

Hegseth won't commit to obeying courts on Marines in Los Angeles

The Defense secretary said he'd comply with a Supreme Court order blocking Trump's domestic deployment, but did not commit to the other courts.



Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth fields questions on the Pentagon budget from the House Armed Services Committee on Thursday, June 12, 2025. | Scott Applewhite/AP

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06/12/2025 12:17 PM EDT

Updated: 06/12/2025 03:27 PM EDT



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deference to other courts considering the issue.

The Pentagon chief initially deflected when asked at a House Armed Services Committee hearing whether he would abide by a court's decision if it determined President Donald Trump's deployment of National Guard troops and Marines was unlawful.

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“What I can say is we should not have local judges determining foreign policy or national security policy for the country,” Hegseth said.

“We’re not here to defy a Supreme Court ruling,” he said.

The comments mirror other officials who have criticized court rulings that go against the Trump administration, often directing withering criticism at lower-court judges while vowing deference to the justices.

Trump has ordered the Pentagon to deploy 4,000 National Guard troops and 700 Marines to Los Angeles to protect Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel in response to mass deportation protests. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has said the troops are not necessary, is suing to remove them.

The Trump administration, [in a filing Wednesday](#), urged a federal judge to reject the lawsuit, calling it a “crass political stunt.”

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request to immediately block Hegseth from using troops to support immigration arrests in Los Angeles.

The issue marked a flashpoint during the third budget hearing this week for Hegseth and Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Dan Caine, which ranged from Ukraine aid to Hegseth's efforts to root out diversity, equity and inclusion programs in the department.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) repeatedly pressed Hegseth on whether he would follow a court ruling. "You're not willing to say you would respect those decisions?" Khanna asked.

Hegseth replied: "What I'm saying is local district judges shouldn't make foreign policy."

Newsom reposted a video of the exchange on social media platform X. "This is not normal," he said.

If Breyer sides with Newsom, the administration would likely appeal any order to limit the deployment to a California appeals court and then to the Supreme Court.

The Defense secretary, in separate congressional testimony on Wednesday, suggested the administration could deploy troops elsewhere to assist in roundups and deportations. At that hearing, he wasn't able [to immediately cite the legal justification](#) for the deployments

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