

Gabbard fires intelligence workers over explicit chats

The director of national intelligence accused employees of using government platforms to engage in ‘horrific behavior.’

Today at 4:50 p.m. EST

🔊 4 min ✨ ↗️ 📌 🗨️ 196

By [Warren P. Strobel](#) and [Ellen Nakashima](#)

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard says she has ordered the heads of U.S. spy agencies to fire more than 100 employees who are accused of using a government communications platform, which is maintained by the supersecret National Security Agency, to exchange highly explicit, sexually themed messages.

Revelations about the messages on Intelink, a secure system meant for collaboration and information-sharing among far-flung intelligence analysts, and Gabbard’s forceful response are the latest tempest to affect the sprawling U.S. intelligence apparatus.

Under President Donald Trump, who has shown disdain for intelligence agencies, the CIA and others have been ordered to dismantle diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, and have offered deferred resignations to many employees. Now they await the fate of probationary workers, in some cases highly skilled veteran employees who recently took on new jobs, targeted for dismissal under the administration’s sweeping effort to reduce the federal workforce.

The chats on Intelink, which appear to include topics such as gender-affirming surgery and unconventional sexual practices, were first reported this month by a journalist and conservative activist, Christopher Rufo, who wrote in the *City Journal* that he and a colleague had obtained logs of the chats. While Intelink is operated by the NSA, the chats apparently involved personnel from multiple U.S. intelligence agencies.

Rufo said he obtained the logs from one current and one former NSA official, and posted what he said were examples on the social media site X.

Gabbard, in a Fox News interview Tuesday evening, said the employees used government platforms to engage in “horrific behavior.”

“I put out a directive today that they all will be terminated, and their security clearances will be revoked,” said Gabbard, who was sworn in on Feb. 12 to be Trump’s top intelligence adviser.

The NSA, which conducts electronic eavesdropping and code-breaking, said on its X account Tuesday that “NSA is aware of posts that appear to show inappropriate discussions by IC personnel,” referring to the U.S. intelligence community. “Potential misuse of these platforms by a small group of individuals does not represent the community. Investigations to address this misuse of government systems are ongoing.”

One intelligence contractor said employees are shutting down other chatrooms dedicated to nonwork, but noncontroversial, topics out of fear of reprisal. “People like to chat while we’re working because we don’t have access to the outside world most of the time,” said the contractor, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. Intelligence personnel spend most of their day in highly secure vaults known as Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities.

Larry Pfeiffer, a former senior intelligence official, said, “There sadly have always been problems with Intelink and individual agency chatrooms,” including past complaints about bullying, discussion of politics and racist chats.

“When complaints were levied, investigations were conducted and usually administrative actions were taken if warranted,” said Pfeiffer, director of the Hayden Center at George Mason University. “I can’t ever remember anyone being fired.”

“Now that I think of it, I can’t remember the [director of national intelligence] ever directing the firing of anyone in one of the IC elements,” he added.

The CIA last week fired a small number of employees who had worked on DEI programs. Current and former officials said those employees were not hired specifically for DEI jobs but were on rotation from other assignments. Others remain on administrative leave, while 11 employees have sued in federal court, arguing their potential dismissal is unconstitutional.

The CIA, NSA and other spy agencies are waiting to learn how many of their employees will be allowed to resign under the deferred-resignation program offered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, in which employees can leave their jobs but continue to receive pay and benefits through Sept. 30. Some proposed resignations may not be accepted if they involve people with critical national security skills.

Aaron Schaffer contributed to this report.

What readers are saying

The comments on Tulsi Gabbard's decision to fire over 100 intelligence employees for misuse of a government communications platform are mixed. Some commenters support the firings, arguing that the behavior warranted termination and that the employees should have known better.... [Show more](#)

This summary is AI-generated. AI can make mistakes and this summary is not a replacement for reading the comments.