



Trump administration

Trump ends DEI in US military and reinstates troops who refused Covid vaccines

President also signs order to eliminate 'gender radicalism in the military' and seeks to develop missile defense system

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Donald Trump signed a series of executive orders on Monday that remove diversity, equity and inclusion from the US military, reinstate thousands of troops who were kicked out for refusing Covid-19 vaccines during the pandemic, and one that appeared to be aimed at transgender troops.

Earlier on Monday, Pete Hegseth, who narrowly secured enough votes to become defense secretary, referred to the names of Confederate generals that were once used for two key bases during his remarks to reporters as he entered the Pentagon on his first full day on the job.

Trump signed the executive orders while flying back from Miami to Washington.

One of the executive orders signed by Trump was titled eliminating “gender radicalism in the military”.

It appeared to be a reference to transgender troops in the military but a text of the order was not immediately available.

During his first term, Trump announced that he would ban transgender troops from serving in the military. He did not fully follow through with that ban - his administration froze their recruitment while allowing serving personnel to remain.

Biden overturned the decision when he took office in 2021.

About 1.3 million active personnel serve in the military, Department of Defense data shows. While transgender rights advocates say there are as many as 15,000 transgender service members, officials say the number is in the low thousands.

When Trump announced his first ban in 2017, he said the military needed to focus on “decisive and overwhelming victory” without being burdened by the “tremendous medical costs and disruption” of having transgender personnel.

Hegseth, who has promised to bring major changes to the Pentagon, has made eliminating DEI from the military a top priority.

The air force said on Sunday that it will resume instruction of trainees using a video about the first Black airmen in the **US military**, known as the Tuskegee airmen, which has passed review to ensure compliance with Trump’s ban on DEI initiatives.

Much of Hegseth’s focus at the Pentagon could be internal to the military, including making good on a Trump’s executive order on bringing back troops discharged for refusing Covid vaccines.

Thousands of service members were removed from the military after the Pentagon made the Covid-19 vaccine mandatory in 2021.

Trump also signed an executive order that “mandated a process to develop an ‘American Iron Dome’”.

The short-range Iron Dome air defense system was built by Israel’s Rafael Advanced Defense Systems with US backing, and was built to intercept rockets fired by Hamas in Gaza towards Israel.

Each truck-towed unit fires radar-guided missiles to blow up short-range threats such as rockets, mortars and drones in midair.

The system determines whether a rocket is on course to hit a populated area. If not, the rocket is ignored and allowed to land harmlessly.

Any such effort would take years to implement in the United States.

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