**Biden to nominate Avril Haines as next director of national intelligence; she would be the first woman to hold the position**

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President-elect Joe Biden’s intention to nominate Avril D. Haines as the next director of national intelligence marks a historic turn — she would be the first woman to hold the country’s top intelligence position — and a stabilizing one, installing a national security expert who is expected to restore rigor and independence to an office that has been beset by political intrigue and mismanagement, current and former officials said.

For weeks, Haines had been an odds-on favorite to land the top post and was said to be considered as well for director of the CIA, where she served as the No. 2 during the Obama administration. News of her selection was greeted enthusiastically by career intelligence officers, who regard her as both a sharp policy expert and attuned to the operational aspects of intelligence.

“I have a great deal of respect for Avril. Her relationship with the president-elect and her experience with the CIA should serve her, the community and the nation well as she leads the [intelligence community] into a very dynamic future that will require not only focus but change,” said [Sue Gordon, the former principal deputy director of national intelligence](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/no-2-intelligence-official-resigning-trump-announces/2019/08/08/9ed9d266-b54e-11e9-951e-de024209545d_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_4), who was also said to be under consideration for the job.

Haines was deputy CIA director under John Brennan, who said her knowledge of the inner workings of the agencies and her strong relationships on Capitol Hill were well suited to the job, which was created in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to help coordinate a far-flung intelligence apparatus.

“The real purpose [of the DNI position] is to have someone who can serve as an effective orchestra conductor of the 17 intelligence agencies, so what comes out is a symphony and not a cacophony,” Brennan said. “Her easiest job will be to work with the new administration. She knows these people.”

Biden’s decision to reveal Haines’s nomination before an announcement on a pick for the CIA job is designed to send the signal that the DNI role will be paramount in the Biden administration, said a person familiar with Biden transition planning who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Haines is set to rejoin colleagues from the Obama administration whom Biden plans to name to other top posts. In 2015, she replaced Antony J. Blinken as the deputy national security adviser at the White House, when he became the No. 2 at the State Department. Biden plans to [nominate](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-picks-antony-blinken-as-secretary-of-state-emphasizing-experience-and-the-foreign-policy-establishment/2020/11/22/94f91ac6-2d3a-11eb-bae0-50bb17126614_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_11) Blinken as the next secretary of state.

Biden’s pick to lead the CIA is also likely to be someone Haines knows well. Michael Morell, a career CIA officer whom she replaced as deputy director, is said to be on the shortlist to run the agency. Another is Tom Donilon, who was Obama’s national security adviser from 2010-2013, when Haines worked in the White House Counsel’s Office as a deputy assistant to the president and was deputy counsel for national security affairs.

Current and former officials said that Haines’s first order of business should be to restore the DNI’s role as an apolitical purveyor of intelligence and manager of the intelligence community. “She is going to be fiercely committed to the principle that policymakers are best served by having rigorous, thorough analysis without any spin on the ball,” said Lisa Monaco, who was President Obama’s homeland security adviser.

Haines was among a handful of White House officials to learn from Brennan of [the early intelligence reports about Russian interference in the 2016 election](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/world/national-security/obama-putin-election-hacking/?itid=lk_inline_manual_16). The Russian operation, which involved hacking Democratic Party computer networks and probing state and local election websites, became a defining point of contention between U.S. spy agencies and President Trump.

As he approached the end of his term, Trump increasingly used the DNI position as a way to settle scores with agencies whose work he did not trust and often blamed for casting doubt on the legitimacy of his election.

Haines, if confirmed, will replace John Ratcliffe, a former Republican congressman and prominent Trump loyalist who has been [the subject of intense criticism from intelligence officers](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/dni-ratcliffe-has-broken-his-promise-to-keep-politics-out-of-intelligence-agency-veterans-say/2020/10/08/2dded958-0985-11eb-9be6-cf25fb429f1a_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_20). Recently, Ratcliffe has played a key role in declassifying information that Trump believes will demonstrate a conspiracy within the intelligence agencies to undermine his campaign and his presidency. The information released to date shows no evidence to support his claims, but officials have said the disclosures risk [damaging](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/dni-ratcliffe-has-broken-his-promise-to-keep-politics-out-of-intelligence-agency-veterans-say/2020/10/08/2dded958-0985-11eb-9be6-cf25fb429f1a_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_20) sensitive sources and methods.

Haines’s nomination comes as Trump continues to refuse to concede the election or allow his administration to cooperate with Biden on the transition. That has left Biden’s team in the dark about everything from classified budgets to ongoing operations that Haines and others will be in charge of overseeing in less than two months.

Haines’s selection “reflects that Biden recognizes” the need to restore public confidence in the intelligence community, to respect bipartisan Congressional oversight, “and to support a workforce that has been through the wringer,” said Susan Hennessey, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former attorney at the National Security Agency.

Haines, who has an undergraduate degree in physics from the University of Chicago and a law degree from Georgetown University, has advised Biden in various roles for 15 years, from serving as deputy chief counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when Biden chaired the panel in the mid-2000s to leading the transition’s national security and foreign policy team this year.

Her CIA tenure coincided with the surveillance disclosures by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden and the release of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on CIA torture of terrorist detainees. While she was at the White House, the administration concluded a nuclear deal with Iran and grappled with Chinese economic espionage as well as Russian interference.

In 2016, Haines drove a process aimed at minimizing civilian casualties in U.S. drone strikes and other uses of force overseas, while increasing transparency about the legal process governing those actions.

James R. Clapper Jr., the longest-serving DNI, worked closely with Haines while she was at the CIA and at the White House. Haines, he said, has “an unbelievable work ethic, impeccable integrity and she’s just a fundamentally good human being.”