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Introduction

The novel coronavirus has put unprecedented strain on America's civilian health infrastructure, stretching the capacity and resources of local health systems to the breaking point. With more than [546,341 COVID-19 cases](#) in the United States as of April 12, many have called on the military to add its significant weight to the whole of government response. The [Center for International Policy](#) (CIP) team has developed a resource page, which will be updated regularly, providing a collection of information on the appropriate role for the military in responding to the virus, as well as the limitations and risks of looking to the armed forces to address a domestic health crisis

Overview: Resources, Risks and Considerations

Despite the [vastness of the military's resources](#), there are serious practical limitations to the utility of U.S. armed forces capabilities in the Covid-19 response.

The military does maintain [stores of medical and personal protective equipment](#) that can be made available to state responders, as well as a [network of laboratories](#) medical facilities, and military bases that be directed to support the response effort. In addition, the military maintains a number of healthcare professionals within its ranks, including [scientists and physicians](#).

Nevertheless, the scale of the military's relevant medical and scientific resources are limited and geared to treating active duty and retired military members, [not those afflicted with infectious disease](#). Moreover, some of their capabilities are either already indisposed or [could draw resources](#) from existing civilian efforts.

While the Pentagon may have some relevant resources to add to the fight against COVID-19, it is not a public health agency and is far from the ideal tool for addressing the current crisis, as has been [acknowledged](#) by military leaders themselves. What is needed in the long-term is a sustained and growing investment in public health resources.

For a more detailed overview, check out CIP's recent [Special Edition of the Weekly Monitor](#).

The Latest News

["Beware the Pentagon's Pandemic Profiteers"](#) Project on Government Oversight, May 4, 2020

["Amid New York's 42,400 hospitalizations, the military handled 3 percent. But it helped in immeasurable ways"](#) Washington Post, May 2, 2020

["How the Coronavirus Pandemic Has Shaken the US Military."](#) CNN, April 26, 2020

["National Guard COVID-19 update: Troop level at more than 46,500, 86 percent on Title 32 orders"](#) Military Times, May 6, 2020

["Pentagon Blasts Lawmakers' Critique Of COVID-19 Response"](#) Defense One, April 28, 2020

["How the U.S. Military Could Help Fight the Coronavirus Outbreak,"](#) Government Executive, April 27, 2020

["Senate Democrats pan Esper for 'failed' coronavirus response,"](#) The Hill, April 27, 2020

["Trump White House Turns to Military for New Supply Chain Mission"](#) MSN, April 25, 2020

Other Issue Briefs

["The Prognosis: Latest News on Coronavirus & National Security,"](#) Defense One, April 17, 2020

["The COVID-19 Manufacturing Tracker: Responding to the Defense Production Act,"](#) American Enterprise Institute, Updated April 13, 2020

["Overview: The Department of Defense and COVID-19,"](#) Congressional Research Service, March 31, 2020

["Use of Military Forces in the COVID-19 Emergency",](#) the Center for Strategic and International Policy, March 17, 2020

["The U.S. Military and the Domestic Coronavirus Response: Key Questions,"](#) Kaiser Family Foundation, March 20, 2020

["Coronavirus: Defense Industry Repurposing Resource Page,"](#) Forum on the Arms Trade, Last Updated March 30, 2020

Government Documents & Statements

["Factsheet: Department of Defense COVID-19 Response,"](#) Department of Defense, May 6, 2020

["DOD Response Timeline,"](#) Department of Defense, April 20, 2020

["Teamwork Provides Protective Masks Quickly,"](#) Defense Logistics Agency, April 13, 2020

["DOD Expands Medical Support in New York City, New Orleans, and Dallas,"](#) Department of Defense, April 3, 2020

["Partnering With the U.S. Defense Industrial Base to Combat COVID-19,"](#) Department of Defense, April 3, 2020

["COVID-19: The Basics of Domestic Defense Response,"](#) Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2020

["Department of Defense Statement on the use of National Guard Forces Under Title 32 Section 502\(f\),"](#) Department of Defense, March 28

["Coronavirus Rumor Control,"](#) Department of Defense, April 9, 2020

Legal Considerations

["COVID-19: Defense Support of Civil Authorities ,"](#) Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2020

["The National Guard in the COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Framework for Action,"](#) Congressional Research Service, April 1, 2020

["The Use of Federal Troops for Disaster Assistance: Legal Issues,"](#) Congressional Research Service, November 29, 2008

["Defense Primer: Defense Support of Civil Authorities,"](#) Congressional Research Service, October 2, 2019

["COVID-19 and the Defense Industrial Base: DOD Response and Legislative Consideration,"](#) Congressional Research Service, March 30, 2020

["COVID-19: Industrial Mobilization and Defense Production Act \(DPA\) Implementation,"](#) Congressional Research Service, March 25, 2020