

Is Trump Sacrificing General Mattis? Erupting Tensions and Divisions

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Global Research, July 02, 2018

[Yeni Safak](#) 1 July 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

As NATO's role in the new Cold War between Russia and the West is being discussed, U.S. President Donald Trump is further drawing away from his European allies. Trump defends that NATO's entire financial burden is on the U.S.'s shoulders. Trump had shocked his allies when he said, "NATO is worse than NAFTA," at the G-7 Summit in Canada. According to him, the European Union is also worse than China, for Trump's trade wars severely harmed relations with EU countries. Trump's National Security Adviser John Bolton went to Moscow and met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. During the meeting, a decision was made immediately after the NATO Summit between Trump and Putin to hold a summit in Helsinki. Trump said that Russia needs to be readmitted into the G-7. Collectively taking all these developments into consideration, it seems like the NATO summit is going to be extremely tense.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis is trying to fix Trump's damaged trust relations with his European allies. U.S. military officials, on the other hand, are calming allies saying,

"Take our actions into consideration, not Trump's tweets."

One other development that concerns Europeans was Mike Pompeo, who is known for his hawk views, and John Bolton taking up the positions vacated after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and National Security Adviser Gen. McMaster resigned. Thus, the only actors left in Trump's inner cabinet to calm the Europeans are Mattis and White House Secretary-General Gen. John Kelly.

However, according to information leaked to U.S. media, Mattis and Kelly are not as effective as they used to be in Trump's inner cabinet. As a matter of fact, behind the scenes it is being said that Kelly is soon going to resign and, Hope Hicks, who previously resigned while communications director, is going to fill his position. Hicks is known as a figure loyal to Trump's political agenda. It is also said that the communications director position is going to be filled by Trump's political ally, Fox News's former Chair Bill Shine who had quit in May 2017 due to harassment scandals. U.S. Vice President Mike Pence's assistant Nick Ayers and White House Administration and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney are also among the names likely to replace Kelly. It is said that Kelly will be leaving this week or after the NATO Summit.

Mattis is going to become further isolated with Kelly gone. When Pompeo was CIA chief, he

used to spend more time with Trump than Mattis. After becoming secretary of state, this shift further increased. Pompeo was also the architect of the summit between Korean leader Kim Jong-un and Trump in Singapore. Looking at hearsays, Mattis found out about Trump's decision to postpone joint military drills with South Korea afterward. Trump also thinks that U.S. soldiers need to withdraw from Afghanistan and Syria. But Mattis is not on the same page as Trump regarding this matter. Despite having backtracked with respect to both matters, Trump is yet to give up. The question is: "How much longer can Mattis restrain Trump?" Trump also wants to establish a "Space Military Force" that is said will bring hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of trade volume. This fantastical project is going to bring an additional burden to U.S. taxpayers as well. Neither Mattis nor the Air Forces are pleased with this idea. When Trump gave the order to launch preparations to establish the "Space Force," he did not speak to Mattis. This order was a surprise for both the Pentagon and Mattis.

It is said that Mattis, who could not prevent Bolton and Pompeo's appointment to critical positions, may remain in his post as long as he refrains from criticizing Trump in public. Trump and Mattis are also known not to see eye-to-eye on the withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal and moving the U.S.'s embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. It is stated that Trump is tired of Mattis and Kelly's attempts to restrain him. In conclusion, the Trump-Mattis relations seems to be stuck in a tight spot. It is only a matter of time before this tension erupts.

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