

As Trump Reshuffles His Team, Fears Grow About America's Unpredictability

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Global Research, March 16, 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

[The firing](#) of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and his replacement by Mike Pompeo surprised no one in Washington as rumors to that effect have been circulating for more than six months. There have been numerous warnings that President Donald Trump might be disappointed with the performance of his top diplomat, most particularly reflected in the chief executive's tweets expressing disagreement on many occasions when Tillerson dared to voice an opinion. Tillerson responded to the undercutting by Trump by calling the president a "moron."

The naming of Pompeo as the replacement was also predicted by many who noted that he had become a confidant of the president, much more than any previous CIA Director (DCI). The turnover replaces a decent but somewhat bumbling businessman with a hard-line ideologue. Pompeo tends to see complex issues in fairly simplistic ways, a view that has resonated with the president and that has been solidified through his briefing Trump nearly daily on the state of the world. Pompeo was, for example, one of the leading advocates of the terrible decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

In a [speech made five months ago](#), Pompeo criticized the CIA, observing that it had both forgotten how to spy, which is almost certainly true, while adding that it will have to become "more vicious" and "more aggressive" to accomplish its mission of making the United States "safe." In [a speech](#) made in January on the eve of a government shutdown he elaborated "We're gonna continue crushing our adversaries, whether the government's open or closed." Pompeo would like to turn the United States into an unleashed wrecking ball directed against the enemies of the American Way and he appears intent on starting that process in the Middle East, focusing particularly on Syria and Iran. [He has labeled Iran](#) "a thuggish police state" and "despotic theocracy" and has [called for](#) both regime change and the repeal of the "disastrous" nuclear deal with "the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism."

Perhaps more disturbing is Trump's designation of Agency Deputy Director Gina Haspel as the new Director of the CIA to replace Pompeo. Haspel, a thirty-year veteran of the Agency, was one of the architects of the infamous rendition and torture policies that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. She was a protégé of Jose Rodriguez, the CIA's Counterterrorism Center (CTC) director between 2002 and 2004 who later became Deputy Director of Operations (DDO), in charge of the Agency's spies. [Haspel was the head of the secret prison in Thailand](#) where Abu Zubaydah and other suspected terrorists were water boarded and otherwise tortured. She also ordered the destruction of video tapes showing many of the torture sessions, on orders from Rodriguez, in order to avoid possible criminal charges even though the White House Counsel had ordered that they be preserved. Neither

she nor Rodriguez was ever punished either for obstruction of justice or destruction of evidence, both of which, as former senior Agency officer [John Kiriakou notes](#), are felonies.

Haspel has been [praised by Pompeo](#), who defended her and others at CIA after the Senate torture report, [declaring](#) “These men and women are not torturers, they are patriots,” as possessing an “uncanny ability to get things done” and as a leader who “inspires those around her.” But Kiriakou has a different take, [recalling that](#) she was referred to as “Bloody Gina.” Most officers chose to avoid her company.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Haspel faced some difficult questions from Congressmen when she was up for approval for the Deputy position in February 2017. “Her background makes her unsuitable for the position,” Senators Ron Wyden and Martin Heinrich [wrote in a letter](#) to President Trump when Haspel was nominated.

As in the case of many other recent poor senior level appointments at CIA, former Barack Obama Agency Director John Brennan was involved with furthering Haspel’s career. He promoted her to become Director of the National Clandestine Service in 2013, but she was never confirmed due to concerns about her torture record and served only as “acting.” Brennan [predictably commented](#) on her selection as DCI on Tuesday by praising her “wealth of experience.” He chose to ignore her torture record, possibly because he himself is indelibly stained by the Obama Administration drone assassination program and the White House kill list of Americans that he promoted and ran.

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