

Fake News Stories

Trump administration swiftly enacts retribution against political enemies

Peter Nicholas Sun, January 26, 2025 at 5:00 AM MST

WASHINGTON — For those who may have crossed President Donald Trump, the message is sinking in: Payback is coming, and coming fast.

John Bolton, a former White House national security adviser who wrote a damning book about Trump's first term, lost the Secret Service detail assigned to protect him from [assassination threats](#) from Iran.

Also losing his detail was Anthony Fauci, the public health scientist whom Trump called a ["disaster"](#) over his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and who has been a target of far-right anger ever since. (Fauci has hired his own private security team in response.)

A portrait of Mark Milley, the former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman who broke with Trump over [a photo-op](#) at a church during the George Floyd racial justice protests, was abruptly removed from the walls of the Pentagon. Defense officials said they have no idea who ordered it taken down or why.

And Trump yanked the [security clearances](#) of dozens of former national security officials who'd signed a letter during the 2020 campaign opining that emails from a laptop belonging to Joe Biden's son Hunter had the "classic earmarks of a Russian information operation."

All that happened within days of Trump's inauguration — and in some cases, hours.

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Mark Milley's Portrait Disappears from Pentagon on Trump's Inauguration Day

Pentagon officials are not offering any explanation as to why they removed the portrait of Gen. Mark Milley, the former Joint Chiefs chairman, on Monday shortly after President Donald Trump was inaugurated.

The portrait of Milley hung in an ornate hallway that is dedicated to the history of the Joint Chiefs and displays 19 other paintings of all other prior chairmen going back to Gen. Omar Bradley. Milley's portrait, the latest addition in the historic line, [was unveiled Jan. 10](#).

By 2 p.m. Monday, the day of Trump's inauguration, reporters inside the Pentagon noticed that [the portrait had been removed from the wall](#). On Tuesday, reporters observed workers [patching the holes](#) and [repainting the wall](#) where the portrait had hung.

A spokesman for the current chairman, Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, directed Military.com's questions on the removal to the office of the secretary of defense and the White House.

The secretary's office simply said "no comment," while the White House did not respond to the query in time for publication.

While an official explanation for the removal of the portrait that had hung in the Pentagon for less than two weeks was not offered by defense officials, Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., told a group of reporters Tuesday that Trump ordered that the painting be removed.

"I guess he's OK with rewriting history," Kaine said in a video posted by reporter [Joe Khalil to social media](#).

Milley served as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs -- a position that is largely responsible for being the president's top military adviser -- between 2019 and 2023 and advised Trump for the last two years of his first term in office. Before that, Milley had been the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. [Army](#).

While Milley's tenure was rocky and he was condemned by both Republicans and Democrats at various times, the biggest rift between the Army general and Trump came after the violence at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

In the days after the insurrection, Milley made two calls to a Chinese general, Li Zuocheng. "My task at that time was to deescalate," Milley told senators that year, and explained that he was hoping to calm fears in the Chinese top brass that the U.S. might attack China amid the chaos and turmoil of a transition that was being rocked by violence.

Milley was "certain" that the former president "did not intend on attacking the Chinese, and it is my directed responsibility to convey presidential orders and intent," he said.

Amid his reelection campaign in 2023, Trump claimed [Milley would have faced death "in times gone by"](#) for the call and that his retirement was a "time for all citizens of the USA to celebrate!" Katie Miller, the wife of Stephen Miller, one of the key architects of Trump's immigration policies during his first term, claimed that Milley "was a traitor to President Trump who lied to see his name in print and be elevated as a hero to the liberal media" [in a social media post the day the portrait was unveiled](#).

The massive military headquarters that sits on the bank of the Potomac River not only displays portraits of the military and civilian heads of the services but also the former secretaries of defense and war.

Milley's portrait was part of that tradition, and it was made possible because of a donation to the Army by the "Association of the United States Army" -- a nonprofit organization that acts as an outside advocacy organization for the service.

"For at least the last 30 years, we have paid for the portraits of the outgoing chiefs of staff of the Army and secretaries of the Army -- and outgoing chairman when he is an Army general officer -- through a gift proffer," Tom McCuin, a spokesman for the group, told Military.com in an email Tuesday.

"We donate the money to the Army, which the Army then uses to pay the artist," he added, before noting that the finished portraits are property of the Department of the Army or, in the case of the chairman, the Department of Defense.

Milley's portrait from his time as the Army chief of staff was still hanging among his fellow Army chiefs at the time of publication.

In both his Army and chairman portraits, Milley is depicted in a service uniform and included somewhere in the works is a Constitution of the United States, a Princeton University seal, and a photo of his family.

In his chairman's portrait, Milley also had the artist include a battle map of Ukraine lying on a table, among other details.

Pentagon officials wouldn't say where the portrait was taken.

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HOLDING FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ACCOUNTABLE FOR ELECTION INTERFERENCE AND IMPROPER DISCLOSURE OF SENSITIVE GOVERNMENTAL INFORMATION

EXECUTIVE ORDER
January 20, 2025

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Purpose. In the closing weeks of the 2020 Presidential campaign, at least 51 former intelligence officials coordinated with the Biden campaign to issue a letter discrediting the reporting that President Joseph R. Biden's son had abandoned his laptop at a computer repair business. Signatories of the letter falsely suggested that the news story was part of a Russian disinformation campaign.

Before being issued, the letter was sent to the CIA Prepublication Classification Review Board, the body typically assigned to formally evaluate the sensitive nature of documents prior to publication. Senior CIA officials were made aware of the contents of the letter, and multiple signatories held clearances at the time and maintained ongoing contractual relationships with the CIA.

Federal policymakers must be able to rely on analysis conducted by the Intelligence Community and be confident that it is accurate, crafted with professionalism, and free from politically motivated engineering to affect political outcomes in the United States. The signatories willfully weaponized the gravitas of the Intelligence Community to manipulate the political process and undermine our democratic institutions. This fabrication of the imprimatur of the Intelligence Community to suppress information essential to the

American people during a Presidential election is an egregious breach of trust reminiscent of a third world country. And now the faith of Americans in all other patriotic intelligence professionals who are sworn to protect the Nation has been imperiled.

National security is also damaged by the publication of classified information. Former National Security Advisor John R. Bolton published a memoir for monetary gain after he was terminated from his White House position in 2019. The book was rife with sensitive information drawn from his time in government. The memoir's reckless treatment of sensitive information undermined the ability of future presidents to request and obtain candid advice on matters of national security from their staff. Publication also created a grave risk that classified material was publicly exposed.

To remedy these abuses of the public trust, this Order directs the revocation of any active or current security clearances held by: (i) the former intelligence officials who engaged in misleading and inappropriate political coordination with the 2020 Biden presidential campaign; and (ii) John R. Bolton.

Sec. 2. Policy. (a) It is the policy of the United States to ensure that the Intelligence Community not be engaged in partisan politics or otherwise used by a U.S. political campaign for electioneering purposes. The term "Intelligence Community" has the meaning given the term in section 3003 of title 50, United States Code.

(b) It is the policy of the United States that individuals who hold government-issued security clearances should not use their clearance status to influence U.S. elections.

(c) It is the policy of the United States that classified information not be publicly disclosed in memoirs, especially those published for personal monetary gain.

Sec. 3. Implementation. (a) Effective immediately, the Director of National Intelligence, in consultation with the Director of the Central

Intelligence Agency, shall revoke any current or active clearances held by the following individuals:

- (1) James R. Clapper Jr.
- (2) Michael V. Hayden
- (3) Leon E. Panetta
- (4) John O. Brennan
- (5) C. Thomas Fingar
- (6) Richard H. Ledgett Jr.
- (7) John E. McLaughlin
- (8) Michael J. Morell
- (9) Michael G. Vickers
- (10) Douglas H. Wise
- (11) Nicholas J. Rasmussen
- (12) Russell E. Travers
- (13) Andrew Liepman
- (14) John H. Moseman
- (15) Larry Pfeiffer
- (16) Jeremy B. Bash
- (17) Rodney Snyder
- (18) Glenn S. Gerstell
- (19) David B. Buckley

- (20) Nada G. Bakos
- (21) James B. Bruce
- (22) David S. Cariens
- (23) Janice Cariens
- (24) Paul R. Kolbe
- (25) Peter L. Corsell
- (26) Roger Z. George
- (27) Steven L. Hall
- (28) Kent Harrington
- (29) Don Hepburn
- (30) Timothy D. Kilbourn
- (31) Ronald A. Marks
- (32) Jonna H. Mendez
- (33) Emile Nakhleh
- (34) Gerald A. O'Shea
- (35) David Priess
- (36) Pamela Purcilly
- (37) Marc Polymeropoulos
- (38) Chris Savos
- (39) Nick Shapiro
- (40) John Sipher

- (41) Stephen B. Slick
- (42) Cynthia Strand
- (43) Greg Tarbell
- (44) David Terry
- (45) Gregory F. Treverton
- (46) John D. Tullius
- (47) David A. Vanell
- (48) Winston P. Wiley
- (49) Kristin Wood
- (50) John R. Bolton

Two signatories, Patty Patricia A. Brandmaeir and Brett Davis, are deceased.

(b) Within 90 days of this order, the Director of National Intelligence, in consultation with the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, shall submit a report to the President through the National Security Advisor that details:

(i) any additional inappropriate activity that occurred within the Intelligence Community, by anyone contracted by the Intelligence Community or by anyone who held a security clearance, related to the letter signed by the 51 former intelligence officials;

(ii) recommendations to prevent the Intelligence Community or anyone who works for or within it from inappropriately influencing domestic elections; and

(iii) any disciplinary action—including the termination of security clearances—that should be taken against anyone who engaged in

inappropriate conduct related to the letter signed by the 51 former intelligence officials.

Sec. 4. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or
- (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

THE WHITE HOUSE, January 20, 2025.

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