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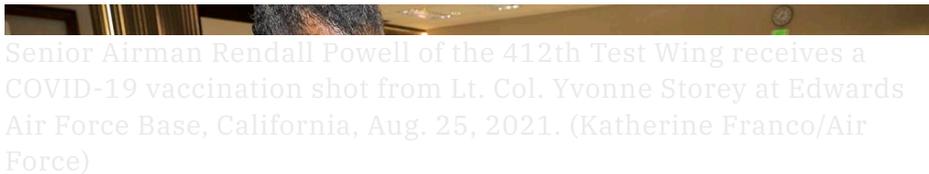
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Military COVID-19 deaths on upswing as vaccination deadlines pass

By Meghann Myers

 Dec 15, 2021





Senior Airman Rendall Powell of the 412th Test Wing receives a COVID-19 vaccination shot from Lt. Col. Yvonne Storey at Edwards Air Force Base, California, Aug. 25, 2021. (Katherine Franco/Air Force)

Eighty troops have died of COVID-19 complications, according to the Defense Department's most recent data, including five deaths in November and three so far in December.

November did see a two-week period without deaths, following a spike in deaths that began in late July, resulting in double-digit monthly deaths through October. While that number has come down, the services are still experiencing one of the most deadly periods of the pandemic, after seeing only one or two deaths for most of 2020 and the first half of 2021.

None of the troops who have died have been fully vaccinated, though two were partially vaccinated at time of death, according to the Office of the Secretary



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of Defense. The most recent deaths include:

- Electronics Technician 1st Class William E. Matthews, 47, of Navy Reserve Center Fort Worth, Texas, died Nov. 24.
- Army Reserve Lt. Col. Ryan Myers, 50, of the 75th Innovation Command in Houston, Texas, died Nov. 25.
- Air Force Tech Sgt. Nevin Tauchus, 30, of the 822nd Base Defense Squadron, 93rd Air Ground Operations Wing at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, died Nov. 26.
- New Jersey Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Sean Romero, 44, of the 177th Fighter Wing, died Dec. 3.
- Army Reserve Sgt. 1st Class Ray Vucinaj, 50, of the 100th Personnel Services Battalion in Homewood, Illinois, died Dec. 11.

With 80 deaths and 258,800 cases overall, the military's COVID-19 mortality rate sits at 0.03%, well below the 1.6% mortality rate in the U.S. overall.

Ad

Following the late summer and early fall surge in military deaths, which saw a height of 15 fatalities in September, deaths have dropped as more and more troops have gotten vaccinated.



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Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced in late August that all troops, active and reserve, will be required to receive a vaccination or have an approved exemption.

As of Wednesday, 69% of the total force is fully vaccinated – 1,588,965 troops – with another 326,967, or 14%, having received the first of a two-dose regimen.

Wednesday also marked the active-duty Army's vaccination deadline, leaving the Navy and Marine

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Corps Reserve to finish up by Dec. 28, and the Army Reserve and National Guard until June 30 to comply.

All of the services have put out guidance stating that those who decline vaccination will be flagged in some manner, with involuntary separations to follow. The Air Force confirmed Tuesday that it had [discharged the first 27 of its non-compliant airmen](#), all of whom were still serving on their initial enlistments.

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About [Meghann Myers](#)

Meghann Myers is the Pentagon bureau chief at Military Times. She covers operations, policy, personnel, leadership and other issues affecting service members. Follow on Twitter @Meghann_MT

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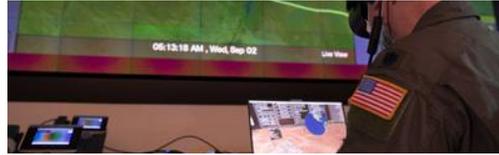


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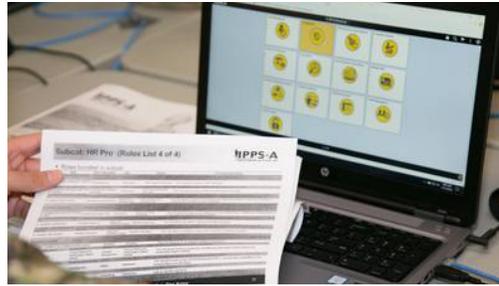
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