



Pentagon's New Direction: Fewer Transgender, Overweight and Bearded Troops; More AutoWarCom, Future Weapons and Fortress Bases

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth presented the “State of the Force” plan at Quantico: a revolution amid culture wars and zero tolerance, autonomous drones with Elon Musk, self-sufficient bases and the return of troops home.

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A unified command for autonomous warfare, **Elon Musk brought on as a strategic adviser**, competition among U.S. states to host a massive base intended to receive troops returning from overseas, and a hard line against “political correctness.” These are the pillars of the transformation of the U.S. armed forces outlined by Secretary of Defense **Pete Hegseth** during his keynote “**State of the Force**” address at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia.

A disruptive speech, attended by hundreds of junior officers and enlisted personnel and met with a standing ovation at its conclusion, marking a sharp change in direction: less room for inclusion policies and the traditional leadership establishment, and a full-speed push toward technology, autonomy, and drones.

Culture wars and zero tolerance: “Fewer trans people, fat people, and beards”

In his remarks, Hegseth forcefully reiterated the line of the so-called “culture wars” within the armed forces, reaffirming the elimination of diversity programs and the ban on transgender people serving. The Secretary of Defense used blunt, colloquial language to describe those whom he believes have no right to wear the uniform:

"No fatties, no trannies, no beardos, no weirdos, no wimps, no radicals" (“No fat people, no trans people, no bearded people, no weirdos, no wimps, no radicals”). It is a zero-tolerance policy aimed at purging everything the administration considers incompatible with an uncompromising view of discipline and physical fitness.

Six hundred of our finest warriors joined [@SECWAR](#) for morning PT at the Pentagon ahead of his HISTORIC State of the Force address. pic.twitter.com/qNfvIBMItw

— DOW Rapid Response (@DOWResponse) [September 30, 2026](#)

More AutoWarCom: the shift in drones and autonomous technologies

At the center of the structural transformation is the creation of the **Autonomous Warfare Command** (renamed "**AutoWarCom**"), a four-star combatant command intended to revolutionize the procurement and employment of drones and robotics.

- The goal is to carry out the fastest transition in modern military history, bringing the command to full operational capability by October 2027.
- To lay the operational groundwork, Hegseth tasked **Owen West** (head of the *Defense Innovation Unit*) and Navy SEAL test pilot **Max Stratiser**. The Pentagon has also submitted

a record request for **\$74 billion** for drone-related technology and counter-drone systems.

The weapons of the future and "Project Meridian"

To identify tomorrow's technologies, "**Project Meridian**" has commissioned a 120-day study on the future of warfare by an exceptional trio comprising **Elon Musk**, **Palmer Luckey** (founder of Anduril), and former Speaker of the House **Newt Gingrich**. Coordinated by technology chief Emil Michael, the three will define strategies and ideas for future generations of warfighters. Immediately after the speech, Hegseth met with the three civilians in a hardened facility within Quantico itself.

"Fortress America" and bringing troops home from overseas

The plan aims to harden strategic infrastructure: under the **Fortress America** initiative, U.S. bases will have to become energy-independent from the civilian grid and capable of withstanding sabotage or cyberattacks.

Hegseth also launched a competition among individual U.S. states to host a new fortified installation. The purpose of this "mega-base" is to **enable the return home of tens of thousands of U.S. troops currently stationed overseas.**



Senior-level cuts and messages to the media

The paradigm shift is proceeding in tandem with a sweeping purge: **about 10% of generals and admirals have already been removed**, and another 10% of senior positions have been eliminated (out of a total of about 850 general officers).

During his remarks, the Pentagon chief also delivered a stern message to the media and **journalists critical of the handling of the war in Iran.**

News link: <https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4615637/hegseth-delivers-state-of-the-force-address-outlines-series-of-new-initiatives/>