



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

AUG 24 2021

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

SUBJECT: Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members

To defend this Nation, we need a healthy and ready force. After careful consultation with medical experts and military leadership, and with the support of the President, I have determined that mandatory vaccination against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is necessary to protect the Force and defend the American people.

Mandatory vaccinations are familiar to all of our Service members, and mission-critical inoculation is almost as old as the U.S. military itself. Our administration of safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines has produced admirable results to date, and I know the Department of Defense will come together to finish the job, with urgency, professionalism, and compassion.

I therefore direct 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.

Service members are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after completing the second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine or two weeks after receiving a single dose of a one-dose vaccine. Those with previous COVID-19 infection are not considered fully vaccinated.

Mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 will only use COVID-19 vaccines that receive full licensure from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in accordance with FDA-approved labeling and guidance. Service members voluntarily immunized with a COVID-19 vaccine under FDA Emergency Use Authorization or World Health Organization Emergency Use Listing in accordance with applicable dose requirements prior to, or after, the establishment of this policy are considered fully vaccinated. Service members who are actively participating in COVID-19 clinical trials are exempted from mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 until the trial is complete in order to avoid invalidating such clinical trial results.

Mandatory vaccination requirements will be implemented consistent with DoD Instruction 6205.02, "DoD Immunization Program," July 23, 2019. The Military Departments should use existing policies and procedures to manage mandatory vaccination of Service members to the extent practicable. Mandatory vaccination of Service members will be subject to any identified contraindications and any administrative or other exemptions established in Military Department policy. The Military Departments may promulgate appropriate guidance to carry out the requirements set out above. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and

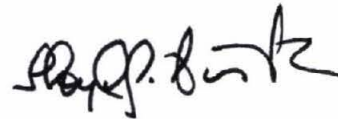


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Readiness may provide additional guidance to implement and comply with FDA requirements or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments should impose ambitious timelines for implementation. Military Departments will report regularly on vaccination completion using established systems for other mandatory vaccine reporting.

Our vaccination of the Force will save lives. Thank you for your focus on this critical mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert M. Gates", is located in the middle right section of the page.