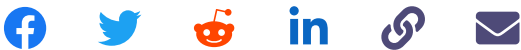


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Military COVID-19 deaths double in two months

By **Meghann Myers**

📅 Sep 24, 2021



Fifty-two service members have died of COVID-19 complications to date. None of them were fully vaccinated. (Lance Cpl. Tyler W. Abbott/Marine Corps)

It took more than a year for 26 service members to die of COVID-19, even as the pandemic raged through the country. It took two months for that death toll to double this summer.

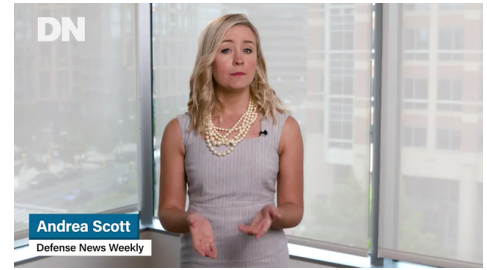
To date, 52 troops have died from COVID-19 complications. None of them have been fully vaccinated. Maj. Charlie Dietz, Pentagon spokesman, told Military Times on Wednesday.

****DoD's definition per SECDEF order for "fully vaccinated" is 14 days after 2nd dose (for the record)**

That total is up six from the previous week. After more than a year in which, generally, one or two service members died each month, August saw eight deaths and September has seen nine so far.

The latest deaths reported to the Defense Department include:

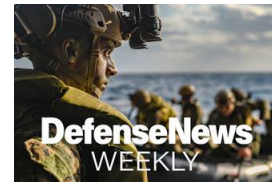
- Gas Turbine System Technician 1st Class Ryan L. Crosby, 39, of Expeditionary Warfare Training



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Group Atlantic, died Sept. 8.

- Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Keffer, 32, of the 701st Military Police Group and Quantico, Virginia, died Sept. 15.
- Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Jeffrey Fonteneau, 36, of Recruiting Station Raleigh, North Carolina, died Sept. 19.
- Air Force Lt. Col Bryan Bonzo, 51, with the 412th Operations Group at Edwards Air Force Base, California, died Sept. 19.
- Army Reserve Maj. Matthew D. Moyes, 54, of the 7403rd Troop Medical Clinic in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, died Sept. 20.
- An Air National Guard senior master sergeant, 52, with the 190th Civil Engineering Squadron in Kansas died Sept. 21.

The Air Guardsman's family had not given permission to be identified as of Friday afternoon.

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Their deaths bring the military's COVID-19 mortality rate to just over 0.02, much lower than the roughly 2-percent rate nationwide, but 50 times higher than it was during previous surges last year. Roughly 10 percent of troops have been diagnosed with COVID-19, vs. 13 percent of U.S. residents.

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As the death toll in the U.S. and within the military continues to surge, all of the services had rolled out mandatory vaccination plans. The active-duty force, along with the the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy reserve components, must be fully vaccinated or face

administrative or criminal consequences by the end of the year. The Army is giving its reserve forces until June 30, 2022.

While Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin approved the Army's slow-rolling plan, his spokesman told Military Times on Friday that he would step in if necessary.

"He's satisfied that they are working hard enough and fast enough to try to improve the vaccination population inside each of the services. But it's not something that he's just going to lose focus on," John Kirby said. "... and certainly, if the secretary feels like a change in implementation needs to occur in any one services, on whatever the data is or what the rate of infection, certainly the rate of deaths — I mean, he will absolutely do that."

Ninety-percent of active-duty troops have received at least one dose of a vaccine, Kirby told reporters Wednesday. Force-wide about 53 percent of troops are fully vaccinated, while another 17 percent have received a first dose.

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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

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