

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

I am appalled by reports that the U.S. Coast Guard will no longer classify certain displays including swastikas and nooses as hate symbols, and I urge the Coast Guard to abandon this policy change immediately. According to recent reporting, after originally stating in a November 20<sup>th</sup> memo that such symbols would remain prohibited hate symbols, the Coast Guard seems to have retracted its commitment and has implemented a policy that labels these hateful symbols as merely “potentially divisive.”

The U.S. Coast Guard’s decision to categorize swastikas and other Nazi symbols as merely “potentially divisive” is an affront to the memory of the millions of Jews murdered during World War II and the Allied Forces who fought, and in many cases died, to liberate Europe from the Nazi regime. The symbols and images associated with Nazism are blatantly antisemitic and employed by criminals to express hatred toward Jewish individuals and racial minorities. Antisemitic attacks against the Jewish community have risen in this country and worldwide since the violent terrorist attack against Israel on October 7, 2023. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported that in the three months following the attack, antisemitic incidents in the U.S. skyrocketed by 361 percent. Prior to the October 7 attacks, hate crimes against the Jewish community were already on the rise. According to data from the Department of Justice (DOJ), in 2023, of 2,699 reported hate crime incidents based on religion, more than half of these (1,832) were driven by anti-Jewish bias.

This policy change by the U.S. Coast Guard is also inconsistent with this Administration’s initiatives to combat antisemitism and hate crimes, including the Task Force to Combat Antisemitism established by the DOJ earlier this year. Congress has also taken decisive action in recent years in response to an alarming rise in race-based hate incidents, including by passing the *COVID-19 Asian Hate Crimes Act*, which I co-authored, and the *Emmett Till Antilynching Act*, which I cosponsored, and which defined lynching as a federal hate crime. Nooses and other symbols of lynching are well-known to be used by hate-motivated groups to

intimidate, threaten, scare, and demean black Americans. It is a symbol of both hate and violence, and its use can constitute the basis of federal criminal prosecutions.

The policy change by the Coast Guard is directly in conflict with Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1325.06, dated June 9, 2025. This instruction governs the management of extremist activities and applies to the Coast Guard when operating under the Department of Homeland Security by agreement. DoDI 1325.06 makes clear that:

Commanders have the authority and responsibility to prohibit Service members from active participation in extremist activities, and other activities that adversely affect good order and discipline within the command. This includes, but is not limited to, the authority to order the removal of symbols, flags, posters, or other displays from military-controlled areas... that pose a threat to the health, safety, and security of military personnel or a military installation.

This makes clear that the Coast Guard remains bound by DoD standards. Downgrading the swastika and the noose—symbols historically associated with genocide, racial terror, and extremism—from “hate symbols” to “potentially divisive” clearly violates the letter and intent of DoDI 1325.06, as well as the Coast Guard’s responsibility to maintain good order, discipline, and the safety of all service members.

The U.S. Coast Guard should be adopting policies to assist with the quick and lawful removal of divisive symbols, and any ambiguity about the Coast Guard’s intent should be immediately rectified and reflected in its policy. The U.S. Coast Guard should be clear: the display of Nazi iconography, symbols of racial bigotry and intimidation, and any hate-motivated representations will not be tolerated.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator