

**US politics & policy****US defence secretary Pete Hegseth forces out top army officer in Europe**

General CD Donahue will relinquish his command on July 2, according to the army



CD Donahue was the last US soldier to depart Afghanistan after the military withdrew from the country in 2021 © Darek Delmanowicz/EPA

**Demetri Sevastopulo** in Washington

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The top US army officer in Europe will retire early from the military after becoming the latest victim of defence secretary Pete Hegseth's purge of senior officers.

General CD Donahue, a widely respected special forces veteran who has been critical to US efforts to help Ukraine fight Russia, will relinquish his command on July 2, the army said on Wednesday, following reports that Hegseth had removed him.

In a statement, the army thanked Donahue for his service and said his deputy, Major General Christopher Norrie, would "perform the duties of the commanding general".

Donahue is being forced out just two months after Hegseth fired General Randy George as army chief of staff, in a move that created resentment among uniformed officers across the US military.

The removal of Donahue comes as the Pentagon prepares to downgrade the level of command in Europe and as President Donald Trump boosts pressure on Europe to take more responsibility for its defence and the war in Ukraine.

Donahue, a four-star general who has served in Iraq, Syria and other combat zones, became known as the last US soldier to depart Afghanistan after then-president Joe Biden ordered the military to withdraw from the country in 2021.

It was unclear why Hegseth ousted Donahue, but the Pentagon chief has been a vocal critic of how the Biden administration handled the chaotic withdrawal and has ordered an investigation into the circumstances behind it.

The dismissal will send another shockwave across the US military. Several former top military officers told the FT that Hegseth had created a climate of fear that was affecting the whole military up to the top brass.

Donahue, who also commanded US army forces in Africa, is highly regarded in the army because of the important combat roles he held over two decades.

“As an officer who proved himself in combat leading the army’s most elite troops during the toughest years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Donahue is widely respected across both the special operations and conventional parts of the military,” said Sean Naylor, an expert on US special operations and intelligence for The High Side newsletter.

Over the past 18 months, Hegseth has fired dozens of officers including General CQ Brown as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral Lisa Franchetti, the first female US Navy chief of operations.

He also fired Timothy Haugh, an air force general who ran the National Security Agency and US Cyber Command, and blocked promotions for a number of senior officers without providing reasons for the decisions.

Donahue's removal was first reported by The Atlantic. Several people said the West Point graduate would officially retire from the military in July.

The Pentagon did not respond to a request for comment.

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