

# Pete Hegseth's Senate confirmation hearing

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## Speakers:

Speaker A - 29.91%

Speaker B - 5.15%

Speaker C - 12.89%

Speaker D - 11.45%

Speaker E - 5.49%

Speaker F - 9.68%

Speaker G - 6.74%

Speaker H - 4.45%

Speaker I - 6.06%

Speaker J - 8.17%

## Notes:

No notes.

### **Speaker A** **00:00:00**

And to all the troops and veterans watching and here in the room, Navy Seals, Green Berets, soldiers, pilots, sailors, Marines, Gold stars and more. Too many friends to name officers, enlisted, black and white, young and old, men and women, all Americans, all warriors. This hearing is for you. Thank you for figuratively and literally having my back.

### **Speaker A** **00:00:27**

You are a misogynist.

### **Speaker B** **00:00:29**

Not only that, you are a Christian.

### **Speaker A** **00:00:32**

Zionist, and you must work the war.

### **Speaker C** **00:00:36**

In Gaza by the Zionists.

### **Speaker A** **00:00:42**

I want to thank the authorities for their swift reaction to that outburst and state that similar interruptions will be treated in like manner. Mr. Hegseth, you may continue. Well, as I'll say again, thank you for figuratively and literally having my back. I pledge to do the same for all of you. It's an honor to come before this committee today as President Donald Trump's nominee for the office of secretary of defense.

### **Speaker A** **00:01:14**

Two months ago, 77 million Americans gave President Trump a powerful mandate for change to put America first at home and abroad. I want to thank President Trump for his faith in me and his selfless leadership for our republic. The troops have no better commander in chief than Donald Trump. As I've said to many of you in private meetings, 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.

### **Speaker A** **00:01:48**

He, like me, wants a Pentagon laser focused on lethality, meritocracy, war fighting, accountability and readiness. You may continue, sir. Returning the Pentagon back to war fighting. That's it. That's my job. Mr. Hexith, suspend your remarks. Let me just say this. The Capitol Police are going to remove immediately individuals that are disrupting the hearing.

**Speaker A**

**00:02:41**

I see a pattern attempted to be inflicted on the committee, and we're simply not going to tolerate that. You may proceed to bring back war fighting. If confirmed. I'm going to work with President Trump and this committee to one, restore the warrior ethos to the Pentagon and throughout our fighting force. In doing so, we will re establish trust in our military, addressing the recruiting crisis, the retention crisis, and readiness crisis in our ranks.

**Speaker A**

**00:03:22**

Members of the security force will remove members. Mr. Hexis, you and your family have endured criticism of your nomination since it was announced in November. Let's get into this allegation about sexual assault, inappropriate workplace behavior, alcohol abuse, and financial mismanagement during your time as a nonprofit executive. I should note that the majority of these have come from anonymous sources in liberal media publications.

**Speaker A**

**00:04:05**

But I want to give you an opportunity to respond to these allegations, sir. Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, thank you for that opportunity. You are correct. We undertook this responsibility with an obligation to the troops to do right by them for our war fighters. And what became very evident to us from the beginning, there was a coordinated smear campaign orchestrated in the media against us.

**Speaker A**

**00:04:34**

That was clear from moment. And what we knew is that it wasn't about me. Most of it was about President Donald Trump, who's had to endure the very same thing for much longer amounts of time. And he endured it incredibly strong ways. So we in some ways knew it was coming. We didn't understand the depth of the dishonesty that would come with it.

**Speaker A**

**00:04:57**

So from story after story in the media, left wing media, we saw anonymous source after anonymous source based on second or third hand accounts. And time and time again, stories would come out and people would reach out to me and say, you know, I've spoken to this reporter about who you really are.

And I was willing to go on the record, but they didn't print my quote, they didn't print any of my quotes, or I've worked with you for 10 years, or I was your accountant, or I was your chief operating officer, or I was your board member, or I was with you on a hundred different tour stops for Concerned Veterans for America.

**Speaker A**

**00:05:39**

No one called me. No one asked about your conduct on the record or off the record. Instead, a small handful of anonymous sources were allowed to drive a smear campaign and agenda about me. Because our left wing media in America today sadly doesn't care about the truth. All they were out to do, Mr.

**Speaker A**

**00:06:00**

Chairman, was to destroy me. And why do they want to destroy me? Because I'm a change agent and a threat to them. Because Donald Trump was willing to choose me, to empower me, to bring the Defense Department back to what it really should be, which is war fighting.

**Speaker D**

**00:06:16**

But the other factor too is you've already disparaged in writing the Geneva Convention.

**Speaker E**

**00:06:21**

The rules of law, all of these things.

**Speaker D**

**00:06:24**

How will you be able to effectively lead a military in which one of the principal elements is discipline, respect for lawful authority? You have made statements to your platoon after being briefed by a JAG officer. By the way, would you explain what a JAG off is?

**Speaker A**

**00:06:46**

I don't think I need to, sir.

**Speaker D**

**00:06:48**

Why not?

**Speaker A**

**00:06:50**

Because the men and women watching understand.

**Speaker D**

**00:06:53**

Well, perhaps some of my colleagues don't understand.

**Speaker A** **00:06:56**

It would be a JAG officer who puts his or her own priorities in front of the warfighters, their promotions, their medals in front of having the backs that those are, making the tough calls on the front lines.

**Speaker D** **00:07:08**

Thank you, Senator Reeves. Interesting.

**Speaker A** **00:07:10**

Thank You.

**Speaker D** **00:07:10**

Senator Ream, thank you very much.

**Speaker C** **00:07:11**

I thought it would be really helpful to better understand your views on women in the military, because you've made a number of surprising statements about women serving in the military. As recently as November 7th of 2024 on the Sean Ryan show, you said, and I quote, I'm straight up saying that we should not have women in combat roles.

**Speaker C** **00:07:35**

It hasn't made us more effective. The quote went on a little longer, but that was the gist of it. That was before you were nominated to be secretary of defense. Mr. Hegseth, do you know what percentage of our military is comprised of women?

**Speaker A** **00:07:53**

I believe it's 18 to 20%, Senator.

**Speaker C** **00:07:55**

It's almost 18%. And in fact, DoD's 2023 demographic report indicated that there are more women serving now and there are fewer separations, so they make up a critical part of our military. Wouldn't you agree?

**Speaker A** **00:08:10**

Yes, ma'am. Women in our military, as I have said publicly, have and continue to make amazing contrib across all aspects of our battlefield.

Well, you also write in your book the War on Warriors, with the chapter the Deadly Obsession with Women warriors, that, quote, not only are women comparatively less effective than men in combat roles, but they are more likely to be objectified by the enemy and their own nation in the moral realms of war.

**Speaker C**

**00:08:39**

Mr. Hegseth, should we take it to believe that you believe that the two women on this committee who have served honorably and with distinction made our military less effective and less capable?

**Speaker A**

**00:08:51**

I'm incredibly grateful for the. For the two women who served our military in uniform and including in the Central Intelligence Agency, contributions on the battlefield. Indispensable contribution. Senator, I would like to clarify when I'm talking about that issue, it's not about the capabilities of men and women. It's about standards. And this committee has talked a lot about standards.

**Speaker A**

**00:09:13**

Standards that we unfortunately, over time, have seen eroded in certain duty positions, certain schools, certain places, which affects readiness, which is what I care about the most. Readiness.

**Speaker C**

**00:09:25**

I appreciate that.

**Speaker A**

**00:09:26**

And so my comments time and time again to standards.

**Speaker C**

**00:09:30**

Your statements publicly have not been to that effect. After your nomination, you did state to a group of reporters that you, quote, support all women serving in our military today who do a fantastic job across the globe, including combat. So what I'm confused about, Mr. Hegseth, is which is it? Why should women in our military, if you were the Secretary of Defense, believe that they would have a fair shot and an equal opportunity to rise through the ranks?

**Speaker C**

**00:10:00**

If, on the one hand you say that women are not competent. They make our military less effective. And on the other hand, you say, oh no, now that I've been nominated to be the

Secretary of Defense, I've changed my view on women in the military. What do you have to say to the almost 400,000 women who are serving today about your position on whether they should be capable to rise through the highest ranks of our military?

**Speaker A**

**00:10:27**

Senator, I would say I would be honored to have the opportunity to serve alongside you, shoulder to shoulder. Men and women, black, white, all backgrounds, with a shared purpose. Our differences are not what define us.

**Speaker B**

**00:10:40**

Our.

**Speaker A**

**00:10:40**

Our unity and our shared purpose is what define us. And you will be treated fairly and with dignity, honor and respect, just like every man and woman in uniform. Just like the men and women that I've worked with in my veterans organizations, to include when I was a headquarters and headquarters company commander in the Minnesota National Guard.

**Speaker C**

**00:10:56**

Well, I appreciate your 11th hour conversion, but Mr. Chairman, for the record, I would like to submit chapter five, the deadly obsession with women warriors. For the record. Mr. Hegseth?

**Speaker A**

**00:11:08**

Without objection, it will be submitted.

**Speaker C**

**00:11:11**

Are you familiar with the women peace and security agenda at the Department of Defense?

**Speaker A**

**00:11:17**

Yes, ma'am, I am.

**Speaker C**

**00:11:18**

This is a law that was signed during President elect Trump's first term. It was legislation that I sponsored with Republican Senator Capito of West Virginia. It was co sponsored by Marco Rubio, the nominee to be the President Elect's Secretary of State. It was led in the House of Representatives by Kristi Noem, the President Elect's nominee to be the

Secretary of Home Homeland Security.

**Speaker C**

**00:11:39**

It mandates that women be included in all aspects of our national security, including conflict resolution and peace negotiations. And at the Department of Defense, it has been the law for eight years. Under both the Trump and Biden administrations, the DoD has incorporated women throughout its decision making. As a result, every single combatant Commander across two administrations has told this committee that this law and its implementation at the Department of Defense provides them a strategic advantage operationally.

**Speaker C**

**00:12:13**

Based on your comments, it appears that the example that you would like to set not only for women in this country, but for women across the globe, 50% of the world's population, as the prospective nominee to lead the most combat credible military in the entire world, is that women should not have an equal opportunity in our military.

**Speaker C**

**00:12:37**

So will you commit to preserving the Women Peace and security law at DoD and including in your budget the requisite funding to continue to restore and resource these programs throughout the DoD?

**Speaker A**

**00:12:53**

Senator, I will commit to reviewing that program and ensuring it aligns with America First National Security priorities, meritocracy, lethality and readiness. And if it advances American interests, it's something we would advance. If it doesn't, it's something we would advance.

**Speaker C**

**00:13:09**

Former President Trump signed the law. I hope that he agrees with you.

**Speaker F**

**00:13:14**

Mr. Hegseth, let's continue on this line of questioning about what's sometimes referred to as women in combat. I think that phrase is something of a misnomer. Many members of this committee have served in combat in the last 25 years to include women and men. I'm sure all those men served with women, whether they were military police officers or they were pilots or whether they were intelligence analysts or medics or what have you.

**Speaker F**

**00:13:40**



You served, I assume you served with women who were on the front lines as well. Is that correct?

**Speaker A** **00:13:44**

Yes, sir.

**Speaker F** **00:13:45**

And were those women anything other than skilled, brave and honorable in their service?

**Speaker A** **00:13:49**

They were some of the best soldiers I worked with.

**Speaker F** **00:13:51**

So women have been serving in combat for a long time. Women, they've even been serving in combat units like infantry battalions for a long time in roles like medics or mechanics or what have you. So what we're talking here specifically is women in ground combat roles in jobs like infantrymen or artillerymen or special forces.

**Speaker F** **00:14:11**

Until about 10 years ago, that wasn't the case. Under Secretary Panetta, those roles were opened up to women to serve in. Has President Trump indicated at all that he plans to rescind or alter that guidance?

**Speaker A** **00:14:26**

You're correct to point out, Senator, that these are the decisions that the commander in chief will have the prerogative to make. He has not indicated to me that he has plans to change whether or not women would have access to these roles. However, I would point out ensuring that standards are equal and high is of importance to him and great importance to me.

**Speaker A** **00:14:47**

Because in those ground combat roles, what is true is that the weight of the ruck on your back doesn't change. The weight of the 155 round that you have to carry doesn't change. The weight of the 240 Bravo machine gun you might have to carry doesn't change. And so whether it's a man or a woman, they have to meet the same high standards.

**Speaker A** **00:15:06**

And Senator, in any place where those things have been eroded or in courses, criteria have

been changed in order to meet quotas, racial quotas or gender quotas, that is putting a focus on something other than readiness standards, meritocracy and lethality. So that's the kind of review I'm talking about, not whether women have access to ground combat.

**Speaker F**

**00:15:31**

Okay, so thank You. We've got a big audience here. Many of them seem to be patriotic supporters of you, Mr. Hegset. Some of them seem to be liberal critics of you. I would note that it's only the liberal critics that have disrupted this hearing. As was my custom during the Biden administration. I want to give you a chance to respond to what they said about you.

**Speaker F**

**00:15:51**

I think the first one accused you of being a Christian Zionist. I'm not really sure why that is a bad thing. I'm a Christian. I'm a Zionist. Zionism is that the Jewish people deserve a homeland in the ancient Holy Land where they've lived since the dawn of history. Do you consider yourself a Christian Zionist, Senator?

**Speaker A**

**00:16:13**

I support. I am a Christian, and I robustly support the state of Israel and its existential defense. And the way America comes alongside them is a great thank you.

**Speaker F**

**00:16:22**

Because another protester, and I think this one was a member of Code Pink, which by the way, is a Chinese communist front group these days, said that you support Israel's war in Gaza. I support Israel's existential war in Gaza. I assume, like me and President Trump, you support that war as well, don't you, Senator?

**Speaker A**

**00:16:41**

I do. I support Israel destroying and killing every last member of Hamas.

**Speaker F**

**00:16:47**

And the third protester said something about 20 years of genocide. I assume that's our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Do you think our troops are committing genocide in Iraq and Afghanistan, Senator?

**Speaker A**

**00:16:57**

I do not. I think our. Senator, our troops, as you know, as so many in this committee know, did the best they could with what they have. We're not the outcomes. And tragically, the outcome we saw in Afghanistan under the Biden administration put a stain on that, but it

doesn't put a stain on what those men and women did in uniform, as you know full well, Senator.

**Speaker F**

**00:17:16**

Thank you, Mr. Axa.

**Speaker G**

**00:17:17**

I have many concerns about your record and particularly your public statements because they are so hurtful to the men and women who are currently serving in the US Military, harmful to morale, harmful to good order and discipline. If you are saying that women shouldn't be serving in the military now, I'm going to read you your quotes because the quotes themselves are terrible.

**Speaker G**

**00:17:41**

You will have to change how you see women to do this job well, and I don't know if you are capable of that. So I want to press on these issues that my colleague Jeanne Shaheen brought up because she said it so well. So, first of all, you answered your questionnaire. Do you believe that any American who wants to serve in their country in the military and can meet objective standards set by the military, should be allowed to serve without limitation.

**Speaker G**

**00:18:05**

You've said yes to that question. But then in all of these other circumstances, you've denigrated active duty service members. We have hundreds, hundreds of women who are currently in the infantry, lethal members of our military serving in the infantry, but you degrade them. You say we need moms, but not in the military, especially in combat units.

**Speaker G**

**00:18:29**

So specific to Senator Cotton's question, because Senator Cotton was giving you layups to differentiate between different types of combat. And specifically as Secretary, would you take any action to reinstitute the combat arms exclusion for female service members, knowing full well you have hundreds of women doing that job right now. And the standards.

**Speaker G**

**00:18:53**

Your two mile run, Tom, is about the Army Combat Fitness Test. It is not the requirements to have an MOS, 11 Bravo, which is the infantry. These are the requirements today for people serving in industry, men and women. They are gender neutral and they are very difficult to meet. They have not been reduced in any way and are our combat units.

Our infantry is lethal. So please explain specifically because you will be in charge of 3 million personnel. It is a big job. And when you make these public statements and I get you are not Secretary of Defense, then I get you were on tv. I get you were helping veterans. I get it was a different job.

**Speaker G**

**00:19:37**

But most recently you said this in November of 2024, knowing full well you might have been named as Secretary of Defense. Defense. So please explain these types of statements because they're brutal and they're mean and they disrespect men and women who are willing to die for this country.

**Speaker A**

**00:19:56**

Well, Senator, I appreciate your comments. And I would point out I have never disparaged women serving in the military. I respect every single female service member that has put on the uniform past and present my critiques, Senator, recently and in the past and from personal experience have been instances where I've seen standards lowered.

**Speaker A**

**00:20:17**

And you mentioned 11 Alpha, 11 Bravo, MOS, places in units. And the book that has been referenced multiple times here, the War on Warriors. I spent months talking to active duty service members, men and women, low ranks, high ranks, combat arms and not combat arms. And what each and every one of them told me and which personal instances have shown me, is that that in ways direct, indirect, overt and subtle, standards have been changed inside infantry training units, Ranger school, infantry battalions to ensure that.

**Speaker G**

**00:20:55**

Give me one example. Please give me an example. I get you're making these characteristics.

**Speaker A**

**00:20:58**

Commanders need quotas to have a certain number of female infantry officers or infantry enlisted, and that disparages those women from.

**Speaker G**

**00:21:07**

Capable commanders do not have to be quotas for the infantry. Commanders do not have to have a quota for women in the infantry. That does not exist. It does not exist. And your statements are creating the impression that these exist because they do not. They are not quotas. We want the most lethal force.

But I'm telling you, having been here for 15 years listening to testimony about men and women in combat and the type of operations that were successful in Afghanistan and in Iraq, women were essential for many of those units. When Ranger units went in to find where the terrorists hiding in Afghanistan or in Iraq, if they had a woman in the unit, they could go in, talk to the women in a village, say, where are the terrorists hiding?

**Speaker G**

**00:21:49**

Where are the weapons hiding? And get crucial information to make sure that we can win that battle. So just. You cannot denigrate women in general, and your statements do that. We don't want women in the military, especially in combat. What a terrible statement. So please do not deny that you've made those statements.

**Speaker G**

**00:22:08**

You have. We take the responsibility of standards very seriously, and we will work with you. I'm equally distressed you would not meet with me before this hearing. We could have covered all of this before you came here so I could get to the 15 other questions that I want to get to. So women you have denigrated, you have also denigrated members of the LGBTQ community.

**Speaker G**

**00:22:29**

Did you know that when Don't Ask, Don't Tell was in place? We lost so many crucial personnel, over a thousand in mission critical areas. We lost 10% of all our foreign language speakers because of a political policy. You said in your statement you don't want politics in the DoD. Everything you've said in these public statements is politics.

**Speaker G**

**00:22:50**

I don't want women. I don't want moms. What's wrong with a mom, by the way? Once you have babies, you therefore are no longer able to be lethal. I mean, you're basically saying women after they have children can't ever serve in the military in a combat role. It's a silly thing to say.

**Speaker G**

**00:23:04**

It's a silly thing to say. Beneath the position that you are aspiring to, to denigrate LGBTQ service members is a mistake. If you are a sharpshooter, you're as lethal, regardless of what your gender identity is, regardless of who you love. So please know this to be a true statement. So you say. You say it was a political thing.

**Speaker G**

**00:23:24**

You say it undermined US Social engineering. I don't know why having Someone having to

publicly say or not publicly say who they love is social engineering. I think having that policy in the first place was highly problematic. And as you said in your statement, do you agree anybody should be able to serve in the military if they meet the standards?

**Speaker A**

**00:23:48**

Senator, as the President has stated, I don't disagree with the overturn of Don't Ask Hotel Great.

**Speaker G**

**00:23:57**

Because I don't want you thinking, can't serve if you're a mom, can't serve if you're lgbtq. And then last, can't serve if you're a leftist. The statements you said about people who have views differently than you, that we're the enemy, Are you saying that 50% of the DoD, if they hold liberal views or leftist views or our Democrats are not welcome in the military?

**Speaker G**

**00:24:19**

Are you saying that?

**Speaker A**

**00:24:21**

Senator, I volunteered to deploy to Afghanistan under Democrat President Barack Obama. I also volunteered to guard the inauguration of Joe Biden, but was denied the opportunity to serve because I was identified as an extremist by my own Unit for a Christian Tattoo.

**Speaker D**

**00:24:36**

I want to talk about financial mismanagement at the two organizations that you headed, which are the only test of your financial management that we have before this committee, the Veterans for Freedom and Concerned Veterans for America. You took over the Veterans for Freedom in 2007. In 2008, you raised \$8.7 million, but spent more than 9 million, creating a deficit.

**Speaker D**

**00:25:09**

By January 2009, you told donors that the organization had less than \$1,000 in the bank and debts of \$434,000. By 2010, revenue at the Veterans for Freedom had dropped to about \$265,000. In the next year, it had dropped further to \$22,000. You don't dispute these numbers, do you, Senator?

**Speaker A**

**00:25:41**

I'm extremely proud of the work me and my fellow vets did at Vets for Freedom. A bunch of young vets with no political experience, a small group working hard every single day. We raised donor funds, and I took. And we have letters submitted for the record from

almost everyone that worked with me every single day, including our chief operating officer, who will attest that every dollar we raised was used intentionally toward the execution of our mission, which is supporting the war fighters.

**Speaker A** **00:26:15**

Exactly why we're here today. The war fighters in the Iraq surge. There was a campaign in 2008, Senator Barack Obama.

**Speaker D** **00:26:22**

If I can just ask you another question.

**Speaker A** **00:26:24**

He believed John McCain would be the.

**Speaker D** **00:26:25**

Right person to win. And so we spent tax returns from that organization.

**Speaker A** **00:26:29**

I'm glad they're for the record.

**Speaker D** **00:26:31**

I'm going to ask to be entered into the record. Mr. Chairman, without objection. These tax returns are yours. They have your signature. And I'm going to ask that members of the committee review them because they're the only documents I've asked for. Others I've asked for the FBI report that would presumably document it should have documented this kind of financial mismanagement.

**Speaker D** **00:26:59**

And These are the 990s from that organization. By the year of 2011, donors had become so dissatisfied with that mismanagement they in effect ousted you. They merged that organization with Military Families United and thereafter you joined a second organization as executive director in between.

**Speaker A** **00:27:27**

Senator, I went to Harvard University years and Afghanistan.

**Speaker D** **00:27:31**

I want to ask you questions about Concerned Veterans for America. Again, another set of

tax returns, the 990s from that organization. I ask they be made part of the record. Mr. Chairman, without objection.

**Speaker A**

00:27:43

Both of those returns are now part of the record.

**Speaker D**

00:27:46

2011 to 2016, at the end of 2013, shortfall of \$130,000. At the end of 2014, shortfall of \$428,000. You had a surplus the following year, but then another deficit of \$437,000. By the time you left, that organization had deep debts, including credit card transaction debts of about \$75,000. That isn't the kind of fiscal management we want at the Department of Defense.

**Speaker D**

00:28:22

We can't tolerated at the Department of Defense. That's an organization with a budget of \$850 billion, not 10 or 15 million which was the case at those two organizations. And it has command responsibility for 3.4 million Americans. The highest number that you managed in those two organizations was maybe 50 people. Let me ask you, how many men and women now serve in the United States Army?

**Speaker D**

00:28:59

What is Sen's strength?

**Speaker A**

00:29:02

Senator, I would like an opportunity to respond to.

**Speaker D**

00:29:05

Well, I'm imputing organization concerned.

**Speaker A**

00:29:10

You're on the VA Committee, sir, and I appreciate your service there. The VA Accountability act and the Mission act were all brainchilds of Concerned Veterans for America. We used our donor money very intentionally and focused to create policy that bettered the lives of veterans.

**Speaker D**

00:29:28

Mr. Hegseth, I'm asking you a very simple question. How many men and women currently serve in the United States Army?



Senator, in the United States Army, 450,000 on active duty, sir.

**Speaker D** 00:29:40

And how many in the Navy?

**Speaker A** 00:29:43

In The Navy, it's 425, sir.

**Speaker D** 00:29:46

Well, it's 337 this year. How many in the Marine Corps?

**Speaker A** 00:29:50

175. 175,000, sir.

**Speaker D** 00:29:52

172,300. Those numbers dwarf any experience you had by many multiples. I don't believe that you can tell this committee or the people of America that you are qualified to lead them. I would support you as the spokesperson for the Pentagon. I don't dispute your communication skills, but I believe that we are entitled to the facts here.

**Speaker D** 00:30:27

I've asked for more documents. I assume you'd be willing to submit to an expanded FBI background check that interviews your colleagues, accountants, ex wives, former spouses, sexual assault survivors, and others and enable them to come forward.

**Speaker A** 00:30:48

Senator, I'm not in charge of FBI and background checks.

**Speaker D** 00:30:50

But you would submit to it and support it.

**Speaker A** 00:30:54

I'm not in charge of FBI background checks.

**Speaker D** 00:30:56

Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Good morning, Mr. Hegseth, and thank you very much. I appreciate your service to our nation. It's something that I know you are very proud of, and it is something that we have in common and that we share. You and I have had many productive conversations, and just for our audience, we have had very frank conversations.

**Speaker H**

**00:31:26**

Is that correct, Mr. Hegseth?

**Speaker A**

**00:31:28**

Senator, that is a correct characterization.

**Speaker H**

**00:31:30**

You know that I don't keep anything hidden, pull no punches. My colleagues know that as well. So I do appreciate you sitting down and allowing me the opportunity to question you thoroughly on those issues that are of great importance to me. Just to recap those issues, three that are very important. One is the DoD and making sure that we have a clean audit.

**Speaker H**

**00:31:58**

The second is women in combat, and we'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment. And the third was maintaining high standards and making sure that we are combating sexual assault in the military. Okay, so, Mr. Hegseth, I'm going to address the issue because this will tie into some of the financial concerns that have been raised here as well.

**Speaker H**

**00:32:24**

And it's why I, trusting my fellow Iowan, asked for unanimous consent of his letter to go into the record. But like me, a lot of Iowans are really, really concerned and upset about the wasteful Washington spending. And of course, in our Pentagon, it's an issue that I have been combating for years. So there's significant room for greater efficiency and cost cutting within the department.

**Speaker H**

**00:32:52**

And the DoD is the only federal agency that has never passed an audit. As the Senate DOGE Caucus chair and founder, that's unacceptable to me, and it should be unacceptable to you as well. So I appreciate that you mentioned that in your opening statement. What are those steps that you will take to ensuring the Pentagon has a clean audit by the year 2028?

**Speaker A**

**00:33:19**

Senator, I appreciate your work on this topic, which you've been involved in for a long

time. You mentioned Concerned Veterans for America. I just want to clarify, we have very generous donors who set a very clear budget that we stuck to every single year. So the latitude there was restricted and we worked very hard and diligently inside it.

**Speaker A**

**00:33:39**

You've also been a leader on the Pentagon audit for a very long time. I think when we met, Senator, I said 2014 was the first year we discovered a 2013 op ed I wrote about the need for a Pentagon audit because an audit is an issue of national security and frankly, respect to American taxpayers who give \$850 billion over to the Defense Department and expect that we know where that money goes.

**Speaker A**

**00:34:04**

And if that money is going somewhere that doesn't add to tooth and instead goes to fat or tail, we need to know that. Or if it's wasted, we need to know that. So I think previous Secretaries of Defense, with all due respect, haven't necessarily emphasized the strategic prerogative of an audit. And myself, my deputy, SecDef and others already know that a Pentagon audit will be the comptroller, others central to ensuring we find those dollars that can be used elsewhere legally under the law inside the Pentagon.

**Speaker A**

**00:34:37**

So you have my word it will be a priority.

**Speaker H**

**00:34:39**

Okay, thank you. Okay. Moving on to women in combat. And I had the privilege of serving in uniform for over 23 years between our Army Reserves and our Iowa Army National Guard did serve in Kuwait and missions in Iraq. And so it is incredibly important that I stress, and I hope that if confirmed, you continue to stress, that every man and woman has opportunity to serve their country in uniform and do so at any level as long as they are meeting the standards that are set forward.

**Speaker H**

**00:35:21**

And we talked about that in my office. I do believe in high standards. Now, I was denied the opportunity to serve in any combat role because I have a lot of gray hair. And the policy has changed since then. I've been around for quite a while. But for the young women that are out there now and can meet those standards, and again, I'll emphasize they should be very, very high standards, they must physically be able to achieve those standards so that they can complete their mission.

**Speaker H**

**00:36:02**

But I want to know, again, let's make it very clear for everyone here today, as Secretary of Defense, will you support women continuing to have the opportunity to serve in combat roles?

**Speaker A**

**00:36:16**

Senator, first of all, thank you for your service. As we discussed extensively as well, it's my privilege and my answer is yes, exactly the way that you caveat it. Yes, women will have access to ground combat roles, combat rows, given the standards remain high. And we'll have a review to ensure the standards have not been eroded in any one of these cases.

**Speaker A**

**00:36:40**

That'll be part of. One of the first things we do at the Pentagon is reviewing that in a gender neutral, neutral way. The standards ensuring readiness and meritocracy is front and center. But absolutely, it would be the privilege of a lifetime if confirmed to be the Secretary of Defense for all men and women in uniform who fight so heroic they have so many other options, they decide to put their right hand up for our country.

**Speaker A**

**00:37:05**

And it would be an honor to have a chance to lead them.

**Speaker H**

**00:37:07**

Thank you. And just very briefly, we only have less than a minute left left, but we have also discussed this in my office. A priority of mine has been combating sexual assault in the military and making sure that all of our service members are treated with dignity and respect. This has been so important.

**Speaker H**

**00:37:30**

Senator Gillibrand and I have worked on this and we were able to get changes made to the Uniform Code of Military justice to make sure that we have improvements on how we address the tragic and life altering issues of rape sexual assault. It will demand time and attention from the Pentagon under your watch if you are confirmed.

**Speaker H**

**00:37:57**

So as Secretary of Defense, will you appoint a senior level official dedicated to sexual assault prevention and response?

**Speaker A**

**00:38:05**

Senator, as we have discussed, yes, I will.

I am focused on your fitness to serve, including your character and temperament and your overall qualifications to do the job. And I do appreciate the comments of ranking member Reed with his concerns regarding your nomination, because I share those concerns. As part of my responsibility as a member of this committee to ensure the fitness of all nominees to come before any of the committees on which I sit, I ask the following two initial questions.

**Speaker E**

**00:38:38**

First, since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

**Speaker A**

**00:38:51**

No.

**Speaker E**

**00:38:51**

Senator, have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement relating to this kind of conduct?

**Speaker A**

**00:38:58**

Senator, I was falsely accused in October of 2017. It was fully investigated and I was completely cleared.

**Speaker E**

**00:39:08**

I don't think completely cleared is accurate, but the fact is that your own lawyer said that you entered into an NDA and paid a person who accused you of raping her a sum of money to make sure that she did not file a complaint. Moving on, as Secretary, you will be in charge of maintaining good order and discipline by enforcing the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

**Speaker E**

**00:39:38**

UCMJ in addition to the sexual assault allegations and by the way, the answer to my second question should have been yes. I have read multiple reports of your regularly being drunk at work, including by people who worked with you at Fox News. Do you know that being drunk at work is prohibited for service members under the ucmj?

**Speaker A**

**00:40:01**

Senator, those are multiple false, anonymous reports peddled by NBC News that run directly contradictory to the dozens of men and women at Fox News jail who I work with.

My question and said in your opening statement, Mr. Hagg said you commit to holding leaders accountable at all levels. That includes you, of course. And frankly, as secretary, you will be on the job 24 7. You recently promised some of my Republican colleagues that you stopped drinking and won't drink if confirmed, correct?

**Speaker A** **00:40:41**  
Absolutely.

**Speaker E** **00:40:42**  
Will you resign as Secretary of Defense if you drink on the job, which is a 247 position?

**Speaker A** **00:40:49**  
I've made this commitment on behalf of the United States.

**Speaker E** **00:40:52**  
Will you resign, Secretary of Defense?

**Speaker A** **00:40:54**  
I've made this commitment on behalf of the men and women I'm serving because it's the most important deployment.

**Speaker E** **00:40:59**  
I'm not hearing an answer to my question, so I'm going to move on. While you have made that commitment, you will not commit to resigning. If you drink on the job as Secretary of Defense, you will swear an oath to the Constitution and not an oath to any man, woman or president. Correct?

**Speaker A** **00:41:18**  
Senator, on multiple occasions, including as a young second lieutenant, I have sworn an oath to the Constitution and I'm proud to do so. Yes, ma'am.

**Speaker E** **00:41:24**  
In June of 2020, then President Trump directed former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper to shoot protesters in the legs in downtown D.C. an order secretary Esper refused to comply with. Would you carry out such an order from President Trump?

**Speaker A** **00:41:43**  
Senator, I was in the Washington D.C. national Guard unit that was in Lafayette Square

during those days.

**Speaker E**

**00:41:49**

Would you carry out an order to issue protests in the legs?

**Speaker A**

**00:41:53**

I saw 50 Secret Service agents get injured by rioters trying to jump over the fence, set the church on fire and destroy.

**Speaker E**

**00:42:00**

You know what that sounds to me that you will comply with such an order. You will shoot protesters in the. In the leg. Moving on. President Elect has attacked our allies in recent weeks, refusing to rule out using military force to take over Greenland and the Panama Canal and threatening to take to make Canada the 51st state.

**Speaker E**

**00:42:23**

Would you carry out an order from President Trump to seize Greenland, a territory of our NATO ally Denmark, by force, or would you comply with an order to take over the Panama Canal?

**Speaker A**

**00:42:36**

Senator, I will emphasize that President Trump received 77 million votes to be the lawful commander.

**Speaker E**

**00:42:42**

We're not Talking about the election, my question is, would you use our military to take over Greenland or an ally of Denmark?

**Speaker A**

**00:42:56**

Senator, one of the things that President Trump is so good at is never strategically tipping his hand. And so I would never, in this public forum, give one way or another, direct what orders the President gives me in any context.

**Speaker E**

**00:43:07**

It sounds to me that you would contemplate carrying out such an order to basically invade Greenland and take over the Panama Canal. Current DoD policy allows service members and eligible dependents to be reimbursed for travel associated with non covered reproductive health care, including abortions. Will you maintain this common sense policy?

**Speaker A****00:43:32**

Senator, I've always been personally pro life. I know President Trump has as well. And we will review all policies, but our standard is whatever the President wants. On this particular issue, my advice I will take.

**Speaker E****00:43:44**

If the President tells you that this policy will not be maintained, you will not enable our service members to seek reproductive care, so to speak.

**Speaker A****00:43:55**

I don't believe the federal government.

**Speaker E****00:43:56**

I'm not hearing answers to my question, Mr. Chairman. I just want to note that the other area that of serious concern to me is President Trump saying that he wants to use the military to help with mass deportations, which will cost billions of dollars. What that will do to readiness is very, very concerning.

**Speaker E****00:44:19**

Mr. Hexagon, I have noticed a disturbing pattern. You previously have made a series of inflammatory statements about women in combat, LGBTQ service members, Muslim Americans and Democrats. Since your nominations, however, you have walked those back on tv, in interviews, and most recently in your opening statements. You are no longer on fox and friends.

**Speaker E****00:44:46**

Mr. Hexsett, if confirmed, your words, actions and decisions will have real impacts on national security and our service members lives. There are close to 3 million personnel in the Department of Defense \$900 billion budget. I hardly think you are prepared to do the job. Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

**Speaker D****00:45:10**

Senator, thank you.

**Speaker A****00:45:12**

That wasn't a question. Mr. Hexa.



I want to return to the incident that you referenced a minute ago that occurred in Monterey, California in October 2017. At that time, you were still married to your second wife, correct?

**Speaker A** **00:45:26**  
I believe so.

**Speaker D** **00:45:27**  
And you had just fathered a child by a woman who would later become your third wife, correct?

**Speaker A** **00:45:32**  
Senator, I was falsely charged, fully investigated, and completely cleared.

**Speaker D** **00:45:38**  
So you think you are completely cleared because you committed no crime? That's your definition of cleared? You had just fathered a child two months before by a woman that was not your wife. I am shocked that you would stand here and say you're completely cleared. Can you so casually cheat on a second wife?

**Speaker D** **00:45:57**  
And she on the mother of a child that had been born two months before. And you tell us you are completely cleared. How is that a complete clear, Senator Hurt.

**Speaker A** **00:46:06**  
The child's name is Gwendolyn Hope Hegseth, and she's a child of God. And she's seven years old.

**Speaker D** **00:46:10**  
And she was. And you cheated on the mother of that child less than two months after that daughter was born, didn't you?

**Speaker A** **00:46:18**  
Those were false charges. Fully investigated, and I was completely cleared. And I am so grateful for the marriage. I have this.

**Speaker D** **00:46:26**  
You've admitted that you had sex at that hotel in October 2017. You said it was

consensual. Isn't that correct?

**Speaker A** **00:46:35**  
Anything.

**Speaker D** **00:46:36**  
You've admitted that it was consensual and you were still married and you just had a child by another woman. Again, how do you explain your judgment?

**Speaker A** **00:46:43**  
Completely false charges against me.

**Speaker D** **00:46:45**  
You.

**Speaker A** **00:46:45**  
You investigated. And I'm completely clear.

**Speaker D** **00:46:48**  
You have admitted that you had sex while you were married to wife two after you just had fathered a child by wife three. You've admitted that. Now, if it had been a sexual assault, that would be disqualifying to be Secretary of Defense, wouldn't it?

**Speaker A** **00:47:01**  
It was a false claim then and a false claim now.

**Speaker D** **00:47:04**  
If it had been a sexual assault, that would be disqualifying to be Secretary of Defense, wouldn't it?

**Speaker A** **00:47:11**  
That was a false claim. I'm talking about a hypothetical.

**Speaker D** **00:47:15**  
So you can't tell me whether someone who has committed a sexual assault is disqualified from being Secretary of Defense.

Senator, I know in my instance, and I'm talking about my instance only, it was a false claim.

**Speaker D** **00:47:28**

But you acknowledge. But you acknowledge that you cheated on your wife and that you cheated on the woman by whom you had just fathered a child. You have admitted that.

**Speaker A** **00:47:38**

I will allow your words to speak for them.

**Speaker D** **00:47:40**

You're not retracting that today. That's good. I assume that in each of your weddings you've pledged to be faithful to your wife. You've taken an oath to do that, haven't you, Senator?

**Speaker A** **00:47:49**

As I've acknowledged to everyone in this committee. Not a perfect person. Not claiming to be, but No.

**Speaker D** **00:47:54**

I just asked a simple question. You've taken an oath. Like you would take an oath to be Secretary of Defense in all of your weddings, to be faithful to your wife. Is that correct?

**Speaker A** **00:48:01**

I have failed in things in my life, and thankfully, I'm redeemed by my.

**Speaker D** **00:48:05**

Lord and savior, Jesus Christ in finalizing divorces from your first and second wives. Were there non disclosure agreements in connection with those divorces, Senator?

**Speaker A** **00:48:14**

Not That I'm aware of.

**Speaker D** **00:48:16**

If there were, would you agree to release those first and second wives from any confidentiality agreement?

**00:48:21**

Senator? It's not something I'm aware of.

**Speaker D** 00:48:24

But if there were, you would agree to release them from a confidentiality?

**Speaker A** 00:48:27

Senator, that's not my responsibility.

**Speaker D** 00:48:29

Did you ever engage in any acts of physical violence against any of your wives, Senator?

**Speaker A** 00:48:33

Absolutely not.

**Speaker D** 00:48:35

But you would agree with me that if someone had committed physical violence against a spouse, that would be disqualified to serve as Secretary of Defense, correct, Senator?

**Speaker A** 00:48:43

Absolutely not. Have I ever done that?

**Speaker D** 00:48:46

You would agree that that would be a disqualifying offense, would you not?

**Speaker A** 00:48:50

Senator? You're talking about a hypothetical.

**Speaker D** 00:48:53

I don't think it's a hypothetical. Violence against spouses occurs every day. And if you as a leader, are not capable of saying that physical violence against a spouse should be a disqualifying fact for being secretary of the most powerful nation in the world, you're demonstrating an astonishing lack of judgment. The incident in Monterey led to a criminal charge, a criminal investigation, a private settlement, and a cash payment to the woman who filed the complaint.

**Speaker D** 00:49:23

And there was also a non disclosure agreement, correct?

It was a confidential settlement agreement off of a nuisance lawsuit, Right?

**Speaker D** **00:49:32**

During an interview, you claimed that you settled the matter because you were worried that if it became public, it might hurt your career. Do you maintain that you were blackmailed, Senator?

**Speaker A** **00:49:42**

I maintain that false claims were made against me and ultimately your attorney.

**Speaker D** **00:49:46**

Those false claims.

**Speaker A** **00:49:47**

I had the opportunity to attest my innocence in those false claims.

**Speaker D** **00:49:51**

But you didn't reveal any of this to President Trump or the transition team as they were considering you to be nominated for Secretary of Defense. You didn't reveal the action, you didn't reveal the criminal complaint, you didn't reveal the criminal investigation, you didn't reveal the settlement, you didn't reveal the cash payment. Why didn't you inform the Commander in Chief and the transition team of this very relevant event?

**Speaker A** **00:50:18**

Senator, I've appreciated every part of the process with the transition team. They have been open and honest with me. We've had great conversations between the two of us, and I appreciate the opportunity that President Elect.

**Speaker D** **00:50:29**

But you chose not to reveal this, right? Because you knew it would hurt your chances. So you chose not to reveal this really important thing to the Commander in Chief of the transition team because you were worried about your chances rather than trying to be candid with the future President of the United States.

**Speaker D** **00:50:48**

Are there any other important facts that you chose not to reveal to the President Elect and his team as they were considering you to be Secretary of Defense.

Senator, I sit here before you in open book as everyone who's watched this.

**Speaker D**

**00:51:00**

Process with multiple non disclosure and confidentiality agreements tying the hands of many people who would like to comment to us. Much, much has been made of your workplace behavior as a leader of nonprofit veterans organizations and as a FOX News contributor. Were you fired from either of the leadership positions with the nonprofits?

**Speaker A**

**00:51:21**

I was the leader. I was the CEO of America and he was director. Were you fired from either And I was never fired from a. Do you have non organizations?

**Speaker D**

**00:51:29**

Do you have none non disclosure agreements with either of those organizations?

**Speaker A**

**00:51:32**

Not that I'm aware of.

**Speaker D**

**00:51:33**

Senator, many of your work colleagues have said that you show up for work under the influence of alcohol or drunk. I know you've denied that, but you would agree with me, right, that if that was the case, that would be disqualifying for somebody to be secretary of defense?

**Speaker A**

**00:51:46**

Senator, those are all anonymous false claims. And the totality, they're not.

**Speaker D**

**00:51:50**

They're not anonymous.

**Speaker A**

**00:51:51**

The letters on the record here on.

**Speaker D**

**00:51:53**

The record we've seen records with names.

**Speaker A**

**00:51:56**

Attached to Freedom Concerned Vets for America and Fox News. One of your colleagues working hard every day.

**Speaker D**

**00:52:03**

One of your colleagues said that you got drunk at an event at a bar and chanted kill all Muslims. Another colleague, not anonymous, we have this said that you took co workers to a strip club, you were drunk, you tried to dance with strippers, you had to be held off the stage and one of your employees in that that event filed a sexual harassment charge as a result of it.

**Speaker D**

**00:52:26**

Now I know you denied these things, but isn't that the kind of behavior that if true, would be disqualifying for somebody to be secretary of Defense?

**Speaker A**

**00:52:36**

Senator, anonymous false charges.

**Speaker D**

**00:52:37**

They're not anonymous. And I'll just conclude and say this to the chairman, you claim that this was all anonymous. We have seen records with names attached to all of these, including the name of your own mother. So don't make this into some anonymous press thing. We have seen multiple names of colleagues consistently throughout your career that have talked about your abusive actions.

**Speaker F**

**00:53:01**

I think he's over his time.

**Speaker A**

**00:53:02**

He's way over his time.

**Speaker D**

**00:53:03**

I now yield.

**Speaker I**

**00:53:05**

So if you're confirmed as secretary of defense, you will oversee our military, including about a quarter of a million women who currently serve on active duty in the army, the Navy, the Air Force, the space force in the Marines. And I have serious concerns that your behavior toward women disqualifies you from serving in this role.

Now, I've been trying to get answers from you for quite some time on this. You haven't wanted to meet or to answer any of my questions. We'll just have to do it here and dive in. I want to pick up on some of the questions asked by Senators Shaheen and Gillibrand and Hirono.

**Speaker I**

**00:53:41**

And I just want to make sure we have a list of some of the facts that I think are undisputed. I'm not going to talk about anonymous sources. I'm just going to quote you directly. We've got the video. We've got it in print. So going back to January 2013, you told a Fox News interviewer that women in the military simply couldn't measure up to men in the military, saying that allowing women to serve in combat roles would force the military to lower the bar.

**Speaker I**

**00:54:06**

You picked up on that same theme in 2015, making remarks on Fire News, referring to women in combat as, quote, erode. It would erode standards. June 2024, you said on Ben Shapiro's podcast, quote, Women shouldn't be in combat at all. And then, of course, we've talked about it. In 2024, you published a book.

**Speaker I**

**00:54:31**

And you say on page 26 of your book, we need moms, but not in the military as especially in combat units. Page 48 of your book, you claim that women should not be in combat roles because men are distracted by women. And then 10 weeks ago, you appeared on the Sean Ryan show and said, I'm straight up just saying we should not have women in combat roles.

**Speaker I**

**00:54:59**

Now, I presume you recall making all these statements.

**Speaker A**

**00:55:04**

Senator, I'm not familiar with the article you're pointing to in 2013, but it underscores my argument completely because in that 2013 argument, I was talking about standards. Standards are what it's always been about.

**Speaker I**

**00:55:16**

The same fighting always been about. Senate, I quoted you directly. We've got the video. We're happy to show it. But I want to be clear here. For 12 years, you were quite open about your views and your views were consistently the same. Women are inferior. Soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and guardians. And in case anyone missed the point, and these



are your words from 10 weeks ago, women, absolutely straight up, should not be permitted to serve in combat.

**Speaker I**

**00:55:47**

And I notice on each of these quotes, those are said without qualification. It's not by how much you can lift or how fast you can run. They don't belong in combat, period. Or your words straight up. And then on November 9, 2024, just 32 days after your last public comment, saying that women absolutely should not be in combat.

**Speaker I**

**00:56:13**

You declared that, quote, some of our greatest warriors are women and you support having them serve and combat. Now that is a very, very big about face in a very, very short period of time. So help me understand, Mr. Hegseth, what extraordinary event happened in that 32 day period that made you change the core values you had expressed for the preceding 12 years?

**Speaker A**

**00:56:53**

Senator, again, I very much appreciate you bringing up my comments from 2013 because for me, this issue has always been about standards. And unfortunately, because of some of the people that have been in political power for the last four years, priorities other than standards, lethality and meritocracy have driven decision making.

**Speaker I**

**00:57:14**

Quoting you from the podcast, women shouldn't be in combat at all. Where is the reference to standards that they should be there if they can carry, if they can run? I don't see that at all, Mr. Hegseth. What I see is there's a 32 day period in which you suddenly have another description about your views of women in the military.

**Speaker I**

**00:57:42**

And I just want to know what changed in the 32 days that the song you sang is not the song you come in here today to sing.

**Speaker A**

**00:57:52**

Senator, the concerns I have and the concerns of many have had, especially in ground combat units, is that in pursuit of certain percentages or quotas, standards have been changed and that makes the combat more difficult.

**Speaker I**

**00:58:04**

Let me make this example for everybody involved about what happened in that 32 days.

You got a nomination from President Trump. Now, I've heard of deathbed conversions, but this is the first time I've heard of a nomination conversion. And I hope you understand that many women serving in the military right now might think that if you can convert so rapidly your long held and aggressively pursued views in just 32 days, that 32 days after you get confirmed, maybe you'll just reverse those views and go back to the old guy who said straight up, women do not belong in combat.

**Speaker I**

**00:58:47**

Now, Mr. Hegstaff, you have written that after they retire, generals should be banned from working for the defense industry for 10 years. You and I agree on the corrosive effects of the revolving door between the Pentagon and defense contract. It's something I would have liked to talk with you about if you'd come and been willing to visit with me.

**Speaker I**

**00:59:07**

But the question I have for you on this is will you put your money where your mouth is and agree that when you leave this job you will not work for the defense industry for 10 years?

**Speaker A**

**00:59:19**

Senator, it's not even a question I've thought about because it's not about it right now. It's not one my motivation for this job.

**Speaker I**

**00:59:26**

I understand what a yes or no. Time is short. I just need a yes or no.

**Speaker A**

**00:59:32**

I would consult with the President. About what? The policy.

**Speaker I**

**00:59:35**

And in other words, you're quite sure that every general who serves should not go directly into the defense industry for 10 years. You're not willing to make that same pledge.

**Speaker A**

**00:59:48**

I'm not a general, Senator.

**Speaker I**

**00:59:52**

You'll be the one. Let us just be clear. In charge of the generals. So you're saying sauce for the goose, but certainly not sauce for the gander.

I would want to see what the policy.

**Speaker I**

**01:00:04**

Oh, I'll bet you.

**Speaker J**

**01:00:06**

Mr. Hex said this hearing is about whether you are qualified to be Secretary of Defense. And one of the qualifications, to answer my colleague's question, is to actually win the votes of every member of this committee and to be confirmed by the United States Senate. And you need to convince us that you're worthy of that vote because the people of the state of Illinois voted for me to be their senator so that I could cast that vote.

**Speaker J**

**01:00:27**

When it comes to picking who is going to be the next Secretary of Defense, this hearing now seems to be a hearing about whether or not women are qualified to serve in combat and not about whether or not you are qualified to be Secretary of Defense. And let me just say that the American people need a sec def.

**Speaker J**

**01:00:43**

Who's ready to lead on day one? You are not that person. Our adversaries watch closely during times of transition. And any sense that the Department of Defense that keeps us safe is being stared by someone who's wholly unprepared for the job puts America at risk. And I am not willing to do that.

**Speaker J**

**01:00:59**

With that in mind, Mr. Hecseth, I want you to try to explain to the American people, this committee who have to vote for you and to our troops who are deployed around the world, why you are qualified to lead the Department of Defense. We already know that you've only led as large as a 200 person organization.

**Speaker J**

**01:01:15**

We already know that you so badly mangled a budget that after you left, they had to bring in a forensic accountant to figure out what went wrong. And that the largest budget you ever managed was about \$18 billion. You know that is about 51,560 times fewer lower than the Department of defense budget of \$825 billion.

**Speaker J**

**01:01:39**

\$16 million 51,568 is times smaller than the defense budget. Please describe to me, Mr. Hexth. You talk about DOD passing an audit. Please describe to Me a time or an

organization when you that you led underwent an audit because you say you're going to hire smarter people than you to run this audit.

**Speaker J**

**01:02:03**

I'm not asking you to be an accountant. I want you to be able to tell me what kind of guidance will be given to those employees. What will happen if whether or not you pass that audit. Have you led an audit of any organization? Yes or no? I don't want a long answer.

**Speaker J**

**01:02:17**

Yes or no, have you led an audit of any organization of which you were in charge?

**Speaker A**

**01:02:21**

Senator, in both of the organizations I ran, we were always completely fiscally responsible.

**Speaker J**

**01:02:26**

Yes or no, did you need an audit?

**Speaker A**

**01:02:28**

And the way that.

**Speaker J**

**01:02:28**

Yes or no, did you need an audit? Stated yes or no?

**Speaker A**

**01:02:31**

Completely.

**Speaker J**

**01:02:32**

You can't answer this question. Yes or no, did you lead an audit? Do you not know this answer, Senator? Yes.

**Speaker A**

**01:02:38**

Part of my leadership of these organizations.

**Speaker J**

**01:02:40**

Yes or no? I will take that as a no. What were the findings though? There were no findings because you've never let an audit. What guidance did you give the auditors? None.

Because you've never led an audit. Nobody expects you to be an accountant, Mr. Hexath. We expect is for you to understand the complexity of this Pentagon budget process that is absolutely necessary to outfit our war fighters.

**Speaker J**

**01:03:01**

Look, the Secretary of Defense is required to make quick decisions every single day that well, with high level information that's being provided for them. A Secretary of Defense has to have breadth and depth of knowledge. Right now I am concerned that you have neither, Mr. Hextef. What is the highest level of international negotiations that you have engaged in that you've led in?

**Speaker J**

**01:03:21**

Because the Secretary of Defense does lead international security negotiations. There are three main ones that the Secretary of Defense leads and signs. Can you name at least one of them?

**Speaker A**

**01:03:30**

Could you repeat the question, Senator?

**Speaker J**

**01:03:32**

Sure. What is the highest level of international security agreement that you have led? And can you name some that the Secretary of Defense would lead? There are three main ones.

**Speaker A**

**01:03:43**

I have not been involved in international security arrangements because I have not been in government other than serving in the military. So my job has been.

**Speaker J**

**01:03:51**

But no, the answer is you name one of the three main ones that.

**Speaker A**

**01:03:54**

The talking about defense arrangements, I mean NATO might be one of one that you're referring to.

**Speaker J**

**01:03:59**

Status of Forces Agreement would be one of them.

**Speaker A**

**01:04:02**

Status of Forces Agreement. I've been a part of teaching about Status of Forces Agreement.

**Speaker J**

**01:04:06**

But you don't remember to mention it. You're not qualified, Mr. Hexag. You're not qualified. You talk about repairing our defense industrial Complex. You're not qualified to that. You could do acquisition and cross servicing agreements, which essentially are security agreements. You can't even mention that you've done none of those. You talked about the Indo Pacific a little bit and I'm glad that you mentioned it up.

**Speaker J**

**01:04:27**

Mention it. Can you name the importance of at least one of the nations in the asean. In asean, and what type of agreement we have with at least one of those nations? And how many nations are in asean, by the way?

**Speaker A**

**01:04:39**

I couldn't tell you the exact number of nations in that, but I know we have allies in South Korea, in Japan and in Aukus with Australia trying to work on submarines with them.

**Speaker J**

**01:04:50**

None of those countries are in allies across. None of those three countries that you've mentioned are in asean. I suggest do a little homework before you prepare for these types of negotiations. Lipson. Mr. Hexaf this. We ask our troops to go into harm's way all the time. We asked them to go into harm's way.

**Speaker J**

**01:05:13**

And this behind me is a copy of the Soldier's Creed, a copy that usually hangs over my desk here in the Senate. And you should be familiar with it. It's the same copy that hung over my desk at Walter Reed every single day that I woke up and fought my way back because I wanted to go back and serve next to my buddies who saved my life.

**Speaker J**

**01:05:30**

These same. The same copy. These words I repeated over and over and over again. And let me read out two things to you. Two sentences. I will always place the mission first. And I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior task. Mr. Hegseth, our troops follow these words every single day.

**Speaker J**

**01:05:51**

And they man up and they pack their rucksacks and they go to war. And they deserve a

leader who can lead them, not a leader who wants to lower the standards for himself of raising. Raising the standards for other people. And by the way, our troops already meet the standards. We ask troops to man that ship, fight that fire, fly that helicopter until their very last breath.

**Speaker J**

**01:06:13**

And they do that every single day. They cannot be led by someone who's not competent to do the job. How can we ask these warriors to train and perform the absolute highest standards when you are asking us to lower the standards to make you the Secretary of Defense simply because you are buddies with our President elect.

**Speaker J**

**01:06:30**

And by the way, he has filed for bankruptcy six times. I'm not quite sure he's the kind of CEO you want to refer to as a successful businessman. Let me make it clear, you can't seem to grasp that there is no US Military as we know it without the incredible women that we serve.

**Speaker J**

**01:06:48**

Women who've earned their place in their units. You have not earned your place as Secretary of Defense. You say you care about keeping our armed forces strong and that you like that. Armed forces of meritocracy. Then let's not lower the standards for you. You, sir, are a no go at this station.

**Speaker A**

**01:07:03**

Thank you.

**Speaker C**

**01:07:04**

I'm going to move on to my next question. America's role in the world, Our alliance.

**Speaker E**

**01:07:13**

Is the threats America is facing.

**Speaker C**

**01:07:14**

They're serious. They're wide ranging from China to Russia to Iranian backed terrorism. So do you agree with the National Defense Strategy that the US Cannot compete with China, Russia and their partners alone and certainly cannot win a war that way? And this is a quote from the National Defense Strategy. Is your interpretation that American first foreign policy is America alone?

Does that include abandoning our allies and partners such as NATO, Taiwan, Israel and others? And if we can't win alone and we don't strengthen our strategic partnerships, I would say that position, your position, place us on a strategic path to lose to our adversaries. So maybe you're okay with choosing that path for America.

**Speaker C**

**01:07:57**

I want to know how you square that position with the positions you articulated in your book where you wrote that NATO is at relic at best a distraction and should be scrapped and remade. Are you okay with sending us down a path where we can't win?

**Speaker A**

**01:08:12**

Senator, the world has had that. Our friends in the world have had no better ally, our allies and partners have had no better friend than President Donald Trump, who's reintegrated a NATO alliance behind Israel in every way, in ways this administration has not. He has ensured that the NATO alliance has become far more robust.

**Speaker A**

**01:08:32**

He worked. Donald Trump going to stand behind Ukraine Pacific as well?

**Speaker E**

**01:08:36**

Is Donald Trump going to stand behind Ukraine?

**Speaker C**

**01:08:38**

Are you going to stand behind Ukraine? You say he's the strongest president. President Elect Trump said he will end the war in Ukraine before he takes office. Okay, so less than a week before he's inaugurated, to the best of your knowledge, do you have knowledge of a plan that he's going to use to rapidly end the war with Ukraine?

**Speaker C**

**01:08:53**

Do you believe it's feasible that it does not make unacceptable concessions to Vladimir Putin, who is a brutal dictator? And are you going to give President elect Trump military advice that you have given others to achieve the objective of.

**Speaker E**

**01:09:11**

Us winning the war in Ukraine? How do you think a rapid end.

**Speaker C**

**01:09:15**

To the war that Vladimir Putin started will affect the United States standing across the



world.

**Speaker A** **01:09:19**

Senator, I will always give clear guidance, my clear guidance, best guidance, to the President of the United States on matters like that.

**Speaker C** **01:09:26**

Do you think that if we concede to Vladimir Putin that that will hurt our credibility with our allies and partners? And do you not believe that our adversaries will.

**Speaker A** **01:09:35**

Perhaps you can take that for the record, Mr. Hegsett.

**Speaker B** **01:09:38**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Heckseth, good to see you here today. Thank you for your service.

**Speaker A** **01:09:41**

Thank you.

**Speaker B** **01:09:42**

And your willingness to serve. I also want to thank you for your clarity in articulating the vision you have for the Department of Defense in restoring an ethos, a warrior ethos, which is in stark contrast to the ethos we've seen the last four years, which is of weakness and wokeness. And I want to drill down on a few things specifically, and exactly how we've gotten to where we've gotten with recruiting and morale.

**Speaker B** **01:10:13**

Dei, there's been a little bit of discussion about this, but for those watching at home, DEI is not about giving everybody opportunity. It is rooted in cultural Marxism, the idea that you pit the room, any room, with oppressor versus oppressed. It's race essentialism, and it is poison. It has no business whatsoever in our military.

**Speaker B** **01:10:38**

I think the American people have spoken loudly and clearly about this. They're tired of this. They're tired of woke ideology. And to my Democrat colleagues on the other side, if you haven't picked up on that, you missed the plot, because that's what November 5th partially was about. And so let's talk specifically about some of these DEI programs that have been

funded in our academy, specifically the Air Force Academy.

**Speaker B**

**01:11:03**

It was advised as disfavored language to refer to your mom and dad as mom and dad. Okay. Dear mom and dad, I'm writing home. Don't say that. That's insane. We're all just people. You can't say that either. And in an effort to police this in a 1984 Orwellian novel, there was actually an eyes and ears program to rat on your fellow students who might say, mom and dad, or just say, in a tough situation, you know what?

**Speaker B**

**01:11:41**

We're all just people. Can't say that. This wasn't limited, by the way, to our academies. The Secretary of the Air Force, our current Secretary of the Air Force, in a memo from August of 2022, thought we had too many white officers, advocated for quotas, and if you crunch the numbers, that meant that 5,800 white officers who worked really hard should be fired in the United States of America.

**Speaker B**

**01:12:15**

I don't know how we got here. And by the way, the Air Force isn't alone here. The Navy sort of touted a drag queen influencer. This stuff is insane. If people wonder why recruiting is dropped off and let me just go through a few numbers and I want to get your comments on how we fix this because it's gone completely off the rails.

**Speaker B**

**01:12:34**

In 2022, the army missed their recruiting goal of 60,000 soldiers by by over 15,000. In 2023, the Navy missed their recruiting goals by over 7,000. In 2022, the Air Force couldn't only couldn't meet their standards, their numbers. Even though they lowered their standards, they've lowered their standards to meet numbers they still can't get to.

**Speaker B**

**01:13:00**

Mr. Heckseth, we got to fix this. I think what you've demonstrated today is that you have the talent and the ability and the desire to fix it. How are you going to fix it?

**Speaker A**

**01:13:13**

Well, Senator, first and foremost up front, you have to tear out DEI and CRT initiatives, root and branch out of institutions 100%. And then you have to put in Army, Navy and Air Force secretaries and others civilian positions at the helm who are committed to the same priorities that the President of the United States is and if confirmed, the Secretary of Defense will be send a clear message that this is not a time for equity.

Equity is a very different word than equality. Equality is the bedrock of our military. Men and women, duty positions in uniform. Black, white, doesn't matter. We treat you equally based on who you are in the image of God as an individual. And we all get the same bad haircuts. You're not an individual, you're part of a group.

**Speaker A**

**01:14:01**

Equity prescribes some sort of an outcome based on differing attributes that we have that divide us. What skin color are you? What gender are you? And then infuse that into institutions which manifest in things like quotas, formal or informal, which does what to morale? Sends it in the tubes. And it makes people feel like they're being judged by something other than how good they are at their job, which is poisonous inside institutions.

**Speaker B**

**01:14:28**

So on top of this recruiting crisis that wasn't enough for this administration. Administration during the COVID hysteria and in their attempt to fire 100,000 people who work for bigger companies because they didn't get the COVID shot or to mask five year olds, they decided also to make this a central plank in their policy at the Pentagon.

**Speaker B**

**01:14:51**

8,000 well trained. So we got a recruiting crisis. 8,000 well trained men and women were fired. Were fired. Will you commit today, Mr. Hecseth to recruit these folks back, to give them back pay and give them an apology from the United States government for how they were disrespected.

**Speaker A**

**01:15:14**

Senator, I will commit to this because the Commander in Chief has committed to this that not only will they be reinstated, they will receive an apology, back pay and rank that they lost because they were forced out due to an experimental vaccine.

**Speaker B**

**01:15:29**

Thank you. And I'm a limited time, but I just want to say for all the talk of experience and not coming from the same cocktail parties that permanent Washington is used to, you are a breath of fresh air. And again, if you weren't paying attention to what this election was all about, it was about the disruptors versus the establishment.

**Speaker B**

**01:15:52**

And the American people have had enough of business as usual for the same people that we line up for these same jobs who give us the same results. We need somebody who's

going to go in there and fight for innovation, fight for change. I think you're that person. And I appreciate your willingness to sit here and listen to some of these undignified attacks.

**Speaker B**

**01:16:12**

It's ridiculous. Thank you.

**Speaker F**

**01:16:14**

Few nominees come into this room with all the necessary experience to do this job, to be Secretary of Defense. We get that. It's a reflection on just how big of a job this is. What I want to understand is whether or not you bring any of the necessary experience that this job requires.

**Speaker F**

**01:16:34**

And here's where I'm concerned. Senator Coleman introducing you, and this is a quote. He said he has struggled and overcome great personal challenges, unquote. You walk in here saying that you've had personal and character issues in your past, including heavy drinking, which you wrote about. And you said, and this is a quote from you that you said, I sit before you as an open book.

**Speaker F**

**01:17:04**

Yet you haven't actually said what personal challenges it is that you've overcome when you've been asked about them. So I'm going to give you an opportunity here to be as forthright as you say you want to be. So while leading Concerned Veterans of America, there were very specific cases cited by individuals about your conduct.

**Speaker F**

**01:17:26**

I'm going to go through a few of them, and I just want you to tell me if these are true or false. Very simple. On Memorial Day 2014, at a CVA event in Virginia, you needed to be carried out of the event for being intoxicated.

**Speaker A**

**01:17:43**

Senator Onana Smears.

**Speaker F**

**01:17:46**

Just true or false. Very simple. Summer 2014, in Cleveland, drunk in public with the CVA team.

Anonymous smears.

**Speaker F**

**01:17:57**

I'm just asking for true or false questions. True or false? Answers an event in North Carolina drunk in front of three young female staff members after you had instituted a no alcohol policy and then reversed it. True or false? Anonymous smears December of 2014, at the CVA Christmas party at the Grand Hyatt at Washington, D.C.

**Speaker F**

**01:18:19**

you were noticeably intoxicated and had to be carried up to your room. Is that true or false? Anonymous smears Another time, a CVA staffer stated that you passed out in the back of a party bus. Is that true or false? Anonymous smears in 2014, while in Louisiana on official business for CVA, did you take your staff, including young female staff members, to a strip club?

**Speaker A**

**01:18:49**

Absolutely not. Anonymous smears so.

**Speaker F**

**01:18:56**

Is it accurate that the organization reached a financial settlement with a female staffer who claimed to be at a strip club with you and there was a colleague who attempted to sexually assault her? Was there a financial settlement?

**Speaker A**

**01:19:17**

Senator, I was not involved in that. I don't know the nature of how that played out.

**Speaker F**

**01:19:23**

But you understand there was a financial settlement for a young female staffer who accused other member of the organization, not you, of sexual assault in a strip club.

**Speaker A**

**01:19:36**

We have multiple statements on the record referring to that.

**Speaker F**

**01:19:40**

But you claim you were not there when that occurred.

**Speaker A**

**01:19:43**

Absolutely not.

Now, the behavior I cited if true. Do you think that this behavior of intoxication going into these type of establishments, women on your staff being so uncomfortable that they have to file these sort of harassment claims? Do you think this is appropriate behavior for a leader?

**Speaker A**

**01:20:10**

Senator, the overwhelming majority of anyone who's worked for me, including the on the record statements that have been submitted to this with their name on it on the record, men and women who worked with me every day are the overwhelming preponderance of evidence that testify to my leadership and professionalism in leading Vets for Freedom and Concerned Veterans for America.

**Speaker A**

**01:20:31**

My leadership has been completely impugned on these veterans organizations that did fantastic work.

**Speaker F**

**01:20:37**

Mr. Heckshath, I'm not even going to go into the. I'm not even going to go into the accusations.

**Speaker A**

**01:20:42**

Financial books with integrity across the board. How many people? Everybody who runs a campaign.

**Speaker F**

**01:20:47**

I have limited time. I'm not going to get into the accusations that come from Fox News, some of your Fox News colleagues here. There are multiple instances of accusations against you about drinking on the job.

**Speaker A**

**01:20:59**

All anonymous, all false, all refuted by my colleagues who I worked with for 10 years at 6am to 9pm and everything.

**Speaker F**

**01:21:08**

The challenge here for me, Mr. Hegset, is when there is discussion about personal challenges. And you admittedly had Issues with heavy drinking. It's hard to kind of square this, to square the circle here. It's kind of a difficult thing to do. Let me ask you, if I have about 90 seconds left here, If.

If you had to answer these questions about sexual assault against you and your drinking and your personal conduct, would it have been different if this. If you were under oath?

**Speaker A**

**01:21:42**

Senator, all I'm pointing out is the false claims against me.

**Speaker F**

**01:21:47**

Okay, I do not want to answer that question. I walk in, walked into. Into this hearing this morning, concern that you haven't demonstrated adequate leadership in your civilian roles. And this is a dangerous world we're living in here, and America cannot afford a Secretary of Defense who is unprepared for that mission. I'm going to leave with concerns about your transparency.

**Speaker F**

**01:22:10**

You say you've had personal issues in your past, yet when asked about those very issues, you blame an anonymous smear campaign, even when many of these claims are not anonymous. Which is it? Have you overcome personal issues, or are you the target of a smear campaign? It can't be both. It's clear to me that you're not being honest with us or the American people because you know the truth would disqualify you from getting the job.

**Speaker F**

**01:22:40**

And just as concerning as each of these specific disqualifying accusations are, what concerns me just as much is the idea of having a Secretary of Defense who is not transparent. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Austin testified before the House Armed Services Committee a couple of years ago and responding to a question from me, said he had, quote, no regrets about what happened in Afghanistan.

**Speaker F**

**01:23:09**

I wonder, what do you make of that?

**Speaker A**

**01:23:10**

Painful. They still tout it as the most successful airlift in American history. When what the rest of us all saw was true, laid before our eyes, utter failure, a destruction of military legacy there. Abandonment of our allies, death of American troops, detriment to our reputation. And then no answers and no accountability on the other side.

**Speaker A**

**01:23:37**

And then what was unleashed because of what happened in Afghanistan. The October 7

attacks, an invasion into Ukraine. The world recognized weakness for what it was. And who bore the brunt for it? The troops on the front lines at Abbey Gate doing an impossible job, whose external security was the Taliban, because there was no actual plan for this under the Biden administration.

**Speaker A**

**01:23:59**

And yet not a single person, the only person held accountable in those moments was a Marine Corps lieutenant colonel who had the courage to stand up and say, someone should be held accountable for that. His name is Stu Scheller. No one else involved has ever taken accountability for it. When that Microcosm becomes the reality of the perception of the American military or America's commitment to victory and success and positive outcomes.

**Speaker A**

**01:24:25**

The world responds to that. President Trump is going to restore real deterrence by bringing a real warrior culture back, rebuilding our military and ending wars properly. And if we have to fight them, winning them decisively. Decisively.

**Speaker F**

**01:24:39**

I served in Afghanistan. You served in Afghanistan. 75% of our nation's veterans disagree with how the withdrawal from Afghanistan was handled. The embarrassment of it, what that's done, I believe, has directly impacted our historic recruitment crisis in this country. Without a doubt, and you've already talked about that. But how do we fix it?

**Speaker F**

**01:25:02**

How do we bring pride back to wearing the uniform for the next generation, to inspire them to do what you and I did, to raise our right hand and take that oath and serve this great country?

**Speaker A**

**01:25:13**

I bring this back to strong, clear leadership, patriotic, pro American leadership that says we're not going to focus on all the other political projects. That's why we all have political perspectives. I said this before, and I'll say it again in uniform. None of that matters. You wear green, you wear blue, you bleed red.

**Speaker A**

**01:25:34**

That's it. Who you vote for doesn't matter. But when the perception of that changes, then you don't want people deciding whether to serve based on a political party in power. That's a dangerous thing for continuity inside your military, and it's fragile right now,



President Trump. And if I'm confirmed, with my leadership, we're going to restore the continuity of an apolitical military that acts decisively and only based on merit.

**Speaker A** **01:25:59**

You and I, they sound basic, but they're fundamental.

**Speaker F** **01:26:02**

You and I agree. You and I agree that wokeness is weakness. Mr. Hexsett, do you support racial quotas in recruitment or promotions in the United States military?

**Speaker D** **01:26:11**

Not.

**Speaker A** **01:26:12**

Senator. Support any form of racial quota.

**Speaker F** **01:26:15**

Do you support affirmative act? Do you support affirmative action at our.

**Speaker A** **01:26:18**

Nation'S military academies, Senator, Hiring and promoting and admitting the best and brightest, whatever their background is.

**Speaker F** **01:26:25**

I think that's. That's very important. Mr. Hegseth. Lloyd Austin, the secretary, later went AWOL. He disappeared for days and never told the president. Didn't even inform the president's chief of staff that he was going into the hospital. Would that ever occur on your watch?

**Speaker A** **01:26:42**

No. Senator. I know in any one of my jobs, if I had decided to go AWOL for even a day or two in uniform or around, that that would.

**Speaker C** **01:26:50**

Have been a concern for those who I haven't met in my one week that I've been Sworn into the senate. I'm a CIA officer recruited after 9 11. I did three tours armed in Iraq alongside the military, and have worked for four different Secretaries of Defense, both Democrat and Republican, proudly and watched them make decisions that literally

determine the life and death of Americans in the dark of night.

**Speaker C**

**01:27:15**

I'm also a Democrat representing a state that Trump won.

**Speaker F**

**01:27:18**

Right.

**Speaker C**

**01:27:19**

We both won on the same ballot. So I understand that President Trump has the right to nominate his people. We are going to have policies that we disagree with. All of that, to me comes very standard. What I think I'm most concerned with is that no president has the right to use the uniform military in a way that violates the US Constitution and further taints the military as that apolitical institution that we all want.

**Speaker C**

**01:27:45**

Right. And our founders designed the system so that, you know, we had posse comitatus, that we weren't going to use active duty military inside the United States and make American citizens potentially scared of their own military. We went through our own experience with that with the British. As the Secretary of Defense, you will be the one man standing in the breach should President Trump give an illegal order.

**Speaker C**

**01:28:11**

Right. I'm not saying he will, but if he does, you are going to be the guy that he calls to implement this order. Do you agree that there are some orders that can be given by the Commander in chief that would violate the U.S. constitution?

**Speaker A**

**01:28:26**

Senator, thank you for your service, but I reject the premise that President Trump is going to be giving illegal order.

**Speaker C**

**01:28:33**

No, I'm not saying he will. But if.

**Speaker A**

**01:28:34**

If.

**Speaker C**

**01:28:34**

Do you believe there is such a thing as an illegal order that Joe Biden or any other President Donald Trump could give? Is there anything that a commander in chief could ask you to do with the uniform military that would be in violation of the US Constitution?

**Speaker A** **01:28:47**

Senate, Anybody of any party could give an order that is against the Constitution or against the law.

**Speaker C** **01:28:54**

Right. Okay, so. And are you. So are you saying that you would stand in the breach and push back if you were given an illegal order?

**Speaker A** **01:29:01**

I start by saying I reject the premise that President, I understand giving done.

**Speaker C** **01:29:04**

Your genuine legal orders, but at all. Mike, this isn't a hypothetical. Your predecessor in a Trump administration, Secretary Esper, was asked and did use uniform military to clear unarmed protesters. He was given the order to potentially shoot at them. Kilos flew low in Washington D.C. as crowd control. He later apologized publicly for those actions.

**Speaker C** **01:29:28**

Was he right or wrong to apologize?

**Speaker A** **01:29:31**

Senator, I was there on the ground. I saw that. I saw.

**Speaker C** **01:29:34**

I understand and I respect that.

**Speaker A** **01:29:35**

I've been there but you're about to.

**Speaker C** **01:29:36**

Understand the level of threat that was.

**Speaker A** **01:29:38**

Involved in that moment.

**Speaker C** 01:29:40  
Was he right?

**Speaker A** 01:29:41  
So he was legality and the Constitution.

**Speaker C** 01:29:43  
Was he right or wrong to apologize?

**Speaker A** 01:29:46  
I'm not going to put words in the mouth of Secretary Esper, nobody else.

**Speaker C** 01:29:50  
He said on himself, you don't have to. What are you scared of? Did he do the right thing by apologizing?

**Speaker A** 01:29:56  
I'm not scared of anything, Senator.

**Speaker C** 01:29:58  
Then say yes or no. You can say no.

**Speaker A** 01:30:00  
The laws in the Constitution in any.

**Speaker C** 01:30:02  
Particular so Donald Trump asked for the active duty 82nd Airborne to be deployed during that same time. Secretary Esper has written that he convinced him against that decision. If Donald Trump asked you to use the 82nd Airborne in law enforcement roles in Washington D.C. would you also convince him otherwise?

**Speaker A** 01:30:22  
I'm not going to get ahead of conversations I would have with the president. However, there are laws and processes inside our Constitution that would be foul.

President Trump said in November that he is willing to consider using the active duty military against the, quote, enemy within. Have you been personally involved in discussions of using the US Military active duty inside the United States, Senator?

**Speaker A**

**01:30:46**

I'm fine. I'm glad we finally got to the topic of border security equaling national security because it's been abdicated and ignored for the last four.

**Speaker C**

**01:30:53**

It wasn't my question. I'm just asking have you been involved. You're about to be the Secretary of Defense potentially. Have you been involved in discussions about using the active duty military inside the United States, Senator?

**Speaker A**

**01:31:06**

I am not yet the Secretary of defense confirmed. I would be party to any number of.

**Speaker C**

**01:31:11**

But you haven't been in any of.

**Speaker A**

**01:31:12**

These, which I would not reveal what I have discussed with the President.

**Speaker C**

**01:31:16**

No, no. Just have you been in conversations again, you're going to be in charge of 3 million people. The active duty that I know you care about. I believe you care about. So have you been in conversations about using the active duty in any way, whether it's setting up and detention camps, policing dangerous cities?

**Speaker C**

**01:31:33**

Have you been involved in any of those conversations?

**Speaker A**

**01:31:36**

Certainly I have been involved in conversations relating to doing things this administration has not, which is secure the southern border and not allowed floods of illegal so are you country through an invasion that threatens the American people. And there are ways in which the military is already playing a role in that to include 5,000 national do you believe Indiana and Texas, we're at the border right now allowing for borders through.

Active duty military staff detention centers. Our US Military is not trained in law enforcement roles. I think you know that right We've seen how that mission is difficult for them in places like Iraq and Afghanistan because that's not the training a uniform, uniform military comes with. Do you support the use of active duty military in supporting detention camps?

**Speaker A**

**01:32:22**

Senator, everything we will do would be lawful and under the Constitution. But I recognize that this administration has advocated its responsibility. President Trump is going to restore order at the border, enemies from invading and yes, he is.

**Speaker C**

**01:32:37**

I get it. I get part of what in the spirit of preserving the institution that I think we both care about legitimately, the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I've heard a couple of different things. One, you said you will not change the Uniform Code of Military justice, which is what governs justice system in the military.

**Speaker C**

**01:32:53**

Yes or no? You said that earlier.

**Speaker A**

**01:32:55**

Those are laws Senators, set by Congress.

**Speaker C**

**01:32:58**

Okay, so you will not go to change it. You will not attempt to change it. You also said that JAG officers are potentially people who put their own interests in their own medals and promotions ahead of the troops. Senator Lindsey Graham was a JAG officer for most of his life. Is that what you believe about those who implement our justice system in the US Military?

**Speaker A**

**01:33:19**

Senator, I was speaking about particular JAG officers I've had to deal with in my military.

**Speaker C**

**01:33:24**

Are you going to get involved member.

**Speaker A**

**01:33:25**

Of the United States?

Senator, Are you a secretary again of Defense going to get involved in the implementation of the U.S. military Code of Justice?

**Speaker A**

**01:33:32**

Senator, ultimately it will be a big part of my job to evaluate decisions vis a vis. Okay, so I'll take Uniform Code of Military Agenda Justice.

**Speaker C**

**01:33:40**

Have you seen the fairly is CQ Brown on your list in the warrior boards to be removed from his position?

**Speaker A**

**01:33:46**

Senator, every single senior officer will be reviewed based on meritocracy standards, lethality and commitment to lawful orders.

**Speaker D**

**01:33:55**

They will be given.