracy theorist Frank Gaffney's radio show and defended Michele Bachmann's calls for an investigation into people she baselessly said had "penetrated" the highest ranks of the Obama administration on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood. [[SOURCE](#)]

Bolton is embroiled in the Cambridge Analytica scandal; his Super PAC "spent heavily on the services of embattled voter profiling company." [[SOURCE](#)]

- This is not the first time Bolton has been caught up in an election related scandal – in the 1990's Bolton was president of a think tank that funneled money from Hong Kong and

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Taiwan to Republican Party candidates in the 1996 elections. [[SOURCE](#); [SOURCE](#)]

- Bolton appeared in a promotional video for a Russian gun rights group at the behest of the NRA, linking Bolton to the shadowy GOP-NRA-Russia nexus in the run-up to the 2016 election. [[SOURCE](#)]

FURTHER RESOURCES

Research/backgrounders: [[LINK](#)] [[LINK](#)]

Congressional Statements Tracker: [[LINK](#)]

Organizational Statements Tracker: [[LINK](#)]

Conservative Pushback Tracker: [[LINK](#)]

John Bolton worst hits (op-eds and quotes): [[LINK](#)]

[AFTER BOLTON, SENATE MUST NOW BLOCK HASPEL & POMPEO](#)

Mike Pompeo is no diplomat and Gina Haspel is no champion for the rule of law. If their nominations as Secretary of State and CIA Director weren't alarming before Bolton's White House promotion, now's the time for the Senate to step up and take a stand.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK ON HASPEL...

...from the ACLU's [Faiz Shakir](#): “**Democrats are losing this opportunity to define a moral backbone for the party**, to distinguish themselves on values. Certainly, Trump loves torture -- he's said it, it 'works.' This is a clear opportunity to say, 'That's him and this is us.' A complete break.”

Indeed, with Sen. John McCain likely absent due to health issues, and Sen. Rand Paul already announcing his opposition to Haspel, Democrats [have a real chance](#) to block her nomination. Paul explained his thinking in an [op-ed](#) this week and pushed back on the claim that Haspel's role in torture was merely a case of “following orders”:

Glenn Carle, a former CIA interrogator, has described her as “one of the architects, designers, implementers and one of the top two managers of the [Enhanced Interrogation Techniques program] and a true believer, by all accounts, in the ‘Global War in Terror’ paradigm.”

This does not sound like someone who was simply “following orders.” **This sounds like someone who was giving them, which I would argue is far worse.**

SPIRITUAL ADVISER FUELS POMPEO'S WAR LUST & ISLAMOPHOBIA

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LobeLog's Eli Clifton [reports](#): "An examination by *LobeLog* of statements and studies by Secretary of State-designate Mike Pompeo's 'spiritual adviser' reveals a deeply ingrained anti-Muslim theology coupled with a conviction that U.S. military engagement overseas is justified by nothing less than the Bible itself."

For more on the anti-Muslim company Pompeo keeps, check out Peter Beinart's [latest](#).

FOR MORE ON HASPEL AND POMPEO

See our [Debrief from last week](#), J Street's [fact sheet](#) for more on Pompeo's troubling rhetoric, and Lawrence Wilkerson's [piece](#) on "the most important hearings of the young century."

[TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR SAUDI ARABIA'S WAR IN YEMEN](#)

The Senate this week sent a loud, clear, and bipartisan message that U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen is on a short leash, and that the conflict there must end.

Forty-four senators supported bringing a bipartisan resolution to a vote that would have ended congressionally unauthorized U.S. military support for a Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen. It is the clearest signal yet that Congress and the American people are fed up with fueling humanitarian suffering in Yemen and engaging in military conflicts abroad that lack a clear U.S. national security interest. Indeed, the U.N. Secretary-General and High Commissioner for Human Rights just [reported](#) again that Saudi Arabian airstrikes are to blame for most civilian deaths and injuries in Yemen.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION REACTION: [FCNL](#), [Oxfam](#), [Peace Action](#), [Win Without War](#), [Yemen Peace Project](#)

U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP BECOMING INCREASINGLY TOXIC

So while the fight to end the war in Yemen continues, Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman -- or "MBS" -- kicked off a month-long tour of the U.S. this week with an interview on CBS's 60 Minutes, in what many described as a free infomercial for Saudi Arabia full of falsehoods and [contradictions](#).

"The interview itself consisted of one softball question after another," noted Mehdi Hasan of The Intercept, who added that 60 Minutes "threw away a unique, on-camera opportunity to hold an unelected dictator to account." (Read Hasan's full piece [here](#), including 10 questions 60 Minutes could have asked. Daniel Larison at the American Conservative called the interview "[embarrassing](#).")

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Meanwhile, Sens. Cory Booker, Tim Kaine, and Chris Murphy [called on Trump](#) to press MBS on a variety of issues during their meeting at the White House this week, including “domestic human rights violations” and “ending the brutal Yemen war.”

And Sens. Tom Udall and Richard Blumenthal led a group of eight Senate Armed Services Democrats, including Ranking Member Jack Reed, [writing](#) to Defense Secretary James Mattis “significant concerns about the ability of Congress to oversee the use of this authority and expenditure of U.S. taxpayer dollars in support of” the Saudi-led war in Yemen.”

“The president and the crown prince might not want to reckon with the reality of their rights abuses,” Kristine Beckerle of Human Rights Watch [wrote](#) this week, “but U.S. lawmakers owe it to the Yemeni civilians still suffering, the Saudi activists still behind bars and the women still fighting for freedom — full freedom — to ask the right questions and to push these powerful leaders to answer them.

AND IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

[Not one woman](#) was seated at the table when Saudi and American leaders met at the White House this week, and MBS [reportedly](#) thinks he has Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner “in his back pocket,” a charge that calls into question whether Kushner may have shared highly classified information with the Saudi royal.

[15 YEARS AFTER THE INVASION, WHAT HAS THE IRAQ WAR TAUGHT US?](#)

The 15th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion passed relatively quietly on Monday. From our statement: “Despite lessons from the deadly and costly American war in Iraq, there is still a well-funded and vocal chorus in Washington and beyond — many of whom hold or will hold key national security positions on the Trump administration — pushing the U.S. toward catastrophic wars with Iran and North Korea. Have we learned nothing?”

Read the rest [here](#).

OTHER TAKES ON THE IRAQ WAR ANNIVERSARY

- “The Return of the Iraq War Argument,” the Atlantic [\[LINK\]](#)
- Former CIA Analyst Nada Bakos: “I am about to write a thread I am so tired of repeating on the anniversary of the Iraq invasion...” [\[LINK\]](#)

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- “What was the political cost of getting the Iraq war wrong?” by Win Without War’s Stephen Miles and Erica Fein [\[LINK\]](#)
- “15 Years Later, CIP Commemorates Disastrous US Choices in Iraq,” Center for International Policy [\[LINK\]](#)
- “One Morning in Baghdad,” by Andrew Exum, the Atlantic [\[LINK\]](#)
- “Fifteen Years Ago, America Destroyed My Country,” by Sinan Antoon, New York Times [\[LINK\]](#)
- “Mohammed bin Salman, son of the Iraq war,” by Shibley Telhami, Brookings [\[LINK\]](#)
- “15 years later, Iraq vets in Congress worry lawmakers learned little from the war,” by Leo Shane, Military Times [\[LINK\]](#)

BURIED LEDES

Sen. Bernie Sanders and other experts [hosted a call](#) with activists worldwide last Sunday on **how to stave off war with North Korea**.

CAP [outlines the way forward on North Korea](#): diplomacy, deterrence, and pressure; and sift through the myths surrounding the North Korea policy debate.

“**Middle East civilian deaths have soared under Trump**. And the media [mostly shrug](#).”

MUST READ: Journalist Robert Wright [explains how the New York Times is making war with Iran more likely](#).

ICYMI: Russian mercenaries, many fighting with the co-called “[Vagner Commanders](#),” are [engaging](#) U.S. troops in Syria, **sparking concerns of escalating the conflict**.

And finally, **you’re not winning** when the French Ambassador has to smack down your “childish” arguments about the Iran deal [on Twitter](#).