# Concerns mount over Pete Hegseth’s leadership as US defence secretary under Trump



In a recent edition of the Financial Times’ on-site Swamp Notes newsletter, concerns have been raised regarding the appointment and conduct of Fox TV personality Pete Hegseth as the United States Secretary of Defense under Donald Trump’s administration. The article highlights a series of controversies and missteps that have prompted unease among military officials, allied governments, and security experts.

The unease began at the nomination stage last November, with observers both domestic and international questioning the suitability of a television anchor for a critical role requiring deep managerial expertise, political skill, and a commitment to public service. The Financial Times recounts a conversation where a Washington ambassador from a major country rhetorically asked whether it was normal for TV anchors to be appointed to lead the Pentagon, signalling the widespread scepticism of Hegseth’s candidacy. His background included failed leadership roles in non-profit veteran organisations and allegations of misconduct, such as drunkenness and sexual harassment.

Hegseth’s tenure has been marked by a number of incidents that the article describes as reckless and damaging to US national security. Notably, he reportedly shared sensitive military operational details on private messaging platforms, including a Signal chat group which unintentionally included Atlantic editor Jeffrey Goldberg. Furthermore, Hegseth allegedly disclosed specifics about future air strikes against Yemen’s Houthi militia on another group chat comprising family members. These actions have been characterised as a failure to grasp the critical importance of safeguarding classified information.

The fallout from these disclosures led to multiple firings within Hegseth’s inner circle, including long-term aides who publicly voiced opposition to his leadership. John Ullyot, a former aide, wrote in Politico calling for Hegseth’s removal, citing a pattern of “sophomoric errors” and the minimisation of his own actions in a manner that only worsened the situation. Despite this, Trump has deflected speculation about dismissing Hegseth, citing his performance in statements such as, “Ask the Houthis how he [Hegseth] is doing.” This comment drew attention to the alleged civilian casualties in a Yemeni air strike linked to operations under Hegseth's watch.

Beyond operational security concerns, Hegseth's leadership has reportedly caused significant disruption within the Pentagon. The department’s morale is described as “in tatters”, as he has removed senior female and non-white military leaders, including CQ Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Hegseth has pursued policies to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and has ordered the removal of nearly 400 books from the US Naval War College library, including works by African-American authors and a Holocaust memorialisation text. Meanwhile, ideological texts such as Hitler’s Mein Kampf and Charles Murray’s The Bell Curve remain available. These actions appear aimed at reversing DEI progress and promoting the ideologies favouring a narrowly defined “warrior” archetype, which Hegseth reportedly envisions as heterosexual white males.

The Financial Times article also notes an unusual expenditure of taxpayer money authorised by Hegseth, who reportedly had a room adjacent to the Pentagon briefing room converted into a makeup studio to facilitate his frequent television appearances on Fox News.

Responding to these developments, the Financial Times contrasted Hegseth’s appointment with other controversial Trump nominations, such as US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, who has been accused of sympathies with Russia. Lucy Fisher, the newspaper’s Whitehall editor, explained that initial British government responses sought to reassure that long-standing military and intelligence ties between the US and UK would remain intact regardless of individual appointments. However, behind closed doors, British security officials have grown concerned about the unpredictability of US policy, particularly regarding Ukraine and the Middle East.

Fisher reported that the UK and other allied nations recognise the need to enhance their own military and intelligence capabilities to reduce reliance on an increasingly erratic Washington. Despite internal worries, there is a clear preference for maintaining discretion and avoiding public criticism of US figures such as Hegseth, Gabbard, or Trump himself. The aim is to prevent accelerated divisions within critical alliances such as NATO and the Five Eyes intelligence partnership.

The article also recommended further reading on Trump’s broader political dynamics and foreign policy implications, including columns on JD Vance’s role in the Trump administration and analyses of the US’s diminishing global influence amid internal political turbulence.

In sum, the Financial Times’ coverage paints a picture of significant upheaval within the US Department of Defense during Pete Hegseth’s controversial tenure, highlighting both internal military disruptions and external concerns among key allies. The situation underscores challenges in sustaining trusted defence and intelligence partnerships amidst leadership characterised by unconventional appointments and policy reversals.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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