

Pentagon Considering COVID Booster Shot Mandate for Troops



The Pentagon said Friday active discussions are taking place within the department about making [COVID vaccine booster doses](#) mandatory for service members, despite thousands refusing or seeking exemptions from the initial shot requirement.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said a final decision has not been made on the matter, but added that Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin “absolutely encourages people, if they can and if they qualify, to get the booster. But right now there is no requirement for it.”

The Pentagon in August announced it would require all members of the military to [get the COVID vaccine](#). The military branches set their own specific guidelines on the mandate and laid out the repercussions for those who refused and were not granted an exemption.

Although the Department of Defense said religious, medical and

administrative exemptions would be available, very [few have been granted](#) and only to those who were already leaving the military or had certain medical conditions.

The deadlines to be fully vaccinated for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps have passed, and thousands remain unvaccinated.

During the Pentagon's [press conference](#), Kirby said about 96.4% of all active-duty personnel have gotten at least one dose of a COVID vaccine, but the percentage plummets when including members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Only about 74% of the total military force are fully vaccinated, but the Army Guard has until next June to get the shots. An unknown number have voluntarily retired or left the service over the matter since the mandate was put in place.

“The numbers are trending in the right direction, but “we know there’s more work to do,” Kirby said, “The secretary’s expectation is 100% vaccination, that’s what he wants to see.”