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KAYLA BARTKOWSKI / GETTY IMAGES

U.S. Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth leaves Ben & Jerry's with his family and security team while in Washington, D.C., this month. Sources say Hegseth's security requirements are straining the resources of the army agency charged with keeping him and his large blended family safe.

Hegseth's expansive security detail taxes army agency

TARA COPP, ALEX HORTON
AND DAN LAMOTHE
in Washington

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth's unusually large personal security requirements are straining the army agency tasked with protecting him as it pulls agents from criminal investigations to safeguard family residences in Minnesota, Tennessee and D.C., according to numerous officials familiar with the operation.

The sprawling, multimillion-dollar initiative has forced the army's Criminal Investigation Division, or CID, the agency that fields security for top Defence Department officials, to staff weeks-long assignments in each location and at times monitor residences belonging to the Hegseths' former spouses, the officials said.

One CID official, who like some others spoke on the condition of anonymity citing a fear of reprisal, characterized Hegseth's personal protective arrangement as unlike any other in the agency's recent history.

"I've never seen this many security teams for one guy," the official said. "Nobody has."

This account is based on more than a dozen interviews — including with CID staff, current and former defence officials, and others familiar with Hegseth's activities — and a review of documents revealing the Trump administration's apparent unwillingness to meet the army's request for additional funding and personnel for the mission. The Washington Post withheld several sensitive details gathered in the course of reporting this article, including the size of Hegseth's protective details and the precise locations where they are assigned.

Army CID has faced significant staffing and budgetary shortfalls for years, but new demands since Hegseth's arrival in January have put added pressure

on the agency, officials said. "We have complete inability to achieve our most basic missions," one person said.

The Pentagon declined to address several questions submitted by The Post. A spokesman, Sean Parnell, said that "any action pertaining to the security of Secretary Hegseth and his family has been in response to the threat environment and at the full recommendation of the Army Criminal Investigation Division."

CID's chief mission is to investigate serious crimes within the army. The agency's other mandate is to provide security for the defence secretary, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Army secretary, and other current and former top defence officials. CID agents serve as advance teams, co-ordinating security ahead of public appearances. They also staff motorcades and provide security during travel at home and abroad.

Historically about 150 of the agency's approximately 1,500 agents serve on VIP security details, according to people familiar with the matter, who said that when Hegseth took office a call went out for many more. Now there are hundreds assigned to personal protective duty, these people said. One person characterized the figure as "400 and going up." Another said it's "over 500."

In a statement, army CID acknowledged the agency "operates within existing resource constraints" and said it "proactively adjusts its efforts to address emerging threats and maintains a robust security pos-

ture in both the investigative and protective realms." Citing unspecified safety concerns, the agency said, "specific details regarding threat assessments, security protocols, resource allocation, and budgetary matters related to either investigative or protective operations are considered sensitive and cannot be publicly disclosed."

The demand for additional resources is not only because of Hegseth's large blended family — including one child with wife Jennifer Rauchet Hegseth, her three children from a previous marriage plus three children from Hegseth's second marriage — but also a rise in politically motivated violence as the nation has become more splintered. The U.S. Secret Service, which co-ordinates personal security for the president, vice-president and their families, among others, faced searing criticism after an attempt on Donald Trump's life during last year's campaign. A separate incident involving an alleged gunman at Trump's Florida golf course weeks later was thwarted by Secret Service agents.

Shortly after Hegseth was nominated to become defence secretary, a bomb threat was made against his home in Tennessee, two people told The Post. The incident prompted an increase in security, these people said.

Hegseth, 45, a former National Guard officer and Fox News personality, was among Trump's most polarizing picks, and his tenure thus far has been mired in tumult. The Defence Department inspector general is scrutinizing

his handling of highly sensitive national security information, the White House intervened after his office targeted senior Pentagon officials with polygraph tests and top political staff have either fled or been fired amid infighting.

In that time, Hegseth's security demands have required CID to pull agents off investigations to send them instead for long-term assignments in Tennessee, or Minnesota, where Hegseth's second wife resides, people familiar with the matter said. The agency also has had to activate military reservists to help fill some staffing gaps, these people said.

One CID official expressed frustration with the situation, saying agents were being taken off investigations — "doing what we are supposed to be doing" — to "sit on luggage" instead or "sit in the cars on the driveway."

"It is literally taking away from (CID's) law enforcement mission. ... You are taking hundreds of people out of the field to provide this level of protection," the official said.

Hegseth frequently has his children appear with him, including at this year's White House Easter Egg Roll and a Pentagon reception for NASCAR driver Ross Chastain. The CID security assignments can entail accompanying the children to school and walking the perimeter of the homes to provide round-the-clock surveillance, said people familiar with the agents' duties.

CID protection has on occasion extended to the Hegseths' former spouses to protect the children, two of the officials said. Two other officials called this arrangement unusual. Another said it was something they had never seen before.

In its statement, army CID said Hegseth did not request the additional coverage. The secretary "has never effected CIDs recommended security posture," the statement says.

See HEGSETH on A2

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