

Tulsi Gabbard's ex-aides say that the former congresswoman, whom Donald Trump has nominated as the next director of national intelligence, used to regularly consume Russian state media. ABC News, citing interviews with three of her former staffers, reported Thursday that Gabbard regularly read and shared articles from RT (formerly Russia Today), a state-run media outlet, even after being advised that RT wasn't a credible source. Gabbard has defended Russia at least since she represented Hawaii's 2nd congressional district. In 2017, she sent a memo to her staff with her views on foreign policy, blaming the U.S. and NATO for provoking Russia and complaining about America's "hostility towards Putin." "There certainly isn't any guarantee to Putin that we won't try to overthrow Russia's government," Gabbard wrote in the memo. "In fact, I'm pretty sure there are American politicians who would love to do that." In her 2020 run for president, she attacked the U.S. involvement in Syria's civil war as a "regime change war" on Russia-backed Syrian President Bashar Al Assad. When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Gabbard blamed Ukraine's bid to join NATO, drawing the ire of America's national security establishment. Gabbard, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, has never worked in intelligence, another obstacle to Senate confirmation. As a result of her pro-Russia views, Republicans in the Senate say Gabbard might have the toughest path of Trump's nominees to confirmation, even as his secretary of defense pick, Pete Hegseth, faces sexual assault allegations and his FBI pick, Kash Patel, expresses a desire to prosecute Trump's enemies. "Behind closed doors, people think she might be compromised. Like it's not hyperbole," one Republican Senate aide told The Hill. "There are members of our conference who think she's a [Russian] asset." Trump has already had two of his nominees drop out: his attorney general pick, Matt Gaetz, and his pick to run the DEA, Chad Chronister. Hegseth is drawing more negative news attention each day, and Patel is not winning over many supporters with his open threats to go after the so-called "deep state." For now, Gabbard has flown under the radar, but that seems to be changing.