

Trump ousts acting AG as outcry grows

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AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File
President Donald Trump speaks in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington.



AP Photo/J. David Ake, File
Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates speaks at the Justice Department in Washington.

WASHINGTON — Accusing her of betrayal and insubordination, President Donald Trump on Monday fired Sally Yates, the acting attorney general of the United States and a Democratic appointee, after she publicly questioned the constitutionality of his controversial refugee and immigration ban and refused to defend it in court.

The dramatic public clash between the new president and the nation's top law enforcement officer laid bare the growing discord and dissent surrounding Trump's executive order, which temporarily halted the entire U.S. refugee program and banned all entries from seven Muslim-majority nations for 90 days.

The firing came hours after Yates directed Justice Department attorneys not to defend the executive order, saying she was not convinced it was lawful or consistent with the agency's obligation "to stand for what is right." Trump soon followed with a statement accusing Yates of having "betrayed the Department of Justice by refusing to enforce a legal order designed to protect the citizens of the United States."

He immediately named longtime federal prosecutor Dana Boente, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, as Yates' replacement. Boente was sworn in privately late Monday, the White House said.

Yates' refusal to defend the executive order was largely symbolic given that Sen. Jeff Sessions, Trump's pick for attorney general, will almost certainly defend the policy once he's sworn in. He's expected to be confirmed Tuesday by the Senate Judiciary Committee and could be approved within days by the full Senate.

The chain of events bore echoes of the Nixon-era "Saturday Night Massacre," when the attorney general and deputy attorney general resigned rather than follow an order to fire a special prosecutor investigating the Watergate scandal. The prosecutor, Archibald Cox, was fired by the solicitor general.

Yates' abrupt decision reflected the growing conflict over the executive order, with administration officials moving Monday to distance themselves from the policy. As protests erupted at airports over the weekend and confusion disrupted travel around the globe, even some of Trump's top advisers and fellow Republicans made clear they were not involved in crafting the policy or consulted on its implementation.

At least three top national security officials — Defense

arrived after Trump's travel ban took effect and found themselves in limbo.

Yates, who was appointed deputy attorney general in 2015 and was the No. 2 Justice Department official under Loretta Lynch, declared Monday she was instructing department lawyers not to defend the order in court.

"I am responsible for ensuring that the positions we take in court remain consistent with this institution's solemn obligation to always seek justice and stand for what is right," Yates wrote in a letter announcing her position. "At present, I am not convinced that the defense of the Executive Order is consistent with these responsibilities nor am I convinced that the Executive Order is lawful."

Trump said the order had been "approved" by Justice Department lawyers. However, the department has said the Office of Legal Counsel review was limited to whether the order was properly drafted, but did not address broader policy questions.

Other parts of Trump's administration also voiced dissent Monday. A large group of American diplomats circulated a memo voicing their opposition to the order, which temporarily halted the entire U.S. refugee program and banned all entries from seven Muslim-majority nations for 90 days. White House spokesman Sean Spicer challenged those opposed to the measure to resign.

"They should either get with the program or they can go," Spicer said.

The blowback underscored Trump's tenuous relationship with his own national security advisers, many of whom he met for the first time during the transition.

Mattis, who stood next to Trump during Friday's signing ceremony, is said to be particularly incensed. A senior U.S. official said Mattis, along with Joint Chiefs Chairman Joseph Dunford, was aware of the general concept of Trump's order but not the details. Tillerson has told the president's political advisers that he was baffled over not being consulted on the substance of the order.

U.S. officials and others with knowledge of the Cabinet's thinking insisted on anonymity in order to disclose the officials' private views.



AP Photo/John Minchillo
Demonstrators chant against President Donald Trump's executive order temporarily banning immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S. and suspending the nation's refugee program Monday outside City Hall in Cincinnati.

Veterans protest travel ban, saying it hurts interpreters

SAN DIEGO (AP) — U.S. combat veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan say they are outraged at the temporary ban on immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries that has blocked visas for Iraqi interpreters who risked their lives to help American troops on the battlefield.

Thousands of veterans have signed petitions. One soldier says he has bought a plane ticket for his Afghan translator in case that country is added to the list of banned nations.

Many veterans say they feel betrayed by the executive order signed by President Donald Trump on Friday that also suspends the admission of all

refugees to the U.S. for 120 days and all Syrian refugees indefinitely.

They say the fight feels personal because they gave their word to people who aided American troops that the United States would protect them and their families.

"This administration just made me a liar in a very significant way, and I'm not willing to accept this," said Iraq and Afghanistan combat veteran Michael Breen, president and CEO of the Truman National Security Project, a Washington-based nonprofit think tank.

The Pentagon is compiling the names of Iraqis who have supported U.S. and coalition personnel to help

exempt them from the 90-day immigration ban.

The list will include those who have tangibly demonstrated their commitment to supporting U.S. forces, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said. It will contain several categories of people, such as translators, drivers and Iraqi forces who may be training in the U.S.

California Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter, a combat Marine veteran who endorsed Trump's presidential campaign, sent the president a bipartisan letter signed by other lawmakers who served in the military, expressing support for the exemption list.

Secretary Jim Mattis, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and Rex Tillerson, who is awaiting confirmation to lead the State Department — have told associates they were not aware of details of the directive until around the time Trump signed it. Leading intelligence officials were also left largely in the dark, according to U.S. officials.

Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations committee, said that despite

White House assurances that congressional leaders were consulted, he learned about the order in the media.

Trump's order pauses America's entire refugee

program for four months, indefinitely bans all those from war-ravaged Syria and temporarily freezes immigration from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia

and Yemen. Federal judges in New York and several other states issued orders that temporarily block the government from deporting people with valid visas who

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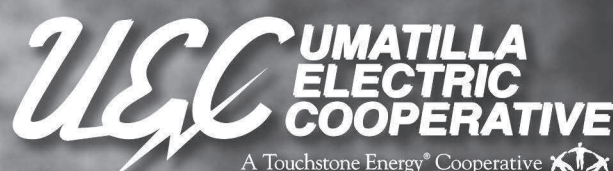
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