

April 23, 2018

Dear Senator Schumer:

We, the undersigned progressive and civil liberties organizations, urge you to prevent Donald Trump from forming a pro-war cabinet. His appointment of John Bolton as National Security Advisor and his nominations of Gina Haspel for CIA Director and Mike Pompeo for Secretary of State represent an aggressive shift in posture that could presage new wars and expansions of existing ones. We urge you, as Democratic Leader, to lead the Senate in rejecting the confirmations of Haspel and Pompeo, strongly encourage Democrats to uniformly oppose them at every step, and do everything in your power to prevent their nominations from moving forward.

John Bolton's appointment is evidence of Trump's contempt for Congress and his poor judgment in choosing his advisers. As you know, the Senate refused to confirm Bolton as President George W. Bush's ambassador to the United Nations in 2005; to his eventual regret, Bush went on to grant Bolton a recess appointment, later saying "I don't consider Bolton credible."¹ Bolton was an architect of the Iraq war, and pines for its continuation, having said "Iraq today suffers not from the 2003 invasion, but from the 2011 withdrawal of all US combat forces."² And, in Strangelovian fashion, Bolton has repeatedly called for attacking Iran and North Korea.³ He lacks the judgment, temperament, and humility to be a public servant, as those who have had the misfortune to serve with him attest. The Senate must not confirm like-minded allies that would empower him.

Haspel and Pompeo would march in lockstep with Trump and Bolton's move to war.

As a clandestine officer at the CIA in 2002, Haspel oversaw a secret prison in Thailand where detainees were tortured by the CIA. This alone should disqualify anyone from public service as a menace to the common good. As a senior person overseeing at least one interrogation involving repeated waterboarding—which is, in essence, deliberately causing a person to drown—as well as other forms of torture, she demonstrated astonishingly poor judgment.⁴ As a consequence of that poor judgment, she was not promoted to lead the CIA's clandestine operations.

¹ "Why I Changed My Mind about John Bolton," by Max Boot, Washington Post (March 26, 2018), available at <https://wapo.st/2IDpTAu>.

² "The only mistake of the Iraq war was that we didn't get rid of Saddam Hussein sooner," by John Bolton, The Telegraph (July 6, 2016), available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/06/the-only-mistake-of-the-iraq-war-was-that-we-didnt-get-r-id-of-sa/>.

³ "John Bolton on: bombing Iran, North Korea, Russia and the Iraq War," by Gregory Krieg, CNN (March 23, 2018), available at <https://cnn.it/2Gd4kt5>.

⁴ "Declassify CIA Director Nominee's Role in Torture, Rights Groups Demand," by Spencer Ackerman, Daily Beast (March 18, 2018), available at <https://thebea.st/2IEPDMG>.

In addition, Haspel lobbied to destroy videotapes of torture—against orders—that were visual proof of the CIA’s crimes.⁵ The destruction occurred immediately after a *Washington Post* story on secret sites in eastern Europe that was expected to trigger a Congressional investigation, and likely uncover the activities she helped oversee; Representative Jane Harman, then the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, asked that the records be preserved because of their potential value in to Congressional oversight.⁶ Congress was not informed of the tape’s destruction in a timely way. In 2007, Sen. John Rockefeller, then the Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he only learned of the tapes a year after their destruction.⁷ The White House and agency counsel were left out of the loop as well; the White House had a standing order that it should be informed before such an action occurred, and it was not.⁸

Trump has stated he wants to “bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding.”⁹ Haspel is the kind of person who might unflinchingly help him do it, regressing to what Senator McCain has called “one of the darkest chapters in American history.”¹⁰ Her confirmation would also send a clear message to all members of the CIA, every intelligence agency, members of our military, and foreign states and their citizens around the world that we do not care about the rule of law or basic human rights.

Pompeo’s record is similarly disturbing. During his tenure in the House of Representatives, he evangelized for torture, and as CIA Director, he promptly promoted Haspel to Deputy Director.¹¹

Pompeo has claimed all Muslims are “potentially complicit” in terrorism.¹² He has pushed for war over diplomacy with Iran and, despite promises to the contrary during his confirmation hearing to be CIA director, has used his DCIA position to undermine the Iran nuclear deal.¹³ This is notwithstanding the fact that nearly all of Trump’s national security personnel, including the Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Central Command

⁵ “Trump’s Pick To Lead CIA Actively Pushed To Have The ‘Torture Tapes’ Destroyed,” by Thomas Frank, BuzzFeed News (March 28, 2018), available at <https://www.buzzfeed.com/thomasfrank/all-the-bosses-in-the-bush-administration-wanted-the>.

⁶ “New CIA Deputy Director’s Past Intertwined With CIA’s History Of Waterboarding,” by Mary Louise Kelly, National Public Radio (February 14, 2017), available at <https://n.pr/2uZVABR>.

⁷ “CIA Destroyed Videos Showing Interrogations,” by Dan Eggen, Washington Post (December 7, 2007), available at <https://wapo.st/2qfgW8S>.

⁸ “Destruction of CIA Tapes Cleared by Lawyers,” by Mark Mazzetti, New York Times (December 11, 2007), available at <https://nyti.ms/2JwJqnf>.

⁹ “Trump calls for ‘hell of a lot worse than waterboarding,’” by Jonathan Swan, The Hill (February 6, 2016), available at <https://bit.ly/2fzb2gM>.

¹⁰ “Statement by SASC Chairman John McCain on Leadership Changes at State Department & CIA” (March 13, 2018), available at <https://bit.ly/2jwvnhH>.

¹¹ “New CIA Director Mike Pompeo on torture, Muslims, terror, Iran, NSA spying,” McClatchy (November 18, 2016), available at <https://bit.ly/2gr8uxu>.

¹² “The Silence of Muslim Leaders is Deafening,” Rep. Mike Pompeo, Floor of the House of Representatives, Congressional Record H3258 (June 11, 2013), available at <https://bit.ly/2EwNMHA>.

¹³ “Iran nuclear deal may be the first casualty of Tillerson’s ouster,” by Carol Morello (March 15, 2018), available at <https://wapo.st/2Ey9ivh>.

Commander General Joseph Votel, say that preserving the agreement is in the U.S. national security interest.¹⁴

Pompeo's bellicosity has also manifested in his refusal to foreclose upon the possibility of launching so-called "preventive" war with North Korea, and in his support for unauthorized American involvement in conflicts such as that in Yemen.¹⁵

Last year, fifteen members of the Democratic Caucus voted to confirm Pompeo as CIA Director, spurring a sharp reaction from constituents — including more than 1,500 who confronted Senator Sheldon Whitehouse about his vote, captured on footage that was replayed repeatedly on national news.¹⁶ These senators can now benefit from a year's worth of experience and reach a different conclusion about Pompeo as they weigh the merits of elevating him to Secretary of State. We hope you will encourage them to do so.

In addition, America's position in the world would be damaged if the head of the CIA becomes the head of the State Department. Having the nation's diplomatic arm run by its former top spymaster destroys the credibility of the agency and casts a pall over those in its employ.

The confirmation of Haspel or Pompeo would normalize torture, jeopardize human rights, increase the likelihood of war — and of war crimes, and empower the worst impulses of Trump and Bolton. We already know Trump is a danger to our democracy; we should not heighten that danger by giving him willing tools who have demonstrated a disregard for the rule of law and all that we hold dear.

Accordingly, we urge you to lead unified, Democratic opposition to both of their nominations.

18 Million Rising
198 methods
350org
About Face: Veterans Against the War
ActTV
Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American Family Voices
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Campaign for America's Future

¹⁴ "Mattis Contradicts Trump on Iran Deal Ahead of Crucial Deadline," by Thomas Gibbons-Neff and David E. Sanger (October 3, 2017), available at <https://nyti.ms/2ga5Ldi>; "U.S. general signals support for Iran nuclear deal," by Idrees Ali, Reuters (March 13, 2018), available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-nuclear/u-s-general-signals-support-for-iran-nuclear-deal-idUSKCN1GP203>.

¹⁵ "CIA believes North Korea weapons aimed at coercion, not just defense: Pompeo," by David Brunnstrom, Reuters (January 23, 2018), available at <https://reut.rs/2v02ly7>.

¹⁶ "Rachel Maddow covers protest at Sheldon Whitehouse event," by Resistance Film RI (Uploaded January 31, 2017), available at <https://bit.ly/2EwSfdk>.

Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Popular Democracy
Climate Hawks Vote
ClimateTruth
CODEPINK
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Council on American-Islamic Relations
Courage Campaign
CREDO Action
Daily Kos
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Demand Progress Action
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No More Guantánamos
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