



## **Pete Hegseth says he was blackmailed into paying off rape accuser during #MeToo movement: lawyer**

By Ryan King

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President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth says he was blackmailed during the #MeToo movement, and paid off an accuser to keep her silent, his attorney Timothy Parlatore tells The Post.

Hegseth, who worked as a Fox News host until Trump picked him for his Cabinet, paid an undisclosed amount to a woman who accused him of sexual assault, which he maintains was consensual, his lawyer confirmed.

"Basically, he was totally innocent. He did nothing wrong here," Parlatore said. "We went through a mediation and ultimately settled for far less than what she wanted. And that should have completely buried it."

Last week, the Trump transition team received a memo from a friend of the accuser who detailed the accusations against Trump's surprise pick to lead the Department of Defense, the Washington Post reported.

The alleged incident took place on Oct. 7, 2017, in Monterey, California, and involved an unidentified staffer at a conservative group who accused Hegseth, now 44, of raping her in his hotel

room after a boozy night at the bar. She was in her 30s at the time.



The former Fox News star has denied sexual assault accusations. Getty Images

Hegseth had been staying at the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa at the time after delivering an address at the California Federation of Republican Women conference.

Parlatore, who declined to divulge the amount paid or the identity of the woman, claimed that she was sober and pursued Hegseth.

“He had way too many drinks, and according to video surveillance and eyewitness testimony, this woman who was sober, took advantage of him, and she was the aggressor,” he said.

“She took him by the arm and she led him up to his room.”

But the memo of the incident sent to the transition team, which The Post has not independently obtained, alleged that she was responsible for ensuring that Hegseth made it back to his room and to the airport the next day, according to the Washington Post.



Last week, the Trump transition team received a memo from a friend of the accuser who detailed the accusations against Hegseth. REUTERS

She was staying in the hotel with her children and husband at the time. After receiving texts from two women at the bar who claimed “Hegseth was getting pushy about his interest in taking them upstairs to his room,” she decided to intervene, per the memo.

The accuser “had a moment of hazy memory of being raped the night before, and had a panic attack,” according to the memo.

A friend of the accuser said that she had seen her at events over the past 15 years but had “never known her to be irresponsible, drunk, or ever of questionable character.”

Parlatore alleged that the accuser was simply trying to save face with her husband.

“She woke up to a whole bunch of texts from her husband saying, ‘Why didn’t you come back to our room?’ Afterward, she had to come back and lie,” he added, citing a police report that is not publicly available.

Days after the encounter, the accuser later filed a complaint to the police, who investigated the situation and ultimately, the local district attorney declined to pursue charges.

Two years later, in 2020, the accuser threatened to pursue Hegseth in court, which resulted in his settlement payment to her in exchange for the woman signing a non-disclosure agreement.

“If she were to come out and start repeating these false claims, or if this in any way derails the confirmation, then, yeah we will probably be following a pretty massive lawsuit against her for defamation and civil and extortion,” Parlatore said.



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Pete Hegseth is already facing heavy scrutiny as President-elect Donald Trump's choice to lead the Pentagon. Getty Images

Hegseth, an Army veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, is widely seen as an unconventional choice to take charge at the Pentagon given his lack of experience managing a large organization.

Trump, 78, chose Hegseth, who has degrees from Princeton and Harvard, with the intention of dramatically shaking up the Pentagon, and eliminating the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practices from America's armed forces.

So far the president-elect is sticking with his DOD nominee amid the accusations, which caught his transition team by surprise.

“President Trump is nominating high-caliber and extremely qualified candidates to serve in his Administration,” Trump campaign communications director Steven Cheung said in a statement.

“Mr. Hegseth has vigorously denied any and all accusations, and no charges were filed. We look forward to his confirmation as United States Secretary of Defense so he can get started on Day One to Make America Safe and Great Again.”

The Post was unable to identify the accuser to reach out for her version of events.

<https://nypost.com/2024/11/17/us-news/pete-hegseth-says-he-was-blackmailed-into-paying-off-rape-accuser/>