

NBC's *Today*  
03/19/26  
7:01:06 a.m. [TEASE]  
26 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Getting Personal]

CRAIG MELVIN: Getting personal.

SENATOR RAND PAUL (R-KY): You supported the felonious violent attack on me from behind.

SENATOR MARKWAYNE MULLIN (R-OK): I did not say I supported it. I said I understood it.

MELVIN: Republican Senator Rand Paul clashing with President Trump's pick to lead the Department of Homeland Security. Inside the tense confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill and the tough questions he's facing about national security, the role of ICE, and protecting our borders.

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7:12:29 a.m.  
3 minutes and 18 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Senators Clash With Homeland Security Nominee]

HODA KOTB: All right, let's turn now to another closely watched and contentious hearing on Capitol Hill. The President's pick to replace Kristi Noem and lead the Department of Homeland Security, facing questions about his views and the agency's future as lawmakers weigh in on his nomination. NBC's Kelly O'Donnell has that story. Hey Kelly, good morning.

KELLY O'DONNELL: Good morning, Hoda. The Department of Homeland Security has often been at the center of controversy and the work to find a new secretary brought out more heat and drama. The President's choice, Markwayne Mullin, made clear he sees things differently than outgoing Secretary Kristi Noem. But he's also in a very personal feud with the Republican chairman, Rand Paul, who said Mullin has anger issues that could affect whether he can set the right example. With a key vote today, Oklahoma's Republican Senator Markwayne Mullin is one step closer to taking over the Department of Homeland Security, bringing his tough guy temperament.

MULLIN: I'm very blunt and direct to the point, and if I have something to say, I'll say it.

O'DONNELL: Mullin clashed with committee chairman, Rand Paul, over a long-running personal dispute, where Paul says Mullin failed to condemn a violent attack Paul suffered in 2017.

PAUL: Haven't heard the word apologized, haven't heard the word regret, haven't heard I misspoke and it was heated, and I made a mistake. Haven't heard any of those words.

MULLIN: Actually, sir, actually, it wasn't heated, and I'm not apologizing for pointing out your

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PAUL: Good!

O'DONNELL: But Mullin did reverse course, admitting he was wrong to label Alex Pretti "a deranged individual" after his fatal shooting by ICE in Minneapolis.

MULLIN: I went out there too fast. I was responding immediately without the facts. That's my fault. That won't happen in a secondary.

SENATOR GARY PETERS (D-MI): So you regret that statement?

MULLIN: I already said that, yes, sir.

PETERS: Would you wanna apologize to the family of Alex Pretti?

MULLIN: Well, sir, I just said I regret those statements.

PETERS: Is that the same as the apology?

MULLIN: I haven't seen the investigation.

O'DONNELL: Mullin, a former pro-MMA fighter, with a multi-million dollar family plumbing business, repeatedly distanced himself from fired Secretary Kristi Noem's tenure. On deportations, he said he was open to reforms for ICE agents.

MULLIN: Judicial warrants will be used to go in to houses, and into place the businesses unless we're pursuing someone that enters in that place.

O'DONNELL: Mullin said he would not close FEMA.

MULLIN: I think it needs to be restructured and not eliminated.

O'DONNELL: And pledged to end a Noem policy that required her signature for dispersing certain disaster relief funds that critics say caused delays.

MULLIN: Absolutely. That's called micromanaging. And I don't know if secretary put that in or someone else did. I'm not a micromanager.

O'DONNELL: Under questioning, Mullen told senators he would cooperate with investigations of the DHS contracting process under Noem's leadership. Today, in an exclusive from NBC

News, our team reports that some companies wanting to do business with the government complained to the White House that Kristi Noem aide Corey Lewandowski stood to personally profit from government contracts at DHS. That's according to multiple sources. Lewandowski has denied those allegations, Hoda.

KOTB: Alright, Kelly O'Donnel for us there in D.C. Kelly, thanks.