

# Gonzales' sacking of US Attorneys like a 'coup d'etat'

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A columnist at *Salon* has described Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' sacking of United States Attorneys involved in controversial prosecutions as an act that amounts to a "coup d'etat."



Joe Conason highlights the removal from office of Carol Lam, Bud Cummings, and John McKay, U.S. Attorneys in San Diego, Little Rock, and Seattle respectively, whose prosecutions ran against the partisan interests of the Bush White House. These acts, Conason writes, suggest that "the White House and the Justice Department have been exposed in a secretive attempt to expand executive power for partisan purposes."

The ability of the White House to swap out U.S. Attorneys with partisan appointees resulted when the staff of Senator Arlen Specter inserted a measure in the renewal of the USA Patriot Act that "permitted the White House to place its own appointees in vacant U.S. attorney positions permanently and without Senate confirmation." According to Conason, Specter says he was not aware of the action by a member of his staff.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is working to restore the US Attorney appointment system to its earlier nonpartisan status. Conason hopes that they will go further in their response.

"The Senate Democrats should continue to probe the attorney general's little coup d'état and all of the resulting appointments. That is the best way to discourage future usurpations -- and to frustrate whatever skulduggery was afoot this time," he writes.

The full column can be read by watching an advertisement [at Salon's website](#).

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