



Written by [ROwens](#) on September 17, 2021

Published in the October 4, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 19

Soldiers, Sailors Say No!

Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) has fielded dozens of communications from distraught active and reserve service men and women concerned about the impending military mandate to receive a COVID vaccine. He has responded by introducing H.R. 3860, a bill that would ban such a mandate. As of September 16, his bill had picked up 33 co-sponsors, all of whom are Republicans. The matter has been referred to the House Armed Services Subcommittee, and at this time there is no scheduled hearing on the measure.



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On August 24, 2021, the secretary of defense issued a memorandum directing that each service branch should have “ambitious timelines for implementation” of the COVID vaccine mandate. In response, each service branch set its own deadline. As of this writing, the vaccine mandate is scheduled to go into effect November 2 for active-duty Air Force and November 28 for active-duty Navy and Marines, and December 15 for active-duty Army.

Many service members who have refused the job would disagree with the claim that the military takes “freedom of religion and worship” seriously.

On August 27, Representative Massie moderated a conference call that included a dozen armed service members, with experience ranging from a first-year Air Force Academy cadet to a major with 17 years of service, including combat experience. Topics covered were widespread, but centered around the willful disregard of the science involved in this matter and the total disregard of people and their concerns, in favor of achieving total compliance with set policies. Selected members of the media, including The New American, were invited to listen to the teleconference and ask questions under the condition that the service members who shared their experiences would remain anonymous.

Media personnel were not provided the names of the witnesses, but Massie advised that his office had vetted each of the speakers for authenticity, and the teleconference was run through his office. The need for anonymity stemmed from intense backlash the witnesses stated they have been subject to, including extreme pressure and threats so pervasive that one member reported the recent suicide of a vaccine non-compliant enlisted man as a result.

The sum and substance of the collective testimony was that the Biden administration has grossly misrepresented to the American people the facts concerning the vaccine status of military personnel, and the administration is outright lying about any notion that they “take freedom of religion and worship seriously.” The witness testimony seemed to suggest that the purpose of the draconian mandates is to get actual vaccine rates to more closely match the 70-percent claim made by the administration. Many of the witnesses predict that the rigid enforcement of the vaccine mandate will result in a huge loss of personnel to resignations and other adverse disciplinary action. Thus, in one incredibly miserable policy choice, Biden has managed to be anti-science and anti-religious-freedom and



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create a national-security crisis all at the same time.

A soldier identified only as “Member 10” is a six-year veteran of the Air National Guard as a frontline healthcare worker. “The science is ignored in favor of a ‘vax everyone at all costs’ position” he reports. Superiors are aware of the fact that soldiers with prior exposure to COVID have a better immune response than could be achieved with a vaccine, yet it simply does not matter. He laments the unnecessary risk of requiring the vaccine for individuals who have natural immunity already, especially when they have health indicators that suggest the vaccine is a risk. “I’ve personally witnessed [fellow soldiers] forced out because of health issues that prevented them from safely getting vaccinated.” He says superiors would rather see experienced veterans quit if such action improved the vaccination percentages in their units.

“Member 1” has been on the military COVID response team for the past six months. “The pressure from commanders to get people vaxxed is intense.” This member is currently in the process of trying to obtain an exemption and has been frustrated throughout the process. He reports that the harassment from commanders to abandon his exemption request is daily and miserable.

“Member 9” is a captain in the Air Force and an experienced, decorated pilot. “I began the religious exemption process months ago.” He noted that it is not yet fully adjudicated. “The officers in charge of the process are yes men that only want to protect their own careers.” This Air Force officer’s once squeaky-clean service record has been irreparably damaged. His future assignments have been canceled. He has been taken off the flight line, has been issued three letters of reprimand, and has been cited and suspended for a “refusal to follow command” — all while his paperwork for an exemption is still pending. The Air Force has invested millions of dollars in training this pilot, who is currently sitting at home all day long answering the occasional e-mail.

“I submitted my exemption paperwork in February and my requests have been denied without any reasons given,” explained a senior officer who is a fighter pilot with combat experience. “I had the support of my direct commander, but I keep getting denials up the chain.” Appeals are still ongoing, but the harassment has ramped up. “Our flight surgeon labeled me a ‘medical extremist’ and that was put in my permanent file, an action that I have no way to appeal.” As with “Member 9,” this senior pilot and flight instructor has been taken off the flight line and relegated to menial tasks.

Such treatment is not just the domain of the Air Force. “Member 4” is a U.S. Army captain with over 10 years of service. He describes himself as a Christian patriot who joined the military out of a sheer love of country. “I put forward my religious accommodation request in December 2020. I had the full support of my command structure. My request was denied by the Surgeon General of the Army without any reason given.” This Army veteran went on to describe the horrific, miserable, and stressful harassment he has endured during the appeals process, which is still pending with the secretary of the Army. “I am going to fight this in Federal Court if I need to.” “Member 4” feels there has been “significant dishonesty” on the part of superiors regarding the ruling upon his religious exemption request.

In corroborating many of the experiences shared by other members on the call, an enlisted Navy man recalled an officer telling him, “you are the reason your mom and dad is going to die.” An enlisted Air Force E4 wanted to refuse the vaccine because a close family member just died from a blood clot immediately after getting the vaccine. Both have been threatened with a court-martial or, in the best-



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case scenario, a dishonorable discharge. “I wanted to serve my country and now I am looking at a result in which I am lumped in with felons and rapists, I won’t even be able to own a firearm,” lamented the enlisted Navy man, who is still under contract and cannot simply resign.

A major with 17 years of active service and identified as “Member 6” related his experience with a medical exemption. The major had previously contracted COVID and recovered well with little complication and no hospitalization. This officer has a heart condition that is prevalent but sufficiently under control, allowing him to remain active duty. At 17 years in, he is still a few years out from a retirement position that would greatly impact his family. “Privately I’ve been told that I qualify for a medical exemption, but the pressure put on the medical staff is such that none of the doctors are willing to officially sign off.” The major has similarly endured constant harassment over his refusal to get vaccinated, and remains steadfast to the point that he carries his resignation papers with him in his pocket. “This is total nonsense; we have thousands of soldiers deployed in combat zones overseas and none of them have received the COVID vaccine. They are still accomplishing the mission.”

As the conference concluded, the service members warned of the national security crisis and extreme peril our nation will face when a vast number of experienced service members are driven out of the military *en masse* by the mandate. A reporter asked each of the participants on the call to estimate the actual number of service members vaccinated based upon their observations. Because of the differing standards and treatment of soldiers based on vaccine status, the members said it is pretty apparent. The answer: less than half.



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