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## Pentagon Divided Over Religious Themes in Recruitment

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Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's efforts to integrate Christian themes into U.S. military recruitment have stirred debate inside the Pentagon, raising questions about religion's place in defense communications.

A recent Pentagon video posted on X showed paratroopers jumping into desert terrain alongside the caption, "*We Are One Nation Under God.*" Superimposed biblical text from Psalms read: "*I pursued my enemies and overtook them... I did not turn back till they were*

*destroyed.*” Critics argue that such imagery risks politicizing the armed forces and framing military service in religious terms.

Hegseth, a former television host, is a member of a church within the Congregation of Reformed Evangelical Churches, led by Pastor Doug Wilson. Wilson has drawn controversy for views such as opposing women’s voting rights. Days before the recruitment video appeared, Hegseth promoted Wilson’s slogan, “*All of Christ for All of Life*,” which advocates weaving Christianity into governance and society.

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell confirmed Hegseth’s association with Wilson’s church, adding: “*The Secretary very much appreciates many of Mr. Wilson’s writings and teachings.*” The Department of Defense has not commented further on the religious framing of the recruitment campaign.

Some veterans and active-duty personnel have voiced unease. Mike Pruitt, a Navy veteran and congressional candidate in Virginia, said he has heard from service members who worry the messaging blurs the line between faith and military duty. “*That kind of concern and frustration within active service right now is just completely invisible to the media narrative,*” Pruitt said.

Analysts caution that explicitly religious messaging could alienate segments of the armed forces and potential recruits, testing inclusivity and constitutional limits. They note that past administrations sought to keep military outreach secular to preserve cohesion across diverse ranks.

Supporters of Hegseth argue that emphasizing faith restores moral grounding and resilience within the armed forces at a time of global uncertainty.

The debate underscores a larger challenge for the Pentagon: balancing individual religious expression with the responsibility to maintain a unified and secular defense force.