

2025

Gabbard reshapes her office



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## 1. SUMMARY

This report examines the **cuts that Tulsi Gabbard, Head of the Office of National Intelligence (Director of National Intelligence) decided to impose on her domains.**

It must be said that she was mandated to do so, as the ODNI was regarded as a bloated office after 20 years of its inception.

Of course, as every change, has been criticised and lauded and is regarded reluctantly by the affected.

Gabbard had already reduced it by 30% when she took office. Eight months later the ODNI is reduced again by 50%. It means **ODNI is 65% smaller than it was in January 2025.**

ODNI was created to **improve the coordination** among the Intelligence Community (IC) after the mishaps revealed by the 9<sup>th</sup> 11. The organisation was established as a compact entity, focused on **coordinating the Intelligence Community (IC)** and subsequently **maximising the quality of intelligence provided to the President.**

Like other organisations, **ODNI has expanded its activities and increased its involvement** within the Intelligence Community.

## 2. IMPACT ON ODNI

Multiple centres and functions within the ODNI have been reduced or eliminated, including the **National Counter-Proliferation and Biosecurity Centre**, the **External Research Council**, and the **Strategic Futures Group**. Notably, the **Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Centre** has been slashed due to perceived redundancy, while the **Foreign Malign Influence Centre** has been cut entirely. This is considered a major blow to the U.S. capacity to counter disinformation campaigns.

These cuts are happening while other agencies are also seeing reductions. The **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)** and the **State Department's Global Engagement Centre** have both seen cuts to their influence operations, and major social media companies like X (formerly Twitter), Meta, and YouTube have scaled back their content moderation efforts. This creates a strategic vacuum, leaving the U.S. more vulnerable to foreign influence.

**The combination of these factors weakens U.S. defences** against foreign influence campaigns, particularly from Russia, China, and Iran. With less federal coordination, the responsibility to counter these threats is fragmented or absent, allowing adversaries to exploit the reduced oversight. **These groups can then amplify disinformation campaigns** targeting democratic institutions, elections, and foreign policy, such as undermining support for Ukraine.

Adversaries are adapting their strategies:

- **Russia** has a long history of sowing division and chaos to weaken democratic cohesion.
- **China** is increasingly effective, mirroring Russian tactics to promote pro-China narratives and criticize U.S. failures.
- **Iran** uses less sophisticated but effective propaganda, often through memes and social media.

**The rise of AI tools like ChatGPT is further complicating the situation.** Adversaries can now overcome language barriers, create content at a massive scale, and build fake websites quickly. AI-driven targeting also allows for **highly tailored disinformation campaigns**, a tactic already used by China in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Ultimately, the ODNI's budget cuts, **combined with parallel rollbacks in other agencies** and weaker social media moderation, have left the **U.S. information environment more vulnerable**. This is happening at a time when adversaries are using AI to supercharge their disinformation operations, making the need for countermeasures more critical than ever.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The recent budget and staff cuts at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and other agencies have created a serious vulnerability for the United States. This situation is made worse by the fact that foreign adversaries are now using powerful AI tools to supercharge their disinformation campaigns.

The most immediate and severe threats fall into three main categories:

- **Russian Influence Operations:** Russia has a long-established "playbook" for spreading chaos and division. The cuts make it much easier for them to execute these plans.

- **AI-Enhanced Disinformation:** New AI tools, like those that create realistic fake text and images, allow adversaries to create and spread false information at a scale and speed never seen before.
- **Weakened Federal Coordination:** The dismantling of key government centres, like the **Foreign Malign Influence Centre**, means there's no longer a central hub to coordinate the U.S. response. This makes it harder for various agencies to work together, leaving major gaps in our defences.

Other significant risks include the reduced moderation policies of social media companies and the **increasingly effective disinformation campaigns from China and Iran**. While their operations may be different, they all exploit the same weaknesses.

The effects of these cuts are not immediate; **they will get worse over time**.

**Short-Term (0-12 months):** The U.S. will experience an immediate loss of skilled analysts and resources. This will create a policy vacuum and a slower response to foreign disinformation campaigns. Meanwhile, social media platforms are already rolling back their content moderation, creating an environment where adversarial influence can flourish.

**Medium-Term (1-3 years):** The biggest shift will be the widespread use of **AI-enhanced propaganda**. This technology will become more accessible and sophisticated, making it harder for the public to tell the difference between real and fake information. During this period, foreign adversaries will likely use these new tools to interfere in U.S. elections and exploit divisive topics to influence public opinion.

**Long-Term (3-5+ years):** Without key government centres to lead the fight, the U.S. will lose its structural ability to counter foreign influence. This will make it easier for countries like Russia and China to dominate online narratives and shape international perceptions. Over time, this could erode public trust in our democratic institutions and media, with long-lasting consequences for U.S. governance and global standing.

## 4. REMARKS

Regarding the ODNI it's remarkable that **both parties agreed on reducing its size**. The Democratic representatives don't regard Tusi Gabbard as the right individual to lead those changes, although they are necessary.

House Intelligence Committee Chair Rick Crawford (**R-Ark.**) commended Gabbard for her initiative aimed at addressing redundancies, inefficiencies, politicization, and perceived weaponization within the Intelligence Community.

Tom Cotton (**R-Ark.**), chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, also expressed approval for Gabbard's proposed reductions.

Senator Mark Warner (**D-Va.**), ranking member of the committee, concurred that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence requires thoughtful reform but voiced reservations about Gabbard leading these efforts.

It is likely that an optimisation of the ODNI was needed. Every head of department tries to expand his/her responsibilities. It is how leaders measure their importance within the organisations, in terms of people they command and the budget they manage.

The key issue is what lies beneath. Intelligence focuses on giving decision-makers relevant, accurate information—not influencing policy, but **ensuring they make informed choices**.

Intelligence reports often **do not correspond exactly with the political perspectives** that decision-makers may prefer. Members of the intelligence community create their reports based on information collected from a variety of sources. These reports are assembled using the available data, and **it is ultimately up to politicians to determine how they use this information in their decision-making process**.

The recent restructuring of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) **may be aimed at ensuring that intelligence briefings provided to the President are closely aligned with his policy objectives**. As a result, members of the Democratic Party have **expressed concerns** about the implications of these developments within the ODNI, as they are led by a person they distrust.

Ultimately, **it will also affect the allies at the other side of the Atlantic and elsewhere**. U.S. IC is at the core of many investigations and operations which take place in European soil, especially in some fields such as

counterintelligence but also terrorism or actions of rogue states, to name a few. In continental Europe, mistrust governs the relationship with the U.S., especially with Trump's administration. European agencies don't need to add any more salt in this dish and Trump continues to do so.