

Patrick Lawrence

Tulsi Gabbard Takes on the Deep State

Of all the appointments President-elect Trump has announced since his victory in America's 5 November elections, his choice of Tulsi Gabbard as director of national intelligence has received by far the most attention. Gabbard's nomination may or may not be confirmed when the Senate, according to American law, considers the incoming president's nominees with the power to approve or reject them. And Gabbard has been controversial, the object of hope on one side and fear on the other, since the hour Donald Trump named her as his DNI.

Gabbard, a XX-year old Army veteran and former congresswoman from Hawai'i, has long been an outspoken critic of America's wars of adventure, the extravagant subterfuge operation we call "Russiagate," and the machinations of its intelligence apparatus. She ran a failed campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination in 2020—successfully advancing her views to a nationwide audience in the course of her defeat. She favors, among much else, an end to the war in Ukraine. She favors dialogue with those the policy cliques in Washington deems America's adversaries.

Can Tulsi Gabbard alter, or assist Trump in altering, the direction of America's foreign and security policies? Can she, yet more broadly and profoundly, bring the national-security state, vast parts of which have long operated beyond legislative oversight or civilian authority, under control? These are the questions Gabbard's nomination prompts.

They are good questions. And to them I add a third: Is it possible to hold high office in any U.S. administration while standing publicly against the operations of the American imperium? To note my conclusion straightaway, I have my doubts.

Gabbard has earned her reputation for bold positions and an admirable insistence on principle over many years. Eleven years ago, while still serving in Congress, she opposed President Obama when he was about to bomb Syria. This was in response to intelligence reports that Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president, had crossed one of those “red lines” American presidents foolishly like to draw, when he, Assad, allegedly authorized a chemical weapons attack on oppositionists in Douma, a suburb of Damascus.

Four years later—this was during Trump’s first term— Gabbard, still serving on Capitol Hill, traveled to Damascus on a “fact-finding” tour and held direct talks with Assad in search of a negotiated settlement to a war that had, by the time of her visit in 2017, claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced millions of others. A year later Gabbard questioned the authenticity of new charges that Assad had deployed chemical weapons, once again in Douma. At the same time she complained, in so many words, that the American intelligence apparatus was effectively lying when they termed Islamic extremists “moderate rebels”—a label mainstream American media uncritically adopted.

Fast forward: Gabbard made headlines again when, a day after Russia began its military intervention in Ukraine, on 24 February 2022, she asserted that the U.S. had provoked the Russian operation by insisting on the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization's eastward expansion and cultivating the coup of February 2014, which brought the Zelensky regime to power five years later..

In each of these cases, and there are more such occasions in Gabbard's record, she stood diametrically against the reigning orthodoxies among the Washington policy cliques and in the corporate press. And here we must note: Gabbard was entirely right in all of these positions. The allegations against Assad for using chemical weapons have been proven to be false-flag operations concocted by American and British intelligence. It is now a matter of record—although the record is not easy to find—that the Central Intelligence Agency financed, trained, and armed jihadist militias, including the Islamic State and its various appendages, for many years. This is probably—it is hard to measure—the most extensive covert operation the C.I.A. has undertaken the whole of the post–Cold War era.

As to Gabbard's official encounters with Bashar al–Assad, it is difficult to take seriously those who accuse her of treacherously betraying America's national interest. She now favors diplomatic engagement not only with Syria but with China and North Korea. This is nothing more than professional statecraft: It is with adversaries that diplomatic contacts are most important. It was only during the warmongering Bush II administration, 2001–2009, that the ridiculous argument took hold that America must refuse to lend “credibility” to its enemies by talking to them.

We come to Gabbard's analysis of the West-sponsored provocations that prompted Russia to intervene in Ukraine. Is there any question of the causality here? Only propagandists, liars, *New York Times* reporters, and those fooled by one or the other or all three any longer contend that the Russian military's move two years

and nine months ago was unwarranted and came as a shock out of nowhere. At bottom, Gabbard's transgression on the Ukraine question lies in saying publicly what the prevailing orthodoxy insists must not be said.

In each of these cases, Gabbard has implicitly, or at times explicitly, challenged the power and methods of the Deep State, as I am comfortable calling the national-security apparatus.

This is why many critics of America's conduct and policies look to Gabbard as the most promising figure to assume high office in many years, if not decades. And it is why President-elect Trump favors Gabbard. It should be obvious to anyone who looks without ideological blinders that the national-security and intelligence apparatus, vigorously opposed to Trump's policy plans as he declared them during the 2016 campaign season, subverted his first term in the White House without relent.

It is also why—this follows more or less automatically—Gabbard is under vigorous attack now from the Deep State and from its appendages in mainstream media, the think tanks, and elsewhere in the neoconservative circles that have controlled U.S. foreign and security policies for many decades.

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There are many observers and commentators who now look to Gabbard to effect a fundamental shift in the direction of U.S. policy and America's conduct beyond its shores. This is perfectly understandable, given her record. Her candidacy is one of

those cases—you see this in Germany and elsewhere now—wherein the customary distinctions between left and right are blurred in the name of a common cause.

Here is John Kiriakou, a former C.I.A. analyst who served prison time as a whistleblower and is now a highly regarded commentator on national-security questions, [writing in *Consortium News*](#) after Trump announced Gabbard as his choice for DNI:

[indent.]

Trump appears to be serious in his desire to change the country's foreign and intelligence policy. He appears to be serious about shaking up the intelligence community. He appears to be serious about bringing foreign conflicts in which the U.S. is involved to a close.

Those are all good things for those of us who support a change to the pro-war status quo that is the military-industrial complex. We can certainly disagree with Donald Trump on a thousand other issues. But on Tulsi Gabbard, he got it right.

[end indent.]

And [here is Scott Ritter](#), the former weapons inspector and also a commentator, again in *Consortium News*:

[indent.]

Had Trump picked a more traditional choice for DNI, drawn from the ranks of the very establishment which conspired against him in his first term,

Trump would find himself trying to implement policies in an environment where he faced constant resistance and opposition.

[end indent.]

These are sound observations. Taking on the Deep State, the military-first character of American policy, and the military-industrial complex are all urgent tasks. With Gabbard as his DNI, Trump will certainly preclude the kind of palace intrigues and subversions that rendered his first term more or less a mess.

But in time such thoughts as these may prove to assume too much. Trump's seriousness and constancy can never be taken for granted. And if Gabbard assumes the office to which Trump has named her it is not at all clear just how much she can get done against the dense immensity of the Deep State's sprawl. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the last one seriously to take on the national-security apparatus was assassinated on 22 November 1963.

Will Gabbard earn a Senate confirmation? We cannot know this yet, either. If she does not her cause will have been defeated before she even began and she will stand to go down as little more than an ineffective gesture on the part of a past and future president much given to gesture and display.

In this latter connection the outlook for Gabbard's success as Congress weighs her nomination does not at this moment appear very bright.

Here is Jared Moskowitz, a congressman from Florida, after Trump announced his DNI nominee:

[indent.]

Putting [in] someone with known sympathies for foreign adversaries is not putting America's interests first—it's putting our security at risk.

[end indent.]

Seth Magaziner, a Rhode Island legislator:

[indent.]

Tulsi Gabbard's deep ties to some of our nation's most dangerous adversaries, including Bashar al-Assad of Syria and Vladimir Putin of Russia, make her an untrustworthy guardian of our nation's most closely held secrets.

[end indent.]

Abigail Spanberger, a Virginia congresswoman (and a former C.I.A. operative):

[indent.]

Not only is she ill-prepared and unqualified, but she traffics in conspiracy theories and cozies up to dictators like Bashar al-Assad and Vladimir Putin.

[end indent.]

You can read this stuff two ways. One, this is the wall of stupidity Trump and Gabbard will confront as she goes to Capitol Hill for her confirmation hearings. It is thick and has been in place for seven and some decades, if not longer. Two, while those just quoted are all lower-house representatives and, so, will not vote on Gabbard's confirmation, they reflect the Deep State's very thorough influence in both houses of Congress.

[Here](#) is a typical piece in this line, written by *The New York Times*'s "disinformation" correspondent, Steven Lee Myers, whose work, with not a single exception, is reliably a straight repetition of official propaganda. In it, Myers repeats all of the cases I listed earlier as if Gabbard's positions are *prima facie* wrong or disproven as "conspiracy theories." It is preposterously upside down, but this is how the corporate press in America now serves as—I will borrow from Bernays here—"the executive arm of the invisible government."

Myers elaborates:

[indent.]

Her selection to be the director of national intelligence has raised alarms among national security officials, not only because of her lack of experience in intelligence but also because she has embraced a worldview that mirrors disinformation straight out of the Kremlin's playbook.

[end indent.]

Note what passes for logic now in American political discourse: If your views, any of them, coincide with those of the Russians or—heaven forbid, their president, you are suspect as a creature of the Kremlin and you are trafficking in disinformation.

You come away with the very strong impression that the Deep State is well along in its preparations to do in Trump's second term what it did in his first. Will

Gabbard win confirmation on Capitol Hill? The skeptics are many but this remains an unknown. Will she prove effective if she succeeds and assumes her post? Ditto.

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