

Who Is Running President Trump's Iran Policy?

We keep trying to get the message to the Trump White House that personnel is policy, and hiring Democrats and Bushies is no way to drain the swamp—indeed it is going to get you the same failed policies candidate Donald Trump campaigned against.

The latest evidence of the truth of personnel is policy is to be found in President Trump's National Security Council.

Ever since General Mike Flynn was ousted as President Trump's National Security Advisor, the NSC has slid steadily back toward Obama-like postures toward the war Islam has declared on the West and especially on dealing with Iran.

The reason for this slide back to Obama's policies is the hiring of LTG H.R. McMaster as National Security Advisor, who in turn retained many of Obama's staff that Flynn had planned to move out of the NSC.

Indeed, in an incredible exercise of bad judgement, McMaster is rumored to be bringing Obama Pentagon official Ylli Bajraktari over to be his assistant.

As impressive as General McMaster's credentials as a warrior and military thinker are, as President Trump's National Security Advisor, he has somehow lost the narrative, especially on who, what and why we are fighting the war Islamists have declared on the West.

The fruit of President Trump's decision to employ McMaster is now playing out in the effort by pro-Iranian Obama holdovers at the NSC and State Department to have President Trump again certify that Iran is in compliance with the JCPOA nuclear deal Obama made with the rogue Islamist state.

At a noon conference call yesterday on how the Trump administration plans to certify the nuclear deal with Iran (the JCPOA) for a second time, McMaster spoke at length about why the JCPOA is a bad deal and how it has not changed Iran's behavior.

McMaster and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin also announced new sanctions against Iran.

However, McMaster still indicated that the administration plans to again certify to Congress that Iran is complying with the agreement. This decision includes certifying that the agreement is in the national security interests of the United States.

McMaster said Iran is in default of the spirit of the agreement, and "we need to take a closer look at whether it is violating the letter of the deal." According to McMaster, Iran has been "walking up to violating the letter" of the JCPOA.

This is demonstrably false.

Our friend Fred Fleitz was on the call and asked McMaster how the Trump administration could do this in light of clear evidence that Iran is violating the JCPOA. Fleitz mentioned recent op-eds that he had read and Ambassador John Bolton, which we covered in yesterday's report on Iran.

Fleitz said that this is a very troubling decision that amounts to looking the other way on Iran's violations, legitimizing the dangerous concessions the Obama administration made to get this deal and going against the president's statements during the presidential campaign. He added that this policy to stick with the JCPOA is little different than what Hillary Clinton would have done if she had won the 2016 election.

McMaster refused to answer Fleitz's question. He refused to address the issue of Iranian violations at all until another

questioner pushed him on this, which led McMaster to give the misleading answer above on Iran being in default of the spirit of this agreement.

McMaster mentioned an ongoing review of Iran policy that reportedly will be completed by late summer. But with a decision like this, there seems little doubt the administration is not going to fulfill President Trump's campaign promise to kill or substantially renegotiate the nuclear deal.

As we pointed out yesterday, certifying that Iran is in compliance when it clearly isn't is an unforced error because the law does not require certification or non-certification.

What's more, the status of Iran's compliance is not a McMaster call—it is the secretary of state's call, and the secretary can satisfy the statute simply by determining that he is not prepared for now to certify compliance and that U.S. policy is under review.

As Ambassador John Bolton recently wrote, withdrawing from the JCPOA as soon as possible should be the highest priority. The administration should stop reviewing and start deciding. Even assuming, contrary to fact, that Iran is complying with the JCPOA, it remains palpably harmful to American national interests.

The only reason we are in this situation is that the policy articulated by candidate Trump during the campaign is being undermined by the Obama holdovers in President Trump's administration.

The Washington rumor mill says McMaster, for his part, has not enjoyed his role as NSA; an armor officer at heart, General McMaster allegedly finds the work of the NSA tedious and unrewarding. If the result of General McMaster's tedium is advising the president to make a demonstrably false certification to Congress, then now would be a good time for

General McMaster to leave the White House and return to the armored battlefield where he is so adept. {eo}

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