

Hegseth kicks off war-recruiting tour at Texas A&M

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Trump's Secretary of War Pete Hegseth visited Texas A&M University last month as the first stop in his "Send Me" tour. The slogan references a Bible verse and calls on young people to volunteer to go to war. Before coming to the university, he met in Austin with representatives of Saronic Technologies, a defense contractor building large-class autonomous vessels.

During the visit he attended a morning training session with the university's Corps of Cadets, presided over a signing ceremony where students contract with the military in exchange for financial aid, and attended a football game alongside far-right Governor Greg Abbott and other officials.

At the signing ceremony, he delivered a xenophobic and jingoistic tirade, calling on students to be ready to sacrifice their lives in wars abroad. He praised the military background of the university, which during World War II contributed the most officers of any university outside of the military academies. He called campus traditions, such as Aggie Muster, an annual gathering to honor university alumni who died during the previous year, a "sacred covenant" that binds the young people pursuing an education in the Corps of Cadets to the bloodthirsty interests of US imperialism.

He contrasted the supposedly martial spirit of this university to the alleged "America-hating" Ivy League universities, which the Trump administration has withheld funds from and engaged in legal challenges for not sufficiently falling in line with its fascist ideology. "We don't need globalist seminars, we don't need land acknowledgements, and we don't need to feel guilty about American power," he said. "We need lethal leaders who know how to win, and that's it." Hegseth then proceeded to denounce DEI in the military and so-called "racial ideology" taught at universities, referring to transgender people using a

slur.

Following the signing of Executive Order 14173 ("Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity") by Trump, the Board of Regents at Texas A&M banned courses last November discussing race and gender. Ignoring significant backlash from students and faculty, they instituted a semesterly course review, using AI to flag course syllabi mentioning banned topics. Last year, this process led to the removal of a passage from Plato from one course and the censorship of hundreds of others. This is the kind of shameless collaboration of university administrations with fascism that Hegseth holds up as a model.

Hegseth ended the speech by calling on Corps members to fight the "communists" and "Islamists," and reiterating his call for a "civic-military combination," threatening the constitutional principle of civilian control over the military.

The selection of Texas A&M as the first stop of Hegseth's tour was no accident. The university epitomizes the drive to harness higher education to the ruling class's war drive against Russia and China. In addition to large-scale recruitment through the Corps of Cadets, the university partners with the military to conduct weapons testing and research. The Ballistic, Aero-Optics, and Materials (BAM) Range at the Rellis campus is the largest enclosed hypersonic test range in the United States. The university also develops laser weapons in collaboration with Raytheon and is involved in autonomous drone research. It broke ground on a new \$205.5 million Texas A&M Semiconductor Institute in April 2026. Semiconductors, essential components in missile defense systems and nuclear stockpiles, have been a pivotal point in the drive to render supply chains independent of China to

prepare for a direct confrontation with the nuclear armed power.

Hegseth's visit took place against the backdrop of continual threats by the Trump administration to "annihilate" Iran, the escalation of imperialist involvement in the NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, and increasingly authoritarian measures at home, including threats to cancel elections and escalating ICE raids. Both the Democrats and Republicans are backing the use of brute military force to extricate American capitalism from the insurmountable national debt, now standing at \$40 trillion, and long-term economic decay.

In this context, the ruling class is compelled to crush the growing opposition among students and workers to its policies of social devastation being used to fund war. As TAMU has demonstrated in practice, academic freedom and freedom of speech are incompatible with the drive to subordinate every aspect of social life to the preparation for war.

Students at Texas A&M and universities across the country must oppose the attempts to subordinate higher education to the drive to war. This requires turning to the socialist program elaborated by the International Committee of the Fourth International and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, which explains the connection between war and the rise of fascism, and looks to the one force that can successfully oppose it: the international working class.



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