

# Pete Hegseth, fascist and defender of war crimes, set to lead American military

Jacob Crosse  
16 January 2025

On Tuesday, the Senate Armed Services Committee held its first and only hearing on the confirmation of President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of defense, Fox News commentator and defender of war criminals Pete Hegseth. Following the hearing, corporate media reports indicated that Hegseth was likely to be confirmed, given that the Republicans control the Senate 53-47 and no Republicans have declared opposition.

Hegseth openly advocates the commission of war crimes and likely participated in them firsthand as an infantryman in a unit notorious for murdering prisoners and as a guard at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp. In his confirmation hearing, Hegseth stated that his experience at Guantanamo Bay makes him an expert on a form of torture known as waterboarding, which he has openly advocated.

During his confirmation hearing, Hegseth railed against the Geneva Conventions, declaring, "We would all have to acknowledge that the way we fought our wars back when the Geneva Conventions were written is a lot different."

That Hegseth has been nominated to head the Department of Defense, let alone his likely confirmation, speaks to the fact that American democracy is reaching its calamitous nadir.

The crimes committed during decades of perpetual war waged by the United States, which legitimized torture and the mass killing of civilians, followed today by US sponsorship of the Gaza genocide, are being brought home. The criminal activities of the US military all over the world will be the basis for domestic political repression.

Of all Trump's nominees, Hegseth's politics are perhaps the most overtly fascist. He has openly defended war crimes and advocated the use of the

military against domestic political opponents. The nomination of Hegseth is a demonstration of Trump's complete contempt for any constitutional check on his use of military force, either at home or abroad.

Hegseth's selection by Trump, based on personal loyalty to the incoming president and a record of public lobbying in support of US soldiers guilty of war crimes, is an ominous warning of an impending explosion of American military violence against countries targeted by Trump and against popular opposition at home.

The role of the Democratic Party is to whitewash and facilitate the lurch of the ruling class toward dictatorship. In the over four-hour hearing, not a single Democrat on the committee once uttered the word "fascist." Nor did the Democrats warn the population that the person seeking the nomination to head an organization teeming with nuclear weapons, stealth bombers, missile submarines and hypersonic weapons has repeatedly indicated his support for using the military against "domestic enemies."

In addition to his support for war criminals, rejection of the Geneva Conventions and support for Trump's failed coup, Hegseth has a series of fascist tattoos on his body, including the Latin phrase "Deus Vult" (God wills it). This slogan, with its origins in the medieval Crusades, has been embraced by today's white supremacists, Christian fascists and Islamophobes.

Notably, during Tuesday's hearing, not a single Democrat questioned Hegseth over his tattoos. After over two hours, North Dakota Republican Senator Kevin Cramer raised the issue but only to provide Hegseth an opportunity to advance his fascistic "warrior ethos."

The central thesis of Hegseth's most recently published book, *The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free*, is a variation

of Adolf Hitler's "stab in the back" theory, which blamed Germany's military defeat in World War I on a traitorous home front infected with "Judeo-Bolshevism." According to Hegseth's book, a variation of which was repeated during the hearing, while he and other "patriots" were fighting the US imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, "America's domestic enemies at home... pounced."

"The Left didn't fight the wars. They stayed home and wrecked our house. America-wreckers, all of them," he wrote. The "domestic enemies" include "the radical Left," "Antifa," "BLM" and "now Hamas supporters and other progressive storm troopers" (a slander against those opposing Israeli genocide in Gaza). Hegseth wrote in the book that the "expectation is that we will defend [America] against all enemies—both foreign and domestic. Not political opponents, but real enemies. (Yes, Marxists are our enemies.)"

During the hearing, Hegseth repeatedly attacked what he termed "woke" policies that were harming "recruitment and retainment" and pledged that as Trump's secretary of defense he would place "lethality" first. Republican Senator Eric Schmitt (Missouri) thanked Hegseth for offering "clarity" and "vision" for the "Department of Defense, in restoring an ethos, a warrior ethos, which is in stark contrast to the ethos of the last four years, which has been weakness and wokeness."

Schmitt claimed the military had been infected with "DEI" (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), which, he said, "was rooted in cultural Marxism." In response, Hegseth claimed, less than two weeks after two US Army veterans launched violent New Year's Day attacks that left dozens injured and over 14 people killed, that "extremism" in the US military was a "made-up boogeyman to begin with."

The term "warrior ethos," which has been developed within the American military over the past two decades, in essence denotes unlimited and unrestrained brutality and criminality to advance the interests of the American oligarchy. Its glorification of warfare and the militarization of society has direct roots in Nazi ideology.

The Democrats never addressed Hegseth's promotion of a "warrior ethos" or exposed its fascist content. They could hardly do so having supported wars in

Afghanistan and the Middle East and particularly the Israeli genocide in Gaza. As a diversion from the substance of imperialist military policy and its bloody methods, they focused almost all of their questions on Hegseth's previous statements criticizing women in the military, allegations of sexual infidelity, and his obvious inexperience managing large organizations.

In championing the role of women, they all accepted as a matter of course that in the coming years American soldiers will be sent into battle en masse, and that the American military must be built up to accomplish this task.

The only digression from the focus on issues of gender, personal transgressions and managerial "competence" came when Democrat Jacky Rosen of Nevada asked if "America First foreign policy" is "America alone? ... Does that include abandoning our allies and partners such as NATO, Taiwan, Israel and others?"

Hegseth assured Rosen that "our friends in the world have had no better ally... than President Donald Trump, who has reinvigorated the NATO alliance and stood behind Israel in every way, in ways this administration has not." Rosen followed up, "Is Donald Trump going to stand behind Ukraine?... Are you going to stand behind Ukraine?"

Here is the key to the policy of the Democratic Party. As long as Trump maintains the US commitment to the war against Russia in Ukraine, even at the risk of a nuclear conflagration, the Democrats, as one of the two parties of American imperialism, are prepared to collaborate in every other area.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**