

5 Things to Know About Pete Hegseth, Trump's Choice for Secretary of Defense

Hegseth is a retired Army National Guard major and combat veteran turned author and political commentator.

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Fox News contributor Pete Hegseth arrives at Trump Tower in New York City on Nov. 29, 2016. Spencer Platt/Getty Images



By Ryan Morgan

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President-elect Donald Trump has nominated Army combat veteran and longtime Fox News host Pete Hegseth as his pick to be the next secretary of defense.

“I am honored to announce that I have nominated Pete Hegseth to serve in my Cabinet as The Secretary of Defense. Pete has spent his entire life as a Warrior for the Troops, and for the Country. Pete is tough, smart and a true believer in America First. With Pete at the helm, America’s enemies are on notice,” Trump said in a Nov. 12 press statement.

If Hegseth is confirmed by the Senate as the next defense secretary, he will serve as the military’s top civilian leader under the president, and will oversee the day-to-day efforts of the military.

His nomination occurs at a time when the U.S. military is transitioning from the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations that have come to define the Global War on Terror era, to a renewed focus on conflicts with peer and near-peer adversaries such as Russia and China, whose actions in certain regions have complicated U.S. counter-terrorism and security interests.

Hegseth would have to come up to speed on multiple fronts, at a time when the U.S. military is coordinating with allies and partners to bolster Ukraine in an active war with Russia, dealing with a series of overlapping conflicts throughout the Middle East, and as China is rapidly expanding its military presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

A Combat Veteran

Hegseth, 44, brings experience as a combat veteran to the equation.

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While studying at Princeton, Hegseth was commissioned as an officer in the Minnesota Army National Guard. He joined the service in October 2002 and served as an infantry officer.

According to a copy of his service record shared with The Epoch Times, Hegseth's unit did a rotation through Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, from June of 2004 to April of 2005. The base has served as a detention facility for foreign terror suspects throughout the Global War on Terror era.

After that Guantanamo Bay deployment, Hegseth's unit deployed to Iraq from September of 2005 to July of 2006. His unit deployed to Afghanistan from May of 2011 to January of 2012.

In the course of his military service, Hegseth twice earned the Bronze Star. His other awards and decorations include the Joint Service Commendation Medal, two Army Commendation Medals, three Army Reserve Components Achievement Medals, the National Defense Service Medal with a Bronze Service Star, an Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two campaign stars, an Iraq Campaign Medal with two campaign stars, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" Device, the Army Service Ribbon, two Overseas Service Ribbons, the D.C. National Guard Emergency Service Ribbon, a NATO Medal, a Joint Meritorious Unit Award, a Combat Infantryman Badge, and an Expert Infantryman Badge.

Hegseth retired from military service in March of 2021 as a major.

Author and Political Commentator

Beyond his military service, Hegseth has been engaged in veterans advocacy efforts and has served as the CEO for Concerned Veterans for America.

Hegseth has authored several books focusing on military and political issues. He has also been a mainstay on Fox News, providing political

commentary across the network's various daytime and primetime programs.

His most recent book, published earlier this year, is titled "The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free." The book focuses on concerns that U.S. military leadership has become overly focused on political issues, at the expense of its overall warfighting capability.

The Amazon [synopsis](#) for the book reads: "The military Pete joined twenty years ago was fiercely focused on lethality, competency, and color blindness. Today our brass are following the rest of our country off the cliff of cultural chaos and weakness."

Concerned About a 'Woke' Military

Hegseth touched further on his view that the military has embraced "wokeness" during an interview with the "Shawn Ryan Show" on Nov. 7. During the interview with Ryan, a former U.S. Navy SEAL, the Fox News commentator expressed opposition to the presence of women in combat roles within the U.S. military.

"Everything about men and women serving together makes the situation more complicated, and complication in combat means casualties are worse," Hegseth said.

Hegseth voiced support for firing military leaders deemed to be too focused on advancing political causes, up to and including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"Any general that was involved—general, admiral, whatever—that was involved in any of the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs] woke [expletive] has got to go," he said.

Questions US Military Preparedness

During his “Shawn Ryan Show” appearance, Hegseth warned that the U.S. military’s warfighting capabilities are lagging dangerously behind that of China.

Hegseth noted U.S. planners routinely find that the United States **would lose** or sustain crippling **losses** in hypothetical conflicts with China.

Hegseth said the U.S. military’s method for modernizing its arsenal is partly to blame for the declining probability of success in a hypothetical conflict.

“The way our bureaucratic system works, the speed of weapons procurement works, we’re always a decade behind in fighting the last war,” he said.

At another point in the interview, Hegseth raised a criticism that the U.S. military’s current support for the Ukrainian war effort is starting to undermine its own readiness. As an example, he said he’s spoken with U.S. artillery troops who said their training time has been cut because so much of the U.S. supply of artillery shells is being donated to Ukrainian forces.

A ‘Recovering Neocon’

Speaking with Ryan, Hegseth said he was “a huge proponent” of the Iraq War when it began, but said in retrospect, now says, “I don’t think we should have been there.”

Hegseth said he’s been a “recovering neocon” for the past six years, and lamented “the foolishness with which we ricocheted around the world intervening, thinking it was in our best interests, when really we just overturned the table and created something worse in almost every single scenario.”

Referring to the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Hegseth said, “The last thing I want is my son deploying to the Donbas, to defend eastern Ukraine.”

Throughout the 2024 election cycle, Trump has said he would prefer to quickly bring an end to the current Russia–Ukraine conflict through negotiations.

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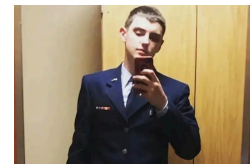
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