

Trump's hypocritical threats to use the Justice Department against enemies



By
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When the wind blows hard from the left, it carries a poison that's ready to kill the body politic. When the storm arrive from the right, it ferries aloft a nearly divine righteousness. Such is Donald Trump's view of the country, and the world, where nothing — no policy, proposal or pronouncement — is legitimate if it doesn't originate with him.

The clarity of his vision of good versus evil gives it a strange appeal to some. When it comes to one of Trump's obsessions — the Justice Department — his binary approach presents an ongoing threat to the nation's well-being and safety.

Trump's justice is founded on the hypocritical premise that all investigations of liberals, progressives and the establishment are necessary, and all scrutiny of the populist right by Democrats is illegitimate. Of course, that immovable proposition cannot be grounded in anything other than a simplistic sales promotion. It is devoid of any sustaining principle.

President-elect Trump has repeatedly stated his opponents — some of whom were members of Congress serving on the January 6th Committee — should be jailed. He and his immediate cadre of advisors also have targeted members of the media for special scrutiny and punishment as criminals. For what offense remains unclear.

Throughout the presidential campaign, Trump's team accused Biden's Justice Department, both career officials and others including Special Counsel Jack Smith and his team, of politicizing investigations and pursuing selective prosecutions against him and his supporters. The Trump campaign's attacks on law enforcement were grounded in the unambiguous view that the weaponization of the federal criminal justice system was wrong and that politicized policing was an important reason to support him, not Biden.

Once Trump became the president-elect, he — without any hint of self-awareness — declared that his Department of Justice will pursue investigations against his designated enemies, using the power of subpoenas, indictments, and "jail time" to defeat them. He quickly announced then-Congressman Matt Gaetz as his pick for attorney general. Gaetz, a smug, self-declared warrior against the establishment, had never investigated, prosecuted or defended a single criminal case in a featherweight legal career. That Trump would publicly advance Gaetz as his choice for attorney general is the clearest signal that he couldn't care less about qualifications for the role of leading thousands of investigators and trial lawyers. He is looking for clear signs of a willing vindictiveness that will leave a trail of destruction in the hallways of the Justice Department.

After Gaetz withdrew, Trump named Pam Bondi, the former Florida attorney



President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a news conference at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach on Monday. **EVAN VUCCI/AP**

general, as his intended nominee. Bondi, while possessing the basic credentials for the position, is a self-labeled Trump lieutenant and represented Trump in one impeachment proceeding. Those who characterize her legal work as putting policy above partisan politics are willfully blind, ignoring her track record of just the opposite, including refusing to investigate Trump University for fraud (as New York did) even as she accepted Trump's support and an illegal campaign contribution from his nonprofit, the Trump Foundation. The cover story of her professionalism is especially dangerous, as the Justice Department will soon face mortal threats from within. Bondi likely won't resist the mandate to pursue her boss' opponents using the might and muscle of federal law enforcement.

Bondi could be aided and abetted by Kash Patel, a conspiracy theorist and Trump's choice for director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Directors are appointed (Trump appointed the current director, Christopher Wray) for 10-year terms to insulate the role from partisanship. Patel has stated he would remove the current FBI leadership (not a bastion of leftists) and then target Trump's enemies through law enforcement action. He would serve as the head of an agency he despises.

That's exactly the sin Trump and his flock have again and again accused the Biden administration of committing.

It's now clear that evidence is irrelevant when the target is a Trump disciple; Trumpism provides the armor that essentially protects one from accountability, because all enforcement efforts against Trump are crooked.

Ultimately, the realization by Trump supporters that their movement is not free from flaws, and from accountability for misconduct done under its banner, is the political and cultural challenge. They can start by recognizing the winds change direction in an instant, and one's allies today can be viewed as the enemy tomorrow.

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