



## Congratulations on Becoming the Secretary of Defense

By

**Michael Fincher**

Secretary Hegseth,

It is good to have a combat veteran as the new Secretary of Defense. It is also good to have someone who, while writing a book on the current state of the military, came to understand the difficulties service members face, why they choose not to resign or not re-enlist, and how hard it can be for some once they leave the service. That same research will also help you to eliminate the politicization that left the military hurting for recruits.

This understanding and experience will be helpful in correcting the course of the Department of Defense. Prioritizing warfighting capabilities and lethality over supporting the mission creep of bureaucracy is critical but antithetical to everything that is Washington, DC. The Pentagon was focused on budgets and bureaucratic infighting long before you arrived. The five-sided puzzle palace will fight back and has a long institutional memory.

Just remember, of [all services and the department](#) itself, only the US Air Force Airmen gave more money to Republicans than Democrats. There is at least one ray of hope.

For decades the military has had its combat forces slashed, bases closed or consolidated, and weapon systems and platforms reduced or retired—all while the Chinese, Iranians, North Koreans, and Russians expanded their military capabilities and plotted the destruction of the international order Americans built. While the war on terror was lost by the very people who hate the fact that you are Secretary of Defense, you have an opportunity to right the ship before it is too late.

No doubt, you will receive more input on what you should do than you can possibly digest. Let me offer a quick list.

First, a sovereign state, by definition, controls its borders. That is a military function. Help President Trump secure the border. There is no such thing as acceptable illegal immigration.

Second, adopt the Weinberger Doctrine as your overriding strategy for the use of military force. You will never go wrong if you do.

Third, the military may be the best socialist system in the world, but it is time to overhaul the personnel system and bring it into the twenty-first century. The military is unique, but do not let that be an excuse.

Fourth, modernization and expansion of the nuclear arsenal must be your top spending priority. A bigger Army, conventional Navy, or conventional Air Force will not deter China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia; only a robust strategic and theater nuclear arsenal can achieve that objective.

Fifth, service members, particularly junior enlisted, have lived in [toxic base housing](#) for far too long. This problem should not make this list, but after two decades it has yet to be solved.

Sixth, remove the cancerous social and political activism that inundates the military. Nothing harms unity more than pitting servicemembers against one another because of their race, gender, or some other contrived distinction. Based on your initial actions, your efforts are already moving ahead.



Seventh, there is simply too much duplication across the services and within the services. Ensuring command opportunities should not lead to the creation of unneeded commands. The services are too small to be inefficient.

Eighth, [expand the number of combatant](#) ships, missile defense systems, and the combat air force. Neither the Navy nor the Air Force has the capability to wage a sustained campaign against a peer. Not only does the nation lack the delivery platforms, but it will go Winchester in a matter of days. Thus, every kind of weapon is also needed.

Ninth, take the time to reset the baseline and see what the military really needs to defeat the Axis of Autocracy. Is it [drone swarms](#), [missile technology](#), robots? Whatever the answer may be, it is unlikely exactly what we already have.

Finally, get very good at telling the American people why it is more important to spend tax dollars on the military than the entitlements they know and love. This is perhaps your biggest task. In 2024, the federal government took in \$4.4 trillion and spent \$4.6 trillion on entitlement programs alone. That is unsustainable. The federal government was never meant to take care of the health, retirement, and education of Americans. It was specifically tasked to defend the nation.

You have a big job ahead of you. Good luck. Americans want nothing more than your success. The safety of the country depends on it.

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