WHO SHOULD WIN THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE?

PETE HEGSETH

If the Nobel Peace Prize was given out to people who truly made the world a more peaceful place, one group would win every year: the United States military—the US Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines.

Now, you may be thinking, how can you award a peace prize to a group whose purpose is to fight wars? Fair question. I'll tell you how: because the reason we are free, the reason anyone on earth today is free, is ultimately thanks to the US military.

They saved the free world from German domination in the First World War. They saved the free world from Japanese and German fascism in the Second World War. They saved the free world from communism in the Cold War. And they're saving it now.

That might sound like an exaggeration, but only because they've protected us for so long. National security—the protection of citizens from an external foe—is not a given; far from it. It's the product of the hard work of American military men and women who stand guard 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, every year. And, they've been doing so for as long as any of us can remember.

The First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War, the Korean War, both Iraq Wars, the Afghan War—these were all conflicts that the US tried to avoid. But they were wars that the US fought not only for itself, but for good, decent and free people everywhere.

Where the US military was not ultimately victorious—the Vietnam War—50 million people were deprived of freedom of speech, of assembly, of press, of travel, and of religion. As many as two million were brutally imprisoned and murdered.

The only reason South Korea isn't an open-air concentration camp like its northern neighbor is because America came to South Korea's defense nearly 70 years ago. To this day, we still have 30,000 troops stationed there to protect the free South from the unfree North.

And it's not just the open conflicts the American military resolves; it's the *not*-wars—all the conflicts that were never fought because our adversaries feared the consequences of American military involvement.

Let's put it this way: The reason Iowa soybeans can be shipped from Seattle to Shanghai, or coffee from Colombia to Cleveland is because the American military—specifically, the Navy—stands guard over the world's shipping lanes. Block those lanes and the price of everything skyrockets, and international commerce grinds to a halt.

Like it or not, the US military has been, and remains, as close to a global sheriff as exists on planet Earth—on the beat, keeping the peace.

Don't believe me? Ask yourself this very simple question: What if China disarmed? Or Iran? Or North Korea? Or Russia? Think the world would be a better or worse place? The question answers itself.

Now, imagine if America disarmed. Think China stays out of Taiwan or Hong Kong? Iran out of Israel? North Korea out of South Korea? Russia out of eastern Europe? And those are just state actors. Islamists would quickly return, bolder and more vicious than ever.

In short, new conflicts would spring up and old ones reignite all over the world. Freedom would be in retreat every single day.

That's the dystopian future of a world without the US military. And that's because across the globe for the last 100 years and more, the bad guys have been thwarted—not *only* by the American military, of course. But in every major conflict, American military force has been decisive.

That's why when you meet a veteran, someone who served in the Armed Forces, you should thank them. We have even set aside a special day for it: Veterans Day.

Not Memorial Day. That's for those who *lost* their lives fighting for America and for freedom. Veterans Day is different. It's for all those who *risked* their lives so that we could keep ours.

If that's not worthy of a thank you, what is?

So this year, put out a flag, call a veteran, someone who honorably served in the US military— maybe your dad or mom or uncle, or family friend, and thank them.

Let them know that *you* know that you are in their debt.

We have been in their debt for so long, it's easy to take what they did—what they risked and what they sacrificed—for granted.

We shouldn't.

Veterans Day is meant to remind us. This year, don't forget.

I'm Pete Hegseth, U.S. Army Major, for Prager University.