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Defense Health Board
On May 12, 2023, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs directed the Defense Health Board (DHB) to provide recommendations on how the DoD could better deliver health information within an environment of misinformation.
Background

• Inaccurate information about health harms public health and undermines trust in public health professionals.

• Inaccuracies can be characterized as *misinformation* (good faith errors) and *disinformation* (intentional spread of falsehoods).

• The information landscape during the COVID-19 Pandemic was exceptionally complex and influenced by multiple factors.

• Tension between freedom of expression and protecting the public good permeates efforts to mitigate the impacts of mis- and disinformation.

Objectives and Scope

• Identify lessons learned about DoD’s vulnerabilities and capabilities in disseminating health information during the COVID pandemic.

• Review DoD/DHA policies and processes used for health communications.

• Review academic, commercial, and government research on best practices for health communications.

• Provide recommendations for how the DoD could better deliver health information within an environment of misinformation and threats to credibility.
Emerging Themes

• Public health officials are charged with protecting the public. They operate according to specific legal authorities. Compliance is impacted by trust.
• Misinformation and disinformation are different and require different mitigation strategies.
• Scientists and the lay public may attribute different meanings to changes in public health guidance.
• It is essential to understand the social and cultural context, and the official and unofficial communication channels, to which Service members are exposed.
• Artificial Intelligence magnifies the challenges of mis- and disinformation.

Way Forward

• June 14: Virtual Kick Off Meeting
• June 28: Introductory Brief to the DHB
• July 25: Virtual Meeting
• August 25: In-Person Meeting
• September 11-12: Tasker Update at DHB Meeting
• November 29-30: Tasker Update at DHB Meeting
Questions