



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on July 25, 2024

# Navy SEALs Win Major Legal Battle Over Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate

In a significant legal victory, thousands of Navy SEALs and other service members who were negatively impacted by President Joe Biden's Covid-19 vaccine mandate have won a court settlement after years of litigation. The mandate, [announced](#) by the Department of Defense (DOD) in August 2021, led to the discharge of over 8,400 service members who refused the vaccine on religious or medical grounds.



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## Background

The [Daily Mail](#) reported that the settlement will correct the service records of those service members. As detailed by the outlet:

Navy SEALs and other special operators suffered professional setbacks for refusing the vaccine, despite having their religious accommodation requests denied multiple times.

They were fired, denied trainings to advance in rank and, in some cases, even forced by the military to repay their initial signing bonuses between \$4,000 and \$7,000.

SEALs and other special operations warfare troops were also told they would have to pay back the cost of their training by the federal government — hundreds of thousands of dollars — and hand over their hard-earned “Trident” pin.

Earning the “Trident” pin, officially known as the “Special Warfare Insignia,” is a major achievement and a mark of honor, indicating that the wearer has met the demanding requirements of being a Navy SEAL. Losing the pin is a severe professional and symbolic blow to any SEAL.

Facing these unjust hardships, a group of over 200 active-duty and retired service members has been vocal in demanding accountability from the Biden administration.

The infamous mandate was [rescinded](#) by the DOD early in 2023, and the administrative separations for sailors who refused the job [were ended](#) soon after. However, among other actions, the group demanded accountability from the military leadership who, they argued, broke the law, trampled on constitutional rights, enabled non-consensual medical experimentation, and suppressed religious freedoms in their implementation of the vaccine mandate.

In an open letter dated January 1, 2024, they vowed to hold those responsible accountable, even calling for top military leaders to be court-martialed “for the crimes they committed.”

The letter pointed out that the affected troops and their families suffered tremendously:

Service members and families were significantly harmed by these actions. Their suffering



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continues to be felt financially, emotionally, and physically. Some service members became part of our ever-growing veteran homeless population, some developed debilitating vaccine injuries, and some even lost their lives.

The letter accused military leaders of “continuing to ignore our communications regarding these injuries and the laws that were broken.”

Service members discharged for refusing the Covid-19 vaccine were not reinstated after the mandate was lifted.

### **The Case and the Settlement**

[According to Military.com](#), the settlement comes in response to [US Navy SEALs 1-26 v. Biden](#), filed in November 2021. This alleged that the Navy and the Defense Department violated the service members’ First Amendment rights to religious freedom by “nearly categorically refusing” to accommodate their requests for religious exemptions from the Covid-19 vaccinations.

The plaintiffs [based some objections](#) on the fact that the mRNA technology was linked to aborted fetal cells. Plus, they felt the shots “would alter the functions of their body such as by inducing the production of a spike protein in a manner not designed by God.”

The suit also quoted the exertional mental and physical health of the SEALs, along with their concerns over the known adverse effects of the Covid shots, such as potentially fatal myocarditis and pericarditis.

After nearly four years of litigation, the Navy, besides expunging all records of separation of the plaintiffs, agreed to grant them protection against discrimination on promotion boards for the next three years. “Promotion boards ‘must not consider any adverse information related solely to COVID-19 vaccine refusal in cases in which a religious accommodation was requested,’” wrote Military.com, quoting the statement from the attorneys.

They also agreed to post a statement “affirming the Navy’s respect for religious service members” and to provide more training for commanders reviewing religious accommodation requests.

Military.com noted:

The Navy also agreed to pay \$1.5 million in legal fees to the plaintiffs’ attorneys. Previously, the attorneys were awarded \$1.8 million in a separate settlement of a suit against the Defense Department.

The plaintiffs will not receive any of the compensation in either settlement, and a settlement is not an admission of guilt or wrongdoing by either party.

The legal challenge was spearheaded by [First Liberty Institute](#) and [Hacker Stephens LLP](#) on behalf of the affected troops. Danielle Runyan, senior counsel at First Liberty Institute, expressed relief and pride in the victory, [stating to the Daily Mail](#), “This has been a long and difficult journey, but the Navy SEALs never gave up.” Heather Gebelin Hacker of Hacker Stephens LLP described the outcome as a “hard-fought but significant victory.”

### **Aftermath of the Mandate**

According to the data on vaccine mandate noncompliance cited by Military.com,



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Roughly 17,000 service members refused the vaccine, and more than 8,400 were discharged for their decision, including 3,717 Marines, 2,041 Navy sailors, 1,841 Army soldiers, and 834 Air Force and Space Force members.

The military services granted only about 1,200 permanent and temporary exemptions for the vaccine, most of them for medical reasons, [according to MilitaryTimes](#).

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro [told Congress this May](#) that he had “no regrets” for discharging thousands of service members who “disobeyed the orders.”

Covid vaccinations led to significant increases in heart disease among military pilots, [as disclosed](#) by Navy medical officer Lieutenant Ted Macie. According to officially acknowledged data from the Defense Medical Epidemiology Database (DMED) quoted by the medic, cases of myocarditis and heart failure had risen by 151 and 973 percent, respectively, as of July 2023.

The resolution of the legal battle against the Biden administration marks a pivotal moment for the Navy SEALs. They and other service members have long endured professional setbacks and personal sacrifices due to the vaccine mandate.



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