



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Guidance for Implementing Rescission of August 24, 2021 and November 30, 2021  
Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Requirements for Members of the Armed  
Forces

In today's rapidly changing global security environment, vaccines continue to play a critical role in assuring a ready and capable force that is able to rapidly deploy anywhere in the world on short notice. Department leadership is committed to ensuring the safety of our Service members and will continue to promote and encourage vaccinations for all Service members along with continued use of other effective mitigation measures. This includes monitoring changing public health conditions, relevant data, and geographic risks; and updating policies and processes as required to maintain the strategic readiness of our forces and our ability to defend national security interests around the globe.

This memorandum provides additional guidance to ensure uniform implementation of Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Rescission of the August 24, 2021 and November 30, 2021 Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Requirements for Members of the Armed Forces," January 10, 2023 (January 10, 2023 memorandum).

As required by section 525 of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, the January 10, 2023 memorandum rescinded the August 24, 2021 and November 30, 2021 Secretary of Defense mandates that members of the Armed Forces be vaccinated against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and thereby also rendered all DoD Component policies, directives, and guidance implementing those vaccination mandates as no longer in effect as of January 10, 2023. These include, but are not limited to, any COVID-19 vaccination requirements or related theater entry requirements and any limitations on deployability of Service members who are not vaccinated against COVID-19.

DoD Component policies, directives, and guidance have not been operative since the January 10, 2023 memorandum was issued, regardless of the status of the DoD Component conforming guidance. DoD Component heads shall formally rescind any such policies, directives, and guidance as soon as possible, if they have not done so already. DoD Component heads shall certify to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in writing that these actions have been completed no later than March 17, 2023.

The January 10, 2023 memorandum recognizes that other standing Departmental policies, procedures, and processes regarding immunizations remain in effect, including the ability of commanders to consider, as appropriate, the individual immunization status of personnel in making deployment, assignment, and other operational decisions, such as when vaccination is



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required for travel to, or entry into, a foreign nation. This continues to be the case, in accordance with the guidance below.

The Department's Foreign Clearance Guide will be updated to reflect that DoD personnel must continue to respect any applicable foreign nation vaccination entry requirements, including those for COVID-19. Other than to comply with DoD Foreign Clearance Guidance, DoD Component heads and commanders will not require a Service member or group of Service members to be vaccinated against COVID-19, nor consider a Service member's COVID-19 immunization status in making deployment, assignment, and other operational decisions, absent establishment of a new immunization requirement in accordance with the process described below. It is my expectation that any requests to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA)) for approval to initiate mandatory immunizations of personnel against COVID-19 will be made judiciously and only when justified by compelling operational needs and will be as narrowly tailored as possible.

Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6205.02, "DoD Immunization Program," July 23, 2019, will be updated as follows to establish a process requiring the Secretary of a Military Department, the Director of a Defense Agency or DoD Field Activity that operates medical clinics, or the Commandant of the Coast Guard, to submit a request for approval to initiate, modify, or terminate mandatory immunizations of personnel. Effective immediately, I direct the following action:

Paragraph 2.11. of DoDI 6205.02 is revised by adding a new subsection g., which will read:

"Submit requests to the ASD(HA) for approval to initiate, modify, or terminate mandatory immunizations of personnel and voluntary immunizations of other eligible beneficiaries determined to be at risk from the effects of deliberately released biological agents or naturally occurring infectious diseases of military or national importance."

The Commander of a Combatant Command must submit a request for approval to initiate, modify, or terminate mandatory immunizations of personnel through the Joint Staff, consistent with existing processes specified in DoDI 6205.02.

The Director of Administration and Management will make the revision directed above as a conforming change to the version of DoDI 6205.02 published on the DoD Issuances website.

