

Pete Hegseth's Military

By Victor Davis Hanson

I'd like to speak a little bit today, very briefly, about the Pentagon under new [Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth](#).

Did you notice that of all the controversial Trump nominees—Kash Patel, Pete Hegseth, Pam Bondi, RFK, Tulsi Gabbard—the Left went after Pete Hegseth the most vehemently? And he required JD Vance to break that tie. There was a reason for that. He is proposing radical changes in the Pentagon.



Remember where we are right now with [the Pentagon](#). We spend \$820 billion a year. It's about 14% of the entire budget and it's immune to criticism. It really is. And we are building \$14 billion carriers. We're building \$85 million F-35s. We have built \$140 million

F-22s. And we're watching, in Ukraine and the Middle East, the entire mode of 21st-century warfare being revolutionized.

It's more of—not that we're going to have bad quality, but it's more quantity than quality. They're flooding the zones with cheap drones—cheap drones on the ocean, in the air, and on land.

And we're not there yet. We're not doing it. So, what Pete Hegseth wants to do is change the entire manner of procurement.

What we have now is more or less a monopoly. We have Raytheon. We have the Boston military group. We have Northrop. We have General Dynamics. We have Lockheed. And the way it has worked is that four-star generals, who have very generous pensions, rotate out. They work for these consortia and then they use their contacts of subordinate officers to favor their procurement.

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it but it's an inherent conflict of interest. And Pete Hegseth is going to stop that. And he can stop it in a number of ways. First is, he can just go back to what we used to do.

We used to say that a military officer cannot be secretary of defense in the civilian role. But the last two were fine men. Gen. [Jim] Mattis, I know him, whom I like, and also [Gen. \[Lloyd\] Austin](#).

We waived that. I don't think we should continue to do that. There was a reason we had a law. I wrote that we should waive it for Jim Mattis because I thought he was a superb [choice]. Looking back, I think it puts too much pressure on the military officers to distance themselves. So, it would be better to have that position as a civilian one.

Another thing we're going to do is, whether we like it or not, we're going to get rid of [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#). And he's already doing it and he's going to save, I think, billions of dollars. And that has already had a profound effect.

We have record number of recruitment, per day. It's accelerating, at almost 10,000 a month. And we were down 40,000 or 50,000 recruits. And [the military](#), instead of saying, "This is a crisis," said, "We really didn't need 40,000 or 50,000. So, we met our goals." No, no, no. We were down and now we're not down.

And you can see that socially, culturally, Pete is trying to

associate with the rank and file. Lift weights with him, jog. It's going to be a people's person defense secretary.

He's also not going to tolerate retired admirals and generals that come out of the woodwork during election season, use their rank—they're still subject to Article 88 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which is enforced against lower-ranking officers. The statute says that retired or serving flag officers shall not disparage major civilian officials in the executive branch; Cabinet officers, vice president, especially the president.

And yet we've seen in these recent news cycles, I won't mention all of the generals' names, but they've called their commander in chief a fascist, a Nazi-like, a Mussolini character, an architect of Auschwitz, a liar, a cheat, who should be removed sooner—just terrible things, with impunity.

We're not going to see that anymore under Pete Hegseth.

So, the procurement will be different. Recruitment will be different. Retired officers will adhere to the code. There'll be no more—less conflict of interest. There's a lot of fat in that budget with DEI. And he's basically sending a message that we're not going to look at the superficial color of one's skin, or their religion, or their gender. We're going to look at the content of their character, and more importantly, even than that, the ability to fight well for the United States.

And I think he's gonna be very successful. He is gonna be very controversial. And that's why the Left went after him more than anybody else. And I think that the Pentagon budget will shrink and it will be more bang for the buck. And it's just all welcome.

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