

—Slug:.....COMM-0852.opin.view.freedman
—Contributor.....Jim Freedman
—Contributor email.....jim.freedman@gmail.com
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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 When senior officials chase headlines at the expense of
2 judgment

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####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 Leadership demands patience and restraint when
4 information is incomplete — especially in matters involving the
5 use of lethal force by government agents

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 IN A HEALTHY democratic system, senior officials rise to
8 prominence because they combine expertise, judgment, and a
9 commitment to constitutional norms with the ability to
10 communicate effectively.

11 What we are seeing with Tulsi Gabbard, Kash Patel, and
12 Kristi Noem is something different: an apparent rush to the
13 spotlight that often outpaces substance, judgment, and
14 accountability. Instead of grounding their public roles in
15 institutional responsibility, these leaders regularly prioritize
16 media visibility — even when doing so raises legal, ethical, or
17 factual concerns.

18 What should worry all Americans is not merely that these
19 figures show up at photo ops, press briefings, and social media
20 moments. They also do so while undermining standards and
21 expectations associated with their offices.

22 That trend points to deeper deficits in character and
23 professional discipline, and it has real consequences for
24 governance and public trust.

25 * * *

26 KASH PATEL, the FBI director under Trump, has repeatedly
27 demonstrated behavior that prioritizes media impact over
28 diplomatic and legal discretion.

29 Take the situation last November involving the arrest of
30 alleged drug trafficker Ryan Wedding in Mexico. The operation —
31 which involved FBI and Mexican cooperation — was meant to be
32 kept confidential because U.S. law enforcement has no
33 jurisdiction to operate independently on Mexican soil.

34 Yet Patel publicly praised the operation almost
35 immediately on social media in a way that contradicted
36 diplomatic promises and forced Mexican leaders into a delicate
37 position. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum publicly
38 downplayed U.S. involvement, underscoring the tension Patel's
39 online announcement introduced into bilateral relations.

40 This wasn't merely about a misstep in messaging. It
41 reflects a broader pattern in which statements are released
42 without regard to facts, diplomatic protocol, or legal boundaries
43 — a leadership style that elevates "winning the narrative" over
44 preserving necessary confidentiality and respecting international
45 sovereignty.

46 In law enforcement and diplomacy, discretion is a core
47 competency. When that is replaced with self-promoting
48 pronouncements, the long-term costs accrue to institutional
49 credibility and international cooperation.

50 * * *

51 TULSI GABBARD'S tenure as director of national
52 intelligence has similarly raised questions about judgment and
53 suitability for the role — not because of partisan disagreement,
54 but because of her conduct relative to the core responsibilities of
55 intelligence leadership.

56 Gabbard's presence during January's FBI raid on the
57 Fulton County, Georgia election office to secure 2020 election
58 ballots is just one example that drew bipartisan concern.
59 Intelligence agencies and their leaders do not have a mandate to
60 direct, oversee, or participate in domestic local criminal
61 investigations — that authority lies with law enforcement and
62 prosecutorial agencies. Yet Gabbard was photographed at the
63 scene, raising questions about why she was there and what role
64 she believed she was playing.

65 The issue is not merely optics. It goes to institutional
66 boundaries. The DNI's remit is foreign intelligence: coordinating
67 among agencies to assess threats from abroad and to inform the
68 president and policymakers of these threats.

69 Domestic elections and criminal procedures are law
70 enforcement jurisdictions. For a DNI to insert herself into those
71 spaces without a clear legal basis suggests either a
72 misunderstanding of the office or a willingness to blur
73 constitutional boundaries in service of political ends.

74 Rank-and-file career professionals in the intelligence
75 community have voiced concern that such behavior undermines
76 their mission and dilutes public confidence at a time when
77 adversaries are actively exploiting information vulnerabilities.

78 * * *

79 KRISTI NOEM, as secretary of homeland security, has faced
80 intense scrutiny over her administration's handling of federal

81 immigration enforcement confrontations — most notably, the Jan.
82 24 shooting of Minneapolis resident Alex Pretti by federal
83 immigration agents during a protest.

84 In the aftermath of that incident, Noem offered public
85 statements about the events that were almost immediately
86 contradicted by bystander video, eyewitness accounts, and
87 official investigations.

88 She initially claimed that Pretti had brandished a
89 weapon, but multiple independent sources — including *The*
90 *Guardian*, Reuters, and BBC — noted that videos clearly showed
91 Pretti holding a phone when he was pinned to the ground and as
92 he was shot at close range.

93 The Department of Justice has now opened a civil rights
94 investigation into the shooting, prompted in part by
95 inconsistencies in the administration's early narrative.

96 The pattern here is telling: Noem took a confident,
97 public stance on an unfolding story before the facts were fully
98 established or verified, contributing to public confusion and
99 distrust.

100 Leadership demands patience and restraint when
101 information is incomplete — especially in matters involving the
102 use of lethal force by government agents.

103 * * *

104 ACROSS ALL THREE figures, we see a recurring set of
105 deficits. Their senior national security roles are defined by legal
106 mandates and professional norms. Ignoring those boundaries for
107 political exposure risks eroding the institutions themselves.

108 Leaders who prioritize immediate messaging over careful
109 fact gathering contribute to misinformation and polarization —
110 undermining the very public trust their offices depend on.

111 Effective officials need to be judged not on their social
112 media reach but on their ability to uphold standards, admit
113 errors, and correct course. Reticence and reflection are strengths
114 — not weaknesses.

115 Unfortunately, none of these standards seem to be used
116 even in passing by the current administration. Such behavior is
117 always reflective of leadership.

118 * * *

119 THE RISE OF Gabbard, Patel, and Noem into high-profile
120 posts reflects a broader shift in public affairs: Performance
121 politics, where news cycles outweigh nuance and visibility
122 overrides substance.

123 But governance isn't a popularity contest; it's a set of
124 responsibilities entrusted by the Constitution and the American
125 people. When senior officials chase headlines at the expense of
126 judgment, the costs are not abstract. They erode diplomatic
127 relationships, weaken institutional legitimacy, and escalate
128 volatile situations unnecessarily.

129 Americans deserve leaders whose visibility is rooted in
130 competence, not ambition; whose actions are grounded in fact,
131 not image; and whose commitment is to the Constitution,
132 institutions and the American people, not just to media moments.

133 That is what is truly lacking in the substance and
134 character of these officials — and what must be restored for the
135 health and sustainability of our democracy.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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136 **JAMES FREEDMAN** (jim.freedman@gmail.com) is a
137 leadership consultant working in the global health-care sector.

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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