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Interior Secretary to Leave His Post

Ryan Zinke has been the subject of more than a dozen government investigations



Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke will leave his position by the end of the year, President Trump said. PHOTO: CLIFF OWEN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By [Vivian Salama](#) 270 COMMENTS

Updated Dec. 15, 2018 10:57 a.m. ET

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who has been the subject of more than a dozen government investigations, will leave his position by the end of the year, President Trump said Saturday, adding to the list of top officials to exit the administration.

Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

Secretary of the Interior @RyanZinke will be leaving the Administration at the end of the year after having served for a period of almost two years. Ryan has accomplished much during his tenure and I want to thank him for his service to our Nation.....

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Mr. Trump announced Mr. Zinke’s departure via Twitter, saying that the secretary “has accomplished much during his tenure, and I want to thank him for his service to our Nation.”

He added that a new interior secretary would be named next week.

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Mr. Zinke has faced allegations ranging from improper spending on private charter flights to actions regarding a development deal with an oil industry executive in his home state of Montana. The Interior Department’s internal watchdog has [referred at least one probe](#) to the Justice Department.Mr. Zinke’s lawyer, Steve Ryan, has said that the interior secretary has done nothing wrong.

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Last month, the department’s inspector general cleared the secretary of wrongdoing in an investigation into whether he redrew the boundaries of a national monument in Utah to exclude lands owned by a political

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congressman, has generally embraced traditional GOP positions when it comes to the environment, opposing most of the regulations issued by the Interior Department during President Barack Obama’s tenure. But he departs from his Republican colleagues in certain areas, in particular opposing legislative efforts to sell federal lands to states.

That position is shared by Mr. Trump and embraced by his oldest son, Donald Trump Jr., [who had a pivotal role in selecting Mr. Zinke](#).

Mr. Zinke, was confirmed in a 68-31 vote in March of 2017, becoming one of a few of Mr. Trump’s cabinet nominees to receive support from a significant number of Democratic senators, who said they liked his stated commitment to conservation.

The Interior Department has responsibility for energy leases on millions of acres of federal lands and waters around the U.S., as well as for the maintenance and operation of the national parks.

Mr. Zinke’s departure will [be one of several personnel changes](#) in the administration as Mr. Trump enters his third year in office. On Friday, Mr. Trump announced that the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, would assume the role of acting White House chief of staff, taking the place of outgoing chief of staff John Kelly. A number of other top White House officials are also expected to leave the administration.

According to The Brookings Institution, the turnover among senior staff is record-setting at 83%, higher than any of Mr. Trump’s five predecessors. More than a dozen senior-ranking White House advisers and cabinet members have departed.

There has been more than one personnel change for at least four top positions: chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, national security adviser and deputy national security adviser.

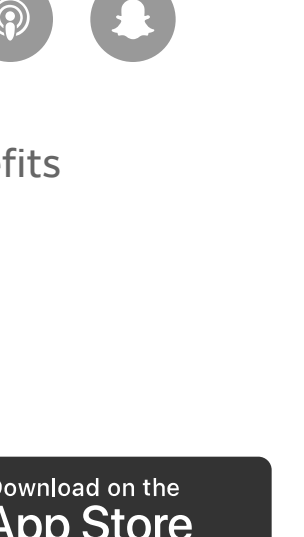
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