


Pentagon Tensions: Army Secretary Heading for Exit and Crackdown on Stars and Stripes Media

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U.S. Army Secretary **Dan Driscoll** is set to leave his position by the end of the year. The decision comes amid a climate of significant tension with Pentagon chief **Pete Hegseth**, opening a significant leadership vacuum at a time when U.S. armed forces are engaged on multiple international strategic fronts.

Friction with Pete Hegseth and Political Isolation

The divergences between Driscoll and Hegseth have deep roots in a series of institutional and personal conflicts that began over the course of 2025:

- **The first clash:** Arose when Driscoll proposed organizing an institutional visit for Donald Trump and JD Vance with troops, an initiative harshly rejected by Hegseth who asserted his hierarchical leadership.

- **The departure of allies:** Relations further deteriorated after the April dismissal of Deputy Chief of Staff **Randy George**, a close ally of Driscoll with whom he was planning army modernization and the adoption of new military technologies.
- **The successor:** With George's exit, Driscoll appeared isolated, in stark contrast with Hegseth, who favors his loyal ally **Christopher LaNeve**.



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The "Stars and Stripes" Case and Leadership Dismissals

The news of Driscoll's departure coincides with another move by Hegseth in his campaign against internal criticism: the removal of the leadership of the historic independent military publication **Stars and Stripes**.

As reported directly by the publication in an article signed by Svetlana Shkolnikova and Rose L. Thayer (read the full article on Stars and Stripes), the Pentagon has initiated dismissal procedures for insubordination against Executive Editor **Erik Slavin**, Middle East reporter **Lara Korte**, and outgoing publisher **Max D. Lederer Jr.**

- **Erik Slavin's reasons:** The executive editor stated he was fired for asserting, during a television interview on *CBS Sunday Morning*, that hypothetical censorship of news intended for military personnel would have represented an unacceptable red line. Slavin reiterated his firm support for the principle that the publication must remain editorially independent by law and by department internal policy.

- **Lara Korte's position:** The journalist, who followed the conflict and hardships of military and sailor families on the front lines (including difficulties aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* due to mission extension), called the dismissals a disgrace to the institution and to the military personnel who deserve a free and independent press.
- **Max D. Lederer Jr.'s departure:** The publisher, who had already announced his resignation after over thirty years of service, left his position highlighting how his vision of the *Stars and Stripes* mission differed in "fundamental ways" from that of the Pentagon.



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The crackdown is part of a broader review plan imposed by the Department of Defense, which includes restrictions on news agency services and a request to align content with the canons of "good order and discipline," raising serious concerns about freedom of information within the armed forces.

> ***Sources:***
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> ***The Wall Street Journal*** *(for rumors and investigation into the expected resignation by year-end of Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and the tense relations with Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth).*
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> ***Stars and Stripes*** *(via the original report signed by journalists Svetlana Shkolnikova and Rose L. Thayer, focused on the dismissal of the publication's leadership, including Executive Editor Erik Slavin, reporter Lara Korte, and publisher Max D. Lederer Jr.).*

> ***CBS News / CBS Sunday Morning*** *(for the television interview released by Erik Slavin and Lara Korte regarding the defense of editorial independence and the "red line" on censorship of military news).*