



Trump to Replace Internationalist Tillerson With Military Hawk Pompeo

President Trump said on March 13 he has removed Rex Tillerson as his Secretary of State and plans to nominate CIA Director Mike Pompeo (shown) to head the State Department. As an indication of Pompeo's views on military interventionism, as a congressman, he voted against an effort to repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which had authorized President George W. Bush to invade Iraq.



White House officials said that White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly called Tillerson to wake him up during his trip to Africa in the early hours of March 10 to alert him that Trump had decided to replace him. Trump had told his chief of staff he wanted to announce he was replacing Tillerson on Twitter, but Kelly urged him to hold off.

Kelly then suggested to Tillerson that he return to Washington as soon as possible, and he came back on March 12.

Speaking to the media before leaving for a planned visit to California, Trump said, "Rex and I have been talking about this for a long time, we got along, actually, quite well but we disagreed on things."

Trump cited Iran's nuclear agreement with six world powers (the United States, China, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and Germany), reached in July 2015, as one area where he and Tillerson disagreed substantially. "When you look at the Iran deal. I think it's terrible, I guess he [Tillerson] thought it was OK. I wanted to either break it or do something and he felt a little bit differently," said the president.

Speaking of Pompeo, Trump said that he and the CIA director are "much more aligned. We're always on the same wave length."

Tillerson held a press conference in the State Department briefing room on March 13, during which he said:

I received a call today from the President of the United States a little after noontime from Air Force One, and I've also spoken to White House Chief of Staff Kelly to ensure we have clarity as to the days ahead. What is most important is to ensure an orderly and smooth transition during a time that the country continues to face significant policy and national security challenges.

As such, effective at the end of the day, I'm delegating all responsibilities of the office of the Secretary to Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan. My commission as Secretary of State will terminate at midnight, March the 31st. Between now and then, I will address a few administrative matters related to my departure and work towards a smooth and orderly transition for Secretary of State-Designate Mike Pompeo.

More important than how well Tillerson or Pompeo get along with Trump, however, is what this change in leadership means for our nation's foreign policy. Those who believe that the most important quality



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of a secretary of state and the president who appoints him is faithfulness to the Constitution and to the visions of our nation's founders and early presidents look for a continuation of the spirit expressed by John Quincy Adams, who said in an address to the House of Representatives on July 4, 1821: "[America] goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."

NPR published a report on March 14 headlined "Tillerson Vs. Pompeo: What Trump's Cabinet Shakeup Might Mean For Policy" and examined several areas where Pompeo is more in alignment with Trump's views than Tillerson was.

The report noted that when Trump abruptly accepted an invitation for face-to-face talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, it contradicted what Tillerson, who was traveling in Africa, told reporters a day earlier, namely, that the United States was "a long ways from negotiations" with Pyongyang.

Trump said that he hadn't discussed the idea in advance with Tillerson, explaining, "Rex wasn't, as you know, in this country. I made that decision by myself."

A more believable explanation is that Trump knew Tillerson was opposed to the idea so Trump just kept him out of the loop. Pompeo, in contrast, defended the president's decision.

Another point of disagreement between Trump and Tillerson was the Iran deal. NPR noted that Pompeo, like the president, has been a fierce critic of the Iran deal, saying it doesn't go far enough in dismantling Tehran's nuclear program and that it's not permanent.

Another area where Tillerson and Pompeo disagree is Trump's recent decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum. Tillerson was among the advisers who reportedly tried, unsuccessfully, to talk the president out of imposing the tariffs.

However, Pompeo defended the president's decision in an interview with Fox News Sunday, especially with regard to China, the country widely blamed for the glut of steel and aluminum on the world market.

Pompeo — despite his drawbacks, which we'll examine in a moment — is not as committed an internationalist as Tillerson. In an [article last December](#), we noted:

Tillerson's removal would be heartily applauded by all supporters of Trump's "America First" inclination, since Tillerson clearly represents the opposite orientation, especially as it relates to that ultimate bastion of world government internationalism, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). We noted last March in our report on the Trump-Tillerson adoption of Communist Beijing's "One China" doctrine (slamming our Free China ally, Taiwan) and the administration's support of expanded U.S.-China "trade" (More Dangerous China Trade? Globalist Push vs. Trump Promise) that Tillerson, "while not a CFR member, has nonetheless been active as a speaker and participant at CFR events, a search of the Council's website shows." Moreover, "he has been endorsed or given high marks by CFR heavyweights and China Lobby stalwarts such as Henry Kissinger, Condoleezza Rice, Stephen Hadley, and Dick Cheney. All of these developments stack up as decidedly unfavorable signs for those who are expecting (or hoping for) major reversals in our decades of disastrous policies regarding China."

In his maiden speech before the Council, on March 9, 2007, Tillerson stated, "Although this is my first time speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations, from a historical perspective, it feels a little bit like home." So although Tillerson is not a CFR member, for all practical purposes, he shares in their



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internationalist philosophy. It is this philosophy that has dominated U.S. foreign policy since the end of World War II, leading our nation into undeclared wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East.

The day before we wrote about Tillerson, we profiled Pompeo in another article, “Trump May Replace Rex Tillerson With Hawkish Mike Pompeo to Head State.” In that article, we cited a report in *The New American* from November 2016, written just after Trump nominated him to head the CIA. The article noted that “in many ways, Pompeo is a strongly conservative Republican,” but “in the areas over which his CIA directorship will be more relevant, Pompeo cannot be classified as a defender of various constitutional safeguards of civil liberties.” That observation was based on Pompeo’s support of the surveillance programs of the National Security Agency (NSA), saying they do “good and important work.” In February 2016, Pompeo said that whistleblower Edward Snowden “should be brought back from Russia and given due process, and I think the proper outcome would be that he would be given a death sentence.”

Another area of criticism noted in that article is especially relevant to Pompeo’s anticipated role at the head of the State Department:

In May [2016] [Pompeo] voted against an effort to repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which had authorized President George W. Bush to invade Iraq. The results of this open-ended military force authorization illustrates a reason to oppose mere congressional authorizations, rather war declarations. Congress chose to leave it up to the president whether to use military force in Iraq, instead of a more specific declaration of war. This unconstitutional delegation to the president of the congressional power to declare war is *why the AUMF is still in effect, 15 years later*. [Emphasis in original.]

For the constitutionalist hoping that the unlimited war powers ceded to former presidents might be withdrawn under Trump, the prospect of having a supporter of the AUMF heading the State Department is not promising. It portends yet more unbridled interventionism.

Photo: AP Images

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