

# **Duckworth: Trump's Pentagon Firings & Refusal to Comply with Stable Transition Endangers Our National Security**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Speaking at the Democratic weekly leadership stakeout this afternoon, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) discussed the urgent need for GOP leaders to speak out against Trump's firing of Secretary Mark Esper and other top Pentagon officials, as well as his refusal to follow precedent and engage in a smooth, stable transition of power that protects our national security during a vulnerable time. Video of her remarks is available [here](#).

Key points:

- “At the height of a global pandemic and in the depth of a national recession, Donald Trump has endangered our national security by forcing the Pentagon into his latest culture war.”
- Looking at the history, the value of ensuring a smooth, stable transition between Administrations becomes obvious... So, too, does the necessity of ensuring that the next Commander-in-Chief is fully briefed on the gravest national security threats the moment they step into the Oval Office.”
- “Rogue states, terrorist groups and adversaries like Russia—they’re all watching us right now, and they’re all aware of the opportunity this transition period presents for their own strategic goals. They see that we now have lackeys instead of experts in crucial Pentagon positions.”

A full copy of Duckworth’s remarks as delivered is below:

- At the height of a global pandemic and in the depth of a national recession, Donald Trump has endangered our national security by forcing the Pentagon into his latest culture war.
- Since the moment it was clear he was going to lose, he has been spewing baseless conspiracy theories and using these lies as a rationale to refuse to accept the results and make the first steps toward a peaceful transition of power.
- These lies could lead to more Americans dying from COVID-19 because they can’t be vaccinated quickly enough, but they also could have serious national security implications.
- Over the past week, Trump has upended any sense of stability at the Department of Defense...
- Aside from reports that he literally wants to attack Iran and has plans to weaken our military, betray our allies and arm our enemies with a rapid, unsafe troop drawdown in the Middle East, he also fired Secretary Esper and replaced him and other top Pentagon officials with a series of unqualified loyalists who seem to have been chosen for their loyalty to this one man in the White House rather than their own competence.
- This upheaval represents a dangerous escalation at one of the most fraught moments possible....

- Let me just give you a little historical reference here. Our enemies historically have tested us within the first year of each new Administration.
- Less than six weeks into Bill Clinton's term, a truck laden with explosives detonated in the basement of the World Trade Center.
- Within six months of Barack Obama taking the Oath of Office, North Korea had rattled its sabers twice, launching a rocket over the Pacific and then conducting a nuclear test.
- Four months after Trump was sworn in, Syria's Bashar al-Assad launched a chemical weapons attack that killed at least 90 people, and tested America's commitment against the use of chemical weapons.
- And, of course, nine months into George W. Bush's presidency, we had the 9/11 attacks.
- Our troops will always do everything in their power to keep us safe. I have every confidence in their technical and tactical proficiency and their professionalism. Unfortunately, the Commander-in-Chief is making it harder for them to do their jobs.
- Looking at the history, the value of ensuring a smooth, stable transition between Administrations becomes obvious.
- So, too, does the necessity of ensuring that the next Commander-in-Chief is fully briefed on the gravest national security threats the moment they step into the Oval Office.
- And that's one reason why incoming Administrations are typically given access to Defense Department buildings and personnel prior to taking office.
- Yet, instead of following precedent, Trump's White House has barred Administration officials from cooperating with Biden's transition team, prevented President-elect Biden from having access to the all-important President's Daily Brief that he himself has ignored, and refused to provide the President-elect a secure government line to speak with world leaders.
- Rogue states, terrorist groups and adversaries like Russia—they're all watching us right now, and they're all aware of the opportunity this transition period presents for their own strategic goals.

- They see that we now have lackeys instead of experts in crucial Pentagon positions.
- Trump is once again putting his own self-interest ahead of national interest. He is sowing chaos when we most need stability and exposing his weakness to those who wish us harm.
- With all that is at stake, it is on the GOP, my colleagues in the GOP, to say *enough* and prove that they care more about protecting our national security than protecting one man's ego.
- We need to do better, and our national security is at stake. Thank you.