

SEBASTIAN GORKA

IMPACT: Sebastian Gorka is a political commentator who appears on Salem Radio Network and Newsmax. He previously worked for Fox News and served as the Deputy Assistant to President Donald Trump in 2017. In 2024, President-elect Trump picked Gorka to serve in his second administration as deputy assistant to the president and senior director for counterterrorism. Gorka supports religious profiling, has targeted Muslim civil rights and advocacy groups, and has publicly worn a medal affiliated with a Nazi-linked Hungarian group.

- Sebastian Gorka served as a [National Security Strategist](#) for Fox News and a [contributor](#) for The Rebel, an online Canadian publication. He [served](#) as the Deputy Assistant to President Donald Trump from January 2017 to August 2017. He is the author of *Defeating Jihad* (Regnery 2016), and **identifies himself as an “irregular war strategist.”**
- Several professors and terrorism experts [expressed concern](#) regarding Gorka’s proximity to the President, given his “amateur” understanding of national security threats. In 2017, **terrorism analyst Michael S. Smith II warned, “This is not somebody who should be working anywhere near the White House.” Daniel Nexon, an associate professor at Georgetown University, reviewed Gorka’s 2007 PhD dissertation and described it as “inept.”** Regarding the dissertation, Nexon stated, “It’s not remotely something that I would consider scholarship. It does not deploy evidence that would satisfy the most basic methodological requirements for a PhD in the US.” **Dr. Omid Safi, director of Islamic Studies at Duke University, has labelled Gorka’s book “propaganda,” stating it’s “inaccurate, sloppy, superficial, bigoted and ideological.”**
- **Gorka has argued that the US is a “Christian nation, a Judeo-Christian nation,” and implied that accepting Muslim refugees would be “national suicide.”** In a June 2016 [speech](#), Gorka said that “profiling is actually a synonym for common sense,” and “If 98 percent of the terrorists come from a certain faith community, have a certain ethnic background, have a certain travel pattern, and visit the same sites on the Internet, why are we patting down, you know, 82-year-old Episcopalian grandmothers?”
- On January 31, 2016, Gorka was [charged](#) with carrying a weapon at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. In February 2017, a judge dismissed the case and ordered Gorka to forfeit the weapon and “be on general good behavior” for six months. In January 2018, a BuzzFeed report [revealed Gorka had an arrest warrant issued September 17, 2016 for “firearm or ammunition abuse” in Hungary. The article noted the warrant was “in place for the entirety of Gorka’s tenure at the White House.”](#)
- **From 2014-2016, Gorka was the National Security editor at Breitbart,** where he wrote several [articles](#) focusing on Islam and stressing the threat of “global jihadism.” Between 2009-2011, Gorka [wrote](#) for the [Gatestone Institute](#), [described](#) by Webby-award winning AlterNet news service as “a hub for anti-Muslim ideologues.”
- **Gorka has accused Muslim civil rights organizations, like the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), of using “subversive tactics,” and having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.** Gorka [considers](#) the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization and [claimed](#) the Muslim Brotherhood was “overrun[ning]” the National Cathedral after CAIR and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) hosted prayers there.
- Gorka has been a **frequent guest on Frank Gaffney’s Secure Freedom Radio.** Gaffney is the head of the Center for Security Policy (CSP), which the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) [considers](#) an anti-Muslim group. Gaffney has also hosted Gorka at a number of events hosted by CSP, [described](#) by the SPLC as a “conspiracy-oriented mouthpiece for the growing anti-Muslim movement in the United States.”

- In June 2016, **while speaking at the conservative advocacy group Family Research Council, Gorka inaccurately claimed that 98 percent of terrorists are Muslims.** Research by the New America Foundation found that since 9/11, right-wing extremists have killed almost twice as many Americans as perpetrators who identify as Muslim have.
- Gorka has accused The Washington Post and the New York Times of “shilling for the Jihadis,” and siding with the “Islamists” when it came to the wars in the Middle East. Following the deadly shooting at an Orlando nightclub, Gorka stated the attack was “in part facilitated by the policies of this administration, President Obama and Secretary Clinton,” and blamed “political correctness” for allowing it to happen.
- **In early 2017, pictures were posted showing Gorka wearing a medal associated with a Hungarian group listed by the State Department as “having taken direction from Germany’s Nazi government during World War II.”** Gorka, who has denied links to the group, wore this medal at the inauguration and during a television interview with Sean Hannity. The Nazi-linked group, Vitézi Rend, has claimed Gorka as a member.
- Following the **August 5th, 2017 bombing of a Minnesota mosque, which Minnesota’s governor called “an act of terrorism,”** Gorka gave an interview in his capacity as a White House official and stated the bombing may have been a “fake hate crime.”
- On **August 25th, 2017, The New York Times, announced Gorka had been “forced out” of his position at the White House.** Soon after, Gorka became the Chief Strategist for the MAGA Coalition, a pro-Trump organization dedicated to advancing “America First” principles. The coalition’s founders promoted the “Pizzagate” conspiracy theory, which claimed, “Hillary Clinton and other high-level Democrats ran a child sex trafficking ring out of the basement of a Washington, D.C. pizzeria.”
- In **November 2017, The Hill reported Gorka was contracted to give a series of five foreign policy speeches at the conservative Heritage Foundation.** The Heritage Foundation has previously hosted events featuring anti-Muslim voices such as Frank Gaffney and Brigitte Gabriel.
- A 2017 Foreign Policy article noted that **while Gorka calls himself “an expert on “radical jihadi ideology,”” he does “not speak Arabic and has spent no time in the Middle East.”**
- In **February 2017, Lobelog’s Eli Clifton revealed Gorka had joined *The Rebel*, a far-right Canadian publication with a “long history of anti-Semitism, extremism, and Islamophobia.”** The outlet once published a satirical video titled “Ten Things I Hate About Jews.”
- In a February 2017 New York Times piece, **Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin, individuals who served in national security and counterterrorism roles in the US government, described Gorka as an “Islamophobic Huckster” and “ill-informed Islamophobe.”** Simon and Benjamin stated that Gorka believes “violence emanates from the ‘martial language’ of the Quran,” and sees “Islam as the problem.”
- In **March 2019, Media Matters revealed Gorka would no longer be renewing his contract with Fox and instead would be joining Sinclair TV as a contributor.** Media Matters revealed Gorka had appeared in “six Sinclair national news packages in 2019 -- most of which discuss stories related to ISIS or immigration.”
- On July 14th, 2020, the White House announced President Trump’s intent to appoint Gorka “to be a Member of the National Security Education Board for a term of four years.” In response, rights activists and anti-racism advocates condemned the appointment, with the CEO of Bend the Arc: Jewish Action stating, “White nationalists and their allies should have no place in our government.” Additionally, SPLC’s Margaret Huang stated, “Someone like Gorka has absolutely no place in the federal government,

Last updated December 10, 2024

even less as a member of the NSEB. His ties to anti-Muslim extremists have been well documented.”

- On July 28th, 2020, Gorka made an appearance at Liberty University’s Freedom Summit alongside Charlie Kirk, Eric Bolling, and Senator Ted Cruz. The Summit, held at the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., focused on exposing the supposed “growing cultural dangers posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)” including COVID-19. During Gorka’s speech, he called COVID-19 the “Chinese virus,” a reference that many experts have noted is racist.
- During a June 23, 2020 livestream of his show, “America First” produced by Salem Radio Network, Gorka discussed the COVID-19 pandemic. Following recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, many states issued laws making the wearing of masks mandatory in an effort to stem the spread of the virus. Many conservatives viewed this as an infringement on their right to choose. **A viewer called Gorka’s show and spoke about the “Democrat Islamo-Maoist mask” to which Gorka replied, “You mean the COVID burqas?”** In his previous episodes, he has repeatedly called COVID-19 “the China virus,” and discussed “the Chinese coverup,” referring to the conspiracy theory that China attempted to bury knowledge that the novel coronavirus was spreading. According to Human Rights Watch, derogatory and inflammatory language such as “the Chinese virus” has fueled anti-Asian racism and xenophobia worldwide.
- In **April 2021, YouTube banned Gorka “for repeated violations of our presidential election integrity policy,” as he had published videos claiming that there was widespread fraud in the 2020 election.**
- In **November 2024, President-elect Trump nominated Gorka to serve in his new administration as deputy assistant to the president and senior director for counterterrorism.** In response to this announcement, Trump’s former national security adviser, John Bolton spoke to CNN and described Gorka as “a conman” who should not be “in any US government” and whose selection does not “bode well for counter-terrorism efforts”. **An unnamed “person close to [Trump’s] national security team” told the *Washington Post* that “almost universally, the entire team considers Gorka a clown. They are dreading working with him.”**
- A November 2024 piece in the Guardian revealed that Michael Anton, a conservative writer who served in the first Trump administration, “reportedly removed himself from consideration for deputy national security adviser, in protest at Gorka’s selection.” Anton himself holds anti-Muslim views as he has called Islam “a militant faith,” and argued that “only an insane society” would accept Muslim immigrants following the 9/11 attacks. Additionally, it was also reported that Alex Floyd, a spokesperson for the Democratic National Committee, called Gorka “a far-right extremist who is as dangerous as he is unqualified to lead America’s counter-terrorism strategy”.
- **Gorka is a staunch supporter of Israel and has made several anti-Palestinian statements in recent years.** In a November 2024 interview with the RT, **Gorka stated “there isn’t any genocide in Gaza. There is no such thing as Palestine.”** UN experts, the International Court of Justice, and several human rights experts have all concluded that Israel has violated international humanitarian law and is committing genocide in Gaza.
- A November 2024 Washington Post piece stated that Gorka claimed to have “watched unedited video of the Hamas attack in Israel,” and “provided advice to Israeli leaders on how to prosecute their conflict with the militant group.” **Gorka reportedly said “Kill every single one of them. God bless Israel. God bless Judeo-Christian civilization.”**
- A November 2024 Middle East Eye piece found that Gorka “currently is a political commentator who appears on Newsmax and the Salem Radio Network and is a close ally of Steve Bannon.”

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- **Gorka's wife, Katharine Gorka, is also involved in right-wing politics.** She co-founded the Council on Global Security, a “non-profit institution dedicated to promoting security and human dignity through freedom, economic opportunity, and rule of law.” In articles for Breitbart, she has stated that Democrats were “shut[ting] down any debate within Islam by declaring that Islam is the religion of peace and that terrorism has nothing to do with Islam.” Both Gorkas advocate that the government use the term “radical Islamic terrorism” in order to “be honest about the threat.”

Bridge Initiative Factsheet