

Former High-Ranking Military Officials Have Spoken Out Against Hegseth's Nomination, Citing His Lack Of Qualifications And Reckless Desire To Politicize The Military

SUMMARY: Former military and defense officials have criticized Trump's nomination of Pete Hegseth for Secretary of Defense, noting his lack of qualifications and apparent willingness to politicize the military:

- **Retired Major General William Enyart:** "If Hegseth is confirmed, he'll be [the most spectacularly unqualified person](#) ever nominated and ever confirmed to the position."
- **Eric Edelman, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (2005-2009):** "[It appears](#) that one of the main criteria that's being used is, how well do people defend Donald Trump on television?"
- **Retired Four Star General Barry McCaffrey:** sexual assault allegations against Hegseth "[call into question his judgement and suitability.](#)"
- **Paul Reickhoff, Founder of Independent Veterans of America:** "Hegseth is [undoubtedly the least qualified nominee for SecDef in American History.](#) And the most overtly political. Brace yourself, America."
- **Sen.-elect Elissa Slotkin, former Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (2015-2017):** "Our military and the role of the military is in the Constitution for a reason, and I think [we're really at risk of politicizing the military](#) in a way that we can't put the genie back in the bottle."

Current and former high-ranking officials, including **outgoing Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin** and **former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley**, have [also criticized](#) Hegseth's claims that women should be barred from serving in combat roles in the military.

President-Elect Trump's Contentious Nomination Of Pete Hegseth For Secretary Of Defense Has Met With Opposition From Numerous Former Military Officials, Who Have Criticized His Lack Of Qualifications, Fringe Political Views, And Apparent Willingness To Politicize The Military

November 2024: President-Elect Donald Trump Nominated Fox News Host And Army Veteran Pete Hegseth To Be His Secretary Of Defense

November 2024: President-Elect Donald Trump Named Fox News Host And Army Veteran Pete Hegseth As His Nominee For Secretary Of Defense. "President-elect Donald Trump moved to build out his national security team Tuesday, announcing he is nominating Fox News host and Army veteran Pete Hegseth to serve as his defense secretary and former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe to lead the Central Intelligence Agency." [The Associated Press, [11/12/24](#)]

Hegseth's Nomination Sparked Immediate Controversy And Has Soured Further In The Wake Of Sexual Misconduct Allegations

Pete Hegseth's Nomination To Secretary Of Defense Reportedly Came As A Shock To Trump Allies And Pentagon Officials Alike, Given His Lack Of Senior Military Status Or Public Office Experience. "Trump

named Hegseth as his choice for secretary of defense on Tuesday, surprising both Pentagon officials and the former president's own allies by picking a nominee without senior military or public office experience. Hegseth serves as a co-host of the 'Fox & Friends Weekend' show, previously led several nonprofits and briefly ran to represent Minnesota in the US Senate in 2012." [CNN, [11/15/24](#)]

Pete Hegseth Allegedly Sexually Assaulted A Woman In 2017. "President-elect Donald Trump's Pentagon pick Pete Hegseth, who has denied allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman in 2017, would lead an agency that has long faced criticism over its handling of sexual assault and harassment allegations... But the assault allegation, which led to a nondisclosure agreement between Hegseth and the alleged victim, but no criminal charges, has been central to Hegseth's critics' worries about him." [The Washington Post, [12/5/24](#)]

Hegseth Was Reportedly Forced To Step Down From His Role As President Of Concerned Veterans For America Following Hostile Workplace Allegations, Including Claims That Hegseth Had Pursued Female Staffers Sexually. "A previously undisclosed whistle-blower report on Hegseth's tenure as the president of Concerned Veterans for America, from 2013 until 2016, describes him as being repeatedly intoxicated while acting in his official capacity—to the point of needing to be carried out of the organization's events... The report also says that Hegseth, who was married at the time, and other members of his management team sexually pursued the organization's female staffers, whom they divided into two groups—the 'party girls' and the 'not party girls.' In addition, the report asserts that, under Hegseth's leadership, the organization became a hostile workplace that ignored serious accusations of impropriety, including an allegation made by a female employee that another employee on Hegseth's staff had attempted to sexually assault her at the Louisiana strip club... according to three knowledgeable sources, one of whom contributed to the whistle-blower report, Hegseth was forced to step down from the organization in part because of concerns about his mismanagement and abuse of alcohol on the job." [The New Yorker, [12/1/24](#)]

Retired Major General William Enyart Said That, If Confirmed, Hegseth Would Be "The Most Spectacularly Unqualified [Secretary Of Defense] Ever"

Major General William Enyart Served In The U.S. Air Force Before Joining The National Guard, Where He Eventually Became Adjutant General Of Illinois, The State's Top National Guard Position. "Major General William L. Enyart [was] the 37th Adjutant General of the State of Illinois... Prior to becoming the Adjutant General, General Enyart served as the Deputy Commanding General for the Illinois Army National Guard. He served in that assignment from May, 2006 to September 2007. General Enyart served on active duty in the United States Air Force. He served as Commander, Illinois Army National Guard Forces deployed to Kiev, Ukraine in July, 2005. General Enyart was selected to brief the Polish Army and Air General Staff on mobilization policy of United States Reserve Military Forces. He has also served overseas at Vincenza, Italy and Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan." [National Guard Bureau, accessed [12/5/24](#)]

- **Enyart Was Adjutant General Of Illinois From 2007-2012.** "2007-2012: Adjutant general, Illinois National Guard." [Ballotpedia, accessed [12/5/24](#)]
- **Enyart Left The National Guard To Become A Member Of Congress For Illinois, Serving One Term From 2013-2015.** "2013-2015: U.S. House Representative, Illinois' 12th Congressional District." [Ballotpedia, accessed [12/5/24](#)]

Major General William Enyart: "If Hegseth Is Confirmed, He'll Be The Most Spectacularly Unqualified Person Ever Nominated And Ever Confirmed To This Position." "Enyart: Frankly, if Hegseth is confirmed, he'll be the most spectacularly unqualified person ever nominated and ever confirmed to the position." [News Nation via YouTube, [11/13/24](#)]

- **Enyart: "He's A TV Personality [...] He Has No Real Experience And No Real Credentials For This Kind Of Job," In Which He Would Be "Managing A Budget Of Nearly A Trillion Dollars, Two Million People."** "Enyart: 'He has virtually zero experience, zero qualifications or credentials for this job. He's a smart guy, you know, he's a TV personality. He's written a book criticizing generals, [but] he just has no real experience and no real credentials for this kind of job. As your previous correspondent pointed out, you're managing a budget of nearly a trillion dollars, two million people. You are the face of

the U.S. defense apparatus throughout the world. I have to wonder if, perhaps, he's a stalking horse candidate..." [News Nation via YouTube, [11/13/24](#)]

- **Enyart Questioned Whether Hegseth Is A Stalking Horse Candidate.** "Enyart: 'I have to wonder if, perhaps, [Hegseth is] a stalking horse candidate..." [News Nation via YouTube, [11/13/24](#)]
- **Enyart: "Every Chief Of Defense, Every Defense Minister, From Russia To China To Cuba To Venezuela, Pick A Nation, Is Going To Look At This And Go, 'He's A Pretty Boy From TV.'"** "Enyart: 'This young man just does not have the seasoning, the experience, or the qualifications to serve in this position, and every chief of defense, every defense minister, from russia to china to cuba to venezuela, pick a nation, is going to look at this and go, "He's a pretty boy from tv.'" [News Nation via YouTube, [11/13/24](#)]

Eric Edelman, Former Under Secretary Of Defense For Policy From 2005-2009, Said That Hegseth Was Nominated For Defending Donald Trump On Television Rather Than For His Defense Credentials

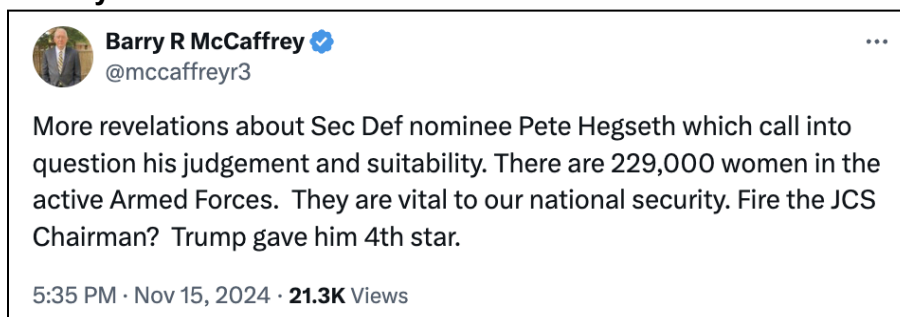
Eric Edelman, Under Secretary Of Defense For Policy Under George W. Bush: "It Appears That One Of The Main Criteria That's Being Used Is, How Well Do People Defend Donald Trump On Television?""[Trump] puts the highest value on loyalty," Eric Edelman, who served as the Pentagon's top policy official during the Bush administration, said in an interview. "It appears that one of the main criteria that's being used is, how well do people defend Donald Trump on television?" [Politico, [11/12/24](#)]

- **Edelman Was Under Secretary Of Defense For Policy, The Third Highest Position In The Department Of Defense, From 2005-2009.** "Ambassador Eric S. Edelman is Counselor at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He retired as a career minister from the U.S. Foreign Service on May 1, 2009... As undersecretary of defense for policy (August 2005-January 2009), he was DoD's senior policy official, overseeing strategy development with global responsibility for bilateral defense relations, war plans, special operations forces, homeland defense, missile defense, nuclear weapons and arms control policies, counterproliferation, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, arms sales, and defense trade controls." [Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, accessed [12/5/24](#)]

Retired Four Star General Barry McCaffrey Said That Hegseth "Came Out Of Left Field" And That Sexual Assault Allegations "Call Into Question His Judgement And Suitability"

Barry McCaffrey Is A Retired Four Star General. "President-Elect Donald Trump has selected Fox News host Peter Hegseth as his nominee for defense secretary. The announcement has come with a warning from Retired Four-Star General Barry McCaffrey, calling the pick 'a politicization of the military.'" [KIRO, [11/14/24](#)]

McCaffrey: Revelations About Sexual Assault Allegations Against Hegseth "Call Into Question His Judgement And Suitability."



[Barry McCaffrey via X, [11/15/24](#)]

McCaffrey: “Clearly, [Hegseth] Came Out Of Left Field.” “McCaffrey: ‘Clearly, this came out of left field. I know almost everyone involved in national security issues knew nothing about him.’” [MSNBC, [11/13/24](#)]

McCaffrey: “Almost Everyone Involved In National Security Issues Knew Nothing About Him.” “McCaffrey: ‘Clearly, this came out of left field. I know almost everyone involved in national security issues knew nothing about him.’” [MSNBC, [11/13/24](#)]

Paul Reickhoff, Founder Of Independent Veterans Of America, Called Hegseth “Undoubtedly The Least Qualified Nominee For SecDef In American History”

Paul Reickhoff, Founder Of Independent Veterans Of America: “Hegseth Is Undoubtedly The Least Qualified Nominee For SecDef In American History. And The Most Overtly Political. Brace Yourself, America.”



I first met Hegseth when he started running Vets for Freedom around 2007.

He is a highly effective and ferocious media, culture and political warrior for MAGA. And beyond loyal to and trusted by Trump.

I figured Trump would probably pick him for Chief of Staff or Press Secretary.

But this...

Hegseth is undoubtedly the least qualified nominee for SecDef in American history. And the most overtly political.

Brace yourself, America.



CBS News @CBSNews · Nov 12

BREAKING: President-elect Donald Trump taps Fox News host and combat veteran Pete Hegseth as his pick for secretary of defense. [cbsn.ws/3AEbkx8](#)

8:02 PM · Nov 12, 2024 · 1.3M Views

[Paul Reickhoff via X, [11/12/24](#)]

- **Reickhoff Is The Founder Of Independent Veterans Of America.** “‘Hegseth is undoubtedly the least qualified nominee for SecDef in American history. And the most overtly political. Brace yourself, America,’ Paul Reickhoff, founder of Independent Veterans of America, said in a post on X Tuesday night. [Politico, [11/12/24](#)]

Senator-Elect Elissa Slotkin, Former Acting Assistant Secretary Of Defense For International Security Affairs, Said That There Is A Serious Risk Of Politicizing The Military, That Hegseth Is Planning To Try Generals In A “Kangaroo Court,” And That Women In The Pentagon Now Fear For Their Careers

Sen.-Elect Elissa Slotkin (D-MI): “Our Military And The Role Of The Military Is In The Constitution For A Reason, And I Think We’re Really At Risk Of Politicizing The Military In A Way That We Can’t Put The Genie Back In The Bottle.” “‘I think they have been very clear that they’re putting together some sort of panel that’s going to look at generals, people who have served their nation their entire lives, over multiple administrations, Democrat and Republican in combat,’ [Senator-elect Elissa Slotkin (D-MI)] told Raddatz. ‘They are now openly talking about dismissing them like some sort of kangaroo court. You can imagine the stress in the Pentagon about that.’ She continued: ‘Our military and the role of the military is in the Constitution for a reason, and I think we’re really at risk of politicizing the military in a way that we can’t put the genie back in the bottle.’” [Politico, [11/17/24](#)]

- **Slotkin Was Acting Assistant Secretary Of Defense For International Security Affairs From January 2015 To January 2017, And Was Formerly A CIA Team Leader And White House National Security Council Director For Iraq.** “Her own credentials are more impressive than the sound bites of campaigning. She was a CIA team leader in Iraq in 2006-07 who advanced to the White House as National Security Council director for Iraq, then to the State Department and Pentagon, where she was acting assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs from January 2015-January 2017.” [Detroit Free Press, [11/9/18](#)]

Slotkin Said That There Is Worry In The Pentagon That Hegseth Will Set Up A “Kangaroo Court” To Dismiss Generals “Who Have Served Their Nation Their Entire Lives, Over Multiple Administrations, Democrat Or Republican In Combat.” “I think they have been very clear that they’re putting together some sort of panel that’s going to look at generals, people who have served their nation their entire lives, over multiple administrations, Democrat and Republican in combat,’ she told Raddatz. ‘They are now openly talking about dismissing them like some sort of kangaroo court. You can imagine the stress in the Pentagon about that.’” [Politico, [11/17/24](#)]

Slotkin Said That There Is “Constant Chatter And Conversation And Concern” Among Women Serving In Senior Pentagon Roles That Hegseth’s Nomination Will Harm Their Abilities To Advance In Their Careers. “Slotkin, a former CIA and Department of Defense official, said that she visited the Pentagon on Thursday and saw ‘constant chatter and conversation and concern from senior women officers. But also I’ve heard from folks who I’ve recommended to service academies, young women just starting out their career saying, ‘Am I going to be able to accomplish what I want to accomplish here?’” [Politico, [11/17/24](#)]

Current And Former High-Ranking Defense Officials Have Spoken Out Against Hegseth’s Purported Plan To Bar Women From Serving In Combat Roles

Pete Hegseth Has Stated That He Believes Women Should Not Be Allowed To Serve In Combat Roles In The U.S. Military. “Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump’s pick for secretary of defense, has said that he believes women should not serve in combat and that he wants to see the military purged of “woke” officials who support diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.” [CNBC, [11/13/24](#)]

- **Hegseth: “I’m Straight Up Just Saying That We Should Not Have Women In Combat Roles.”** “I’m straight up just saying that we should not have women in combat roles,’ Hegseth said on the podcast. ‘It hasn’t made us more effective, hasn’t made us more lethal, has made fighting more complicated.’” [CNBC, [11/13/24](#)]

In A Speech Before West Point Cadets, Outgoing U.S. Secretary Of Defense Lloyd Austin Made Multiple Jabs At Hegseth’s Plans To Bar Women From Combat Roles, Stating, “It Isn’t 1948.” “Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin took a swipe Wednesday at President-elect Donald Trump’s embattled choice to succeed him at the Pentagon, Pete Hegseth, who has called for ending the role of women in combat. Austin, in one of his final public addresses, told cadets at West Point that throughout his 40-year military career, the women he has seen in combat have been ‘incredibly’ capable, competent and brave. ‘So look, if I get a little fired up about this, it’s just because this isn’t 1950. It isn’t 1948,’ Austin said in a speech at his alma mater, referencing the year that President Harry Truman desegregated the military. ‘It is 2024.’” [USA Today, [12/4/24](#)]

- **Lloyd Austin Served As Secretary Of Defense Throughout Biden’s Presidency.** “Lloyd James Austin III was sworn in as the 28th Secretary of Defense on January 22, 2021. Mr. Austin is the principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense and serves on the National Security Council.” [U.S. Department of Defense, accessed [12/5/24](#)]

Former Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff Mark Milley Stated, “Don’t Lecture Me About Women In Combat... Women Have Been In Combat And [...] If That 762 [Bullet] Hits You In The Chest,” It Doesn’t Matter “If It’s A Woman Or A Guy Who Pulled The Trigger.” “Speaking at a national security innovation event hosted by the Pallas Foundation on Thursday, Milley, who served as the nation’s highest-ranking military officer, reacted to the comments. ‘Don’t lecture me about women in combat,’ he said. ‘Women have been in

combat and it doesn't matter if that 762 (bullet) hits you in the chest, no one gives a s*** if it's a woman or guy who pulled the trigger – you're still dead.” [The Independent, [11/21/24](#)]

- **Retired Army General Mark Milley Was The Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff From 2019-2023.** “General Mark A. Milley served as the 20th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the nation's highest-ranking military officer, and the principal military advisor to the President, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Council. He retired Sept. 29, 2023. Prior to becoming Chairman on October 1, 2019, General Milley served as the 39th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army.” [U.S. Department of Defense, accessed [12/5/24](#)]
- **Milley Worked His Way Up To Become A Commanding General In The U.S. Army, And Served As The 39th Chief Of Staff Of The U.S. Army Before Becoming Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff.** “Prior to becoming Chairman on October 1, 2019, General Milley served as the 39th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army... General Milley has had multiple command and staff positions in six divisions and a Special Forces Group throughout the last 44 years to include command of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry, 2nd Infantry Division; the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division; Deputy Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault); Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division; Commanding General, III Corps; and Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces Command.” [U.S. Department of Defense, accessed [12/5/24](#)]

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