

Tulsi chooses loyalty over principle

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate on Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard's moral quandary following the resignation of her deputy, Joe Kent, in protest of the war on Iran. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Aaron Mate

Well, you know, Joe Kent was not intimidated by the Israel lobby or by Trump and his cronies, because he stood up to this war and called it out for being based on lies. Someone, though, who I think does appear to be intimidated—or at least intimidated into complete subservience—is Trump. Trump's director of national intelligence, who helped hire Joe Kent, has gone along with the Trump administration's phony case for war, or at least hasn't challenged it, even though her own intelligence community's assessments contradicted everything the Trump administration has said. And here's Tulsi Gabbard appearing this week before Congress.

#Speaker 1

Director Gabbard, last year you testified that Iran was not building a nuclear weapon. Do you stand by that statement—yes or no?

#Speaker 2

Context matters with that statement. Iran had all the materials and capabilities to do so.

#Speaker 1

Mr. Chairman, I reclaim my time. It's an easy answer—you either stand by what you said last year or you don't. This is a serious question that requires the totality of the information available. Director Gabbard, I reclaim my time. I reclaim my time. Did you—when President Trump was asked about your testimony, he said you were wrong. Were you lying or not?

#Speaker 2

I stand by the intelligence community's full assessment.

#Aaron Mate

Director Gabbard, last year you testified that—so that’s Congressman Jimmy Gomez, and he gets right to it. Trump is saying Iran was just a few weeks away from a nuclear weapon, and he references last year when Tulsi Gabbard said the opposite—that Iran did not have a nuclear weapons program. Trump said, “I don’t care what she said.” So when Gomez brings that up—the fact that Trump even disregarded her—for the sake of some minimal self-respect and pride, Tulsi Gabbard has to say, “I stand by the intelligence community’s assessment,” which means, although she’s not stating it explicitly, that Trump is lying and contradicting his own intelligence community’s assessment.

But it's humiliating for her that she can't just come out and say that Trump is lying, and that she's continuing to basically defer to him. And one way of deferring to him is to say, “Well, we delivered the information to the president. It's up to him to decide what constitutes an imminent threat or not.” That's been the thread she's tried to weave here, and it's a humiliation for her.

#Max

Well, there's the John Ossoff questioning too. I’m not sure if we have that.

#Aaron Mate

Yes, we do.

#Max

She just lost all credibility there as well. And her tweet, where she refused to draw a conclusion about what the DNI said regarding whether Iran posed a nuclear threat to the U.S., was completely craven. But here it plays out in questioning at the Senate.

#Speaker 3

The White House stated on March 1st of this year that this war was launched as, quote, “a military campaign to eliminate the imminent nuclear threat posed by the Iranian regime,” end quote. That’s a statement from the White House—“the imminent nuclear threat posed by the Iranian regime.” Was it the assessment of the intelligence community that there was an imminent nuclear threat posed by the Iranian regime?

#Speaker 2

The intelligence community assessed that Iran maintained the intention to rebuild and continue expanding its nuclear enrichment program.

#Speaker 3

Was it the assessment of the intelligence community that there was, quote, an imminent nuclear threat posed by the Iranian regime—yes or no?

#Speaker 2

Senator, the only person who can determine what is or is not an imminent threat is the president. False.

#Speaker 3

This is the Worldwide Threat Hearing, where you present to Congress national intelligence that is timely, objective, and independent of political considerations.

#Aaron Mate

So that's her way of avoiding saying that Trump lied—by claiming it's up to Trump to decide what constitutes an imminent threat to the U.S. I've never heard that argument before. Only the president can now decide what counts as an imminent threat to the country, when you have an entire multi-agency...

#Aaron Mate

A contingency of people—thousands, maybe hundreds or thousands of staffers—are responsible for determining what constitutes an imminent threat. But that's Tulsi Gabbard's way of avoiding acknowledging that Trump lied through his teeth to go to war—the exact kind of war she spent many years opposing and warning against. And now she's out there shilling for one.

#Max

Yeah, I mean, Joe Kent put her in a pretty uncomfortable position, where she either has to choose her celebrity—making loads of money on the lecture circuit and through various Trump corruption and crony initiatives after she leaves—or choose her integrity. And she seems to have chosen that route. Joe Kent, you know, they're calling him hard right. Well, he chose the harder right over the easy wrong. And Tulsi Gabbard has gone with the easy wrong, along with J.D. Vance. They still think there's a chance this war might work out and things will go well for them. But it just won't.

#Aaron Mate

So, whereas Tulsi Gabbard has chosen to take the approach of basically pretending that only Trump can determine what's an imminent threat—and refusing to acknowledge outright that Trump was lying—John Ratcliffe, the director of national intelligence, who you've done some reporting on for his ties to Israel, chose the route of just outright lying.

#Max

Yeah.

#Aaron Mate

Whereas Tulsi Gabbard, you know, at least couldn't contradict her own intelligence community.

#Max

Well, I should revise what I just said. You know, there's another argument—we always argued that with Tulsi Gabbard, it's better to have her in there than someone like James Clapper or Michael Hayden. Having her there does expose the Trump administration in that testimony, because it clearly shows there's a gulf between the DNI and the intelligence community—the so-called IC—and the political wing of the administration that's totally controlled by Israel.

#Aaron Mate

That's right. Whereas Tulsi Gabbard at least wouldn't contradict what the IC concluded—that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program—the director of the CIA had no problem going before Congress and lying through his teeth.

#Max

Yep.

#Speaker 4

Not playing. Has Iran plotted assassination attempts against Americans on American soil? Yes. Was Iran developing a nuclear weapon prior to our military action last June? And did Iran remain committed to developing a nuclear weapon in the lead-up to this conflict?

#Speaker 3

Yeah, so I want to clarify that, because there's been a lot of talk about a fatwa against nuclear weapons.

#Speaker 4

Can you come back to that for one second? Yes, you bet. If left unchecked, do you think Iran would have the ability to develop missiles capable of reaching the United States? Yes. Did Israel force the U. S.'s hand and make us take action, as some have claimed? No. Director Gabbard, do you agree with the CIA director's assessment on that last question in particular? Yes.

#Aaron Mate

As some have claimed—by the way, that was Marco Rubio who claimed that. And that's Josh Gottheimer, a Democrat, one of the pro-Israel Democrats. Some have said Israel forced their hand. It was Marco Rubio who first said that, not Joe Kent, as they're trying to suggest. But John Ratcliffe there is directly contradicting Tulsi Gabbard, because where Tulsi Gabbard said, "I stand by the intelligence community's assessment, which is that Iran was not developing nuclear weapons," John Ratcliffe, in the same hearing, said Iran was developing nuclear weapons. That's how incoherent this administration is.