

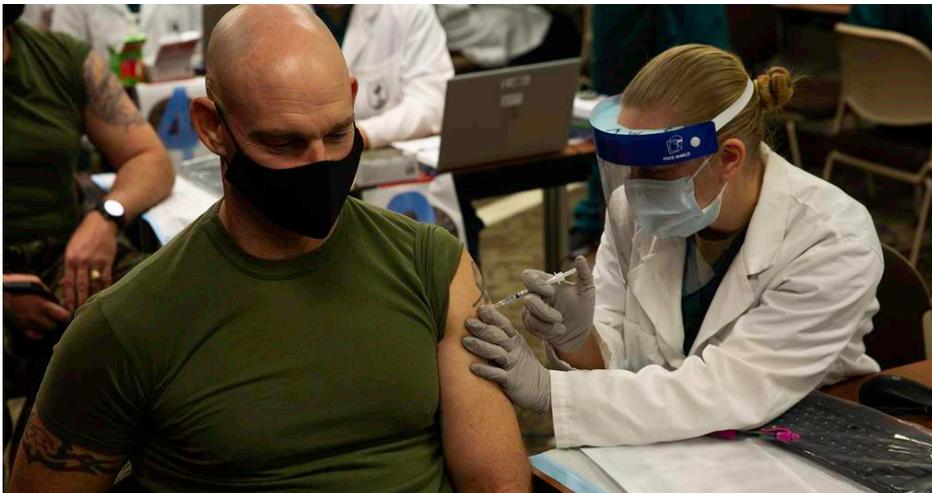


Pentagon & Congress

5 more military COVID-19 deaths as active-duty force inches toward 100% vaccination

By **Meghann Myers**

📅 Oct 13, 2021



Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Troy E. Black receives the

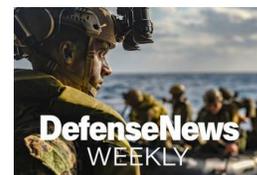
Featured Video



Scanning for fraudulent chips and a Russian chopper deal falls through | Defense Dollars



How much can I contribute to my IRA? — Money Minute



Best of Modern Day Marine | Defense News Weekly Full Episode, 5.16.22



Roundup: Modern Day Marine 2022

COVID-19 vaccine as part of Operation Warp Speed at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Maryland, Dec. 22, 2020. (Lance Cpl. Tyler W. Abbott/Marine Corps)

Military COVID-19 deaths are continuing to trend upward, even as more of the force gets vaccinated. The five most recently reported deaths all came in members of the Army's reserve component, whose organizations are among the least vaccinated in the military.

In the 36 deaths reported since August, 19 – or 53 percent – were among Army Reserve and Army National Guard soldiers, though they make up roughly 20 percent of the military overall. Since the pandemic began, they have made up 26 of 67 total deaths, or 39 percent.

Of those 67, 66 were completely unvaccinated, while one had received a first dose of a two-dose vaccine, Pentagon spokesman Maj. Charlie Dietz confirmed to Military Times on Wednesday.

The most recently reported deaths include:

- An Army National Guard sergeant, 49, died Aug. 14. He was assigned to the 2225th Transportation Company in Jacksonville, Alabama. As of Wednesday afternoon, his family had not agreed to release his name.
- Army Reserve Sgt. 1st Class Matthew E. Harmon, 51, died Oct. 1. He was assigned to 8th Battalion, 104th Regiment in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- Army Reserve Sgt. Yancy Williams, 54, died Oct. 5. He was assigned to the 451th Civil Affairs Battalion in Houston, Texas.
- An Army National Guard Master Sgt. Billy Richardson, 53, died Oct. 6. He was assigned to Joint Force Headquarters in San Antonio, Texas.
- An Army National Guard sergeant first class, 53, died Oct. 7. His family declined to release his name, according to Tennessee Military Department spokesman Lt. Col. Marty Malone.

Ad

Those deaths bring the total in October so far to eight, less than half-way into the month. September saw 14 deaths while August saw 15, up from an average of one or two deaths a month previously.

A small square box with a thin black border containing the text "Ad" in a bold, sans-serif font.

As of Wednesday, 60 percent of the total force is fully vaccinated – 1,383,388 troops – with another 15 percent – 338,000 troops – who have received the first of a two-dose regimen.

That number belies a significant chasm between the active-duty and reserve components.

On Tuesday, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters that just under 97 percent of active-duty troops are at least partially vaccinated, while just under 84 percent are fully vaccinated.

The first active-duty deadline drops Nov. 2, for the Air Force and Space Force, followed by Nov. 28 for the Navy and Marine Corps, then Dec. 15 for the Army.

Ad

RELATED

[Archbishop: Catholic troops can refuse COVID-19 vaccine](#)

The reserve component is lagging much more behind. While the Army has given its Reserve and National Guard until the end of June 30 to both get its troops vaccinated and update their files to reflect that, the other services have deadlines closing in more quickly.

The Marine Corps Reserve, for example, is only 38 percent vaccinated, [the Washington Post reported Friday](#), with a Dec. 28 vaccination deadline. The Army Reserve and National Guard are also roughly 40 percent vaccinated, according to that data.

“Commands will try to get these troops to make the right decision based on information and education,” Kirby said. “And for somebody that refuses, they’ll be given a chance to get more context from medical service providers, as well as their chain of command.”

Trending Now

Commander of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28 ousted due to ‘loss of confidence’

Putin complains about barrage of cyberattacks

UFOs pose real danger, says Pentagon, but aliens aren’t to blame — probably

Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group deploys from Yokosuka

Lawmakers urge DoD to take action to curb rising commissary prices

If that doesn't work, discipline comes into play, though not necessarily criminal charges. Commanders have the ability to involuntarily separate troops without getting the law involved.

“It's a lawful order. So obviously, if after all that effort, the lawful order is disobeyed, there could be disciplinary action,” Kirby said. “But the secretary believes that there's lots of tools available to leaders, short of using the Uniform of Code of Military Justice, to get these troops to do the right thing for themselves and for their units.”

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

Share:      

More In Pentagon & Congress >

More nations expected to sign up for Pentagon's Ukraine aid group

A group of international defense chiefs convened by U.S. Defense Secretary Lloy...



Military commands spent pandemic money on space analytics, IT upgrades

The U.S. military commands responsible for North America misused at least \$19 million ...



Pentagon tech chief wants an 'all in one' sensor

It is one of several critical technologies that Heidi Shyu, the undersecretary of defen...



Ukraine getting battalion's worth of artillery in new \$100 million aid package

The U.S. is sending Ukraine another \$100 million in military assistance, includin...



Watchdog could subpoena former VA workers under plan approved by Congress

Currently the VA inspector general cannot force former employees to detail proble...



Ad

In Other News >

Lawmakers urge DoD to take action to curb rising commissary prices

Stop requiring commissaries to make a profit, lawmakers say.



Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group deploys from Yokosuka

During its last deployment, which concluded in October, the Reagan not only operate...



IPPS-A rollout still on track after initial delay, Army says

The Army says its new master human resources platform is on track for full...



Blue Star Museums again offering free admission to troops, families all summer

Participating museums are offering free admission to military families from May 21...



Wildfire monitoring, other state missions in jeopardy without a Space Guard, these officials say

Space Force officials want to move away from the traditional Guard and...



Load More



Military Times © 2022

Terms of Use

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

Get Us

[Subscribe](#)

[RSS Feeds](#)

Contact Us

[Advertise](#)

[General Contacts, Subscription Services](#)

[Editorial Staff](#)

About Us

[About Us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Jobs for Veterans](#)

Military