

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has significantly severed relations with several Ivy League universities, primarily by **terminating Department of Defense funding for graduate-level programs** starting in the 2026–2027 academic year. He has described these institutions as "factories of anti-American resentment" that prioritize "wokeness" over military readiness. ^[1, 2, 3, 4]

Key Actions Taken

- **Graduate Program Cancellations:** Hegseth has ordered the "complete and immediate cancellation" of attendance at multiple elite institutions for active-duty service members. Impacted schools include:
 - **Harvard University:** Ties were initially cut in early February 2026, targeting professional military education, fellowships, and certificate programs.
 - **Broadening the Ban:** On February 27, 2026, the ban was extended to include **Princeton, Yale, Columbia, and Brown**, as well as non-Ivy schools like **MIT, Georgetown, and Carnegie Mellon**.
- **Targeted Programs:** The cuts specifically affect the **Senior Service College Fellowship**, a prestigious program for mid-career officers, and other graduate-level professional military education (PME).
- **Exceptions:**
 - **Current Students:** Personnel already enrolled in these programs are generally allowed to complete their studies.
 - **ROTC:** As of early 2026, reports indicated that undergraduate Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs remained unaffected. ^[1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13]

Reasons Cited for the Break

Hegseth has framed these decisions as a rejection of "woke indoctrination" and a return to a "warrior ethos". His specific criticisms include: ^[6, 11]

- **Ideological Concerns:** He claims elite universities have replaced the "study of victory" with "radical dogma" and "leftist ideology".
- **Adversarial Influence:** He has accused Harvard of maintaining research partnerships with the Chinese Communist Party and fostering an environment that "celebrated Hamas".
- **Personal Protest:** Hegseth, a graduate of both Princeton and Harvard, famously made a theatrical show of defacing and returning his Harvard diploma in 2022 to protest the university's direction. ^[4, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16]

The Pentagon is reportedly seeking to reroute military leaders to alternative institutions, such as **Hillsdale College** and **Liberty University**, which Hegseth views as more aligned with national security interests. ^[17]

[1] <https://www.nytimes.com>

[2] <https://www.yahoo.com>

[3] <https://taskandpurpose.com>

[4] <https://www.foxnews.com>

[5] <https://yaledailynews.com>

[6] <https://www.youtube.com>

[7] <https://www.tuftsdaily.com>

[8] <https://www.bbc.com>

[9] <https://apnews.com>

[10] <https://www.military.com>

[11] <https://www.youtube.com>

[12] <https://www.nbcboston.com>

[13] <https://www.harvardmagazine.com>

[14] <https://www.youtube.com>

[15] <https://www.facebook.com>

[16] <https://www.theguardian.com>

[17] <https://apnews.com>