



Political and
Geostrategic
OBSERVATORY
of the United States

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AFTER PAM BONDI

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Lincoln Mitchell, based in New York City and San Francisco, is a political analyst and a writer who teaches at Columbia University. He has contributed to CNN, Opinion, NBC News, the San Francisco Examiner, and other outlets. Lincoln has authored nine books covering topics from democratic development to urban politics to baseball.

PRESENTATION OF THE OBSERVATORY

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John Mitchell (no relation) was Richard Nixon's Attorney General during his first term. Mitchell then served as Nixon's campaign manager in 1972, a role that, naturally, led him to become enmeshed in the Watergate Scandal. In 1975, a few months after Nixon resigned, Mitchell was found guilty of perjury, obstruction of justice and conspiracy. He served 19 months in a federal penitentiary.

When it comes to being a disgrace to the Department of Justice, Mitchell had nothing on Pam Bondi.

Bondi, who was fired on Thursday after serving as Trump's Attorney General for about 14 months, turned the Department of Justice into Trump's personal legal attack dog, humiliated herself during a congressional hearing and distinguished herself, like so many other members of Trump's cabinet, largely through her sycophantic loyalty to her cult leader. Pam Bondi's tenure as Attorney General may stand out now for its extraordinary corruption and for her consistent prioritization of the needs and whims of the President over anything approaching rule of law or justice, but we can be confident that within a few months her successor will bring the Department of Justice to newer lows.

According to most reports, Bondi was fired because she was not successful enough in prosecuting Trump's political foes-although she certainly gave it her best effort-and due to her handling of the Epstein files. Todd Blanche is now the interim Attorney General and will continue the destruction of the Justice Department. It is not clear when a new one will be appointed or who that person will be, but it is certain the new Attorney General will also be an extreme Trump loyalist and pick up essentially where Bondi left off.

The damage that has been done to the Department of Justice over the last fourteen months or so will not wind down with Bondi's departure. On the contrary, it will continue and likely get worse because the real problem was never Bondi but the regime and the ideology that she served. The political prosecutions, seeking to avenge every perceived slight against President Trump, endless cover-ups, complicity with and support for the brutality of ICE, allowing or encouraging the extraordinary corruption of the Trump administration and other efforts to facilitate the rise of MAGA fascism will continue to define the Department of Justice during the rest of Trump's time in office.

It is not particularly likely that free and fair elections leading to a victory for a Democrat in 2028, followed by an acceptance of that defeat by the MAGA forces and a smooth and peaceful transition will occur, but even if all that comes to pass, it will be difficult to rebuild the Department of Justice and restore it to a functioning government agency seeking to maintain and strengthen rule of law. Fourteen months of Bondi would not necessarily have

had such an extraordinary impact on the future of the Department of Justice, but another 34 months of MAGA leadership will harm that department irreparably.

Trump and Bondi have broken the Department of Justice, just as the MAGA regime has destroyed so much of the American government. The Department of Justice, like the FBI, the United States Agency for International Development, much of the federal judiciary, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, countless other federal agencies, and very likely, in the near future, elections, is another institution that has been turned into something radically different from its pre-MAGA iteration. Trump's destruction of the White House is a visual, and extremely distressing, example of this as well.

Most of these institutions were flawed before Trump came to power, but they are in exponentially worse shape now. Accordingly, the post-MAGA regime, whenever it comes to power and in whatever form it takes, will be faced with the choice of seeking to rebuild these institutions or having the courage and vision to recognize the extent of the damage and begin the more difficult, but ultimately more valuable, project of crafting new institutions.

The regime has already changed in the United-States. Some elements of the Democratic Party leadership and a handful of other pundits and establishment members of the political class may not want to reckon with that quite yet, but the rest of America, regardless of whether they support or oppose the MAGA regime, understands that.

There is no going back to the pre-MAGA Department of Justice. Similarly, the United-States relations with our NATO allies will never be the same after two terms of Trump putting the United-States on Moscow's side while threatening and belittling countries that had been among our strongest allies.

It should be clear by now that a strategy aimed at winning few elections and resurrecting a failed late 20th century liberal order is a foolish way to approach the extraordinary challenge now facing the future of American democracy. Overcoming the current crisis requires the ability to think boldly and imaginatively not just about how to bring an end to the MAGA regime, but also about how to build a more meaningful and durable democracy in its wake.

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