

The Walls Are Closing in on Pete Hegseth

-Harry J. Kazianis

Thom Tillis says he has lost confidence in Pete Hegseth, and Appropriations Chair Susan Collins called Gen. Christopher Donahue's exit deeply troubling — as Hegseth seeks tens of billions more for a war he priced at \$37.5 billion. Republicans haven't abandoned him as a group, and Trump still backs him.

Republican Senators Are Losing Confidence in Pete Hegseth: Republican frustration with Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth is moving into the open as the Iran war becomes more expensive and his removal of senior military leaders draws fresh scrutiny. An [Independent report on the growing GOP criticism](#) found lawmakers questioning whether Hegseth has the judgment and management experience needed to lead the department through a widening conflict.

Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina said he no longer had confidence in Hegseth and criticized what he described as excessive micromanagement and the loss of respected officers. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine separately called the departure of Gen. Christopher Donahue, the former commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, deeply troubling.

The criticism matters because Hegseth is asking Congress for tens of billions of dollars in additional military funding. At a [July 21 Senate Appropriations Committee hearing](#), he estimated that the Iran war had cost \$37.5 billion and warned of serious readiness problems unless lawmakers approved more money.

Republicans have not abandoned Hegseth as a group. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Roger Wicker continues supporting a tougher campaign against Iran, while Sen. John Cornyn argues that the United States retains enough military power to pressure Tehran.

The emerging divide concerns Hegseth's leadership, not a unified Republican rejection of the war.

The Iran War Has Made Hegseth's Record Harder to Defend

Hegseth entered office promising fewer senior officers, faster decisions and a stronger warfighting culture. Donahue [relinquished command on July 2](#) after an 18-month tenure focused on integrating American and NATO forces across Europe.

Changing military leadership is a civilian prerogative. Doing so during a major conflict creates a different problem when senators suspect the moves reflect personal control rather than operational requirements. The Pentagon is losing experienced commanders while the United States faces [an Iran war without a clean political outcome](#).

The campaign has also exposed pressure on American missile inventories and operating accounts. Washington paused its bombing after 13 consecutive nights as senior advisers raised

concerns about remaining targets and munitions. Several critical weapons now face [replacement timelines measured in years](#), making the conflict a wider test of [American readiness for another major war](#).

Hegseth Needs Republican Votes for More Iran War Money

Collins chairs the Appropriations Committee. Tillis remains a Republican vote in a closely divided Senate. Their criticism therefore reaches beyond public embarrassment. Hegseth needs lawmakers to approve the administration's supplemental request while explaining why the Pentagon requires new money before spending all the funds Congress previously authorized.

The hearing did not produce a final price for the war. Gen. Dan Caine told senators that he could not predict the total because Iran retained choices of its own. That answer was militarily realistic, but it weakened the administration's effort to present the funding request as a bounded commitment. The United States can continue striking Iran, yet [military damage has not delivered the settlement Washington wants](#).

Casualty reporting has created another trust problem. The Pentagon's public database was revised after discrepancies emerged over deaths and injuries from renewed fighting. The latest [Associated Press review of the records](#) documented confusion over which losses the department included in its official Iran-war count.

Hegseth Still Has Trump's Support

Donald Trump has shown no sign that he intends to remove Hegseth. Presidential support protects the secretary from an immediate personnel crisis, while Republican hawks still want him to intensify the campaign. The available [military and diplomatic options](#) remain expensive enough to require continued congressional involvement.

The next funding vote will show whether Republican criticism remains personal or becomes operational. Hegseth can survive hostile hearings while Trump stands behind him.

His position becomes harder if senators begin withholding money, blocking nominations or demanding formal limits on how the Iran war is conducted.