

Pete Hegseth's Opening Statement at Confirmation Hearing: 'All Glory... to Jesus Christ'

Defense Secretary nominee Pete Hegseth fired off a strong statement of his goals for America's fighting forces in the opening statement that marked the beginning of his Senate confirmation hearings.

President-elect Donald Trump reached beyond the military's leadership ranks to tap Hegseth, a veteran and former Fox News host. The pick has been controversial, both for Hegseth's background and allegations about his personal life.

Hegseth began by noting, "All glory—regardless of the outcome—belongs to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His grace and mercy abounds each day. May His will be done."

Hegseth set the stage, "Two months ago, 77 million Americans gave President Trump a powerful mandate for change, to put America First—at home and abroad."

Veterans lined up in DC to support Hegseth

— Karli Bonne' ☐☐ (@KarluskaP) January 14, 2025

"When President Trump chose me for this position, the primary charge he gave me was to bring the warrior culture back to the Department of Defense. He, like me, wants a Pentagon laser focused on lethality, meritocracy, war fighting, accountability, and readiness," he said.

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Hegseth then listed his priorities.

"One, restore the Warrior Ethos to the Pentagon and throughout our fighting force; in doing so, we will reestablish trust in our military, addressing the recruiting crisis, the retention crisis, and readiness crisis in our ranks."

"The strength of our military is our unity and our shared purpose—not our differences," he said.

Hegseth said, he would "rebuild our military, always matching threats to capabilities."

Hegseth said, he would focus on "reviving our defense industrial base, reforming the acquisition process (no more 'Valley of Death' for new defense companies), modernizing our nuclear triad, ensuring the Pentagon can pass an audit, and rapidly fielding emerging technologies."

In promising to "reestablish deterrence," Hegseth said, "First and foremost, we will defend our homeland—our borders and our skies."

"Second, we will work with our partners and allies to deter aggression in the Indo-Pacific from the communist Chinese. And finally, we will responsibly end wars to ensure that we prioritize our resources to reorient to larger threats. We can no longer count on 'reputational deterrence.' We need real deterrence."

Hegseth said on his watch, the armed forces will "remain patriotically a-political and stridently constitutional. Unlike the current administration, politics should play no part in military matters."

"We are not Republicans. We are not Democrats. We are American warriors. Our standards will be high, and they will be equal, not equitable, that's a very different word," he continued.

Hegseth did not mention diversity in his statement, saying

that “every general or flag officer is selected for leadership or promotion purely purely on performance, readiness, and merit.”

“Leaders—at all levels—will be held accountable. And warfighting and lethality and the readiness of the troops and their families will be our only focus,” he said.

Hegseth noted that he is not from the mold of past secretaries.

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“It is true and it has been acknowledged that I don’t have a similar biography to Defense secretaries of the last 30 years,” Pete Hegseth said.

“But, as President Trump also told me, we’ve repeatedly placed people atop the Pentagon with supposedly ‘the right credentials’—whether they are retired generals, academics or defense contractor executives—and where has it gotten us? He believes, and I humbly agree, that it’s time to give someone with dust on his boots the helm. A change agent. Someone with no vested interest in certain companies or specific programs or approved narratives.

“My only special interest is the warfighter. Deterring wars, and if called upon, winning wars, by ensuring our warriors never enter a fair fight. We let them win, and we bring them home,” Hegseth said.

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“Like many of my generation, I’ve been there. I’ve led troops in combat. I’ve been on patrol for days. I’ve pulled the trigger downrange, heard bullets whiz by, flex-cuffed insurgents, called in close air support, led medevacs, dodged

IEDs, pulled out dead bodies, and knelt before a battlefield cross. This is not academic for me; this is my life. I led then, and I will lead now," he said.

Axios quoted what it said was a source familiar with Hegseth's thinking as saying, "The standard-issue SECDEFs have degraded our readiness, our lethality and our ability to win wars. There's never been a singular focus on the warfighter, and that's why we're losing wars and deterrence capabilities."

Democratic Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona and Tammy Duckworth of Illinois said Hegseth is not the right person for the position.

"One quick glance at his resume and concerns over his lack of experience and qualifications become obvious," they wrote in an Op-Ed in Military Times.

"The reality is that the world is too dangerous of a place, and our service members' lives too precious, to lower the bar," they wrote.

The confirmation hearing can be watched [here](#).

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