

Secretary of Defense Mandatory Vaccination Directive and T32 Pay

On 24 August 2021, the Secretary of Defense mandated that all members of the armed forces, to include all state National Guards, immediately obtain COVID-19 vaccinations. November 30, 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued an additional memorandum prohibiting unvaccinated Guardsmen from participating in a Title 32 paid status. The Department of the Army has ordered no Title 32 pay for duty for those unvaccinated or without an approved accommodation/exemption beginning July 1, 2022. This order will, among other things, affect the federal pay of unvaccinated Texas Army National Guardsmen (TXARNG) conducting Title 32 annual training, inactive duty for training (IDT), or active guard reserve (AGR) service.

On 4 October 2021, Governor Greg Abbott issued Executive Order No. GA-39, prohibiting COVID-19 vaccine mandates by governmental entities in Texas. This mandate applies to the Texas National Guard and makes the decision to vaccinate a voluntary one. Governor Abbott has also initiated a federal lawsuit requesting the federal government be enjoined from forcing Guardsmen to vaccinate and dictating punishments while Guardsmen are in a Title 32 state status. A finding in Governor Abbott's favor, could halt the federal mandate. However, pending that decision, the federal government will not pay those unvaccinated or without an approved accommodation/exemption beginning 1 July 2022.

Although the decision to vaccinate in Texas is voluntary, TXARNG members should consider the collateral effects of their decisions. This information is intended only to provide facts so that TXARNG members can make informed decisions concerning their careers. Currently, the federal government is prohibiting unvaccinated members from Title 10 deployments or attendance at Training Doctrine and Command (TRADOC) schools. The prohibition on school attendance will potentially affect promotions and advancements. After 1 July 2022, TXARNG will no longer be eligible to perform Title 32 duty in a paid status. This will affect the member's ability to receive retirement points, bonuses, tuition assistance, and possible loss/recoupment of federal G.I. Bill benefits for members and dependents.

For those who decide to submit an accommodation/exemption, the member should contact their unit chaplains or the battalion medical providers to assist with the submission. The federal government defines fully vaccinated as 2 weeks following the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or 2 weeks following a one-dose vaccine.