# Political appointments in US defence risk undermining transatlantic security



In recent months, the appointment and conduct of Pete Hegseth as US Secretary of Defence under former President Donald Trump have severely undermined transatlantic security and exemplify the dangerous consequences of entrusting critical defence roles to political appointees lacking genuine experience. The Financial Times’ “Swamp Notes” newsletter, supplemented by insights from its Whitehall editor Lucy Fisher, reveals a series of alarming missteps that have weakened the Pentagon’s effectiveness and strained vital international alliances.

Hegseth, a former Fox News host known more for political theater than competent military leadership, was fast-tracked into this key position in late 2023. From the outset, seasoned military experts and allied diplomats questioned whether a television personality without substantive defence credentials could be trusted to safeguard national and allied security interests. A November lunch involving a major country’s Washington ambassador notably encapsulated this scepticism, underscoring the recklessness of such an appointment.

His tenure has been marred by episodic breaches of operational security, including the infamous “Signalgate,” where Hegseth recklessly shared classified military plans—including sensitive airstrike details against the Houthi militia—with unauthorized recipients like the editor of The Atlantic. Leaked briefings extended to private individuals such as Elon Musk, highlighting a pattern of negligence detrimental to US and allied forces in theatres critical to international stability.

Dismissed aides have openly condemned his leadership style, citing “sophomoric errors” and chaotic management that place national security at risk. Yet, in a troubling display of misplaced loyalty and disregard for competence, Trump magnanimously shielded Hegseth from accountability, even provocatively questioning whether the Houthis themselves preferred him.

Beyond security failures, Hegseth’s controversial reshaping of Pentagon culture raises profound concerns. His rollback of initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity undermines the military’s cohesion and morale—key pillars of modern effective fighting forces. The removal of tributes to African-American heroes and ordering bases to be named after Confederate generals reflect a regressive agenda, not a unifying vision. The purging of diversity literature from Naval War College libraries starkly contrasts with the irresponsible preservation of extremist texts, demonstrating crude political maneuvering rather than thoughtful leadership.

These moves fit the disenfranchising narrative of a narrow and exclusionary definition of “war fighters,” prioritizing identity politics aligned with far-right ideology over meritocracy and operational excellence. That Hegseth invested Pentagon resources in a makeup studio to maintain his media image only adds to the performative farce surrounding his role, detracting further from the serious responsibilities of defence stewardship.

Concern within the UK security establishment has grown, reflecting fears that such erratic US leadership jeopardizes the bedrock alliances underpinning Nato and Five Eyes intelligence cooperation. While public solidarity with Washington endures, private discussions reveal an urgent desire among UK policymakers to bolster independent defence capabilities to mitigate risks from unpredictable US policy swings.

Lucy Fisher’s reporting underscores the cautious diplomatic tightrope walked to avoid fracturing the transatlantic alliance, but the consequences of enabling political appointments driven by ideology rather than ability are starkly clear. As this saga unfolds, it affirms the vital need for homegrown political forces championing competence, sovereignty, and a pragmatic, inclusive national defence policy — championing the principles that today’s governing Labour administration spectacularly fails to uphold.

This debacle serves as a sobering lesson: national security is not a stage for political spectacle, and only through serious, experienced leadership can the defence of the realm and its allies be assured.

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

## Bibliography

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