

U.S. Military Has Not Granted Any Religious COVID Vaccine Exemptions



Lawyers representing armed forces members who are seeking exemptions to a COVID vaccine requirement say the military is violating the U.S. Constitution and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in [failing to grant](#) religious exemptions.

So far, more than 12,000 service members have [requested religious exemptions](#) from the federal vaccine mandate, but none have been approved.

The Air Force has denied 2,130 requests for religious accommodations to the Pentagon's COVID vaccine mandate, the Air Force [announced Tuesday](#). More than 8,630 individuals are still awaiting the Air Force's decision on their requests,

which are “individually reviewed by Religious Resolution Teams at the wing, garrison, major command and field command levels.”

The Navy on Wednesday said it [received 2,844 requests](#) for a religious accommodation to the vaccine mandate – none of which have been approved. The Marine Corps and Army, have received 3,100 and 1,700 [requests](#), respectively.

Within the Air Force, if a religious accommodation request is denied, a service member has five days to either appeal with the Air Force surgeon general, start the vaccination process, request to separate or retire if able, [according to a Dec. 7 memo](#). To date, no appeals have been successful, with 135 denied and 152 still pending.

The Marine Corps has already [separated 103 troops](#) for refusing the vaccine, and the Air Force discharged 27 this month, as the deadline to get vaccinated passed.

“It’s now the point where I think we can call it what it is. It appears to be blatant religious discrimination when the military has now conceded, both publicly and in court filings I should say, that they have approved multiple numerous medical and administrative exemptions but yet they have refused to approve any religious accommodations,” Mike Berry, an attorney with First Liberty Institute, told [The Epoch Times](#).

“That’s textbook definition of religious discrimination.”

GOP lawmakers file amicus brief on behalf of navy seals and crewmembers

A group of 47 Republican lawmakers [filed an amicus brief](#) in a Texas federal court in support of a lawsuit brought on behalf

26 Navy SEALs and nine special operations crewmembers seeking to enjoin the Pentagon from enforcing the mandate because it violates religious freedoms.

“Plaintiffs’ religious liberty and the government’s asserted interest in protecting our service members from COVID-19 need not be in conflict, especially where, as here, the individuals seeking an exemption are willing to adopt non-vaccination measures to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19,” the lawmakers wrote.

“They are only in conflict here because Defendants refuse to accommodate Plaintiffs’ religious objections even as they accommodate those who will not receive the vaccine for non-religious reasons.”

The plaintiffs are either Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant, and as such, they have “sincerely held religious beliefs forbid each of them from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine for a variety of reasons based upon their Christian faith as revealed through the Holy Bible and prayerful discernment,” according to the suit.

Troops forced to get vaccine under EUA

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on Aug. 23 [issued a memorandum](#) mandating COVID vaccines for service members. John Kirby, Pentagon press secretary, said only vaccines approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would be mandatory.

Austin said he determined [mandatory COVID vaccinations](#) for service members were necessary to protect the health and readiness of the force. The announcement that the vaccine would be mandatory for troops ironically came just two days after Pfizer’s “Comirnaty” COVID vaccine received full

approval by the FDA.

Unbeknownst to many, “Comirnaty” [is not available](#) in the U.S, leading some to question whether it was approved in order to protect Pfizer from liability for the harms caused by its product and to pave the way for mandatory vaccinations – as vaccines under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) cannot be mandated.

It is the experimental Pfizer/BioNTech COVID vaccine, still under EUA, that is being forced upon U.S. troops. Service members trying to get religious exemptions say they’ve been told it’s [pointless to apply](#), while some have hired lawyers in an attempt to sue the federal government.