



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on November 10, 2025

Hegseth Orders Pentagon to “Wartime Footing,” Tightens Ties With Industry

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), recently rebranded as the Department of War (DOW), is shifting its focus to a “wartime footing.” In a [speech](#) to a group of defense-industry executives and DOD officials on Friday, Secretary Pete Hegseth outlined a broad plan to overhaul the Pentagon’s acquisition system and speed up weapons production:

Our objective is simple: Transform the entire acquisition system to operate on a wartime footing, to rapidly accelerate the fielding of capabilities and focus on results.... American industry and spirit are begging to be unleashed to solve our most complex and dangerous war-fighting problems. We need to get out of our own way, out of your way, and enter into real partnership with you rather than overprescribe and decelerate your natural progress.



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He later underscored:

We’re not building for peacetime. We are pivoting the Pentagon and our industrial base to a wartime footing. Building for victory should our adversaries FAFO [f*** around and find out].

The “transformation” was urgent, he said:

This is a 1939 moment, or hopefully a 1981 moment, a moment of mounting urgency. Enemies gather, threats grow. You feel it. I feel it. If we are going to prevent and avoid war, which is what we all want, we must prepare now.

Bureaucracy and Rumsfeld’s Shadow

Hegseth began his address by naming his “adversary” as being not on a battlefield, but inside the Pentagon. “The foe I’m talking about is much closer to home. It’s the Pentagon bureaucracy,” he said. “Not the people, but the process; not the civilians, but the system.” He called it “one of the last bastions of central planning” that “with brutal consistency stifles free thought and crushes new ideas.”



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“The modernization of the Department of War is a matter of life and death ultimately of every American,” declared the secretary.

Then came an unexpected admission. “The speech so far is not my own,” Hegseth said. “Those words are practically verbatim from a speech given by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on September 10, 2001.” He ended by again invoking Rumsfeld, urging the audience to build on “Rumsfeld’s vision.” That vision — [outlined one day before 9/11](#) — was meant to “liberate” the Pentagon from bureaucracy. Instead, it ushered in two decades of war, privatization, and unchecked spending.

Rumsfeld’s name now carries a toxic legacy. His call to streamline defense spending became the justification for expanding it. He presided over the Iraq invasion, privatized logistics on an unprecedented scale, and normalized permanent war as policy.

By reviving that speech, Hegseth aligned himself not with meaningful reform to shrink the war machine, but with the model that made reform nearly impossible — one that equated efficiency with removing oversight and security with continuous mobilization.

What’s Changing

Hegseth’s speech boiled down to two main themes: changing the requirements process and changing the acquisition process — both notoriously slow and opaque.

Killing JCIDS

One of the boldest moves: the end of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), which often takes 300 days or more just to approve a document. The DOD [started](#) its overhaul this past August. Hegseth called it “a years-long bureaucratic anchor that dragged us down while our adversaries surged ahead.”

In its place, he outlined a new framework linking requirements, funding, and delivery. That will include the three components. The Requirements and Resourcing Alignment Board (RRAB) will tie dollars directly to warfighting priorities. The Mission Engineering and Integration Activity (MEIA) will connect the Pentagon, industry, and labs to prototype early. And the Joint Acceleration Reserve (JAR) will push promising technologies across what Hegseth called the “valley of death” between prototype and deployment.

The aim, he said, is to close the gap between what the military says it needs and how fast it can get it. The new “organizing principle,” he stressed, is “speed to delivery.”

Redesigning Acquisition

Hegseth announced what he called a total reset of how the Pentagon buys weapons:

Today, at my direction, the defense acquisition system as you know it is dead. It’s now the warfighting acquisitions system.

The overhaul strips away layers of review, giving program leaders authority to trade cost and performance for speed. Contracting officers will move inside project teams and be judged on outcomes, not compliance. The department will also adopt a “commercial-first” approach, favoring off-the-shelf technology. Hegseth argued:

An 85-percent solution in the hands of our armed forces today is infinitely better than an



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unachievable 100-percent solution.

“Speed and volume will rule,” he stressed once again.

Public-private “Arsenal of Freedom”

Hegseth devoted much of his address to what he called “the arsenal of freedom.” That is the “rebuilt industrial base” designed for continuous wartime production.

He announced the creation of a new Wartime Production Unit, redesigned from the Joint Production Acceleration Cell, to centralize deal-making through a “deal team” empowered to negotiate bulk contracts, enforce delivery, and tie investment to performance. “This initiative is not a pilot program,” he said. “It’s a fundamental shift in how we arm our warfighters.”

Building the “arsenal of freedom,” he conceded, “will not happen overnight.” It will demand sustained investment and long-term commitments. Annual budget cycles, he argued, prevent the Pentagon from providing industry with predictable demand. His fix: “stable, clear, and consistent demand signals,” backed by “multi-year procurement authorities, guaranteed purchase orders, and stable funding mechanisms” to encourage private investment and expand production.

“We will encourage and accelerate creative strategies in investment, contracting, and procurement,” Hegseth said. He urged companies to spend their own capital to modernize and scale up — or risk going out of business:

If we do that, the Department of War is of course big-time supportive of profits — we are capitalists after all. But if they do not, those big ones will fade away.

Then came the incentive:

You, our friends among industry, must realize that we appreciate your need to make a good margin and a profit as capitalists. But you must invest in yourselves rather than saddling taxpayers with every cost. For those who come along with us, this will be a great growth opportunity — and you will benefit.

Economy of War

Hegseth is right that the Pentagon’s bureaucracy is broken. It is swollen out of proportion, immune to accountability, and incapable of explaining where its money goes. The DOD has never passed an audit since 2018, and cannot account for more than [\\$21 trillion in spending](#).

By further fusing the military’s machinery with profit-driven industry and a Congress accustomed to its payroll, Hegseth risks consolidating the very system he claims to reform. Already addicted to spending, it will now have an even greater incentive to remain at war.

The new “wartime footing” may deliver speed, but it strips away whatever restraint is left. It trades oversight for output and principle for performance. The result is not a leaner Pentagon, but a faster one — and a country more deeply bound to the economics of endless war.



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