

## Claim

Claim: "US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth called Putin a 'war criminal'."

## Actions

`web_search("Pete Hegseth Putin war criminal")`

## Evidence

### Evidence from `web_search`

Newsweek published a fact-check article stating that Pete Hegseth called Putin a "war criminal" in March 2022 on Fox News. The article also mentions that Hegseth has since been more cautious and critical of U.S. spending on the conflict. The article is dated November 13, 2024. (



According to POLITICO, Roger Wicker said that Pete Hegseth called Putin a “war criminal who needs to be in prison for the rest of his life.” The article was published on February 14, 2025. ([image:k](#)) The Kyiv Independent published an article on June 12, 2025, stating that Pete Hegseth, when asked who the aggressor in the war is, responded, "Russia is the aggressor." However, he avoided directly stating which side the U.S. wants to see win. ([image:k](#))

- <https://www.newsweek.com/pete-hegseth-vladimir-putin-war-criminal-1985251>
- <https://www.politico.eu/article/senate-armed-services-chair-roger-wicker-pete-hegseth-war-in-ukraine-russia/>
- <https://kyivindependent.com/republicans-press-pentagon-chief-over-trumps-plan-to-end-russias-war-against-ukraine-politico-reports/>

## Elaboration

The evidence indicates that Pete Hegseth has, at different times, referred to Putin as a "war criminal" and identified Russia as the aggressor in the war. Newsweek reported that Hegseth called Putin a "war criminal" in March 2022 on Fox News. POLITICO reported that Roger Wicker said Hegseth called Putin a "war criminal who needs to be in prison for the rest of his life." The Kyiv Independent reported that Hegseth identified Russia as the aggressor.

## Final Judgement

The evidence confirms that Pete Hegseth has, at different times, called Putin a "war criminal." This is supported by multiple sources, including Newsweek and POLITICO.

true

**Verdict: TRUE**

## Justification

Pete Hegseth has been reported to have called Putin a "war criminal." A Newsweek fact-check article from November 13, 2024, confirms that Hegseth made this statement on Fox News in March 2022. Additionally, POLITICO reported that Roger Wicker stated Hegseth called Putin a "war criminal who needs to be in prison for the rest of his life."