

Grilling Hegseth: Democrats Expose Their Spiteful Hypocrisy

By Bruce Bawer

How bizarre it was to [watch](#) Pete Hegseth, Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of defense, being abused at his confirmation hearing by the Democratic members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Until Trump picked him for his cabinet, I didn't really know anything about Hegseth and had never watched his show on Fox News. But since his nomination, I've looked into him. I've heard his former colleagues speaking about him, without exception, in glowing terms. And



Defense Secretary nominee Pete Hegseth at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Service Committee on Jan. 14, 2025 (C-

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for hours in the committee room on Tuesday, he was not just highly articulate and well-informed on military matters; he exuded sincerity and decency. It was clear that whatever his past peccadillos, this is a man who genuinely loves America, who is dedicated to the idea of a strong military, and who cares about the men and women who wear the uniform of the American armed forces. For heaven's sake, he comes off like something out of another era – a good, old-fashioned, corny,

foursquare patriot of the kind that might have been played in an old movie by Jimmy Stewart or Gary Cooper.

A recurrent complaint by the Democrats on the committee was that Hegseth didn't have the kind of experience that previous candidates for the job had. Before becoming a host at Fox News, Hegseth studied politics at Princeton University and public policy at Harvard University, served with the Army at Guantánamo Bay, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and in the D.C. National Guard, led two veterans' service organizations, and worked as a market analyst at Bear Stearns. His views on the important issues are rock-solid. He recognizes that DEI has done serious damage to the armed forces. He understands that Islam isn't a religion of peace and that its more aggressive adherents are out to conquer the West. (It's all true, but you're not supposed to say so.)

Is Hegseth really lacking in the kind of experience that Democratic senators are used to in nominees for defense secretary? Guilty – just as Trump himself came to the presidency with an unprecedented pedigree. Unlike Lloyd Austin, the man he's supposed to replace, Hegseth hasn't spent his career climbing the ladder at the Pentagon, being promoted for screwing up, and then securing a lucrative job in the military-industrial complex. Under Obama, Austin led the fight against ISIS, which was a disaster. After retiring from the military, he was hired for the usual positions at Raytheon and other companies. During his confirmation [hearing](#) to be Biden's secretary of defense, he accused the armed forces of being full of racists and white supremacists – a disgusting charge to level against an institution that showed America eight decades ago how to be successfully integrated. After joining the Biden cabinet, Austin supported the insane Iran deal, purged Trump appointees from the Pentagon, and surrounded himself with radical activists from the Southern Poverty Law Center and apologists for jihadist Islam – all the while focusing largely on an absurd campaign to rid the military of

racism and to restructure it in accordance with DEI priorities, an approach that sent morale among the rank and file into a nosedive. It was, of course, Austin who presided over the most stunning military debacle in U.S. history, the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan; and it was he who, in 2023, unbeknownst to the White House, spent several days in the ICU at Walter Reed after undergoing prostate surgery.

You might have thought that Hegseth, coming along in the wake of such a colossal failure, would've sailed through his confirmation hearing. But think again. While most of the Republican members of the committee asked him serious and substantive questions about military preparedness (which he handled with aplomb), one Democrat after another actually had the audacity to question his moral compass, to deplore his lack of administrative experience, and to tell him point-blank – and, in most cases, quite nastily – that he was unqualified to fill Austin's shoes. It was outrageous enough to listen to their abuse with the knowledge of just how much of a catastrophic screw-up Lloyd Austin has been. But when one considered the back stories of those Democratic senators themselves, the whole display was even more beyond belief.

We're talking, after all, about people like Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, who, ranting at Hegseth about anonymous and unproven accusations of adultery that have been leveled against the latter since his nomination was announced, looked chillingly evil, delighting in his vile insinuations like a cartoon villain. If you'd only read a transcript of this interrogation instead of staring all the while into Kaine's beady eyes, you'd never have guessed that in the 2016 election he was the running mate and loyal lapdog of Hillary Clinton, whose hubby is the very personification of sexual profligacy. This is also a man, incidentally, who has refused to condemn Antifa, who has an extraordinarily long list of ties to supporters of jihad, and who has described slavery as an American invention.

We're talking, too, about the execrable (and surpassingly stupid) Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, who went after Hegseth as brutally as she did Brett Kavanaugh during *his* Supreme Court confirmation hearing. We're talking about Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who greased the wheels of her academic career by pretending to be a Native American – and who nonetheless had the nerve, on Tuesday, to pose as a pillar of righteousness while accusing Hegseth of duplicity about his views on women in combat. (By the way, along with the committee's other distaff Dems, notably New York's Kirsten Gillibrand – who, ludicrously, accused Hegseth of hurting the tender feelings of female soldiers – Mazie and Liz were even more painfully shrill and shrewish than usual, exuding all the charm of a coven of witches. For a while there I thought I was watching the Scottish play. As for Kaine, I could have sworn that the whiff of sulfur was oozing out of the TV screen.)

Last but not least, we're talking about Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, whose sleazy investment activities, involving sums in the millions of dollars, didn't keep him from going after Hegseth over unproven claims of mismanagement of relatively trifling amounts. But even this hypocrisy paled alongside the fact that Blumenthal, who had the audacity to challenge the value of Hegseth's military experience vis-à-vis the Department of Defense gig, has repeatedly told audiences of veterans that he'd served in Vietnam; on the contrary, he'd gone to extremes during the Vietnam era to avoid service. It's remarkable enough for somebody who's been caught red-handed lying about such a thing to remain in the Senate and keep pontificating for a living instead of crawling under a rock; but for such a creep to dare to say so much as a single unpleasant word to a real veteran like Hegseth is so reprehensible that it makes your head spin.

We already knew, needless to say, that Warren, Blumenthal, and others were pretty slimy characters. But to see these people – these creatures who are apparently incapable of shame –

stacked up live against the foursquare, rock-ribbed Pete Hegseth, who in response to their venom kept his cool throughout, was something special. One was reminded of Socrates being put through the wringer by the pusillanimous citizens of Athens, of Galileo being persecuted for heresy by the Vatican's thuggish inquisitors, of Thomas More being railroaded by Henry VIII's bloodthirsty flunkies. But alas, such is it – not always, but all too often – when some of the most appalling living specimens of *homo sapiens* detect in another member of the species the unbearable scent of decency, virtue, and integrity.

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