

Scuttling All the US Government Departments  
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The US government is a very big bureaucracy, which to some critics is a bad thing. However, each department under the Administration has been established by Congress to provide essential services. They all do the work that keeps us the most productive, enviable country in the world.

When a new president comes into office, he goes through the transition process, learning what each government agency or department does, its budget, and over all, how government works.

Michael Lewis, author of Moneyball, an informative book about financial risks, has provided us with another book: The Fifth Risk, an update of a previous work detailing how a presidential transition to governing works. This is one of the most frightening books I have encountered, and one that provided much more information about what government agencies do and how they work.

What happens under an ordinary presidency (every one before President Trump) is that an experienced political professional puts together briefings from each department to enable the president to know exactly what each does. This is the essential bridge between campaigning and governing. Something unique happened after the 2016 election: former Governor Chris Christie was assigned to put together such a transition program, but when he handed it over to President Trump, the material was trashed.

Election day came and went, and each department expected a visit from their new president, but nothing happened. This went on for many days until the president began naming new department heads, all of them men (and a few women) who were either totally ignorant of the agency they were to head or men and women dedicated to destroying the agency over which they presided. Putting a coal executive in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency made clear what the new administration wanted to do.

I knew about quite a few agencies, such as Environmental Protection and Interior Department, but really did not know about the Agriculture Department's extensive responsibilities. One of Trump's sons didn't even know that we still had an Agriculture Department. Nor did they ever receive the briefing that Ag was actually in charge of protecting and advancing America's food supply. Millions of dollars in grants are given to Universities to develop and expand methods of food production. I had no idea that this department was also responsible for clearing every airport of Canadian geese that might cause aircraft to crash.

The Energy Department is another interesting case. It is responsible for much more than coal or oil production; it is currently working on alternate energy systems and its most urgent responsibility is cleaning up nuclear (and plutonium) dumps in Washington States before this deadly material can get into the Columbia River system. This department has always had a scientist as its head. President Obama's choice was a nuclear physicist who was also essential in determining the dangers of Iran's program during the negotiations.

The US Weather Service is a public/private partnership that provides us all with the most reliable weather information ever. Lives and property has been saved by the agency's prediction of storm trajectories in time for evacuation of endangered populations. Today's five day out weather predictions are as reliable as one day predictions only a decade ago. This complex system had a large, essential budget for carrying out its work. It is now headed by the owner of a private weather bureau dedicated to destroying the government system.

Trump has not appointed a single scientist or expert in the system they are to govern. What we are seeing is a dedicated attack on the professionalism of government agencies, replaced instead by the most self-serving, corrupt individuals in his circle.

If we were to have eight years of such attacks, attacks as vicious as that being waged against our Intelligence community and Justice system, we might not be able to fix the system for many years to come.

Once more, the missing element for voters is a good high school class in civics, and more for those going to universities. We need to understand how our government works so that a situation like this will never happen again.

685 words

Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of *God's Law or Man's Law*. You may contact her at [Lfarhat102@aol.com](mailto:Lfarhat102@aol.com) or [www.globalthink.net](http://www.globalthink.net).