

Gabbard in the Wilderness

by [G. Murphy Donovan](#) (February 2025)



Tulsi Gabbard at Senate Intelligence Committee, 1/30/2025 (AP Photo/McDonnell)

Deception is a state of mind and the mind of the state.
–James Jesus Angleton

Pete Hegseth made team Trump by a hair the other day because, like J.D. Vance, he's probably too male for the Beltway demographic. Most of the raps against Hegseth were, like

criticisms of Donald Trump, venial, not mortal sins. Alas, if you excluded wankers, gas bags, mashers, and drunks from holding office in Washington, DC, the capitol would be a null set or a just another east coast urban slum.

Fortunately, all US cabinet departments are team sports. Hegseth will either have game at DOD, or not. If Pete isn't first string material, he's gone. Trump is an equal opportunity coach. He hires—and he fires. And as for experience; tenure is arguably the big drag on any government institution. Inside the Beltway, as in many state capitals, “experience” and longevity are deficits, not assets.

Tenure and inertia are brothers by the same mother inside Washington. Joseph Robinette Biden will forever be a Democrat Party testament to the hazards of believing that five decades of tenure are civic virtues.

Nevertheless, Pete's Department of Defense/arms industry circle jerk is a formidable challenge, yet small spuds compared to Tulsi Gabbard's chore at the Intelligence Community (IC), the darkest waters of our dysfunctional deep state.

Rationales and justifications for all those bogus threats and expensive Pentagon toys emerge from the IC, where agencies and services now grow like mushrooms under bogus blankets of anonymity and security classification; TOP SECRET cloisters designed primarily to keep voters, taxpayers, and Congress, like mushrooms, in the dark.

Thus, Tulsi Gabbard's first challenge is corrupt bigness, a corruption wrought, in large measure, by proliferate size and engineered complexity.

The IC is a rodent's warren of superfluous separate competing fiefdoms, one-way streets, indeed, a wilderness of windowless sequestered vaults where the intelligence product is processed, some say cooked, daily. James Jesus Angleton,

poetry aficionado and former mole hunter at CIA, once called the Intelligence business a “wilderness of mirrors.” Indeed, between voluminous collection, security compartmentation, poor coordination, political bias, and the trust deficits; it’s a wonder any fungible products are produced at all.

The crown jewel at the IC is supposed to be the TOP SECRET National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) series; annual, alleged “interagency” consensus reports that provide the basis for threat assessments and the annual National Security (mostly DOD and Intelligence Agency) budgets. We say “alleged” because CIA, as the big cat in the Intelligence circus, actually manages and controls the NIE process.

Recall, if you will, that even house cats can lick their own genitals.

Other agencies might change ‘happy to glad’ in the coordination process, but for the most part, NIE’s are an annual or spontaneous rite where narratives seldom change. Indeed, for 75 years now, the Russians, and their “genetic predispositions,” according to James Clapper, are still supposed to be America’s biggest worry.

The real action in the Intelligence Community actually takes place in those daily or weekly Intelligence briefings that pockmark every departmental schedule. Daily briefings, of which few records are kept, are usually tightly scripted to protect expensive toys and institutional prerogatives.

For example, service Intelligence agencies thrive on enemy threat analysis, bean counts really, but abhor vulnerability studies. USAF Intelligence will always soft pedal close air support (CAS) because USAF flags don’t like supporting ground troops as much as they like the romance of aerial dog fights and the nostalgia rush provided by an antiquarian’s bomber fly by.

The A-10 close air support fighter, an incredible tactical

asset for troops in contact, as an example, has been on life support since the Warthog got wings.

Just as Naval Intelligence will never admit that those large expensive carrier task force groups do more as targets than they do for US military force projection. One tactical missile might take out an aircraft carrier or one tactical nuclear weapon might take out the entire flotilla. Looking good is important to sailors with brass hats. And of course the Marine Corps have their Harrier/VSTOL nightmare because USMC grunts can't depend on Naval or USAF aviation for tactical air or tactical lift support.

In the last Intelligence reformation, Congress created the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) to eliminate redundancy and parochialism of separate service Intelligence functions. Today we still have both DIA and the four service HQ Intel agencies, for a total of five agencies just for military matters alone. All five are bigger today than ever. Service Intelligence agencies avoid congressional HQ staffing limits by creating satellites outside the Pentagon in the DMV (District of Columbia, Maryland, & Virginia) where military service HQ staff will not be noticed.

On paper, the numbers of Intelligence HQ billets at the Pentagon are limited by law. In practice, service HQ staff positions are littered in and around the Beltway megaplex, supplemented by numerous contract think tanks like the RAND Corporation. Today, a literal forest of 1,500 or more contract think tanks, including a host of "non-profit" rackets, flourish at taxpayer expense.

One might wonder; if think tanks are doing the analysis and thinking for Uncle Sugar, what do all these military and civil service apparatchiks do at all those over staffed federal agencies?

When we use an adjective like "intelligence" to preface many

national security institutions; we are already lost to the weeds of rhetorical obfuscation.

Beyond musical chairs to deceive Congress, you often hear apologists claim that "Intelligence speaks truth to power." In practice, Intelligence is more like a lamb to the policy lion. For the most part, if we judge by analytical products, and IC mandarin behavior, Intelligence is a deductive process that begins with a policy narrative. The Intelligence process, some would say circle jerk, is just a pantomime to support foregone conclusions.

Indeed, both American and British Intelligence are fond of charades to support what policymakers already believe. The Russian threat narrative is the best example, former DNI James Clapper even claimed that Russians were genetically predisposed to behave badly; ergo, no evidence of intentions or malice required.

The inside joke about the Russians is; if they didn't exist, US Intelligence would have to invent them.

The only thing new about the Russophobic narrative in the 21st Century is that tactics formerly used to smear Moscow are now employed by Intelligence mandarins to take down politicians at home. The pervasive IC/Democrat Party narrative used against Donald Trump as a Russian agent or dupe speaks for itself.

Trump may be a lot of things, but he didn't make his bones as Putin's flunky.

Before, during and after the Trump impeachment hearings, bizarre creatures like Fiona Hill, Alexander Vindman, and particularly, Christopher Steele, emerged from the political muck to discredit Trump. The nexus between the UK's Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Chris Steel, and gal pal Fiona Hill, a White House national security staffer in Trump's first term, has yet to be vetted.

The more recent revelation that PM Kier Starmer's Labour Party sent 20 Brit operatives to work against Trump and for Biden/Harris during the recent election suggests that Number 10, British Intelligence, and US Intelligence are, at a minimum, still on the same page when it comes to grooming US elections.

But the worst of American Intelligence is not secrecy, political skullduggery, operational incompetence, or even shabby products. The worst are sins of omission, what the US Intelligence Community has failed to say in the last fifty years are mortal sins of omission.

The best performer in this respect might be former CIA director John Brennan, a baron of aggressive bullshit, the best of the worst to metastasize recently behind that wilderness of mirrors.

Without going through the long list of post WWII tactical Intelligence failures like the Bay of Pigs, 9/11, and recent Arab atrocities in Israel; just a few exemplars from Brennan's tenure will suffice to make the case for sins of omission:

- Failure to recognize the opportunity represented by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Failure to see that the expansion of NATO to the Russian frontier would provoke a war in Ukraine. Failure to see that a CIA/US State Department coup in Ukraine would produce a comic grifter like Zelensky. Indeed, America couldn't take yes for an answer from Moscow at the turn of the century and now the West pays the piper.
- Failure to recognize the emergence of market or capital Communism in China where Beijing may now be beating the US at its own game. China may now do with commerce and American economic dependencies, that which makes force of arms unnecessary.

- Failure to recognize the fusion of the global socialist left and the global Islamist right in Europe, the Commonwealth, and the UK—and assess the implications of that merger for the EU, NATO, and America.
- Failure to see Islamism as a global strategic threat, the equal of anything since the rise Hitler and National Socialism. Failure to acknowledge the role of Arab and Muslim sponsorship, creating the fiction that Islamic terror proxies are independent, “radicalized” actors. Failure to see Islam itself as a political threat that does not merit any immunity associated with “great” religions. Islamism is just politics by other means.

So Tulsi Gabbard is destined to ride herd on a cluster of naïve or incompetent partisan US Intelligence institutions that have neither the intellectual capacity nor the moral integrity to see the world for what it is.

Of course we wish her luck, but Tulsi needs to know that apathy, inertia, and anger are on the side of the deep state and all those unhappy American Democrats that voted for business as usual in 2024. If 2016 is a precedent, Gabbard should expect to experience the kind of excess that always attends lack of success.

Failure and the failed do not go quietly into the night.

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