

# Trump fires Noem as DHS secretary, but war on immigrants continues

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Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem was fired Thursday from her position as head of the department, which includes Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the two major agencies implementing the Trump administration's war against immigrants.

Trump reportedly made the decision to fire Noem on Wednesday, after two days of disastrous testimony before Senate and House committees overseeing DHS. While the focus of those hearings was largely on Noem's corruption and incompetence, these provided a pretext for carrying out a personnel shift that had been in preparation for more than a month.

Noem was the official most closely associated with the invasion of Minneapolis by thousands of federal agents, which led to the murders of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in January. Noem made widely publicized denunciations of both victims, slandering the mother of three and the VA intensive care nurse as "domestic terrorists."

Five days after the murder of Alex Pretti, at the first cabinet meeting of the new year, Trump did not call on Noem as he went around the room asking each cabinet member to give a report on their department's operations (invariably combined with repulsive bootlicking praise of Trump's supposed brilliance and leadership).

Trump "skipping" Noem while calling on every other cabinet official was widely reported as an indication that she was on her way out, as a means of defusing the massive popular revolt against Trump's immigration gestapo methods, not only in Minnesota but nationally.

The White House carried out a tactical shift, replacing Noem's favorite thug, CBP commander Greg Bovino, by sending White House "border czar" Tom Homan to take charge in Minneapolis. Homan worked out a deal

with Democratic Governor Tim Walz to have state and local police partner with ICE and continue arrests and detentions of immigrants with less open violence and intimidation.

The corruption issue is significant but secondary compared to the determination of Trump, Stephen Miller and other White House fascists to continue the attack on immigrants unabated. Noem is a penny ante scam artist compared to Trump himself, whose family has netted billions from the first year of his second term. Her most flagrant offense was a \$220 million public relations campaign featuring herself, urging undocumented immigrants to "self-deport."

Noem awarded the largest contract for the campaign to a company set up by the husband of her press spokeswoman, Tricia McLaughlin. The company was founded only 11 days before it received a government contract worth about \$160 million. McLaughlin left the department last month, a departure which foreshadowed the ouster of Noem.

At the Senate hearing Tuesday, Noem came under intense questioning from Republican senators as well as Democrats, suggesting that the word had already gone out that Trump was no longer insisting on her defense. Or more likely, the Republicans had been told to attack because her ouster was imminent—dead woman walking.

When Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana, an arch-Trumper, asked Noem about the \$220 million contract, she claimed that Trump knew of and had approved the arrangement. Press reports Thursday indicated that Trump had called Kennedy to say he had not known of the deal. That would mean that Noem had lied under oath before a Senate committee (or that Trump was cutting off the limb on which she was sitting, to cover up his own responsibility).

This episode gives a glimpse of the Borgia-like atmosphere of vicious infighting, combined with money-grubbing corruption and the inevitable sexual scandals. (Noem was actually asked at the Senate hearing whether she was having an affair with Corey Lewandowski, Trump's former campaign manager, who now serves as a special government employee, acting as an unpaid adviser and de facto chief-of-staff to Noem.)

While expressing the escalating crisis within the Trump government, the most important aspect of this sordid affair is that it will not have the slightest change in the Trump administration's onslaught against immigrants. More than likely, Noem's self-promotion and corruption were increasingly regarded as an obstacle to the continuation and intensification of these Gestapo-style assaults. Firing her was the principal demand of the Democrats, in the wake of the Minneapolis ICE murders, and throwing her overboard leaves the ICE thugs and the massive and growing network of detention camps untouched.

Trump announced on social media he was nominating Oklahoma Senator Markwayne Mullin to replace Noem. Mullin was a Republican congressman for five terms, before winning the Senate seat in 2022 left vacant by the early retirement of James Imhofe. He is fully aligned with Trump on all major political questions, campaigning as a Christian conservative, hostile to abortion rights, supporting the oil industry and further expansion of the gargantuan US military apparatus.

He was one of the majority of House Republicans who voted against certifying the Electoral College victory of Biden over Trump in 2020, even after the fascist mob summoned by Trump stormed the Capitol and temporarily blocked the certification vote.

Mullin said the rioters should be prosecuted but claimed they were "professional agitators" and "not normal Trump supporters." He said any suggestion that Trump bore responsibility was "absolutely ridiculous."

Last November, amidst the Trump administration's murder campaign in the Caribbean and Pacific, Mullin gave an interview with CNN defending the killings and connecting it to paramilitary operations within the United States. "The president and the Secretary of War have made very clear," he said, "that they are going to use lethality against our enemies, home and abroad."



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