

Wave Of US State Department Personnel Resign, Are Fired As Tillerson Takes Control

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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Update: according to a CNN report – so as always take with lots of salt – the [story has shifted materially](#), because according to two senior administration officials, it wasn't a resignation by the State Department officials, but more of a termination: "the Trump administration told four top State Department management officials that their services were no longer needed as part of an effort to "clean house" at Foggy Bottom."

Patrick Kennedy, who served for nine years as the undersecretary for management, Assistant Secretaries for Administration and Consular Affairs Michele Bond and Joyce Anne Barr, and Ambassador Gentry Smith, director of the Office for Foreign Missions, were sent letters by the White House that their service was no longer required, the sources told CNN.

All four, career officers serving in positions appointed by the President, submitted letters of resignation per tradition at the beginning of a new administration. The letters from the White House said that their resignations were accepted and they were thanked for their service.

The White House usually asks career officials in such positions to stay on for a few months until their successors are confirmed.

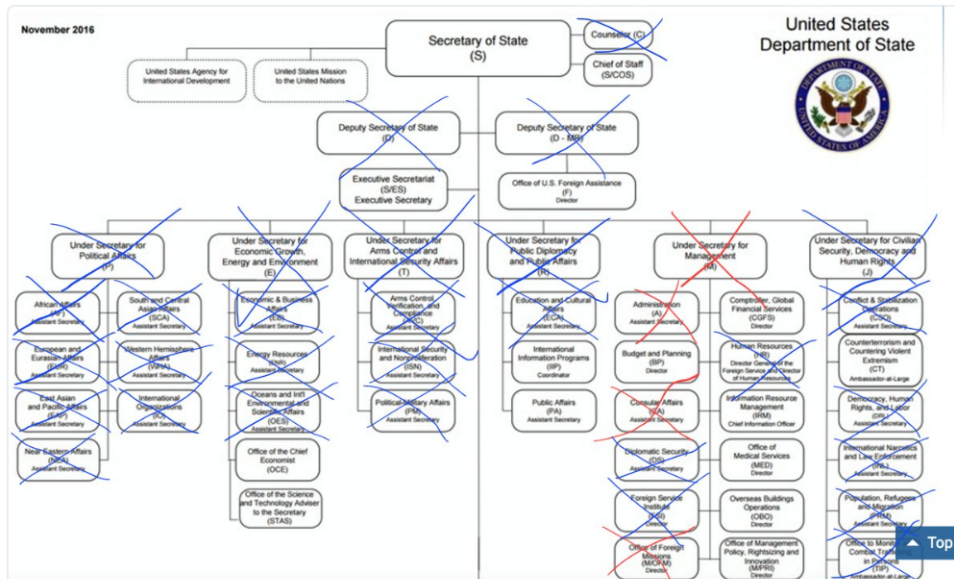
"Any implication that that these four people quit is wrong," one senior State Department official said. "These people are loyal to the secretary, the President and to the State Department. There is just not any attempt here to dis the President. People are not quitting and running away in disgust. This is the White House cleaning house."

Mark Toner, the State Department's acting spokesman, said in a statement that "These positions are political appointments, and require the President to nominate and the Senate to confirm them in these roles. They are not career appointments but of limited term."

A second official echoed that the move appeared to be an effort by the new administration to "clean house" among the State Department's top leadership. "The department will not collapse," the second official said. "Everyone has good deputies. It's a huge institutional loss, but the department has excellent subordinates and the career people will step up. They will take up the responsibility."

Victoria Nuland, the State Department's assistant secretary for Europe, was also not asked to stay on.

The following org charts breaks out the unfilled appointee positions, in blue, while the red crosses show the resignations



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 Follow

Here's an updated State Department Org Chart.

Blue X's are unfilled appointee positions. Red X's are resignations.

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Earlier:

Demonstrating just how ideologically aligned with the Obama administration was the entire US State Department, moments ago the WaPo reported that “the entire senior level of management officials resigned Wednesday, part of an ongoing mass exodus of senior foreign service officers who don’t want to stick around for the Trump era.”

The mass resignation took place as Rex Tillerson was inside the State Department’s headquarters in Foggy Bottom on Wednesday, taking meetings and getting the lay of the land.

According to WaPo’s Josh Rogin who suddenly has no more senior level sources left at State:

“I reported Wednesday morning that the Trump team was narrowing its search for his No. 2, and that it was looking to replace the State Department’s long-serving undersecretary for management, Patrick Kennedy. Kennedy, who has been in that job for nine years, was actively involved in the transition and was angling to keep that job under Tillerson, three State Department officials told me.”

Then suddenly on Wednesday afternoon, Kennedy and three of his top officials resigned unexpectedly, four State Department officials confirmed. Assistant Secretary of State for Administration Joyce Anne Barr, Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Michele Bond and Ambassador Gentry O. Smith, director of the Office of Foreign Missions, followed him out the door. All are

career foreign service officers who have served under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Additionally, “Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security Gregory Starr retired Jan. 20, and the director of the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, Lydia Muniz, departed the same day. That amounts to a near-complete housecleaning of all the senior officials that deal with managing the State Department, its overseas posts and its people.”

“It’s the single biggest simultaneous departure of institutional memory that anyone can remember, and that’s incredibly difficult to replicate,” said David Wade, who served as State Department chief of staff under Secretary of State John Kerry. “Department expertise in security, management, administrative and consular positions in particular are very difficult to replicate and particularly difficult to find in the private sector.”

There were more: several senior foreign service officers in the State Department’s regional bureaus have also left their posts or resigned since the election. But the emptying of leadership in the management bureaus is more disruptive because those offices need to be led by people who know the department and have experience running its complicated bureaucracies. There’s no easy way to replace that via the private sector, said Wade.

“Diplomatic security, consular affairs, there’s just not a corollary that exists outside the department, and you at least can afford a learning curve in these areas where issues can quickly become matters of life and death,” he said. “The muscle memory is critical. These retirements are a big loss. They leave a void. These are very difficult people to replace.”

Whether Kennedy left on his own volition or was pushed out by the incoming Trump team is a matter of dispute inside the department. Just days before he resigned, Kennedy was taking on more responsibility inside the department and working closely with the transition. His departure was a surprise to other State Department officials who were working with him.

Rogin’s conclusion: “By itself, the sudden departure of the State Department’s entire senior management team is disruptive enough. But in the context of a president who railed against the U.S. foreign policy establishment during his campaign and secretary of state with no government experience, the vacancies are much more concerning.”

On the other hand, if Tillerson wanted a real clean slate, he just got it.

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