

This Week: Defense Department Sharpens Standards, Flushes Climate Change Policies, Restarts Support of Ukraine

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High standards, including physical fitness, body composition and grooming, will be central to a U.S. military that will only get stronger and more lethal.



In a memo Wednesday, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness to look across the military services and investigate current standards, how those standards may have changed over the past decade, and the impact of those changes.

"High standards are what made the United States military the greatest fighting force on the planet," Hegseth told defense leaders. "The strength of our military is our unity and our shared purpose. We are made stronger and more disciplined with high, uncompromising and clear standards."

A laser-like focus on standards has been a top priority for the new defense secretary since the day he was sworn into office. In a message to the entire Defense Department just hours after becoming secretary, he promised to revive the warrior ethos, in part, with high, uncompromising and clear standards.

"Our troops will look sharp — not sloppy; and the DOD will seek quality — not quotas," said Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell during a weekly update video posted today.

Parnell also said the department has altered its view on climate change efforts across the department and military services.

"The Pentagon ... announced that we are eliminating woke climate change programs and initiatives inconsistent with our core warfighting mission," he said.

For example, late last week, the DOD announced cuts to more than 90 studies within the portfolio of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. Those cuts are expected to provide the department with more than \$30 million in cost savings in the first year. Among those studies were those related to global migration patterns, climate change impacts and social trends.

But Hegseth has said from the start that the DOD's focus now is on improving lethality, warfighting and readiness, not climate change and other programs and initiatives inconsistent with its core warfighting function.

In a social media post on Sunday, the secretary solidified the department's commitment to the new focus with a blunt assessment of what the department will and will not be doing going forward.

Hegseth added that the DOD will be moving away from climate change discussions.

Also, this week, Parnell said U.S. support for Ukraine is restored.

The United States has committed billions of dollars in security assistance to Ukraine through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative and by providing hardware and munitions pulled from the U.S. military inventory. For a short time, work related to existing commitments was stopped. Now it has started again.

"Ukraine aid and intelligence sharing was reactivated in response to [Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelenskyy's acceptance of a 30-day ceasefire," Parnell said. "The president and the secretary of defense have been very, very clear: The U.S. wants to see peace in Ukraine. The killing must stop."

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