

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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September 29, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We are concerned by reports that you have ordered hundreds of generals and admirals in the U.S. Armed Forces to leave their posts and gather in Quantico, Virginia, for what appears to be a pep rally rather than a legitimate military necessity.¹ This unprecedented concentration of military leadership in one location, at one time, raises grave concerns about national security, waste of taxpayer resources, and the politicization of our military institutions. The apparent last-minute appearance by President Trump deepens this concern, given his stated intent to use the gathering to promote his administration's record. In light of these concerns, we demand that the administration justify its decision to pursue what we believe to be a dangerous and wasteful stunt.

Recent reporting indicates that the meeting will convene nearly all U.S. generals and admirals in command roles—as many as 800 officers from domestic and overseas posts—to hear you lecture these career warfighters on the “warrior ethos” and engage in a routine discussion of new standards.² The scale of such a gathering of senior military officials poses unnecessary security challenges, layered on other financial and operational wastes such as the June military parade on President Trump's birthday, and the deployment of servicemembers to urban areas across the United States only to have them focused on non-mission essential tasks.³ Experts have

¹ Mark F. Cancian, *A Quick Analysis of Secretary Hegseth's General Officers Meeting*, CSIS (Sept. 25, 2025) (online at www.csis.org/analysis/quick-analysis-secretary-hegseths-general-officers-meeting).

² *Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to Tell Hundreds of Generals About the “Warrior Ethos” in Rare Gathering: Sources*, ABC News (Sept. 28, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/defense-secretary-pete-hegseth-hundreds-generals-warrior-ethos/story?id=125978838>).

³ *Military Parade to Celebrate the Army's 250th Anniversary Will Be Held on Trump's Birthday*, AP News (May 2, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/trump-army-military-parade-birthday-2f5cd12c8ccd4efddc29bfa3cf8f2705>); *National Guard Troops to Pick up Trash in DC, Work on “Beautification” Projects*, NBC4 Washington (Aug. 26, 2025) (online at www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/national-guard-troops-to-pick-up-trash-in-dc-work-on-beautification-projects/3980033/).

warned that concentrating so many senior commanders in a single place creates an unnecessary national security vulnerability, particularly during a time of heightened global instability.⁴

In addition, the logistical burden and potential cost of military readiness in assembling hundreds of senior leaders and their staff is unjustifiable for a presentation that could instead have been a pre-recorded video emailed securely to leaders at their respective locations.

The obvious lack of any legitimate justification for such an event, along with the clear costs, raises strong concerns about the politicization of the military. It would be profoundly inappropriate to use senior officers as props for campaign-style events designed to bolster the image of a Secretary of Defense dogged by allegations of mismanagement, incompetence and the accidental disclosure of classified information to reporters.⁵

President Trump's declaration that he intends to use the meeting to promote his record further deepens the concerns about the use of senior officers as political props. President Trump told NBC news that, "It's really just a very nice meeting talking about how well we're doing militarily, talking about being in great shape, talking about a lot of good, positive things. It's just a good message," which does nothing to justify a potentially serious threat to military readiness, or to public confidence in the military.⁶ Politicization of the military, including the use of senior officers for propaganda purposes, is damaging for our democracy and for our national security. In the words of prominent experts on American civil military relations:

Presidents who are struggling politically have a powerful incentive to wrap themselves in military garb precisely because the American public holds the military in high esteem. But, when the language of national security is stretched to provide cover for what is otherwise viewed as a nakedly partisan effort, it jeopardizes the very esteem for the military on which the administration relies.⁷

To ensure that the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Congress can fully evaluate the necessity, costs, and effectiveness of this meeting, we request the following information be provided to the Committee no later than October 14, 2025:

1. A detailed estimate of the costs associated with this meeting, including, but not limited to, travel, lodging, base operations, security, communications, etc., and the funding source(s) that will absorb those costs;

⁴ *Hegseth Orders Rare, Urgent Meeting of Hundreds of Generals, Admirals*, Washington Post (Sept. 25, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/09/25/hegseth-generals-quantico-meeting/).

⁵ *Trump Allies Are Starting to Notice Hegseth's Growing Pile of Mistakes*, Politico (Mar. 27, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/03/27/hegseth-mistakes-some-trump-allies-00254817).

⁶ *Trump Says He'll Attend Pete Hegseth's Gathering of Generals to Tell Them "How Well We're Doing Militarily"*, NBC News (Sept. 28, 2025) (online at www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-pete-hegseth-generals-military-meeting-rcna234216).

⁷ Jim Golby and Peter Feaver, *Military Prestige During a Political Crisis: Use It and You'll Lose It*, War on the Rocks (June 5, 2020) (online at <http://warontherocks.com/2020/06/military-prestige-during-a-political-crisis-use-it-and-youll-lose-it/>).

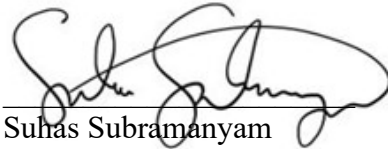
2. A detailed assessment of the operational risks and mitigation plans associated with withdrawing senior commanders and staff from active command responsibilities, as well as concentrating them in one location;
3. A formal statement of immediate and long-term objectives for the meeting; and
4. A detailed assessment of alternative means for this speech (e.g., secure video teleconference or pre-recorded video message) and the rationale for choosing an in-person event over these more secure and cost-effective options.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Suhas Subramanyam
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Military and
Foreign Affairs

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

The Honorable William Timmons, Chairman
Subcommittee on the Military and Foreign Affairs