

Democrats nominate Eugene Vindman, ex-Army colonel and Ukraine war advocate, for Virginia congressional seat

Patrick Martin
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In a primary election result that speaks volumes about the nature of the Democratic Party, former Army colonel Yevgeni (Eugene) Vindman, who with his twin brother Alexander became prominent opponents of then-President Trump and contributed to his first impeachment in 2019, on Tuesday won the Democratic nomination for the Seventh Congressional District of Virginia.

Vindman has no previous political experience and little connection to the district in which he ran, which stretches from the southern suburbs of Washington D.C. through a series of rural towns to the suburbs of Richmond. But he overwhelmed a field of six other Democrats, winning nearly 50 percent of the vote and carrying all six jurisdictions that are part of the district, five counties and the small city of Fredericksburg.

His six opponents included four former or current elected officials—two members of the state legislature and two supervisors of Prince William County, the most populous county in the district—and two others with military/intelligence backgrounds, one a former Army Ranger turned career State Department official, the other a former Army intelligence officer, now a lawyer.

Vindman had two critical advantages against this sizeable field of more politically experienced candidates. He was a celebrity, since both he and his brother were forced into early retirement after they helped expose Trump's decision, after a bullying phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky, to temporarily hold up US military aid to Ukraine. And he was able to raise \$5 million in campaign cash, more than all his opponents combined, thanks to funds provided by national Democratic and pro-war lobbies.

These included VoteVets, the political action committee that has jump-started many of the campaigns of the "CIA Democrats," the military-intelligence candidates who poured into the Democratic Party during the 2018 congressional elections. More than 60 such candidates sought Democratic nominations for Congress that year, and 11 were eventually

elected, including Abigail Spanberger, the current representative from Virginia's Seventh Congressional District, a former CIA spy stationed in Europe.

Spanberger is leaving Congress, having announced her candidacy for governor of Virginia next year. Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin leaves office after the single four-year term provided by the state constitution, deeply unpopular for his right-wing policies and fervent support of Trump.

The Democratic Party establishment has effectively cleared the 2025 gubernatorial field for Spanberger. She would likely be the third of the 2018 CIA Democrats to move to a higher position in capitalist politics, with Michigan Representative Elissa Slotkin and New Jersey Representative Andy Kim both favored to win Senate seats in November.

For the congressional seat vacated by Spanberger, Eugene Vindman will be a modest favorite over the Republican nominee, Derrick Anderson, whose campaign website describes him as "a former Special Forces 'Green Beret' with six tours of duty overseas, including Afghanistan, Iraq and various countries throughout the Middle East."

On his campaign website, Vindman describes his work on the White House National Security Council:

[A]s the Senior Ethics Attorney when I blew the whistle on the infamous phone call in which President Trump attempted to extort President Zelensky of Ukraine, Trump threatened to withhold critical aid if Ukraine didn't investigate President Biden's family. This phone call and the investigation that followed resulted in Trump's first impeachment. Trump retaliated against me for my role; his vindictiveness cost me my career.

In one of the numerous paid campaign ads that flooded the local media during the primary campaign, Vindman declared, “I sacrificed my military career to expose Trump’s corruption.”

The result Tuesday was a remarkable demonstration of the ongoing influence of the military-intelligence agents who began to enter the Democratic Party as congressional candidates in 2018, and have played a key role in driving both the first impeachment of Trump and the ongoing war policies of the Biden administration in Ukraine, the Middle East and against China.

Of the 11 CIA Democrats who won House seats in 2018, three were defeated for reelection, one in 2020 and two in 2022, and three are leaving the House this year in pursuit of higher office. Another, Conor Lamb, gave up his seat for an unsuccessful Senate campaign in 2022, losing in the primary to now-Senator John Fetterman. Four of the original group remain in Congress—Jared Golden of Maine, Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, Chrissy Houlihan of Pennsylvania, and Jason Crow of Colorado.

The losses were offset by new additions: In 2020, former State Department official Sara Jacob, an unsuccessful candidate in 2018, won a safe Democratic seat opened up by retirement in California, while former special forces officer Jake Auchincloss won a nine-candidate primary contest with barely 25 percent of the vote for a safe Democratic seat in Massachusetts.

In 2022, four new military-intelligence candidates were elected to Congress as Democrats, including Chris Deluzio, who replaced Conor Lamb in Pennsylvania; Pat Ryan, defeated in a Democratic primary in 2018 but elected in 2022; and Dan Davis and Jeff Jackson in North Carolina.

Davis and Jackson are leaving Congress this year because their seats were redistricted into safe Republican districts by the Republican-controlled state legislature. But there are still eight Democratic members of the House elected with military-intelligence-State Department backgrounds who are running for reelection, as well as a number of new candidates with similar resumes.

Two of these won nominating contests on Tuesday. In Virginia’s Second Congressional District, which comprises Virginia Beach and other sections of the heavily militarized Hampton Roads area, the largest center of the US Navy, Missy Cotter Smasal won the Democratic nomination to face one-term incumbent Republican Jennifer Kiggans in a highly competitive district.

Two years ago, Kiggans narrowly defeated one of the original 2018 CIA Democrats, Elaine Luria, a former Navy commander who played a prominent role on the House Select Committee that investigated the Trump-instigated attack on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, whitewashing the

collaboration of top military leaders in blocking a National Guard deployment to push back the rioters.

According to her campaign website, Smasal was a Surface Warfare Officer in the US Navy and deployed aboard the U.S.S. Trenton during Operation Enduring Freedom, the official title of the “war on terror” declared by President George W. Bush in 2001. She highlights her military background with an anchor on her campaign logo, although she now runs a small business and advocates on veterans issues.

The other military-intelligence candidate was far more influential and will run in one of the most high-profile contests of 2024, against fascist Georgia Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene, in one of the most heavily Republican districts in the country. Brigadier General Shawn Harris won the Democratic nomination Tuesday, a year after retiring from a 40-year military career.

One of the highest-ranking African-Americans in the military, Harris was an infantry commander in Afghanistan and oversaw extensive combat operations. He was a highly political officer, serving as an advisor in Liberia during the Ebola crisis and as chief of staff to the NATO mission in Kosovo. He ended his career as the defense attaché at the US Embassy in Jerusalem.

Writing on X/Twitter, Tuesday night, Harris said:

I defended our nation and its democracy for 40 years and retired as a Brigadier General ... I’m taking on that mission again: I’m now the official Democratic candidate facing MTG [Marjorie Taylor Greene]. I’m going to fight like hell to end [her] toxic career...



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