
US Defense Secretary criticised over Pastor endorsement controversy



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WASHINGTON, August 11—US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is facing sharp criticism after reposting and praising a CNN interview featuring two Christian pastors who have made controversial remarks about women's voting rights and slavery.

The interview included Idaho pastor Toby Sumpter, who said that in his “ideal society” voting should be conducted by households, with the husband casting the ballot after consulting his family. Fellow pastor Doug Wilson defended earlier comments suggesting there was “mutual affection between slaves and their masters,” a statement widely condemned as offensive and historically inaccurate.

On Friday, Hegseth reposted the seven-minute segment on X with the caption “All of Christ for All of Life.” Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell later stated that Hegseth is a proud member of a church affiliated with the denomination Wilson founded and appreciates many of Mr Wilson’s writings and teachings.

Critics say the defense secretary’s public praise for such figures raises serious concerns about his judgment and the potential influence of extreme views on US defense policy. Andrew Whitehead, sociology professor at Indiana University Indianapolis, said it matters if the secretary of defense promotes views questioning women’s right to vote or downplaying the history of slavery. He stressed that such endorsements are significant when they come from someone holding high office.

Christ Church, associated with Wilson, has been expanding across the United States and recently opened a parish in Washington DC where Hegseth and his family have attended services.

Hegseth has previously faced controversies including allegations of sexual misconduct and Islamophobic comments, both of which he denies, as well as criticism for revealing sensitive military information via a commercial messaging service. The latest incident has prompted calls from lawmakers and advocacy groups for clarification of his position.