

Trump to fire National Security Adviser McMaster as personalist circle tightens

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The *Washington Post* reported last night that five White House sources claim President Donald Trump has decided to fire National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster.

The dismissal, which has not been officially announced by the White House and may not be implemented immediately, comes days after Trump announced the firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Trump's presidency resembles less and less a presidential *administration* and more a personalist clique of appointees who serve their leader.

The present cabinet reshuffling marks a dramatic step to the right by what was already the most reactionary presidency in US history. Trump has nominated CIA Director Michael Pompeo, far-right stooge of the Koch brothers, as Tillerson's replacement. His nominee to take Pompeo's place is Gina Haspel, who ran a US blacksite torture center in Thailand during the Bush administration.

Among possible replacements for McMaster is John Bolton, the ultra-right George W. Bush administration US ambassador to the UN and a ferocious advocate of war against Iran and North Korea. *Vox* wrote that Bolton "seems poised to become President Donald Trump's next national security adviser, which would have significant—and frightening—implications for the future of Trump's foreign policy."

Last night's *Post* report portrays Trump in his element as he assembles a cabinet totally dominated by the military-intelligence apparatus. "For all of the evident disorder," the *Post* wrote, "Trump feels emboldened, advisers said" and "is enjoying the process of assessing his team and making changes, tightening his inner circle to those he considers survivors and who respect his unconventional style, one senior White House official said."

This confirms the analysis put forward by the *World Socialist Web Site* in the March 15 perspective, "Seven days in March: The Trump administration and the

breakdown of American democracy." We wrote:

Trump conducts himself more and more in the manner of a Mussolini, putting into practice his frequent declaration during the 2016 campaign that only he could put right what is wrong about American society. He conducts himself, not as the elected representative of the American people, or even as the leader of one of the two main capitalist parties, but as a personalist ruler, an authoritarian of the Latin American or fascist type, the arbiter of all major social and political issues.

Further evidence of this process was provided in a letter sent yesterday by leading Democratic House members Elijah Cummings and Eliot Engel to White House Chief of Staff John Kelly and Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan. The letter alleges the Trump administration is purging career State Department officials from the government in what the Democrats call an "extremely disturbing" development.

The letter continues, "Over the past year, we have heard many reports of political attacks on career employees at the State Department, but we have not seen evidence of how extensive, blunt, and inappropriate these attacks were until now." The Democratic letter alleges that Trump is firing certain officials it refers to as "Obama/Clinton loyalists not at all supportive of President Trump's foreign policy agenda."

The letter cites documents leaked from a State Department "whistleblower" (i.e., a Democratic loyalist) who asserts that the purge is organized by "a network of conservative outside parties—including former Speaker Newt Gingrich, conservative activist Barbara Ledeen, and former Dick Cheney and John Bolton advisor David

Wurmser.” The memo cites an email from Gingrich calling for “cleaning” the State Department of Democratic officials. Cheney’s mention in the letter is particularly chilling.

The *Post* report detailing McMaster’s firing also states that more dismissals are to come. As a result, “the mood inside the White House in recent days has verged on mania, as Trump increasingly keeps his own counsel and senior aides struggle to determine the gradations between rumor and truth. ... Some White House officials have begun betting about which staffer will be ousted next.”

Trump is increasingly drawing on his favorite television personalities to serve key roles in his government. He has named CNBC television host Larry Kudlow as his chief economic adviser, replacing Gary Cohn, who quit last week after Trump announced his tariffs on steel and aluminum. According to multiple reports, Trump is also considering firing Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin to be replaced by Fox News television host Peter Hegseth.

The Democratic Party has responded to the internal crisis of the Trump administration not by opposing his right-wing program, but by forcing Trump to take a more bellicose position against Russia. It is notable that the recent round of dismissals have coincided with Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s decision to subpoena Trump businesses, indicating that Trump is drawing his inner circle closer as the possibility of impeachment or indictment draws nearer.

At the same time, Trump indicated his willingness to go along with the military-intelligence agencies’ campaign against Russia by signing new sanctions against Russia. Trump, along with NATO powers Germany, UK and France, has also condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin, for unproven claims that the government of Russia attempted to assassinate Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, in England.



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