

Trump assembles cabinet of fascist repression and imperialist war

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In a rapid-fire series of appointments and announcements, fascist President-elect Donald Trump is assembling an administration in his own image. There are only two criteria for the nominees so far announced: complete alignment with the fascist policies Trump seeks to put into place and unquestioning personal loyalty to the would-be dictator.

January 20, 2025 will thus mean not merely the re-entry of the former president into the White House but the installation of a regime with his aides and stooges in charge of all the levers of power, committed to using these powers against all domestic opposition from the American people and against whatever countries Trump chooses to target for subversion, blockade or open warfare.

As Trump prepares to rapidly implement his plans, the Biden administration, which is in power for another two months, is doing absolutely nothing to alert the population, let alone take measures to stop the massive assault on democratic rights. Biden, who is welcoming Trump to the White House on Wednesday, is acting as if it is his responsibility not only to guarantee Trump's succession but to help implement his policies.

The contours of the new Trump-led regime are demonstrated in the nominations made public or leaked to the media over the past three days. Nearly all of Trump's top national security appointments have been made public:

- For secretary of state, US Senator Marco Rubio of Florida
- For national security advisor, Representative Michael Waltz, also of Florida
- For Ambassador to the United Nations, Representative Elise Stefanik of New York
- For CIA director, former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, a Republican congressman from Texas before he joined the first Trump administration
- For secretary of defense, Pete Hegseth, former head of the ultra-right Concerned Veterans of America (funded by the Koch Brothers) and longtime co-host of the Fox News program "Fox & Friends"

From a policy standpoint, all are fervent advocates of confrontation with China and giving the US military a "free hand" in any open conflict: opposing any restrictions on the use of violence against targeted populations, including civilians and children.

This is particularly apparent in the surprise selection of Hegseth, who went unmentioned in media speculation about Trump's potential pick to head the Pentagon. Now a major in the Army Reserve, Hegseth deployed to the US military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba during the Bush administration's "war on terror," then volunteered for the war in Iraq, where he commanded platoons in Baghdad and Samarra. He later served as a counterinsurgency instructor for the

Army in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Having previously led groups of 50 to 100 soldiers, Hegseth is now being tasked to run the Pentagon, the largest military organization in the world, with 3.5 million people, including 2.1 million active duty and reserve soldiers, 750,000 civilian staff and 650,000 contractors. His qualification, however, is his role as an advocate for military war criminals.

In 2019, while on the "Fox & Friends" talkshow, the ultra-right program of which Trump is an avid viewer, Hegseth led a campaign for the exoneration of three soldiers convicted or awaiting trial before military courts for war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. The crimes included the summary execution of unarmed prisoners and the murder of children and old men.

After meeting with Trump, Hegseth summarized the president's approach as follows: "The benefit of the doubt should go to the guys pulling the trigger." Trump issued pardons, called each murderer personally to commiserate with the "injustice" done to them, and boasted publicly of overriding the decisions of top military commanders, who had felt it necessary to mount a few token prosecutions to offset revelations of the avalanche of atrocities committed by US forces in both wars.

This will be the administration's approach, not just to individual soldiers who commit war crimes but to *policies* that require war crimes for their implementation. The incoming president signaled this by announcing the appointment of former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee as US Ambassador to Israel. Huckabee is a Christian fundamentalist, who has provided religious justification for the crimes committed by the state of Israel, declaring in the past, "There's really no such thing as a Palestinian." He is an all-out supporter of the genocidal policies of the Netanyahu government, which seeks to make "no such thing as a Palestinian" a brutal reality.

The other group of nominees announced this week will be tasked with carrying out Trump's planned war at home, which involves the rounding up of millions of undocumented immigrants, imprisoning them in concentration camps and deporting them as quickly as possible. The principal perpetrators of this dictatorial policy include:

- For "border czar," a new White House position, Thomas Homan, the former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the first Trump administration and a longtime advocate and defender of mass deportations
- For deputy White House chief of staff for policy, Stephen Miller, who was responsible for immigration policy in the first Trump administration. Miller spearheaded such measures as the separation of children and families, mass detention, and the "Remain in Mexico program," which effectively blocked asylum seekers

• For secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem. The Republican governor, a one-time hopeful to become Trump's running mate, is a vehement advocate of violence against migrants crossing the US-Mexico border, once sending dozens of South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas at the request of that state's governor. She will be in overall charge of repressive agencies, such as the Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Secret Service

The regime that Trump and Miller are devising and that Homan and Noem will enforce will make the detention camps used against Japanese Americans during World War II look like child's play. According to Homan, the problem of separating children and their parents, which aroused fierce popular opposition during Trump's first term, will be solved by deporting entire families, whether or not some of the family members are American citizens.

Trump aides were already reportedly drafting executive orders that he will sign on January 20, 2025, as soon as he is inaugurated, to establish a terror regime directed against migrants. This will include revoking Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Haiti and Central America, many of them longtime residents of the United States with American citizen children.

The incoming administration plans to use military resources in the anti-migrant campaign, meaning that migrants could be detained by military personnel on military bases, and that military flights could become a major factor in transporting migrants to their countries of origin or other countries willing to accept them.

Trump is also seeking to push through his appointments without Senate confirmation. The *New York Times* reported that "Mr. Trump insisted on social media that Republicans select a new Senate majority leader willing to call recesses during which he could unilaterally appoint personnel, a process that would allow him to sidestep the confirmation process."

A report Tuesday in the *Washington Post*, headlined, "Trump is planning a border crackdown. Biden already started one," traces the continuity between the two administrations:

Trump stands to inherit enforcement tools from the Biden administration that are even more powerful than the policies at his disposal last time. Biden administration officials, for example, have implemented emergency border controls this year that essentially ban asylum for migrants who enter unlawfully. While Trump's Remain in Mexico policy provided asylum seekers with access to U.S. courts, President Joe Biden's asylum restrictions afford no such process, allowing US officials to summarily deport migrants and threaten them with criminal prosecution if they return.

Just four years ago, the Republicans responded to the defeat of Trump with ferocious denunciations, followed by an attempted coup. The Democrats, in contrast, are doing everything they can to chloroform the population and prevent at all costs a popular mobilization against the incoming administration. On Tuesday, the day before Trump's visit to the White House, Biden issued a few anodyne tweets on Veterans Day, while saying nothing about the fascists Trump is planning on putting in charge of the state apparatus.

From the standpoint of the Democratic Party, what Obama referred

to as the "intramural scrimmage" within the ruling class is over, and it is the task of the Democrats to ensure, as former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi put it in an interview with the *New York Times*, the "success" of the new president.

There is no suggestion that the Biden administration should take any action to defend the rights of the more 70 million people who voted against Trump, or for that matter the more than 70 million people who voted for him. The Democrats' sole concern is to ensure the continuation of the central policy of the Biden administration itself: the escalation of war against Russia in Ukraine.

Indeed, according to White House aides, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine will be the sole focus of the meeting between Biden and Trump in the White House. The Democrats want to ensure that the pipeline remains open for billions in US military and economic aid, and that Washington will continue to permit the Kiev regime to engage in provocative strikes with US and NATO weaponry on targets deep within Russia, including Moscow, despite the risk of a widening and even nuclear war.

In the final weeks of the failed presidential campaign of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democrats would make noises about Trump as a threat to democracy, and highlight the threats of mass roundups, the targeting of political opponents, and the policy measures outlined by the Trump-backed 2025 Project, a 900-page manual for social counterrevolution.

Now that Trump is moving rapidly to implement these plans and has appointed two top aides, Stephen Miller and Thomas Homan, who actually contributed to the 2025 Project, the Democrats have dropped such protests and declared themselves committed to a "peaceful transfer of power." This really means: We will do nothing to oppose the implementation of dictatorship against the American people.

There must and will be mass opposition to the policies Trump is preparing. But this opposition must not be straitjacketed by the Democratic Party, which like the fascist Republican Party is an instrument of Wall Street and American imperialism. The opposition to Trump must be led by the working class, based on a socialist program, and spearheaded by the building of a new revolutionary leadership, the Socialist Equality Party.



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