



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem testifies during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Tuesday. Nathan Posner/Anadolu via Getty Images

### Trump Administration

## Kristi Noem Misled Congress About Top Aide's Role in DHS Contracts

Testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Noem denied that Corey Lewandowski had any role in approving contracts. But internal DHS records and interviews with current and former agency staffers contradict her testimony.

by **Joshua Kaplan** and **Justin Elliott**

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Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem misled Congress on Tuesday about the powers of her controversial top aide Corey Lewandowski, according to records reviewed by ProPublica and four current and former DHS officials.

Lewandowski has an unusual role at DHS, where he is not a paid government employee but is nonetheless acting as a top official, helping Noem run the sprawling agency. For months, members of Congress have asked the agency to detail the scope of his work and authority.

At a [Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Tuesday](#), Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., asked Noem whether Lewandowski has “a role in approving contracts” at DHS. Noem responded with a flat denial: “No.”

But internal DHS records reviewed by ProPublica contradict Noem’s Senate testimony. The records show Lewandowski personally approved a multimillion-dollar equipment contract at the agency last summer.

That was not a one-off. Lewandowski has approved numerous contracts at DHS and often needs to sign off on large ones before any money goes out the door, the current and former department employees said.

Last year, Noem [imposed a new policy](#) that consolidated her and her top aides’ power over all spending at DHS, requiring that she personally review and approve all contracts above \$100,000. Before the contracts reach Noem, they must be approved by a series of political appointees, who each sign or initial a checklist sometimes referred to internally as a routing sheet. Typically, the last name on the checklist before Noem’s is Lewandowski’s, the DHS officials said.

### **Noem Denies That Lewandowski Has “a Role in Approving Contracts” at DHS**

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Via C-Span

Under [federal law](#), it is a crime to “knowingly and willfully” make a false statement to Congress. But in practice, it is rarely prosecuted.

In a statement, a DHS spokesperson reiterated Noem’s claim. “Mr. Lewandowski does NOT play a role in approving contracts,” the spokesperson said. “Mr. Lewandowski does not receive a salary or any federal government benefits. He volunteers his time to serve the American people.” Lewandowski did not respond to a request for comment.

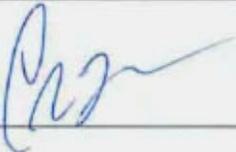
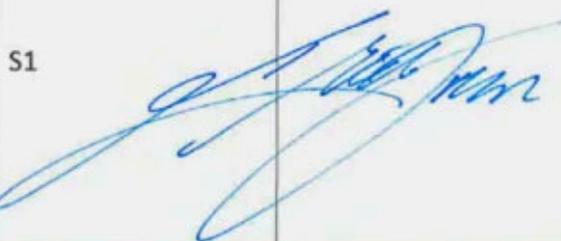
Several [news outlets, including Politico](#), have previously reported on aspects of Lewandowski’s involvement in contracting at DHS.

There have been [widespread reports](#) of delays caused by the new contract approval process at the agency, which has responsibilities spanning from immigration enforcement to disaster relief to airport security. [DHS has asserted](#) that the review process saved taxpayers billions of dollars.

A similar sign-off process exists for other policy decisions at DHS. One of the checklists, about rolling back protections for Haitians in the U.S., emerged in litigation last year. It featured the signatures of several top DHS advisers. Under them was Lewandowski’s signature, and then Noem’s.

<b>DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY</b>		<b>STORM #</b>	<b>SENIOR LIAISON OFFICER:</b>
<b>RECORD OF CLEARANCE AND APPROVAL</b>		<b>25-07536</b>	<b>LAWRENCE INDYK</b>
<b>LEAD COMPONENT: OGC</b>	<b>DATE SUBMITTED TO FO: 02/14/25</b>	<b>DRAFT RECEIVED DATE: 02/14/25</b>	

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**ATTACHMENT A: DECISION DOCUMENT**  
**ATTACHMENT B: DRAFT FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE**  
**ATTACHMENT C: JULY 2024 PACKAGE - TPS LEGAL AUTHORITY**  
**ATTACHMENT D: JULY 2024 PACKAGE - USCIS COUNTRY CONDITIONS**  
**ATTACHMENT E: JULY 2024 PACKAGE - DEPARTMENT OF STATE RECOMMENDATION & COUNTRY CONDITIONS**  
**ATTACHMENT F: JULY 2024 PACKAGE - SIGNED DECISION DOCUMENT**  
**ATTACHMENT G: JULY 2024 PACKAGE- PUBLISHED FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE**

OFFICE	SIGNATURE	DATE	COMMENTS
SENIOR COUNSELOR (ROB LAW)	RL	2/14	CLEAR
SENIOR ADVISOR (JIMMY PERCIVAL)	JP	2/14	CLEAR
SENIOR ADVISOR (JOSEPH N. MAZZARA)	JM	2/15	CLEAR
JOSEPH GUY SENIOR ADVISOR	JG	2/15	CLEAR
SENIOR ADVISOR (TROUP HEMENWAY)	TH	2/15	CLEAR
SENIOR ADVISOR (TROY EDGAR)	TE	2/15	CLEAR
CHIEF ADVISOR COREY LEWANDOWSKI		2.7	(ALSO PROVIDED VIA EMAIL)
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<b>AFTER REVIEW RETURN TO:</b> [REDACTED], EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT	<b>TELEPHONE</b> [REDACTED]
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APPROVED FOR AUTOPEN: \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO DATE AND INITIALS FOR AUTOPEN APPROVAL: \_\_\_\_\_

An internal Department of Homeland Security policy document from February 2025 shows agency officials, including top aide Corey Lewandowski and Noem — referred to as “S1,” signing off on a policy change. U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. Scrim added by ProPublica for clarity.

Lewandowski is what’s known as a “special government employee,” a designation historically used to let experts serve in government for limited periods without having to give up their outside jobs. (At the beginning of the Trump administration, [Elon Musk was one](#), too.) Special government employees have to abide by only some of the same ethics rules as normal officials and are permitted to have sources of outside income.

Lewandowski has declined to disclose whether he is being paid by any outside companies and, if so, who.

*Do you have any information we should know about Kristi Noem, Corey Lewandowski or DHS contracts? Josh Kaplan can be reached by email at [joshua.kaplan@propublica.org](mailto:joshua.kaplan@propublica.org) and by Signal or WhatsApp at 734-834-9383. Justin Elliott can be reached by email at [justin@propublica.org](mailto:justin@propublica.org) and by Signal or WhatsApp at 774-826-6240.*

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I’m a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter at ProPublica, where I write about the government, money and power.

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I am a ProPublica reporter covering business and politics.

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