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## Trump names Mike Flynn national security adviser

The retired lieutenant general's hardline views on Islam — as well as laudatory statements about Russia — have made him a lightning rod, as did his strident attacks on Hillary Clinton during the campaign.

By **BRYAN BENDER** | 11/17/2016 09:40 PM EST | Updated 11/18/2016 12:06 PM EST

President-elect Donald Trump on Friday named retired Lt. Gen. Mike Flynn, one of his top confidants, to be White House national security adviser, elevating the controversial surrogate to be the chief arbiter of virtually every major defense and foreign policy decision.

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possibly without the diplomatic and cultural sensitivities that have been the hallmark of President Barack Obama's approach, which Flynn has repeatedly criticized.

In the past, Flynn, 58, has argued that "Islam is a political ideology," one that in his view "the American Founding Fathers wanted nothing to do with."

"I am pleased that Lieutenant General Michael Flynn will be by my side as we work to defeat radical Islamic terrorism, navigate geopolitical challenges and keep Americans safe at home and abroad," Trump said in a statement. "General Flynn is one of the country's foremost experts on military and intelligence matters and he will be an invaluable asset to me and my administration."

Flynn said in a statement that he was "deeply humbled and honored to accept the position."

Some of his hardline views — as well as laudatory statements about Russia — have made him a lightning rod, as did his strident attacks on Hillary Clinton during the campaign, including leading chants at Trump rallies of "Lock her up."

But Flynn, a registered Democrat, heavily influenced Trump's campaign and is now poised to shape nearly every international issue that comes before the new president, sitting atop a National Security Council staff of hundreds.

The choice was roundly criticized by a number of leading Democrats, including the ranking member of the House Oversight and Government Reform panel, who demanded Friday that the Trump camp release more information about potential conflicts of interest posed by Flynn's consulting firm.



WAR ROOM

## How Mike Flynn Became America's Angriest General

By JAMES KITFIELD

But Trump backers hailed the much-anticipated appointment — to a post that is the president's prerogative to fill and, unlike the heads of Cabinet departments, requires no Senate confirmation.

"He's knowledgeable not just about the intel community but the way the guys on the ground

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on the ground actually execute the mission. And you combine those together, and that's what you want in a national security adviser."

"He got drummed out of the DIA because he wouldn't roll over for Obama's political ideology," Hunter argued. "It's not like he didn't do a great job."

During one of his combat tours Flynn was the top intelligence officer in Afghanistan, where he worked under Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who Obama fired in 2010 after his staff was quoted in Rolling Stone making disparaging statements about the president.

One former senior intelligence official who worked with him closely said Flynn revered McChrystal and seethed at his removal. The official, who asked not to be identified, said he believed the McChrystal affair may have been the start of Flynn's eventual falling out with Obama.

In a recent book co-authored with conservative scholar Michael Ledeen, Flynn railed against "political correctness" and argued that Obama had failed to recognize "the war being waged against us."



PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

## Trump's new world order

By NAHAL TOOSI

"This administration," he wrote, "has forbidden us to describe our enemies properly and clearly: they are Radical Islamists. They are not alone, and are allied with countries and groups who, though not religious fanatics, share their hatred of the West, particularly the United States and Israel. Those allies include North Korea, Russia, China, Cuba and Venezuela."

The former senior intelligence official said "his views on Islam are off the charts."

Flynn described himself as "a maverick, an atypical square peg in a round hole," and claimed he had been fired for telling Congress that the administration was hiding the truth about the nature of the extremist threat.

The choice of Flynn has set off some alarms in Washington, not least because he sat at a

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"I'd like to see someone with very sober judgment with a temperament that complements rather than accentuates the eccentricities of the incoming president," Rep. Adam Schiff of California said at the DefenseOne Summit in Washington on Thursday.

While lauding the Army officer's military service, Schiff also said Flynn's connections to Russia undermine his qualifications.

"Some of the policy positions he's advocated, a kind of a newfound affinity for the Russians and Kremlin, concern me a great deal," Schiff said.

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Obama urges Trump to stand up to Russia  
By LOUIS NELSON

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He also criticized Flynn for an op-ed he wrote calling Fetullah Gulen, a Turkish imam granted permanent residency in the United States, a radical Islamist.

"Well the [Turkish] government has been jailing moderates and jailing journalists," said Schiff. "That is generally the test whether someone is a radical or a moderate."

Flynn came under new scrutiny this week when POLITICO reported that his firm was recently hired to lobby for a company with ties to the Turkish president. Flynn has urged the United States revoke its "safe haven" for Gulen, who is in his late 70s and lives in Pennsylvania. The Turkish government claims the aging cleric orchestrated a July coup attempt.

On Friday, Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland sought more information from President-elect Donald Trump's transition team about his apparent conflicts of interests.

He released a letter sent to Vice President-elect Mike Pence, who is running the transition process and released a Memorandum of Understanding signed last week by the former head of the transition team, Chris Christie, and White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough that stipulates that in order to that to receive non-public or classified information members of the transition team must sign a statement that "he or she has no financial interest or imputed financial interest that would be directly and predictably

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paid to lobby the U.S. Government by a close ally of Turkey's president," Cummings said in a statement. "It is unclear how Lt. Gen. Flynn was reportedly allowed into intelligence briefings during the campaign despite these apparent conflicts of interest."

Flynn has been one of the most reliable surrogates for Trump, who has struggled to find supporters in the national security community. At one point Flynn was reportedly under consideration as a possible vice presidential running mate.

He called for Clinton to resign over her use of a private email server at the State Department, telling CNN that "if it were me, I would have been out the door and probably in jail" and blasting a "lack of accountability, frankly, in a person who should have been much more responsible in her actions."

Flynn has shaped some of Trump's key views, including his bitter criticism the agreement reached with Iran last year to curtail its nuclear weapons program. "Iran doesn't deserve a place at the [negotiating] table," he said at an appearance at Dartmouth University in 2014.

His calls for a far more aggressive strategy to confront Islamic extremism at home and abroad stems from what he considers a "grave danger" that "threatens our way of life."

The former senior intelligence official remarked that "his views on Islam are off the charts."

A former National Security Council official told POLITICO he found Flynn's appointment "scary."

"There's been hope that despite what candidate Trump said on the trail that he was going to as president surround himself with folks that were more tempered in their views," the former official said, pointing to the naming of Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus as White House chief of staff as a sign of moderation. "But Mike Flynn, I mean, is definitely not in that same category."

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WHITE HOUSE

## Obama to Trump: Time to get serious

By EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE

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If former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, another fierce advocate for cracking down on

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be received by other members of the coalition against the Islamic State, which includes a number of Muslim-majority countries.

At least some Democrats were willing to give Flynn the benefit of the doubt Thursday.

"I respect him and deeply admire his family's legacy of military service. It is pretty remarkable to have two brothers rise to the rank of General like Mike and Charlie Flynn," said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee. "I do not agree with General Flynn on every issue. I have concerns about some of the statements he made in the heat of the campaign."

He said he hopes Flynn will use some of his experience to educate Trump — and provide "unbiased and fact-based advice."

"He is familiar with the complex set of security challenges we face. And President-elect Trump does not have a wealth of experience in this arena," Reed added.

The NSC has grown in size and influence in recent decades, now amounting to a staff of nearly 400. It has been widely criticized under Obama for micromanaging nearly every aspect of national security and foreign policy — much to the frustration of the State and Defense Departments and other national security agencies.

It has grown so powerful there are several bipartisan proposals now under consideration in Congress to try to scale it back — a move Obama has threatened to veto.

*Jeremy Herb and Nahal Toosi contributed to this report.*

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