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**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](#), *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Juan Gonzalez, in for Amy Goodman. Amy is on assignment. We turn now to look at the rest of the incoming administration of president-elect Donald Trump. Last week, Trump made three key announcements to his cabinet. He offered Lt. General Michael Flynn the position of national security adviser. Flynn is well known for his anti-Muslim worldview, having called Islam a cancer and saying "fear of Muslims is rational." The position of National Security Adviser does not require Senate confirmation. Flynn served as the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency under President Obama, during which time some of his subordinates invented the term "Flynn facts" to refer to the false claims Flynn frequently made, including claiming Sharia Law was spreading in the United States. On Friday, Kansas Congressman Mike Pompeo was named as

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director. Pompeo has opposed closing Guantánamo Bay prison. In 2013, he visited the notorious U.S. prison and said of the prisoners who were on hunger strike — "It looked to me like a lot of them had put on weight." He's also a vocal opponent of the Iran nuclear deal. And in one of his first appointments, Trump selected Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions to be Attorney General. Sessions is a former prosecutor who was elected to the senate in 1996. As a senator, he's consistently supported anti-immigration legislation. In 2010, he was a leading proponent of the efforts to repeal the 14th amendment, which grants citizenship to everyone born in the United States. Sessions has also been a vocal opponent of the Voting Rights Act. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan nominated Sessions for a federal judgeship, but he was denied confirmation because of his history of racist comments, including reportedly saying he thought the Ku Klux Klan "was OK until I found out they smoked pot." Well, for more, we're still joined by Jeremy Scahill, cofounder of *The Intercept*. Jeremy, welcome back. Talk to us about these appointments from Friday, the three key security — defense and security appointments.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** First of all, one thing that I think's really interesting is that Trump is putting together his own version of a team of rivals. They are rivals of President Obama when it comes to some of these military people. You have General Flynn, you have General Mattis who — former Marine Corps general who very well may be the secretary of defense. And then you have Admiral Mike Rogers, current head of the NSA that may end up being the director of national intelligence. All of these people ended up in direct conflict with President Obama over key issues that Trump and Pence have sort of touted. We'll get to that in a moment. With the issue of, starting with General Michael Flynn, I followed Flynn's career for a very long time. Flynn is actually a very fascinating character. His social media presence I think gives the impression that he's just kind of a hateful buffoon. Flynn actually is a very important figure in the evolution of dirty wars post 9/11. Flynn was the intelligence chief for General Stanley McChrystal when McChrystal was the commander of the joint special

operations command — which effectively operated as a kind of Praetorian Guard for the most sensitive operations being ordered by the White House under Bush and Cheney. They killed their way through Iraq. They had set up a notorious prison called Camp Nama in Baghdad. Later when Flynn and McChrystal really were rolling their sleeves up, they moved it the Balad Air Base. Flynn and McChrystal were really credited with taking the strategy that in order to fight a force like Al Qaeda, you have to think like them. So they started doing a lot more house raids. This intelligence leads to that intelligence. Pre-emptive strikes. Flynn, himself, would personally sit in on the interrogations that were being conducted of prisoners, and there were wide allegations of abuse and torture at the camp Nama in Baghdad and then later at Balad where Flynn was. He then went on, with McChrystal, to Afghanistan, under President Obama, where they did their surge there, and then implemented the same kind of sort of systematic mathematical kill operation that they had built up in Iraq.

And then, Flynn, at the Defense Intelligence Agency, ended up being a nightmare of a footnote for Flynn's career in his own eyes. And you did have this business about him looking with a radical anti-Islam ideology at intelligence, which defeats the whole purpose of having people head an intelligence agency. And just so listeners understand the DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency is the military's equivalent of the

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and the Pentagon are diving into each other's — dipping into each other's territory. What I think we're going to see with someone like Mike Pompeo, if he ends up being the

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director — first of all, just on a side note that relates to the work we do at the

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, Pompeo, basically, has said that he thinks Edward Snowden should be killed and that is a treasonous traitor. And that he supports domestic surveillance operations, including against American citizens. He has a very strong anti-civil liberties background, and that's why he's getting praise from people like General Michael Hayden and others. Democrats also are speaking positively about him. He's another adult in the room, Juan, like we were talking about Mike Pence. Mike Pompeo, OK, he's an acceptable guy, one of us, we know we can do business with him. But, the business these guys are going to do is bringing back a full-blown torture operations. It's not that under Obama the

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wasn't engaged in horrifyingly act— horrifying activities of question legality, it's that with Bush and Cheney, it was like they wore it on their sleeves. And it was sort of the — Cheney's obsession with, we have to use forces on the dark side. That's all coming back into power right now.

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** I wanted to ask you, Kans— Kansas Congressman Mike Pompeo has opposed closing Guantánamo Bay. In 2013, he visited the notorious prison, and said of the prisoners who were on hunger strike "it looked to me like a lot of them had put on weight." He's also a vocal opponent of the Iran nuclear deal. This whole issue of Guantánamo, which Obama has been trying to close — at least whittling down to a small number, but still not closing it.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** It's one of the great failures of the Obama Presidency. The Republicans outplayed Obama on the issue of Guantánamo. And I think their game plan was as long as there's at least like one prisoner there by the time the Maoist, Socialist, black Kenyan gets out, then we can go back to game on. There are several of Trump's either appointees or people that he is considering that have said the only problem with Guantánamo is that there aren't enough bodies there. What's interesting about Flynn, Mike Pompeo, and Guantánamo, Flynn actually has been an interesting critic of the president's drone strike program. Now, it's not that Flynn isn't in love with killing people around the world. He definitely believes in primitive strikes and targeted killings, assassinations. But, Flynn has said by killing these people, we're losing an opportunity to get valuable intelligence. What we need to do is ship them to black sites again, what we need to do is bring them to Guantánamo. Big supporters of the military tribunal system. So, I think what we're going to see is that Obama has blessed these men — and it is all men right now — with the gift of legitimizing drone strikes and making a legal argument as to why it's OK to assassinate American citizens, combined with his failure to close Guantanamo, means that these guys are going to combine the worst aspects of what Obama has done and using his credibility to legitimize it with liberals, and the worst aspects of the Bush-Cheney doctrine. It really is kind of unprecedented that this kind of a cabal has this much power controlling both houses of Congress, the White House, and an ability to run the deck in making a Supreme Court that is extraordinarily, almost unprecedented, in its right-wing nature.

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** Well, on Saturday, former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney reportedly met with Donald Trump as well to discuss foreign policy amidst speculation that Trump is considering him as a possible pick for Secretary of State. Trump is reportedly also considering former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, as his Secretary of State. That's quite a trio there. Can you talk about these three and the possibility of one of them being Secretary of State?

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Well, you know things are bad when you're rooting for Mitt Romney to be named as Secretary of State. I don't even know which of these people would be a worse disaster. I mean, you have Rudy Giuliani — first of all, Giuliani has a lot of questions to answer, and going in front of a Senate and having to talk about money his firm took from Qatar, talking about the fact that he gave paid speeches in front of a State Department designated terror organization, the MEK, which, also, Howard Dean and others are connected to. It's a bipartisan love fest with this particular cult. Giuliani's record in New York,

he's sort of thought of as America's mayor because of 9/11. You and I remember what it was like in New York. I mean, this was a guy who developed a very close relationship with the FBI

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targeting Muslim communities. His police force was empowered to shoot at will against black people on the streets of New York. I don't know how else to say it. You look at what happened to Amadou Diallo who was shot 41 times by special units of the police force. You had the torture of Abner Louima in — I remember you were there, and interviewed Abner Louima. I mean, people have to understand that the tone Giuliani set in New York City is not about, oh, America's mayor. This was a guy who believed that police forces should be agents of war, of urban war. And for all of the bragging he'll do about how he cleaned up New York, you look at the tactics that Giuliani used and think of those in the emerging landscape we see with the paramilitarization of law enforcement, Giuliani as either as secretary of state or as homeland security director is a terrifying prospect.

John Bolton, who sort of cut his teeth as an assistant attorney general under Reagan, was most known for trying to stifle the Iran-Contra investigation into Oliver North, arms for hostages, the funding of Contra death squads in Nicaragua. And so, you look at that and you say, how bad could Mitt Romney be? So, we'll see what happens, Mike Pence is indicating that Mitt Romney is a leading candidate. But, Trump is running this basically like "The Apprentice." Remember Obama, he met Hillary Clinton in secret in the firehouse annex at the airport in Washington, D.C., they kept the whole thing down low. Trump is putting — he's telegraphing all of this stuff and picking the most extreme — I think he is floating a balloon too, naming some people he knows will never pass Senate confirmation. But, it's sort of like messaging that he does with the Ku Klux Klan and the white supremacists, white nationalist groups, it's sort of like these are the kind of people I like. Oh, we'll have Romney here, but Bolton really is our kind of guy. I think there is some of that happening, too, with the way Trump is running this.

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** But he — if he did name Romney as his Secretary of State, there'd be real issues as to whether they could be on the same — on the same game plan, isn't it?

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** When it comes to the military figures, Trump is sort of in awe of the generals and I think he is going to be a very malleable figure when it comes to people like General Flynn, General Mattis, Admiral Rogers. He's sort of, all praise the wise military men. When it comes to Secretary of State, if it is Romney — he is basically is doing it almost as a throwaway ambassadorship of sorts. And I think it's meant to be kind of chit thrown to the other Republican establishment. But, if you have a disempowered Secretary of state, and, basically, you're just running everything by fiat, which seems like Trump will do, then it really is just a token appointment if it's Romney. It will be interesting, if he puts a Giuliani or Bolton there, then

you're going to have someone who, a, is a loose cannon, but, b, really knows how to effectively be a bad person globally and in their cities.

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** We haven't talked about Mattis and the potential of Mattis for Secretary of defense.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Well, remember, Mattis, there was this move to draft Mattis, Mad Dog Mattis, as he's called, whose most recent post, he was the commander of U.S. Central Command and was fired by President Obama for speaking openly or critically about the Iran deal and questioning some of the Obama administration's motives.

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** But, he also played a key role in initial invasion of Iraq.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** And then in the battle of Fallujah.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Right, so Mattis, Mattis was the commander who encircled Fallujah in the fir— in advance of the first siege of Fallujah in March of 2004, that was then sparked by the killing of these Blackwater — Blackwater somehow seems to seep into everything. But, the killing of four Blackwater guys in Fallujah. Mattis, though, has said, speaking about his time commanding forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, that sometimes it's fun to shoot people. Talking specifically about people that were resisting U.S. occupations. But, he has a very sort of golden reputation within the hawkish militarist world. And there was a move to draft him to actually run for president. I think as Defense Secretary, her would be — I think he's less of a neocon than some of these other people, but he definitely believes in the iron fist of U.S. militarism. He definitely would be one of the more sophisticated military figures that Trump is speaking to. Also, Mattis, it should be noted, he intervened and was able to get clemency or free a variety of people that were involved with the Haditha massacre in Iraq where 20 something Iraqis were massacred, and other war crimes. He actually intervened and got some of the soldiers out or got them cleared in the aftermath, including in the aftermath of their convictions. So, Mattis, everyone says, oh, he's a general's general. That was a thing that Trump said about him. What do they mean by that? Well, part of what people in the military would mean is, there is no real crime when you kill civilians in war. There's just, sort of, mistakes in the moment, fog of

war. That's kind of disturbing given that the Defense Secretary is going to be responsible for overseeing all of the Armed Forces in a world that Trump is committing to unleashing U.S. power with no regard for international law or even some U.S. laws.