**Who is Avril Danica Haynes?**



**Avril Haynes**

**She is the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) appointed by President Biden - the first female DNI**

The public usually knows very little about our most senior intelligence officials, especially when they are female. On January 21, 2021 Ms Gina Haspel was appointed as Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). Who knew anything about her before she became the DCI?

We were recently provided some details about our current DNI. Our Source is Samantha Vinogard, who served on President Obama's National Security Council, 2009-2013, and in the Treasury Department for President George W. Bush. Vinogard worked daily with Haynes in the White House during the Obama administration so has directly observed the competency of our DNI in action. Vinogard who worked close to Haynes for several years in the White House described her colleague, who also has both a physicist and law degrees, as extremely intelligent and serving in national security at the highest level. Haynes was always prepared and her positions were never clouded in politics.

These characteristics are precisely needed for any intelligence officer.

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**SOURCE:**

[***https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/24/opinions/avril-haines-america-world-safer-vinograd/index.html***](https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/24/opinions/avril-haines-america-world-safer-vinograd/index.html)

**Avril Haines' appointment will make America -- and the world -- safer**

**Opinion by Samantha Vinograd, Tue, November 24, 2020**

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*(CNN)*For almost four years, President Donald Trump has trashed the American intelligence community. He's [appointed political acolytes](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-job-is-essential-to-us-security-trumps-nominee-is-not-qualified/2020/03/02/a19c43d4-5ca7-11ea-9055-5fa12981bbbf_story.html) to top national security jobs, [pilloried expert analysis](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/01/31/when-trump-savages-his-intelligence-chiefs-deep-state-has-reason-worry/) and [polluted intelligence](https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/01/politics/trump-intel-briefings-russia/index.html) with his personal politics. But with President-elect Joe Biden's [nomination of Avril Haines](https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/23/politics/joe-biden-foreign-policy-national-security-cabinet/index.html) as Director of National Intelligence, we will soon have a reliable expert leading our intelligence community.

**Avril Haines**

**Samantha Vinograd:**

I know Haines. When I was a staffer at the White House National Security Council during President Barack Obama's administration, she and I were often two of the last people left on the White House compound each night. As the National Security Council's top lawyer, Haines worked seemingly nonstop to advise the National Security Adviser and the President on legal considerations associated with national security decisions. Working beside her for several years, I saw the intellect, focus, leadership and dedication she brought to national security policymaking. Her [incredible background](https://www.newsweek.com/2013/06/26/avril-haines-least-likely-spy-237616.html) -- including her love of science, flying planes and brown belt in judo -- may read like a movie script, but it's real.

Later, when she served as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Counsel to the President for National Security Adviser and then as the Deputy Director of the CIA, so many of her former colleagues, including many of us women, knew the skillset she brought to bear. After serving as the first female Deputy Director of the CIA, she is the first ever female nominee for the DNI job. But it's not only her gender that makes her nomination remarkable. It's what, if confirmed, she could do in her new role.

Under Trump, the DNI has become grossly politicized. Richard Grenell, the former ambassador to Germany who served a stint as acting director at DNI this year, was a right-wing political force before, [during](https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/26/politics/grenell-director-of-national-intelligence-final-days/index.html) and [after his time](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-nevada-trump-idUSKBN27L1TR). Current DNI John Ratcliffe [has painted](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/10/12/trumps-intel-chief-is-undermining-us-intelligence-he-should-resign/) himself into a similar politicized box -- [seemingly serving](https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/30/politics/ratcliffe-unverified-intelligence-concerns/index.html) more as a political surrogate for the Trump administration than the leader of an integrated and apolitical intelligence community. Their actions are a disgrace to the role of the DNI, which [rests](https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/mission-vision) on providing apolitical, objective and unbiased intelligence to [their customers](https://www.dni.gov/index.php/what-we-do/what-is-intelligence).

[[](https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/23/opinions/biden-blinken-us-diplomacy-security-andelman/index.html)](https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/23/opinions/biden-blinken-us-diplomacy-security-andelman/index.html)

[**What Biden's new security and diplomatic team can do for America**](https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/23/opinions/biden-blinken-us-diplomacy-security-andelman/index.html)

Haines could not be any more different. Among her other accomplishments, she's a skilled lawyer, a [physicist](https://twitter.com/AmbassadorRice/status/1331089941879615489) and [has been described](https://www.newsweek.com/2013/06/26/avril-haines-least-likely-spy-237616.html) by a colleague as someone who "may quite literally be the nicest person any of us have ever met." I can confirm that kindness and her overwhelming drive to always get the best information.

In the time that I worked with her, I never once heard her mention politics or party or anything of that sort. Instead she showed up prepared, with copious notes, at each and every meeting. She wanted to help inform policy decisions, not play politics or try to get herself into the public spotlight. I never once heard her tell a policymaker what she thought they wanted to hear -- further confirming what she said in her remarks on Tuesday, [that she](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/biden-trump-us-election-news-11-24-20/index.html) "never shied away from speaking truth to power." That's why the intelligence community needs her more than ever.

Haines also excels at multitasking, and that's going to be a good thing as soon as she is (hopefully) confirmed by the Senate. Not only will she have to do her statutorily outlined responsibilities, she will concurrently have to restore the soul of our intelligence community while dealing with a highly complex threat landscape. From Covid-19 related intelligence issues to the growing threat of misinformation to shifting geopolitics, there will be no shortage of intelligence issues to analyze and collect on.

[**Can Joe Biden clean up the mess?**](https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/07/opinions/joe-biden-election-2020-clean-up-bergen/index.html)

Overall, Biden's cabinet nominations thus far show how serious he is about restoring the national security apparatus to its most effective form, free of politics and focused on doing what's in the best interests of our national security. Haines will be primary part of that process -- and not only because of her [longstanding relationships](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/avril-haines-to-head-intelligence-community/2020/11/23/e9dce3f4-2daf-11eb-96c2-aac3f162215d_story.html) with key intelligence customers in the new administration, including Biden, Secretary of State nominee Antony Blinken, National Security Adviser nominee Jake Sullivan and others.

The intelligence community is vast -- [comprised](https://www.dni.gov/index.php/what-we-do/members-of-the-ic) of 17 organizations -- and the mission of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) [is to](https://www.odni.gov/index.php/component/content/article?id=341&Itemid=583) "lead and support IC integration; delivering insights, driving capabilities, and investing in the future." That's why the DNI is, [statutorily](https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/RelatedContent_documents/Intelligence_Reform_Act.pdf), supposed to have extensive national security experience -- something Ratcliffe sorely lacks. Haines, on the other hand, has [extensive national security experience](https://www.newsweek.com/2013/06/26/avril-haines-least-likely-spy-237616.html) in the executive branch, having served in the White House, at the CIA and at the State Department earlier on in her career. As such, she understands the role of intelligence in policy making and has deep expertise when it comes to working with members of the intelligence community.

Plus, in the wake of Trump's undermining of the intelligence community, Haines' track record of apolitical public service will help her restore the soul of the intelligence community which, at its core, is supposed to [speak truth](https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/mission-vision) to power. Rebuilding morale and recruiting and retaining top talent will undoubtedly be a focus for our new DNI as Trump [pushed out career officials](https://www.politico.com/story/2019/08/08/sue-gordon-national-intelligence-trump-1453555) and [insulted intelligence analysis](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/30/us/politics/trump-intelligence.html). Based on her reputation, leadership capabilities, intelligence and character, Haines is up to that task.

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The ODNI's relationship with Congress has also been under serious strain these last four years. With intelligence officials canceling [election security briefings](https://www.axios.com/odni-cancels-in-person-election-security-briefings-congress-00b1ac4b-cf41-4f34-9457-8e58363d4237.html) and seemingly censoring information that the Trump found politically inconvenient, Haines will have to repair the relationship with members of Congress, regardless of their political affiliation. Haines [worked on the Hill](https://www.newsweek.com/2013/06/26/avril-haines-least-likely-spy-237616.html) as deputy chief counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when Biden was chairman, and she has a solid reputation with Congress from her years of government service.

Haines is also a respected figure on the world stage. Trump's politically motivated [selective declassifications](https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/06/politics/brennan-ratcliffe-declassifying-intelligence-clinton-russia/index.html) of intelligence and [cavalier attitude](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-revealed-highly-classified-information-to-russian-foreign-minister-and-ambassador/2017/05/15/530c172a-3960-11e7-9e48-c4f199710b69_story.html) with classified information had to have given our intelligence partners pause as their own sources and methods could be compromised. Our allies won't have to be concerned about the DNI aiding and abetting the President's political errands because that's not how Biden nor how Haines operate. And that is good news, not just for national security, but for the world at large.