



By: TA | AP Insight

Will a new US attorney general meet Trump's demands of loyalty and desire for retribution?



Pam Bondi is **out of her job** after failing to deliver criminal cases against President Donald Trump's political enemies.

But there's no guarantee her successor will have any better success at placating the president.

Over the last year, Bondi's Justice Department has encountered resistance from judges, grand jurors and its own workforce in trying to establish criminal conduct by one Trump foe after another.

A new attorney general will confront not only Trump's demand for political prosecutions — a constant dating back to his first term in the White House — but also the same skeptical court system, and factual and legal hurdles, that have impeded efforts to deliver the sought-after results.

“At the end of the day, it’s not like there were some magic steps that Pam Bondi could have taken to make bad cases look good to grand juries or judges,” Peter Keisler, a former acting attorney general in President George W. Bush's administration, said in an email. “The problem is that the president is demanding that prosecutions be brought when there’s no evidence and no valid legal theory. A new Attorney General won’t change that.”

Bondi was just the latest Trump attorney general pressed to meet the president's demands of loyalty and desire for retribution.

Trump in his first term called for **Jeff Sessions** to investigate Democrat Hillary Clinton and ultimately pushed him out over his recusal from the Russia election interference investigation.

He berated another attorney general, **William Barr**, over Barr's refusal to back his false claims of election fraud in the 2020 contest. Barr resigned soon after.

The win was short-lived

Bondi arrived at the Justice Department 14

months ago seemingly determined to remain in Trump's good graces unlike her predecessors had, heaping praise on him, offering unflinching support and embarking on investigations into Democrats and the president's adversaries — even amid concerns from career prosecutors about the sufficiency of evidence.

Days after Trump implored **Bondi** via social media last September to prosecute former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James, the Justice Department did just that, securing indictments in Virginia.

But the win was short-lived: a judge weeks later **dismissed the cases** after finding that the prosecutor who filed them, Lindsey Halligan, was illegally appointed.

Grand juries have since refused to bring new mortgage fraud charges against James and the Comey case is mired in a thorny evidentiary dispute and statute of limitations concerns.

Both Comey and James have vigorously denied any wrongdoing and called the cases against them politically motivated.

One high-profile Trump critic who could face trial in the years ahead is his former national security adviser, John Bolton

Since then, a **federal grand jury** in Washington refused to return an indictment against Democratic lawmakers in connection with a video in which they urged U.S. military members to resist “illegal orders.”

And a federal judge has quashed Justice Department subpoenas issued to the Federal Reserve as part of an investigation into testimony last June by Chair Jerome Powell about a \$2.5 billion building renovation.

The judge, James Boasberg, said that the government has “produced essentially zero evidence to suspect Chair Powell of a crime” and called its justifications for the subpoenas a “thin and unsubstantiated” pretext to force

Powell to cut interest rates.

A prosecutor on the case subsequently conceded in court that the investigation had not found evidence of a crime.

An additional investigation into a Trump enemy remains underway with prosecutors in Florida scrutinizing former CIA Director **John Brennan** over testimony to Congress related to Russian interference in the 2016 election.

That investigation has been open for months, but has not produced charges and it's not clear that it will. Brennan's lawyers have similarly called the investigation baseless.

One high-profile Trump critic who could face trial in the years ahead is his former national security adviser, John Bolton, though the investigation that produced that indictment and examined Bolton's handling of classified documents began before Trump took office.

Trump's retribution campaign

For now, the Justice Department will be led by Deputy Attorney General **Todd Blanche**, who has a longstanding relationship with Trump after having served as one of his personal lawyers.

Several people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Thursday that Lee Zeldin, a Trump loyalist and head of the Environmental Protection Agency, has been privately mentioned by Trump as a possible pick.

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Whoever holds the job in the long term will almost certainly be expected to carry out Trump's retribution campaign with more success, said Jimmy Gurule, a former Justice Department official and law professor at Notre Dame.

Blanche appeared to acknowledge as much in a Thursday evening interview with Fox News, saying "I think the president is frustrated, everybody is frustrated" and that "what we saw happen for the past four years is unforgivable and can never happen again."

"If she was fired because Trump did not think that she was moving quickly enough in bringing criminal cases against his political enemies, then you would expect that the person that would replace her would probably agree to escalate those efforts," Gurule said.

