Hegseth’s group reprimanded for laughing during Veterans Day honoring at Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

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Jasmine Fernández in Portland
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Members of an entourage traveling with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth were publicly called out for laughing and taking selfies during a Veterans Day visit to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, as reported by CNN.

Hegseth was posing for photos in front of the monument with his wife, Jennifer, chief of staff Ricky Buria, deputy chief of staff Patrick Weaver and senior adviser Tami Radabaugh following a ceremony attended by President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance.

An on-duty guard stopped his patrol and issued a stern warning over the noise: "All visitors will maintain an atmosphere of silence and respect at all times!"

In a statement to *The Independent*, Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell defended the department's respect for service members and acknowledged the guard's intervention.

“The Secretary and the entire Department have always honored — and will always honor — the sacrifices our military men and women have made to keep America safe,” Parnell said. “While commemorating this solemn day, a soldier correctly and respectfully reminded everyone to maintain decorum.”



An Army Guard member posted at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was forced to yell at a group traveling with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth after they were caught laughing during a Veterans Day ceremony (AFP/Getty)

The monument, which marks the final resting place of an unidentified World War I service member, is one of the most sacred war memorials in the U.S. and has been guarded continuously by the 3rd Infantry Regiment since 1948.

It remains unclear if those involved will face repercussions.

The cemetery incident comes during a tumultuous week for the defense secretary, who narrowly escaped an impeachment vote in the House of Representatives on Tuesday night.

The articles of impeachment, introduced by outgoing GOP Rep. Thomas Massie, accused Hegseth of executing unlawful orders — including waging war in Iran without congressional authorization, ignoring civilian casualty laws and directing extrajudicial killings. Hegseth dismissed the charges at a Tuesday press conference as a "policy dispute," while Trump vowed to continue supporting him.

The effort to advance articles of impeachment over unapproved military actions in Iran and the Caribbean was defeated 211–204 after 11 House Democrats failed to cast their votes due to a Washington traffic jam.



The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier marks the final resting place of an unidentified World War I service member and has been guarded continuously by the 3rd Infantry Regiment since 1948 (Getty)

The missed vote drew criticism from fellow Democrats and progressive commentators toward the absent members and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

"This is a major Hakeem Jeffries fail," wrote political commentator Krystal Ball on social media. "You could have impeached the war criminal Pete Hegseth, but Dems didn't show up to vote."

Progressive journalist Mehdi Hasan added, "Please pick a different Speaker, Dems. Please," while Michigan Senator-elect Abdul El-Sayed criticized his colleagues on CNN, saying, "You should show up and do your job."

Several absent lawmakers defended their attendance record by citing severe gridlock near the Capitol complex. A spokesperson for Representative Melanie Stansbury said the congresswoman "was blocked from entering the Capitol to vote due to a traffic incident and a police escort of a bus during the vote."

Representative Marilyn Strickland's chief of staff, Andrew Noh, said the lawmaker was "stuck behind a motorcade and missed the vote by 1 minute."



Hegseth was reportedly posing for photos in front of the monument following a ceremony attended by President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance (Reuters)

Despite the setback, Jeffries maintained that the push against Hegseth would continue.

"I haven't had a conversation with anyone on the floor team about what may or may not have happened in terms of the Hegseth resolution, but this is not the end of it," Jeffries said. "It's just the beginning."

The incident follows a broader threat to Hegseth's position after Republicans suffered significant losses in the midterm elections. Trump had reportedly begun

asking advisers whether Hegseth should remain in his cabinet as voters rejected the administration's military agenda, particularly the ongoing war in Iran.

"The reason we lost is the war," Vice President JD Vance posted on social media after the election.

In addition to opposition from Democrats, key Republicans have signaled that Hegseth's presence is stalling critical legislation. Republican Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina called his confirmation vote "the biggest regret" of his career and warned that Hegseth faced "a reckoning," citing his role in blocking a $70 billion defense funding request.