



MATT GAETZ, seen at a campaign rally last month in the Coachella Valley, is President-elect Donald Trump's pick for attorney general.

Cabinet picks seen as test for Senate

Selections by Trump for high-profile posts could serve as a gauge of lawmakers' loyalty.

BY NOAH BIERNAN AND KEVIN RECTOR

WASHINGTON — Since he began taking over the Republican Party nearly a decade ago, President-elect Donald Trump has demanded increasing levels of loyalty from lawmakers who serve in Congress.

With few exceptions, they have gone along, refusing to convict him in two impeachment trials and, even after he was convicted of 34 felonies, helping him win a second term in the White House as he plowed through a Republican primary and general election after falsely denying his 2020 loss.

Now, members of the Senate will face another test: whether to cede their long-held independent authority under the Constitution to review an increasingly controversial group of Cabinet picks.

Many senators in both parties have already expressed concerns about some of Trump's selections, but the president-elect has said he expects the body to test a controversial tactic that would let him bypass the confirmation process.

In the last several days, Trump has nominated Pete Hegseth, a Fox television host and veteran who has never held a leadership post, as his secretary of Defense; Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic House member accused of spreading Kremlin talking points, as his director of national intelligence; and Matt Gaetz, a Florida Republican who resigned his seat in the House on Wednesday while facing a congressional investigation into sex trafficking, as his attorney general.

Then on Thursday, Trump named Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a vaccine skeptic who has promoted false conspiracy theories concerning healthcare, to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

Trump is known for defying tradition and going against the grain, but the re-

[See Cabinet, A5]

ANALYSIS

Growing fears of a partisan military

Trump's Pentagon plans stoke worry he will use armed forces for personal goals.

BY LAURA KING

WASHINGTON — Critics of President-elect Donald Trump have long contended that he aspires to use the U.S. military — a non-partisan force, by rule and tradition — as an instrument of the MAGA agenda that propelled his latest election victory.

Now, in the eyes of some, those concerns are being supercharged.

The relationship of the executive branch and the military has always been a balancing act. The American president is, after all, the commander in chief of the world's most formidable fighting machine, and the figure ultimately responsible for the nation's safety and security.

But every senior military officer also takes an oath to defend the Constitution, and pledges to refuse illegal, unconstitutional or criminal directives. During his campaign, Trump flirted with those boundaries, repeatedly musing about using the military to go after domestic political opponents, or to aid in mass deportations of illegal immigrants.

Despite a pledge to be a president who presides over peace rather than war, Trump takes office against a backdrop of global upheaval: wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, the increasing closeness of Russia and North Korea, an ascendant China.

Trump rattled wide swaths of the U.S. defense establishment this week with a draft executive order, whose existence was reported Tuesday by the Wall Street Journal, to create a special panel — dubbed a "warrior board" — that would have the power to force out high-ranking generals and admirals.

"I think people should be

[See Analysis, A6]

Gaetz as attorney general? His confirmation is far from certain

President-elect Donald Trump's pick of Rep. Matt Gaetz for attorney general sent a clear signal through Washington that Trump intends for his Justice Department to take a sharp-elbowed, hyperpartisan approach to law and order — one that is both unquestioningly loyal to Trump and openly antagonistic toward his political opponents, legal and political experts said.

That approach, after all, has long been the norm for Gaetz, a hard-right member of the House since 2017 who is deeply unpopular among his Democratic and Republican colleagues, but has won praise from Trump by being unflinchingly defensive of the former

Many fellow Republicans say the MAGA loyalist is unfit, too extreme to lead the Justice Department

BY KEVIN RECTOR AND SEEMA MEHTA

and future president and openly derisive of the various state and federal criminal cases against him.

"If anything shows Trump will make no effort at unity or conciliation, it is this pick," said Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of UC Berkeley School of Law.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) said Wednesday that Gaetz had submitted his resignation from Congress "effective immediately" in the hope that Florida officials can schedule a special election to fill his House seat with another Republican by early January, so the party's thin majority in the chamber won't be diminished as

[See Gaetz, A5]



JIM McDONNELL, the 59th LAPD chief, said his top priority will be targeting violent and property crimes, with homelessness and transparency also important.

New LAPD chief addresses public confidence in agency

McDonnell says some residents hesitate to report crimes, feeling nothing will improve.

BY RICHARD WINTON

Crime is trending down in Los Angeles, with homicides alone on track to fall 15% compared with last year, but newly sworn-in LAPD Chief Jim McDonnell is concerned that statistics aren't telling the full story.

Speaking ahead of the

ceremony Thursday to mark his arrival as the city's 59th chief of police, McDonnell voiced concern about the perception of disorder — and the reality that crimes are going unreported because some believe nothing will be done to investigate.

McDonnell said he would rather see the city's crime numbers rise because it would give him a real picture of the problem and a better idea of what he must do to handle it.

"Our officers and professional staff are working very hard to continue to drive

those numbers down," he said. "But the perception of the public is based on a number of different things, and one of those things, I think, is that they would say reported crime is down because people don't have confidence that anything is going to be done."

That frankness is one factor that led Mayor Karen Bass to turn to McDonnell, 65, as the new chief.

The son of Irish immigrants who still sounds like he never left Boston despite spending more than 40 years

[See LAPD, A6]

Horror as a girl's killer gets parole

Relatives demand justice in the death of another child, which remains unsolved.

BY BRITNY MEJIA

Madie Moore went to prison in 1995, convicted of murdering her 8-year-old niece, LaToya. The little girl's battered body was found stuffed in a trash can, encased in concrete, in a shed behind the family home.

Moore had gone in at 45. At 74, in a wheelchair and blind in one eye, she was trying to get out.

As she spoke to the California parole board from a prison in Chowchilla in May, Moore recited Psalm 23 from memory: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Then the woman who hoped Moore wouldn't go free addressed the board. Her daughter.

"Why," Candice Moore asked, "are we not talking about Kenny?"

Kenny

Kenneth Eugene Grid-

[See Moore, A10]

GOP maintains control of House

Wins in California and Arizona clinch Republicans' hold on the majority. **NATION, A4**

LAUSD details cellphone ban

Students will need to shut off, store devices starting in February. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

JPL lays off 325, about 5% of staff

Major budget reductions at the lab lead to a third round of cuts this year. **BUSINESS, A7**

Weather

Turning cooler. L.A. Basin: 67/48. **B6**

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