

Kash Patel knowingly broke law when firing top officials, lawsuit alleges

A former acting FBI director and two other top bureau leaders say they were targets of political retribution.



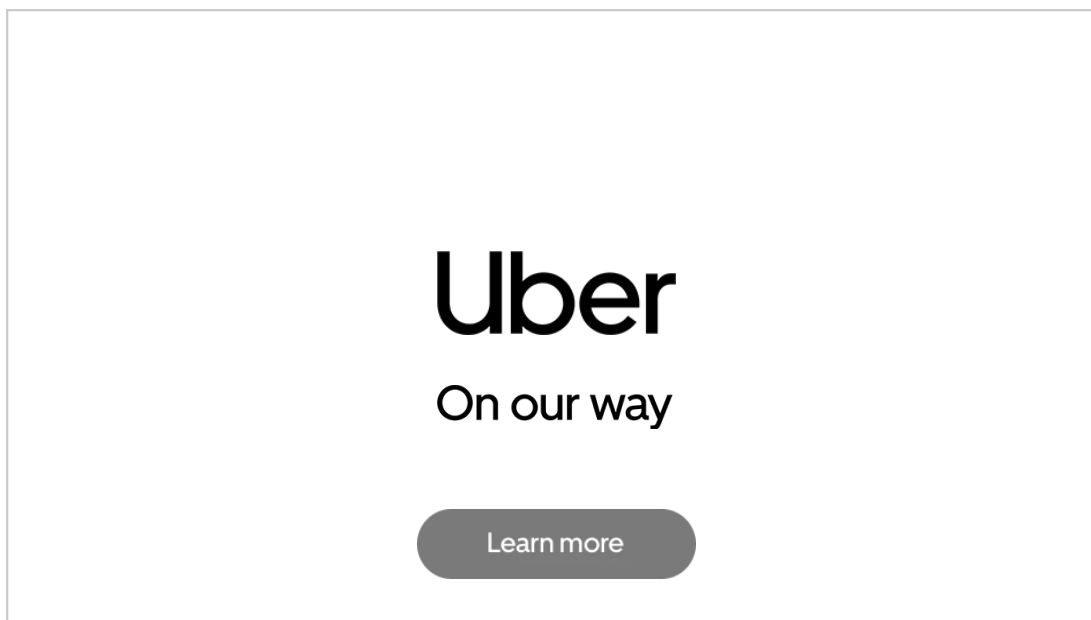
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By Ken Dilanian and Carol Leonnig

FBI Director Kash Patel knowingly broke the law when he fired top officials at the behest of the White House and under pressure from Trump, a lawsuit filed Wednesday against Patel and the Trump administration alleges.

The 68-page complaint was filed by former acting FBI Director and two other FBI leaders who claim they were the targets of “politically motivated” firings “to vindicate their constitutional and legal rights.”

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The suit cites a series of alleged conversations involving Patel and other senior Trump advisers that, if true, show an FBI leadership consumed by the whims of a Trump White House that targeted employees solely for political reasons.

The insider accounts also tend to corroborate [earlier reporting](#) about claims that Patel misled the Senate in his January confirmation hearing when he insisted he would never fire or demote bureau staff for political reasons.

“Patel stated that all FBI employees who they identified who had worked on the cases against President Trump would be removed from their jobs, regardless of their retirement eligibility status,” the lawsuit says in describing Driscoll’s account of a conversation with the FBI director. “He then stated that Driscoll needed to understand that ‘the FBI tried to put the president in jail and he hasn’t forgotten it.’”

The lawsuit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, says Patel acknowledged that firing FBI agents without cause would violate internal FBI rules and federal law – and quotes him as saying he knew he could be sued.

Patel “stated that his own job depended on the removal of th
against the President, regardless of whether the agents chose
lawsuit says.

Driscoll recounts in the suit being subjected to a political loy:
considered to be acting deputy director of the FBI and refusi
whom he had voted for in the 2024 presidential election. It a

Director Dan Bongino acknowledging they were making key decisions in response to political pressure from the White House and to criticism from Trump MAGA supporters on social media.

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The former head of the FBI's pivotal Washington field office recounted investigative briefings with Bongino in which the deputy was focused on what he could publicly say about certain high profile cases to allay Trump supporters' criticisms of the FBI.

"The emphasis Bongino placed on creating content for his social media pages could risk outweighing more deliberate analyses of investigations" he was most concerned with, the lawsuit says.

The FBI declined MSNBC's request for comment on the alleg:
Neither the White House nor the Justice Department has resp

Driscoll's attorney, Chris Mattei, said in a statement that if Pa
former acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove and "the V
who have dedicated their lives and careers to the Constitutio
down in the face of DOJ being used as a lawless tool for politi
thing coming."

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Driscoll, who was fired in August after refusing to terminate a decorated agent and military veteran who had been targeted by pro-Trump social media influencers, brought the suit along with two other veteran FBI officials: [Steve Jensen, a former D.C. field officer leader](#) who was fired after he refused to sack another well-regarded agent and military veteran who had worked on two special counsel investigations into Trump; and [Spencer Evans](#), who was fired while leading the Las Vegas field office and had been the subject of false allegations over how he handled Covid vaccinations.

All three men allege they were illegally fired for political reasons after years of exemplary service.

All three men allege they were illegally fired for political reasons after years of exemplary service and were not given a chance to retire early and claim a portion of their pension.

Among the suit's more noteworthy claims:

- In a “loyalty test” interview, White House official [Paul Ingrassia](#) called Driscoll as he was about to become acting director of the FBI in mid-January and asked him, among other things, whom he had voted for in recent elections and if he voted for any Democrats and if he supported holding “accountable” agents who searched Trump’s residence at Mar-a-Lago for classified records. Trump later nominated Ingrassia to run the federal office responsible for protecting federal employees from political interference and mistreatment.
- Driscoll refused to answer the questions as politically inappropriate for a career agent and acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove intervened to vouch for Driscoll.
- Several former FBI agents were installed as the Director’s Advisory Team upon Trump’s inauguration. They called themselves “politicals” and explained that their mission was to help incoming director Patel make structural and leadership changes. Driscoll told Driscoll he had a list of FBI employees they had targeted and that he would not terminate anyone based on that list and that he would honor his request.
- Bove is described as telling Driscoll and his acting deputy, [Steven](#), at the inauguration that White House deputy chief of staff Steven Bove described “symmetrical” firings at FBI similar to those then happening where a [purge of senior officials was underway](#). Bove presented a list of agents in charge of

field offices he was considering for termination as well as several executive assistant directors at headquarters, who represented hundreds of years of experience in shielding America from terror attacks, criminal gangs and financial frauds.

- Bove also demanded squad rosters for FBI field offices in Las Vegas, Miami and Washington, D.C., and later for a core team that worked on Jan. 6 riot investigations. Driscoll understood Bove was considering these lists of agents for broad terminations and stressed that the mass firing of Jan. 6 investigators would cause grave harm to national security and that he would not tolerate such firings.
 - Bove was described as confiding to FBI staff he was angry about bureau employees creating a parody video that portrayed Driscoll as Batman and Bove as the movie villain “Bane.”
 - Patel and Bongino were caught off guard by the negative reaction of Trump’s political base to them choosing Jensen to lead the Washington field office. Jensen previously led the FBI’s domestic terrorism operations section and his promotion sparked a social media firestorm against Patel and Bongino due to his key role in the Jan. 6 investigation. Both Patel and Bongino complained they had to use up significant “political capital” to keep Jensen in the job.
 - Bongino was intensely focused on getting briefed on three ongoing FBI investigations: the search for a pipe bomber who planted explosives near the Republican and Democratic national committee headquarters the morning of Jan. 6; the search for the source of the leak of a Supreme Court draft decision in the Dobbs abortion case; and the discovery of cocaine at the White House during the Biden administration.
 - Jensen became “alarmed” that Bongino appeared to be almost exclusively focused amid these briefings on the kind of social media content he could post online to change his followers’ perceptions of the FBI – more so than on analyzing the progress of the investigations themselves.
 - Bongino called on Jensen to fire WFO agent Walt Giardina – a well-regarded agent who had worked several high profile public corruption cases into members of both parties and also on special counsel probes under Robert Mueller and Jack Smith suspected crimes by Trump. Because of his role, Giardina left the White House. Patel planned to release a report to Congress that a by publishing his name and redacting the names of other a redact the agent’s name, whose wife was then days away from
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- Patel and Bongino are described as seeking to demote or to social media posts erroneously identified the FBI pilot and agent on social media as someone

who signed an FBI affidavit to search Mar-a-Lago. He didn't sign the affidavit and did not participate in the Mar-a-Lago search.

- Patel and Bongino would later explain they pressured by the White House to fire Meyer and insisted he could no longer fly the director's plane. Patel said he knew it was likely illegal but he had no choice.
- Patel admitted to FBI staff that he recognized that firing some agents would likely be illegal and would not stand up in court. "Patel acknowledged that this would be in direct violation of internal FBI processes meant to adjudicate adverse actions and prevent retaliation based on case assignments. He again commented that he knew the nature of the summary firings were likely illegal and that he could be sued and later deposed," the suit stated.
- Some far-right former agents who had been fired from the FBI in the Biden administration – [who dubbed themselves "the suspendables"](#) – claimed to be communicating privately with Patel. Their complaints about Jensen, Evans, Meyer and Giardina – some aired on social media – were taken seriously by the White House and FBI leaders, even when they weren't factual. Patel recently announced a settlement with some of these former agents, restoring their jobs and awarding them back pay.

The workplace advocacy organization for current and former FBI agents issued a statement in response to the filing, noting that most of the bureau's agents don't have the same employment protections as other federal employees and calling on Congress to take action. "The unlawfully fired employees who filed today's lawsuit are using the limited measures they do have to fight for their Constitutional right to fair treatment and due process," the FBI Agents Association said.



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