

War crimes prosecutor named as special counsel for Trump probes

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U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland walks out to announce his appointment of Jack Smith as a special counsel for the investigations into the actions of former president Donald Trump, in the briefing room of the Justice Department in Washington, DC (Reuters photo)

Washington, November 20 (RHC)-- The U.S. Justice Department has named Jack Smith, a war crimes prosecutor, to serve as special counsel to oversee the department's investigations related to former

president Donald Trump including his handling of sensitive documents and alleged efforts to overturn the disputed 2020 election.

The announcement was made just days after Trump declared that he will seek the Republican presidential nomination in 2024. "In order to make America great and glorious again, I am tonight announcing my candidacy for president of the United States," Trump told a crowd gathered at Mar-a-Lago, his waterfront estate in Florida on Tuesday night.

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said Trump's candidacy, as well as incumbent President Joe Biden's stated intention to run for the White House again, made the appointment of a special counsel necessary, according to Reuters.

Special counsels are sometimes appointed to probe politically sensitive cases and they are supposed to do their jobs with a degree of independence from the Justice Department, the news agency reported.

"The pace of the investigations will not pause or flag under my watch," Smith said in a statement. "I will exercise independent judgment and will move the investigations forward expeditiously and thoroughly to whatever outcome the facts and the law dictate."

Garland said Smith will supervise the investigation into Trump's handling of government documents after leaving the White House last year and look into the Republican president's attempts to overturn the outcome of the dubious 2020 presidential election. "Appointing a special counsel at this time is the right thing to do," Garland told reporters.

The FBI reportedly found material on nuclear capabilities of an unnamed foreign country among the documents it seized from former U.S. President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago retreat in Florida. Newly surfaced findings have indicated that some of the documents seized during the FBI search in Trump's Mar-a-Lago home were so sensitive that many top officials were not aware of their contents.

The Justice Department is investigating whether Trump broke the law by taking government records, including about 100 classified documents, to his Florida estate after leaving office in January 2021.

The department is also looking into whether Trump or his team obstructed justice when the FBI sent agents to search his home, and has warned that more classified documents might still be missing. The sensitivity of the top secret documents, which could endanger US intelligence liaisons, will count as an aggravating factor when prosecutors decide whether or not to file charges in relation to the case.

Meanwhile, Trump claimed that he won the 2020 presidential election and that there was "massive" voter fraud. Trump and his allies had raised concerns that widespread fraud marred the election and that it was rigged by the Washington establishment in favor of Biden, who was certified as the winner in Congress on January 6, 2021.

Trump said that the January 6, 2021 protest represented "the greatest movement in the history of our Country," when thousands of people marched against the certification of the 2020 election which placed Biden in office as the current U.S. president.

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