



Tulsi Gabbard Confirmation Hearing Focuses on Snowden, FISA, and Russia Views

Tulsi Gabbard refused to call Edward Snowden a traitor, despite repeated pressure from multiple members of the Senate Intelligence Committee to get her to do so.

Gabbard is considered among the most controversial of President Donald Trump's nominations, and the least likely to get confirmed. Trump chose her for director of national intelligence (DNI). The Office of Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) was created in 2005 after a report from the 9/11 Commission [proposed](#) its creation. It is designed to serve as the main intelligence advisor to the president, National Security Council, and Homeland Security Council. Plus, it oversees the other 18 intelligence agencies.



AP Images
Tulsi Gabbard

Gabbard was [greeted](#) with clapping and a few chants of "USA!" before sitting down for Thursday's contentious hearing. Committee Chair Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) began by saying the ODNI had ballooned far beyond its intended size and scope. Part of Gabbard's responsibility as DNI would be to dial it back to its original size and scope. Cotton said there are now 15 ODNI offices with about 2,000 employees, when there should be dozens, or, at most, hundreds. If confirmed, he told Gabbard, she has a lot of work ahead of her.

Cotton's concern over the runaway size and scope of this office reflects the concerns of *The New American*. TNA has long maintained that 9/11 was exploited to justify the passing of national security laws and the creation of more intel agencies, and that such actions would lead to more bureaucracy and the violations of basic liberties.

Opening Statements

In her opening statement, Gabbard painted a picture of an intelligence apparatus that has failed to uphold its core mission while managing to turn against the very people it's supposed to serve. She began by saying the Iraq invasion was based "upon a total fabrication or complete failure of intelligence." She said the invasion led to the deaths of thousands of American soldiers, mass migration, regional destabilization, the rise of ISIS, and the strengthening of al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups.

Gabbard also mentioned the intelligence community's spying on Trump by using FISA to illegally obtain a warrant on his advisor Carter Page, while using a Clinton campaign-funded false dossier as "evidence." She reminded the committee that Joe Biden's then-campaign advisor, Antony Blinken, was behind the 51 former senior intelligence officials' letter dismissing the Hunter Biden laptop as "Russian disinfo." Then there was former DNI James Clapper lying to the Senate Intelligence Committee by



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denying the existence of programs that facilitated the mass collection of millions of Americans' phone and internet records. He was never held accountable.

She continued with her list of grievances. Under John Brennan's leadership, Gabbard reminded the committee, the CIA spied on Congress. Then they lied about it until they were caught. Moreover, Biden's FBI surveilled conservative Catholics. She finished with a personal example: "I was put on a secret domestic terror watch list called Quiet Skies." The bottom line is, she added, this must end:

President Trump's reelection is a clear mandate from the American people to break the cycle of failure and the weaponization and politicization of the intelligence community and begin to restore trust in those who've been charged with the critical task of securing our nation. If confirmed as DNI, I will do my very best to fulfill this mandate.

Gabbard's Goals

Gabbard then outlined what she wants to accomplish as DNI. She would begin by assessing the global threat environment; identifying intelligence gaps; integrating intelligence elements; increasing the sharing of information; ensuring unbiased, apolitical, objective collection and analysis to support the president and policymaking decisions; ending the politicization of the intel community; making sure the intel community focuses on its core mission; and addressing efficiencies and effectiveness.

Before concluding, she addressed the elephant in the room:

You may hear lies and smears in this hearing that'll challenge my loyalty to and my love for our country. Those who oppose my nomination imply that I am loyal to something or someone other than God, my own conscience, and the Constitution of the United States, accusing me of being Trump's puppet, Putin's puppet, Assad's puppet ... not recognizing the absurdity of simultaneously being the puppet of five different puppet masters. This same tactic was used against President Trump — and failed.

She later added, "What truly unsettles my political opponents is I refuse to be *their* puppet."

"Those that oppose my nomination — are accusing me of being Trump's puppet, Putin's puppet, Assad's puppet, a guru's puppet, Modi's puppet — what truly unsettles them is I refuse to be THEIR puppet." -Tulsi Gabbard pic.twitter.com/pEYofy9n0i

— Libs of TikTok (@libsoftiktok) [January 30, 2025](#)

Tulsi's Background

Gabbard, 43, is a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves and served combat tours overseas. She is also a former member of the globalist-oriented foreign-policy think tank Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which has been integral to the construction of a global government. Gabbard was listed in the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders program, a designation she says happened without her permission or knowledge.

She left the Democratic Party in 2022. Her tenure representing Hawaii's second Congressional District lasted from 2013 to 2020, during which she amassed an abysmal score of 29 percent in *TNA's* [Freedom](#)



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[Index](#), meaning her votes aligned with the U.S. Constitution only 29 percent of the time.

But when it comes to issues more aligned with her prospective position as DNI, her record improves. She voted against renewal of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 2018, and introduced legislation in 2020 to repeal Section 702 of the act, which allows the surveillance of Americans swept up in spying on foreigners. In December, though, she seemingly reversed her position and came out in support of Section 702, calling it a “vital national security tool,” perhaps to assuage concerns among Senate Republicans in order to garner enough votes to get confirmed. She claimed that “significant FISA reforms have been enacted” since her time in Congress, including new safeguards designed to protect Americans’ privacy.

She maintained this position Thursday, despite skepticism from multiple committee members, who said that 60 percent of the president’s intel is a result of FISA.

Government Surveillance

Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) asked several questions to confirm that Gabbard agreed with his positions. She agreed that government agencies must obtain warrants before conducting surveillance on Americans. She confirmed that she supports the Biden DOJ’s policy restricting collection of news reporters’ records, and reaffirmed her position that the government should not mandate that Americans’ phones include mechanisms that create backdoors for the government. And she agreed that whistleblowers must have a clear and legal path to speak to the intelligence committee if they see something concerning.

Gabbard on Snowden

One of Gabbard’s harshest critics was Committee Vice Chair Mark Warner (D-Va.). “I continue to have significant concerns about your judgment,” he said. In addition to her past opposition to FISA, he worried about her “praise” of Edward Snowden. In 2013, Snowden, a former NSA intelligence contractor, leaked classified documents revealing illegal U.S. surveillance programs.

Warner said Snowden “betrayed the trust of our nation and jeopardized the security of our country” before fleeing to Russia. “Do you still think Edward Snowden is brave?” he asked.

She refused to answer directly. Instead, she said Snowden broke the law. Although she didn’t agree with the information he released and how he did it, she said,

we can’t have individual vigilantes make their own decisions about how and when they’re going to expose the nation’s secrets.

But, “even as he broke the law,” she added, Snowden exposed egregious illegal and unconstitutional programs by the government “that clearly violated Americans’ Fourth Amendment right.”

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) asked if she would pardon Snowden as DNI. Gabbard said no. Senator James Lankford (R-Okla.) asked if Snowden is a traitor. Gabbard deflected, pivoting to what she would do to prevent another Snowden-like incident. As DNI, she said, she would make sure the government isn’t conducting illegal programs. She would limit top-secret access, ensure legal and open whistleblower channels, and create a direct line for whistleblowers to the DNI.

Senator Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) tried his luck at getting Gabbard to agree that Snowden is a traitor.



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“Was Edward Snowden a traitor to the United States of America?” he asked sternly. Gabbard again refused to give the answer they wanted. Bennet pushed harder, saying, “This is when you need to answer the questions of the people whose vote you’re asking for to be confirmed as the chief intelligence officer of this nation.”

Russia, Russia, Russia

Not getting what he wanted, Bennet moved to the next pressing topic: Gabbard’s blaming NATO for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. He read a tweet she posted February 23, 2022, as Russian tanks were rolling into Ukraine. Gabbard said the war could have been avoided had the Biden administration and NATO “simply acknowledged Russia’s legitimate security concerns.” She admitted that was her tweet. Bennet cited other comments she made in the same vein, asking if she knew Russia was pushing the same narrative. She said she had no idea what the Russian government was saying.

Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) asked her, “Who do you blame for the Ukraine war?”

“Putin started the war,” she said.

The Senate committee will hold a vote at a later time.

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