

Rex Tillerson Out as Trump's Secretary of State, Replaced by Mike Pompeo

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Tuesday ousted his secretary of state, Rex W. Tillerson, extending a shake-up of his administration, 14 months into his tumultuous presidency, and potentially transforming the nation's economic and foreign policy.

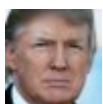
Mr. Trump announced he would replace Mr. Tillerson with Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director and former Tea Party congressman, who forged a close relationship with the president and is viewed as being more in sync with Mr. Trump's America First credo.

Mr. Tillerson learned he had been fired on Tuesday morning when a top aide showed him a tweet from Mr. Trump announcing the change, according to a senior State Department official. But he had gotten an oblique warning of what was coming the previous Friday from the White House chief of staff, John F. Kelly, who called to tell him to cut short a trip to Africa and advised him "you may get a tweet."

It was an abrupt end — after months of speculation — to a rocky tenure for a former oil executive who never meshed with the president who hired him. Mr. Tillerson clashed repeatedly with the White House staff and broke publicly with Mr. Trump on issues ranging from the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar to the American response to Russia's cyber aggression.

"We were not really thinking the same," Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House, explaining his decision to replace Mr. Tillerson.

He added: "Really, it was a different mind-set, a different thinking."
Mr. Trump announced his decision on Twitter.



Donald J. Trump

✓@realDonaldTrump

Mike Pompeo, Director of the CIA, will become our new Secretary of State. He will do a fantastic job! Thank you to Rex Tillerson for his service! Gina Haspel will become the new Director of the CIA, and the first woman so chosen. Congratulations to all!

At the State Department Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Tillerson said the president had called him from Air Force One just after noon — more than three hours after Mr. Trump had tweeted the news of his firing to his 49 million followers — to inform him personally of the dismissal. Mr. Tillerson said he planned to immediately step aside from his post, turning over all responsibilities by the end of the day to John J. Sullivan, the deputy secretary of state.

During a short statement in a briefing room packed with reporters, Mr. Tillerson said he would end his service at midnight on March 31, but was encouraging his policy planning team and under secretaries and assistant secretaries “to remain in their posts and continue in our mission at the State Department.”

“I’ll now return to private life, as a private citizen, as a proud American, proud of the opportunity I had to serve my country,” Mr. Tillerson said. He took no questions and left the briefing room.

The firing of Mr. Tillerson caught even the White House staff by surprise. Just the day before, a White House spokesman berated a reporter for suggesting there was any kind of split between Mr. Tillerson and the White House because of disparate comments on Russian responsibility for a poison attack in Britain.

But a senior administration official said that Mr. Trump decided to replace Mr. Tillerson now to have a new team in place before upcoming talks with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader he plans to meet by May. The president also wanted a new chief diplomat for various ongoing trade negotiations.

The White House’s purge extended to Mr. Tillerson’s inner circle. The under secretary of state for public affairs, Steve Goldstein, was fired, and the status was unclear of Mr. Tillerson’s chief of staff, Margaret Peterlin, and his deputy chief of staff, Christine Ciccone.

Mr. Tillerson, who was at the State Department on Tuesday morning, may speak to the staff around 2 p.m.

At the C.I.A., Mr. Pompeo will be replaced by the current deputy director, Gina Haspel, who will be the first woman to head the spy agency. Both she and Mr. Pompeo would need confirmation by the Senate to take the positions.

Mr. Tillerson has been out of favor with Mr. Trump for months but had resisted being pushed out. His distance from Mr. Trump's inner circle was clear last week when the president accepted an invitation to meet with Mr. Kim, to Mr. Tillerson's surprise.

Mr. Trump said Mr. Pompeo "has earned the praise of members in both parties by strengthening our intelligence gathering, modernizing our defensive and offensive capabilities, and building close ties with our friends and allies in the international intelligence community."

"I have gotten to know Mike very well over the past 14 months, and I am confident he is the right person for the job at this critical juncture," the president continued, in a written statement distributed by the White House. "He will continue our program of restoring America's standing in the world, strengthening our alliances, confronting our adversaries, and seeking the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

In a Twitter post, Representative Nancy Pelosi of California, the House Democratic leader, warned that the turnover at the top of the State Department had diminished the United States with foreign leaders.

 Nancy Pelosi

✓@NancyPelosi

Whenever Secretary Tillerson's successor goes into meetings with foreign leaders, his credibility will be diminished as someone who could be here today and gone tomorrow. <https://goo.gl/RiyLP4>



Pelosi Statement on Firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson - Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi

Washington, D.C. - Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi issued this statement after President Trump fired his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and announced CIA Director Mike Pompeo as his replacement:

Mr. Pompeo, a former congressman, has become a favorite of Mr. Trump's, impressing the president with his engaging approach during morning intelligence briefings. But he also, at times, has been at odds with the president — including agreeing with a C.I.A. assessment about Russia's interference in the 2016 elections.

In picking Ms. Haspel to succeed Mr. Pompeo at the C.I.A., Mr. Trump opted for continuity rather than bringing in an outsider. At one point last fall, Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas, one of the president's closest Republican allies on Capitol Hill, had been tentatively tapped as the front-runner to run the agency if Mr. Pompeo moved up, but the idea later faded.

Mr. Tillerson, a former chief executive of the oil giant Exxon Mobil, had once been viewed as an intriguing, if unorthodox, cabinet choice. He had deep experience with Middle Eastern potentates, and knew President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia through Exxon's extensive efforts to explore for oil in Russia.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/13/us/politics/trump-tillerson-pompeo.html>

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