

Several senior FBI leaders told to leave agency or be fired, people familiar with matter say

The ultimatum was unusual for the FBI and suggested that President Donald Trump is purging leadership at an agency he has harshly criticized.

By Perry Stein and Jeremy Roebuck
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Multiple senior FBI officials have been ordered to leave the bureau within days or be fired, according to three people familiar with the matter, a sign that President Donald Trump's administration is purging leadership at an agency that has been a frequent target of his ire.

The ultimatums came as Trump's nominee to lead the bureau, Kash Patel, [vowed during his confirmation hearing](#) Thursday that he would not take action against perceived enemies should he be confirmed as FBI director.

"All FBI employees will be protected against political retribution," Patel told lawmakers.

While the Senate considers Patel's nomination, the massive law enforcement bureau is being run by an acting director and an acting deputy director, both veteran agents appointed by the White House.

It is highly unusual for senior staffing changes to be made under such circumstances at the FBI, a law enforcement agency that is supposed to be insulated from politics.

The leaders who received the message about resigning or retiring by Monday included several executive assistant directors — managers who oversee criminal and national security investigations — as well as the top agents in some of the bureau's field offices around the country, two people familiar with the situation

said. They and the other person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive personnel matters that have not been made public.

Some of the employees had been promoted under Christopher A. Wray, who [resigned as FBI director this month](#) in the face of repeated pledges from Trump that he would be fired. Some have not yet reached retirement age, meaning they could lose out on benefits to which they'd be entitled if they were not forced out.

An FBI spokesperson declined to comment on or confirm the personnel moves.

The bureau's leadership shake-up followed days of similar upheaval that has roiled the Justice Department. Interim leaders Trump installed there have moved swiftly to [oust or reassign veteran career lawyers](#) who they believe are insufficiently loyal to the president. They also [fired prosecutors](#) who worked on the Justice Department's two special counsel investigations of Trump.

Both Trump and Patel have derided the Justice Department and the FBI for years, saying they believe it has been "weaponized" against conservatives and has put political concerns ahead of the pursuit of justice.

At his confirmation hearing, Patel pledged that, if confirmed, he would restore public trust in the bureau. He promised "a de-weaponized, de-politicized system of law enforcement completely devoted to rigorous obedience to the Constitution and a singular standard of justice."

Democrats pressed him on his past vows to clean house among the bureau's top leadership, whom Patel has described as corrupt. They sought a commitment that he would not move to fire agents who'd worked on special counsel Jack Smith's investigations of Trump.

Patel did not provide one, but he insisted that he had no knowledge of any planned personnel moves involving those agents.

"Every FBI employee will be held to the absolute same standard, and no one will be terminated for case assignments," he said.

Some details about the ultimatum were first reported by [CNN](#).

During his questioning, Sen. Cory Booker (D-New Jersey) named five people he said he'd been told would soon be appointed to newly created political positions in the bureau. The FBI director traditionally has been the bureau's only political appointee — a setup instituted to help shield the agency's work against political influence.

One of the people Booker named was Tom Ferguson, a former FBI agent and aide to Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and one of the bureau's most vocal critics in recent years. Ferguson's LinkedIn profile says he recently left Jordan's office and is now working for the "Trump-Vance Administration, Senior Policy Advisor, Director's Advisory Team, Federal Bureau of Investigation Headquarters."

Patel acknowledged having worked with Ferguson and the four others in the past. But in response to Booker's questions on whether they'd soon have new roles at the FBI, Patel responded, "That's news to me, senator."

Since his inauguration 11 days ago, Trump has ordered drastic staffing changes across the government — [firing several inspectors general](#), offering [buyouts to civil servants](#) across several federal agencies and issuing an executive order [eliminating diversity programs](#).

In a sign of those sweeping changes — both in the administration and at the FBI — a mural at the bureau's training academy in Quantico, Virginia, that highlighted values such as "leadership," "diversity," "fairness" and "integrity" was painted over on Wednesday with gunmetal gray paint, according to a photo obtained by The Washington Post.

The FBI acknowledged in a statement Thursday that all visual and informational materials promoting diversity as a core value were being removed from its facilities.

"The FBI is fully complying with the executive order regarding DEI programs," the statement said. "While diversity is no longer an organizational core value for our employees, the FBI continues its work to serve and protect all Americans."