

Trump's New Pentagon - Divisive Duo Will Frustrate Doves and Hawks Alike

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*After last week's firing of various Pentagon officials including **Sec. of Defense Mark Esper**, the Undersecretaries of Intelligence and Policy, and Chief of Staff to the Sec of Defense, Democrats and Republicans, eager to get back to a status quo under a pending-Biden administration that is [already stacked](#) with op-ed publishing, arms manufacturer-funded think tankers, were irate with another reckless decision that cuts across the Bush-Obama grade of military thinking.*

In Esper's place come former-Army colonels **Christopher Miller** to serve as Defense Sec. and **Douglas Macgregor** to serve as his senior advisor.

In Macgregor there's a renowned soldier who commanded one of the tank contingents in the famous Battle of 73 Easting in the Gulf War, as well as a man who has called the Iraq wars a failure, and famously said we should "run" rather than walk out of Afghanistan. Around this date two years ago, he [published an op-ed of his own](#) on the precarious position of the U.S. forces in Syria, entitled "The Case for Leaving Syria".



Douglas Macgregor meeting with IDF Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General [Aviv Kochavi](#) (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Miller on the other hand was up until last week the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, and commander of some U.S. special forces in Afghanistan, with whom he fought al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Upon his appointment, he [penned a letter](#) to all Defense Department staff which said “we are not a people of perpetual war – it is the antithesis of everything for which we stand and for which our ancestors fought,” before adding “all wars must end”.

What’s more, his admittance of the costs of war were not included with any of the get out of jail free cards politicians and generals so often use to avoid scrutiny, and that start with something like “I agree we should try to draw down these wars...” and that end with something like “but our withdrawal has to be based around conditions on the ground, not arbitrary timelines,” or “but we have to do it responsibly, in a way that doesn’t endanger our allies and partners,” or “but we have to make sure that when we leave the country won’t be used as a haven to plan attacks against us in the future”.

In part paraphrase, these platitudes have been said by everyone from David Petraeus to Pete Buttigieg, and in leaving them out, Miller substituted only the modest coda that “ending wars requires compromise and partnership. We met the challenge; we gave it our all. Now, it’s time to come home.”

It seems that after 4 years of disastrous foreign policy appointments like Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, Mark Esper, Jim Mattis, Robert O’Brien, and James Jeffery, Trump has finally put some men in important cabinet positions that may actually agree with him on ending wars.

Too Little Too Late

Too little too late as the old saying goes, and the appointments are likely to enrage both supporters and opponents of the lame duck president. Trump has about 60 days left in office, and while he has now appointed someone who wants to “run not walk” out of Afghanistan, a fitting policy stance if Trump wants to fulfill his promise and bring the troops home by Christmas, supporters of Trump’s anti-war stance are left grinding their teeth, wondering why the ever-available Macgregor wasn’t appointed earlier.

Meanwhile, opponents have lined up to criticize the head chopping of Pentagon officials whom White House Spokesmen [told](#) the Washington Post were seen as “the leader(s) of the resistance to his agenda [of troop withdrawals]”.

“President Trump’s decision to fire Secretary Esper out of spite is not just childish, it’s also reckless,” House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA) said in a [statement](#).

James Stavridis, former-Supreme Allied Commander of NATO and senior advisor to former-Defense Sec. Donald Rumsfeld, [described to Time Magazine](#) that these moves are “significantly diminishing our national security over the next few months until the Biden Administration takes over,” and collectively something that will cause “high fives” from “Beijing to Moscow to Caracas”.

Trump’s anti-war base was [found in high war-casualty states like Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin](#). It may well have been that it was their votes for Biden, who at least talked a less-hawkish game compared to Hillary, that lost him the election, as a troop reshuffle in Europe, no new wars, and the lagging of the implementation of the pre-peace arrangement with the Taliban couldn’t merit their support in the face of the failure to

remove troops from Somalia, Iraq, or Syria.

Furthermore, prospects for future wars look greater now after the last four years than in 2016 in the face of the bitter animosity created with the Iranians and Venezuelans, the assassination of General Soleimani, the continued support for the Saudis and Emiratis in the War in Yemen, and the steady dismantling of nuclear control agreements between the Russian Federation and the United States.

For those anti-war voters familiar with Macgregor, the appointment must be a source of real frustration, as the first chance since Jimmy Carter to break with the tradition of foreign interventionism comes with less than 3 months left in the Trump Presidency.

Instead of simply starting his administration with men like Macgregor and Miller, Trump floundered on with appointments spelled out to him by the military-intelligence-arms manufacturing alliance, with opposition coming from every department if he tried to drawdown anywhere in the world.

His now-retiring Special Envoy to Syria explained in an [interview with Defense One](#) that he and his staff would regularly lie to the president about troop numbers in Syria, a war which Trump described as “not our business,” and one which he ordered an end to in his typical fashion, via Twitter, and which caused his first Defense Sec. General Jim Mattis to resign.

These late appointments are infuriating to the establishment who were hoping Trump would roll over and take his election loss, with [one report from CNN citing anonymous defense officials](#) saying that Biden could have used the experience of Esper and his undersecretaries, but instead are dealing with less long-serving military bureaucrats.

They are nonetheless, equally infuriating to anti-war Trump sympathizers who gave the ultimate critique of his failed foreign-policy-that-could-have-been in the form of their no-confidence vote on November 3rd.

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