

After 51-50 Senate confirmation vote, Hegseth to implement Trump plans for war and repression

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In a late vote Friday night, the US Senate confirmed fascist US Army veteran and former Fox News commentator Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defense. Like all of Trump's cabinet nominees, the 44-year-old Princeton graduate was chosen chiefly for one quality: unwavering loyalty to Trump and commitment to carry out his fascist policies, no matter what.

Within hours of his confirmation, Hegseth had issued a memo to all Defense Department staff pledging to restore a "warrior ethos" to the Pentagon: in other words, dropping any pretense that American soldiers are to be anything else but killing machines, whether operating abroad or at home.

The first military operations of the new administration began to unfold, as armed soldiers transported by helicopters and V-22 Osprey fighters were deployed to the US-Mexico border. At the same time, military cargo planes began conveying hundreds of detained migrants on deportation flights to countries in Central and South America.

The Pentagon budget that Secretary of Defense Hegseth will oversee for 2025 is officially \$849.8 billion. In his position, Hegseth is not only seventh in the line of succession to the presidency but a key link in deploying the US nuclear triad, which features major new "investments," including \$61 billion for the B-21 Raider stealth bomber program and \$9.9 billion for Columbia-class ballistic-missile nuclear submarines.

Hegseth's nomination has been the closest so far out of all of Trump's picks. Friday's vote was deadlocked at 50-50 after three Republicans, Mitch McConnell (Kentucky), Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) and Susan Collins (Maine) along with every single Democrat voted against Hegseth, forcing Vice President JD Vance to cast his first tie-breaking vote as president of the Senate.

Of all Trump's nominees, Hegseth, a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions and of the Guantanamo Bay torture facility, is the most openly fascist. In published books, on Fox News, and in his confirmation hearing, Hegseth has argued that the Geneva Conventions do not apply to the US military. "We would all have to acknowledge that the way we fought our wars back when the Geneva Conventions were written is a lot different," Hegseth declared during his hearing earlier this month.

A longtime right-wing Republican who initially opposed Trump's campaign for the party's presidential nomination, he quickly shifted to backing the nominee and then peddling his propaganda on Fox News.

Using his public platform, Hegseth lobbied the billionaire president to pardon US soldiers convicted of war crimes, whose cases were ultimately quashed by Trump.

Like his "commander-in-chief," Hegseth is even more concerned with the "enemy within" than he is with supposed foreign enemies like "Communist China" and "Islamic terrorism." In his only public hearing before the Senate earlier this month, Hegseth refused to rule out deploying the military against US citizens if ordered to by Trump. In his latest book, he promised to use the US military against "all enemies—both foreign and domestic. Not political opponents, but real enemies. (Yes, Marxists are our enemies.)"

While many former soldiers have been at the head of the Pentagon, none have so openly promised to use the military against the US civilian population. Hegseth's willingness to follow Trump's orders, no matter how unconstitutional, marks a qualitative shift.

Hegseth faced little opposition from Republicans. In addition to supporting "great power conflict" with China, Hegseth is a staunch supporter of the Zionist state and its

ongoing genocide. His body is covered in Christian nationalist iconography so extreme that the US military blocked him from participating in the protective detail for Joe Biden in Washington following Trump's failed coup.

While not a single Democrat voted in favor of Hegseth, their pro forma opposition to his nomination, rooted almost entirely in allegations of sexual assault, drunkenness, disorganization and incompetence, prevented a real accounting of his fascist politics.

On Saturday, prior to administering the oath of office to Hegseth, Vance thanked Trump for nominating

a person who is respected and adored by the war-fighters. This is a secretary of defense who will stand up for the men and women we send overseas to fight our nation's wars. I think a lot of them feel they haven't had someone who has their back. That is going to change because the president of the United States nominated this guy and we are grateful to President Trump for doing so.

In his first official press release as secretary of defense, Hegseth promised to "lead the warriors of the Department of Defense, under the leadership of our Commander in Chief Donald J. Trump. We will put America First, and we will never back down."

Hegseth promised to restore and "revive" what he called "the warrior ethos," a mentality and glorification of unlimited violence which has been developed in the US military and among police forces since the initiation of the "Global War on Terror." Employing a variation of Hitler's "stab-in-the-back" theory, which blamed Germany's military defeat in World War I on "Judaeo-Bolshevism," Hegseth and other Republicans blame "woke" Democrats for US military defeats following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Examples of "woke" policies being rescinded include "Don't ask, don't tell," allowing women to serve in combat roles, and the promotion of "diversity, equity and inclusion" (DEI).

In one of his first tweets after being sworn in, Hegseth shared an image featuring notary from the office of the Secretary of Defense that read: "No more DEI at Department of Defense. No exceptions, name-changes, or delays. Those who do not comply will no longer work here."

The same day Hegseth was sworn in South Dakota

Governor Kristi Noem was approved in a 59-34 bipartisan vote to head the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Departments under the purview of the DHS include the US Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the US Secret Service and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In other words, Noem will be in charge of the departments that will be at the forefront of Trump's plans for mass deportations. She will work in concert with Hegseth at the Pentagon to militarize the deportation apparatus.

The seven Democrats who joined every Republican in voting for Noem include Michigan senators Elissa Slotkin and Gary Peters; both New Hampshire senators Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen; Tim Kaine of Virginia, Hillary Clinton's 2016 running mate; Andy Kim of New Jersey; and Pennsylvania's John Fetterman. Slotkin and Kim are both former representatives first elected to Congress in 2018 as part of the group the WSWS has identified as "CIA Democrats," moving directly from top national security positions into the House of Representatives.

Notably, Noem took the oath of office in the home of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. There is no doubt that Thomas will be rubber-stamping the unconstitutional actions Noem's charges will take under her direction on the orders of Trump.

The confirmations of Noem and Hegseth mark the effective completion of the bulk of Trump's nominations for cabinet-level national security positions after Florida Senator Marco Rubio was confirmed for Secretary of State (99-0) and former Texas Rep. John Ratcliffe breezed by in his confirmation for CIA director (74-25).



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