

Project Overview

Department of War: COVID After Action Review

Background: The Department of War (DoW) is responsible for organizing, training, and equipping the nation's military forces to protect US national security interests. Through its military departments, combatant commands, and defense agencies, the DoW oversees military readiness, strategic planning, personnel management, and the development and sustainment of defense capabilities across air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace domains. The DoW uses vaccines to protect military personnel from diseases that can cause death and impair operational readiness. Historically, DoW vaccine policies have focused on preserving force health and readiness, while balancing administrative requirements with individual medical considerations. The COVID-19 vaccine mandate, implemented in August 2021 and revoked in January 2023, has prompted discussion within the institution regarding policy consistency, exemption processes, and the long-term implications for medical readiness requirements.



About the National Academy of Public Administration

Chartered by Congress to provide non-partisan expert advice, the Academy is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. Learn more at www.napawash.org

Project Description

The Academy will conduct a comprehensive, independent evaluation of the DoW's COVID-19 vaccine policy and its rescission using a structured, multiphase methodology grounded in program evaluation standards, evidence-based analysis, and transparent stakeholder engagement. The scope of the evaluation will include

- A chronological review of DoW's COVID-19 response, from initial response through vaccine development, mandate implementation, rescission, and reinstatement;
- An examination of exemption and discharge decisions, focusing on policy consistency, fairness, and outcomes;
- An assessment of operational impacts on readiness, retention, morale, and deployability across the Military Departments;
- Stakeholder perspectives to ensure findings reflect both the documented policy and its on-the-ground effects.

The Academy will develop evidence-based findings and actionable recommendations aligned with DoW's operational, legal, and institutional framework.

A four-member Expert Panel of Fellows will oversee and guide this study. Two DoW Advisors will help connect the Study Team to stakeholders affected by the mandate and provide input throughout the project. Information on the Panel, Advisors, and Study Team is provided on the next page. The final report, including findings, recommendations, and executive briefings, will be completed by December 2026.

Expert Panel

Dr. David Chu is an Adjunct Senior Fellow with the Institute for Defense Analyses, from which he retired as president in 2020. His federal career included serving as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (2001-2009), Director and then Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation (1981-1993), and Assistant Director of the Congressional Budget Office for National Security and International Affairs (1978-81). Dr. Chu served a tour of duty with the US Army and worked for the RAND Corporation, where his responsibilities included directing the Arroyo Center and RAND's Washington Office. He earned his Ph.D. in economics from Yale University.

Cary Coglianese is a leading authority on regulatory policy and public administration, currently serving as the Edward B. Shils Professor of Law and Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. He has held senior academic appointments at Harvard University's Kennedy School and served as Chair of the Rulemaking Committee for the Administrative Conference of the United States. Coglianese's research focuses on improving government decision making, regulatory processes, and the use of technology in public sector innovation. He has advised federal agencies on rulemaking, compliance, and crisis response, making his expertise highly relevant to evaluating and strengthening medical countermeasures and policy implementation in complex operational environments.

Dr. Gene Migliaccio is Associate Dean for Applied Public Health at George Washington University and a retired Senior Executive Service leader with 35 years of federal service. He served as Executive Director for Community Care Delivery Operations at the Veterans Health Administration, overseeing an \$11 billion budget for veteran healthcare, and as Director of Federal Occupational Health at HHS. Dr. Migliaccio is a decorated officer in the U.S. Public Health Service and U.S. Air Force Medical Service Corps, with extensive experience in emergency response, health system management, and interagency coordination.

Brynt Parmeter is currently a Professor of Practice at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and was previously the Chief Talent Management Officer (CTMO) for the U.S. Department of Defense, leading Total Force talent strategy and supporting reforms in hybrid work, technology use, and talent mobility across DoD components. He was a U.S. Army infantry officer and combat veteran with nearly 25 years of service, including 40 months in Iraq, retiring as a colonel with three Bronze Star Medals and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

Department of War Advisors to the Expert Panel

Kacy J. Dixon, serves as Senior Advisor on Covid Reinstatement to the Under Secretary of War (Personnel & Readiness). She is an ROTC Distinguished Graduate and 16-year Air Force veteran with experience as an Intelligence Officer and Judge Advocate General (JAG). As a Mission Operations Commander, she led Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance operations to identify enemy networks, and provide real time, actionable intelligence to joint Special Operations Forces. She graduated top of her class as a JAG, possesses a Master of Laws in National Security, and served as a prosecutor and advisor on criminal, administrative, and operational law matters. She played a key role in litigation against Covid vaccine mandates and staunchly advocated for adherence to existing laws.

C. Scott "Sonny" Duncan, serves as the Senior Advisor to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He is a decorated combat Naval Aviator who served as a TOPGUN Instructor Pilot and the Surface-to-Air Threat and Countertactics Subject Matter Expert for the Navy and Marine Corps. He is a DARPA Service Chief Fellow and was meritoriously reordered for early promotion prior to being selected to command an F-35 squadron. LtCol Duncan publicly stood for Truth against the COVID-19 shot mandate. He was removed from command due to his conviction to honor God and support service members with sincerely held religious beliefs. He worked to help pass the National Defense Authorization Act taking effect in 2023 removing the mandate for the armed forces.

Project Staff

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