

U.S. Sen. Johnson: To Sec. Austin: DOD's "pattern of deception" regarding its medical database is unacceptable

Posted on Friday, Jul 21, 2023

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WASHINGTON – On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), ranking member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin regarding the data integrity issues on the Department of Defense's (DoD) Defense Medical Epidemiology Database (DMED).

On July 5, 2023, DoD informed Sen. Johnson's office that it provided him incomplete data in February 2022 regarding increases in registered diagnoses in DMED. This acknowledgement came after Sen. Johnson wrote to Secretary Austin on [March 21, 2023](#), about information he received from a DoD whistleblower that called into question the accuracy of the data DoD previously produced. The whistleblower DMED data showed increases in several registered medical diagnoses among Service members in 2021 compared to a five-year average from 2016-2020.

Sen. Johnson wrote, "without the whistleblower's disclosure, I doubt DoD would have ever acknowledged that it provided incomplete information to my office [.]"

In DoD's July 5, 2023 response, it admitted that when it originally provided Sen. Johnson the DMED information in February 2022, it did not include the complete data set for 2021, due to "data lag by about 3 months." DoD indicated that the "December 2021 data would have not been available until March 2022." However, in July 2022 (over one year ago), when DoD sent Sen. Johnson additional background information on DMED, rather than provide the updated data set for 2021, it once again produced the same incomplete data without informing Sen.

Johnson about any specific data limitations.

“DoD’s failure to provide my office with complete DMED data or immediately disclose relevant limitations to information it produced to Congress shows a complete disregard for transparency,” **Sen. Johnson wrote.**

Sen. Johnson also noted that DoD’s recent response may contain “even more potentially misleading calculations.” DoD claimed that its recent data analysis suggested that increases in case rates of certain registered diagnoses in 2021 were “more likely” caused by COVID-19 infection rather than COVID-19 vaccination.

Sen. Johnson questioned DOD’s assertion writing, “it is unclear whether or how it accounted for Service members who had a prior COVID-19 infection *and* received a COVID-19 vaccination.”

For over a year, Sen. Johnson has been examining DMED data integrity issues. His oversight work in this area began in late Jan. 2022, when he received information from three DoD whistleblowers showing significant increases in certain registered diagnoses in DMED in 2021 compared to a five-year average from 2016-2020. Since then, the senator has sent DoD and its contractor, Unissant Inc., multiple letters seeking information about the data published in DMED.

Sen. Johnson wrote to Sec. Austin, “I am grateful to the whistleblowers who continue to come forward to provide my office with information you and other DoD officials are unwilling to produce.”

Previous letters regarding the senator’s oversight of DMED data integrity issues can be found below:

[Feb. 1, 2022 to DoD,](#)

[Feb. 8, 2022 to DoD,](#)

[March 7, 2022 to Unissant, Inc.,](#)

[June 14, 2022 to Unissant Inc.,](#) and

[March 21, 2023 to DoD.](#)

Read more about the senator’s July 19, 2023 to DoD letter in [Epoch Times.](#)

The full letter can be found [here](#).