

United States Senate

September 7, 2023

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington D.C. 20301-1300

Secretary Del Toro,

On August 24, 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin issued a COVID-19 vaccination mandate¹. This mandate directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments to immediately begin “full vaccination of all members of the Armed Forces under DoD authority on active duty or in the Ready Reserve, including the National Guard, who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19.”

The first COVID-19 vaccines were developed and publicly available just nine months after the pandemic began, making them the most rapidly developed vaccinations ever produced for public distribution. Though an impressive scientific feat, willingness to have these vaccines administered was met with an appropriate level of hesitation by many as test trials were quick, limited, and distributed with relatively no understanding of long-term health complications.

It was subsequently discovered that some vaccines were created and tested using cell lines derived from aborted fetal tissue. This revelation led to widespread objections of conscience for civilians and service members with genuine religious convictions.

Despite well-founded apprehension, the Department of Defense (DoD) directed service secretaries to implement mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for all members of the Armed Forces. The result of this directive led to thousands of service members being discharged for COVID-19 vaccination noncompliance, negatively impacting our military readiness, recruitment, and retention.

Data shows there have been 1,861 Army, 2,041 Navy, 3,717 Marine Corps, and 834 Air Force/Space Force service members discharged due to the COVID-19 vaccine. To better understand the implications of the COVID-19 vaccination mandate within the DoD and its impact on readiness and recruiting, I request a written response to the following questions:

1. What are the Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC), and Naval ratings of each service member discharged for not complying with the Department of Defense’s COVID-19 vaccination mandate?

¹ Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III, *Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members*, August 24, 2021, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Aug/25/2002838826/-1/-1/0/MEMORANDUM-FOR-MANDATORY-CORONAVIRUS-DISEASE-2019-VACCINATION-OF-DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-SERVICE-MEMBERS.PDF>

2. What is the rank of each service member discharged for not complying with the Department of Defense's COVID-19 vaccination mandate?
3. What was the services' plan to ensure continued readiness after the mandate went into effect, knowing that thousands of service members would be discharged?
4. What protocols were put in place for backfilling those MOS, AFSC, and Naval ratings that were lost due to the pandemic, particularly for those jobs in which a shortage already existed?
5. What was your staffing mitigation plan to handle the personnel shortfalls that occurred due to the hasty COVID-19 vaccine mandate to ensure there was no loss in readiness?
6. How many of the servicemembers who were discharged because of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate have re-joined the military?

Please provide information in response to these questions to my office by no later than September 22, 2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tommy Tuberville". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tommy" and last name "Tuberville" clearly legible.

Tommy Tuberville
United States Senator