



CITIZENS FOR
RESPONSIBILITY &
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

April 1, 2026

The Honorable Platte Moring III
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense - Office of Inspector General
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Dear Inspector General Moring:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) respectfully requests the Department of Defense (“DoD”) Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) investigate DoD officials using a military helicopter to fly over the local “No Kings” First Amendment protest and then to the home of musician and Trump ally Kid Rock for what appeared to be a staged political stunt. DoD OIG should review this matter to determine whether this incident violated any applicable federal or DoD rules including the DoD Joint Ethics Regulation, DoD instructions regarding the Use of Government Aircraft and Air Travel and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees. DoD OIG should also review Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s abrupt decision to reverse the suspension of the flight crew imposed by Army personnel pending their review of the matter. Secretary Hegseth’s choice to undermine discipline for apparently political reasons is especially dangerous as American military personnel are engaged in hostilities abroad.

Factual background

This past weekend, videos posted online showed what appeared to be military helicopters flying over a protest and, later, hovering over the Nashville home of musician Kid Rock.¹ Kid Rock has long enjoyed a close relationship with President Trump. The two met after Kid Rock voiced his support for Donald Trump early in his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016.² Kid Rock has also performed at numerous events for

¹ Steven Beynon, *Army Says It’s Reviewing Attack Helicopters Flying Low and Hovering Near Kid Rock’s Home*, ABC News (Mar. 30, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/Politics/army-reviewing-attack-helicopters-flying-low-hovering-kid/story?id=1315530368&cb=1jl0bgp1c>.

² Brian Hiatt, *Kid Rock: ‘I’m Digging Donald Trump’*, Rolling Stone (Feb. 1, 2026), <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/kid-rock-im-digging-donald-trump-241271/>.

President Trump or his allies, including the 2024 Republican National Convention³ and President Trump's second inaugural celebration.⁴ President Trump, in turn, has wielded his influence to benefit Kid Rock, including inviting Kid Rock to the White House for the signing of an executive order intended to combat the "unfair scalping of concert tickets."⁵ Kid Rock's social media post featuring the military helicopter included political rhetoric directed at the Governor of California, which was later reposted by Secretary Hegseth.⁶

Following the viral post, Major Jonathan Bless, a spokesman for the 101st Airborne Division based at nearby Fort Campbell, told the media that the crews of the two helicopters were completing a training mission.⁷ Bless asserted that the stop at Kid Rock's home was not a part of the mission and that he had not requested the stop.⁸ Major Montrell Russell, another army spokesman, said in a statement that "[a]n administrative review is underway to assess the mission and verify compliance with regulations and airspace requirements. Appropriate action will be taken if any violations are found."⁹ The Army suspended the crews of both helicopters pending this review.¹⁰ However, despite the finding of their supervisors, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth quickly reversed the decision without any review, posting the following on his social media account¹¹:

³ *Kid Rock Performs at Republican National Convention*, Wall St. J. (July 18, 2024), https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/rnc-speech-biden-election-2024/card/kid-rock-to-perform-at-republican-national-convention-17HGLri24U5KlxBaSDba?gaa_at=eafs&gaa_n=AWetsqcqQf1TAPaldH6dNC8UGbFJw8ZruYUgLGdVbXjlna50Ca43nVs001rcWd3dPbA%3D&gaa_ts=69cc0e45&gaa_sig=ZehoKG5hmMJ5i7FCn4FdtFHUNBBD03LgQ_ClsUZgn3zdDpEdEBMl60vhxBOPbUnrLmruOETvVkEMmapusjkAQ%3D%3D.

⁴ Amanda Goh, Gabbi Shaw, & Sarah Jackson, *11 Musical Acts that Performed at Donald Trump's Inauguration Events*, Bus. Insider (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.businessinsider.com/celebrities-performing-donald-trump-president-inauguration-list-underwood-village-people-2025-1>.

⁵ The White House, *Trump Is Joined by Kid Rock for the Signing of an EO Targeting Unfair Scalping of Concert Tickets* (Mar. 31, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/trump-is-joined-by-kid-rock-for-the-signing-of-an-eo-targeting-unfair-scalping-of-concert-tickets/>.

⁶ Pete Hegseth (@PeteHegseth), X (Mar. 31, 2026 at 6:34 PM), <https://x.com/petehegseth/status/2039109100282196436?s=46>.



⁷ Beynon, *supra* note 1.

⁸ Alex Horton & Andrew Ba Tran, *Army Grounds Helicopter Crews Who Buzzed Kid Rock's Home, No Kings Rally*, Wash. Post (Mar. 31, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/30/kid-rock-helicopter-flyby>.

⁹ Travis Loller & Kristin M. Hall, *Army Reviewing After Helicopters Hovered Alongside Kid Rock's Swimming Pool as He Saluted*, Wash. Post (Mar. 30, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/2026/03/30/kid-rock-helicopter-army/edc75328-2c73-11f1-aac2-f56b5ccad184_story.html.

¹⁰ Zachary Folk, *Pete Hegseth Unsuspends Air Crew That Flew Helicopters By Kid Rock's Home*, Forbes (Mar. 31, 2026), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zacharyfolk/2026/03/31/army-suspends-air-crew-flying-helicopters-by-kid-rock-home-report-says>.

¹¹ Hegseth, *supra* note 6.


Pete Hegseth  
@PeteHegseth

Thank you @KidRock.

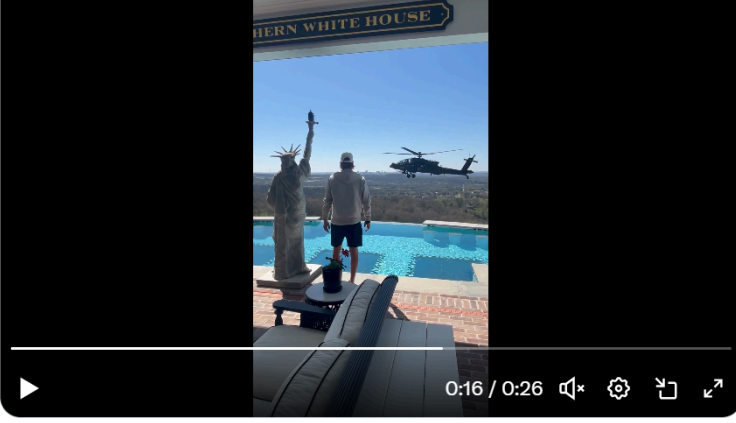
@USArmy pilots suspension LIFTED.

No punishment. No investigation.

Carry on, patriots. 🇺🇸

KidRock  @KidRock · Mar 28

This is a level of respect that shit for brains Governor of California will never know. God Bless America and all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend her. 🇺🇸 🙏



6:34 PM · Mar 31, 2026 · 898.8K Views

When asked by a reporter about the pilots’ conduct, even President Trump acknowledged, “They probably shouldn’t have been doing it ... you’re not supposed to be playing games, right. But I’d take a look at it.”¹²

Potential violations

The apparent actions of the flight crews and their superiors involved in this incident may violate several DoD and executive branch ethical rules. Though executive branch ethical standards offer a carveout for “enlisted members of the uniformed services,” 5 CFR § 2635.103, DoD regulations confirm that executive branch ethical standards do apply to DoD

¹² Video posted by Aaron Rupar (@atrupar), X (Mar. 31, 2026 at 6:04 PM), <https://x.com/atrupar/status/2039101606801658248?s=46>.

employees, including “enlisted members of the Military Services.”¹³ The DoD also maintains its own ethical standards for the use of government property, personnel and aircraft.¹⁴

The OIG should consider whether:

- The stop constitutes “preferential treatment” toward a “private organization or individual” in violation of 5 CFR § 2635.101(b)(8);
- The stop was not part of any “authorized activities” in violation of 5 CFR § 2635.101(b)(9);
- The relevant decisionmakers used government property or equipment for something other than an “official purpose” in violation of JER at para. 2-300;
- The relevant decisionmakers used government personnel for an “unofficial activity” or “non-Federal purpose” in violation of the JER at para. 2-302;
- The stop resulted in the “actual and perceived misuse of air transportation resources” in violation of the Aircraft Instruction at § 1.2(a)(2); and
- The stop “creat[ed] the appearance” that relevant decisionmakers had “violat[ed] the law or the ethical standards set forth in [Part 2635]” in violation of 5 CFR § 2635.101(b)(14).

Areas for investigation

In examining the circumstances that led to the helicopters’ activities, CREW urges DoD OIG to investigate:

- how DoD officials came to know the location of Kid Rock’s home and to arrange to fly near his property when he was present;
- which DoD officials were involved in the decision to fly a military helicopter over a political protest and to Kid Rock’s home;
- whether those involved sought prior clearance to so do take these actions;
- whether those involved sought or received any ethics advice about the matter;
- what official purpose the flights were intended to serve;
- how the ultimate flight plan related to that purpose;
- how much money the use of the military helicopter for these purposes cost the American taxpayers;

¹³ U.S. Dep’t of Def., 5500.07, Ethics and Standards of Conduct (May 15, 2024) [https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/550007p\(2\).pdf?ver=gIrRnuiN_jh86_lUxBWEnw%3D%3D](https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/550007p(2).pdf?ver=gIrRnuiN_jh86_lUxBWEnw%3D%3D); U.S. Dep’t of Def., Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) para. 2-100, 2-101 (May 15, 2024) [hereinafter “the JER”] <https://dodsoco.ogc.osd.mil/Portals/102/Documents/Issuances/JER%20and%20Directives/JER%20May%2015%202024.pdf>.

¹⁴ JER at para. 2-300, 2-302; U.S. Dep’t of Def., 4500.56, Use of Government Aircraft and Air Travel (May 20, 2024) [hereinafter “the Aircraft Instruction”] <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/450056p.pdf?ver=P8cVaWdlKe2spP-cvnjjAA%3D%3D>.

- upon what basis Secretary Hegseth concluded that it was appropriate to overrule the decision made by Army officials to review the matter and suspend the flight crew involved pending that review.

CREW further requests that DoD OIG seek to ensure that all documents related to this incident, including the records generated through the Army's internal reviews, be requested, reviewed and preserved.

Conclusion

As the war with Iran continues, it is even more important for the military to assure the American people that they take their responsibilities seriously and use taxpayer-funded resources appropriately. The conduct depicted in these viral videos, if left unaddressed, will only serve to erode the public's trust in the military and the government more broadly. Secretary Hegseth's immediate action to reverse the decision to suspend the flight crew sends a dangerous message that military personnel can violate orders if it serves the interests of political leadership.

CREW asks DoD OIG to investigate this matter, shed light on the facts and recommend consequences for any wrongdoing, as well as identify any recommended process changes that would prevent similar future misconduct. CREW greatly appreciates your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Donald K. Sherman
President and Chief Executive Officer