

# Two Senate Democrats assure Haspel's confirmation as CIA director

By Patrick Martin  
15 May 2018

Democratic Senator Joe Donnelly announced Saturday that he would vote to confirm Gina Haspel as director of the CIA, virtually assuring that her nomination will be confirmed by the Senate when it is brought to a vote sometime in the next two weeks.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is to vote Wednesday at a closed-door session to approve Haspel's nomination and send it to the full Senate. Haspel was assured of a favorable vote from the committee, which has an 8-7 Republican majority, when Republican Susan Collins of Maine and Democrat Joe Manchin of West Virginia announced they would support her nomination.

Both Donnelly and Manchin are running for reelection this year in states that President Trump carried easily in 2016, and Donnelly, in particular, was being attacked for his supposed opposition to Haspel as late as Thursday, when Trump spoke at a campaign rally in Elkhart, Indiana and called for a vote for his Republican opponent, millionaire businessman Mike Braun.

Donnelly, who had been publicly "undecided" on Haspel, announced his support less than 48 hours after the Elkhart rally. Referring to Haspel's role in overseeing torture and then ordering the shredding of videotapes of torture sessions, Donnelly said, "I believe that she has learned from the past and that the CIA under her leadership can help our country confront serious international threats and challenges."

He also cited the support for Haspel by former CIA directors under the Obama administration, Leon Panetta and John Brennan, and General Michael Hayden, first appointed director of the National Security Agency by Democratic President Bill Clinton and later CIA director under George W. Bush.

While Manchin's vote made the outcome of the

Intelligence Committee vote a certainty, Donnelly's public support was more important, because it means that the two Republican senators opposed to the nomination, John McCain of Arizona and Rand Paul of Kentucky, are now offset by two Democrats.

With the Republican Party holding only a 51-49 margin in the Senate, cut to 50-49 in practice because of McCain's long absence due to terminal brain cancer, the shift of even one senator had the potential to torpedo the nomination.

While most Senate Democrats, including Intelligence Committee veterans like Dianne Feinstein, have announced their opposition to Haspel's nomination, their pretensions to oppose torture and demand a higher moral standard in the CIA leadership are belied by their own records.

Feinstein, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi were among the leading Democrats given regular briefings on the use of torture during the period between 2002 and 2007 when waterboarding, "walling" and other forms of physical abuse of prisoners were common practice in CIA secret prisons.

None of them objected to what was being done in the name of "national security," nor did any of them inform the public. When one CIA agent, John Kiriakou, did reveal the use of torture, the Democrats supported his prosecution and imprisonment under the Obama administration.

It remains the case that the only person in the CIA who has been tried and convicted in relation to the widespread use of torture is the agent who sought to blow the whistle on this barbarism. It was President Obama who decided that John Brennan, Jose Rodriguez, Gina Haspel and others involved in the torture program should not face prosecution. On the

contrary, Brennan was eventually picked by Obama to head the CIA and now Haspel is set to follow in his footsteps.

One Republican senator at last Wednesday's public hearing for Haspel before the Senate Intelligence Committee took the measure of this Democratic Party hypocrisy, asking Haspel sarcastically, "If Hillary Clinton had won and nominated you to be CIA director, how many votes do you think you would have gotten?" He was suggesting, and with good reason, that a Clinton nomination of Haspel would have produced a unanimous vote.

One remark by Haspel clearly demonstrates the real contempt of the career CIA operative to the moralizing over torture by Senator McCain and others. She declared that she would not go along with any effort to revive the waterboarding program, not because it would cause undue suffering to the victims of the torture, but because it might harm the torturers. "I would not put CIA officers at risk by asking them to undertake risky, controversial activity again," she said.

Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, Hillary Clinton's running mate in 2016, announced his opposition to Haspel, although he had previously voted for Mike Pompeo to head the CIA (with Haspel as his deputy director, giving her day-to-day control over the agency).

Kaine said he echoed "my colleague John McCain's disappointment in Gina Haspel's failure to condemn [torture] as immoral during her hearing," adding, "I believe the CIA needs leadership that not only honors the rule of law but meets a higher calling to the moral principles of our nation."

Similar language was employed in editorials in both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, in which the two leading pro-Democratic Party newspapers opposed Haspel's nomination because she failed to declare torture immoral during her testimony before the Intelligence Committee.

Both the Democratic senators and the liberal editorialists seek to present the CIA torture program as an aberration, a violation of the moral principles that supposedly guide American foreign policy. What a fraud!

Every agency of American foreign policy—the CIA, NSA, Pentagon and a dozen other intelligence agencies, as well as the State Department—are

collectively responsible for defending the interests of American imperialism by every possible means: subversion, assassination, illegal surveillance and war. As far as the US ruling elite is concerned, all methods are moral that serve its class ends and maintain its wealth and global power.

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