

Report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives



2019 World Military Games

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

December 2022

**As required by Section 1068 of the National Defense Authorization Act
for Fiscal Year 2022 (Public Law 117-81)**

The estimated cost of this report or study
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Report on 2019 World Military Games

Section 1068 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 (Public Law 117–81) requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the participation of the United States in the 2019 World Military Games.

Introduction

This report covers participation in the 2019 World Military Games in Wuhan, China specifically related to questions posed in section 1068 of the NDAA for FY 2022. Answers to the questions are provided below.

The number of United States athletes and staff who attended the 2019 World Military Games and became ill with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-like symptoms during or shortly after their return to the United States.

The U.S. delegation included 263 total participants (173 athletes and 90 coaches and staff) of whom 219 were military personnel. The Department of Defense (DoD) has concluded through correspondence with the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and United States of America Medical Director in charge of the safety and health of the participants in the 2019 World Military Games, that 7 Service members who attended the games exhibited COVID-19-like signs and/or symptoms during the timeframe of October 18, 2019 through January 21, 2020. The COVID-19-like symptoms could have been caused by other respiratory infections. All 7 Service members' symptoms resolved within 6 days.

The results of any blood testing conducted on athletes and staff returning from the 2019 World Military Games, including whether those blood samples were subsequently tested for COVID-19.

The military facilities supporting Service members from the 2019 World Military Games reported no outbreaks of COVID-19-like signs and/or symptoms shortly upon returning. Service members were not tested for COVID-19 or antibodies due to their participation in the 2019 World Military Games, as testing was not available at this early stage of the pandemic.

The number of home station Department of Defense facilities of the athletes and staff who participated in the 2019 World Military Games that experienced outbreaks of illnesses consistent with COVID-19 symptoms upon the return of members of the Armed Forces from Wuhan, China.

Data surveillance reports from military treatment facilities indicate no statistically significant difference in COVID-19-like symptoms cases at installations with participating athletes when compared to installations without them. In addition, no significant increase in COVID-19-like signs and/or symptoms was documented for the dates of October 2019 through March 2020 as a result of U.S. Army separate surveillance testing.

The number of Department of Defense facilities visited by team members after returning from Wuhan, China that experienced COVID-19 outbreaks during the first quarter of 2020, including in relation to the share of other Department of Defense facilities that experienced COVID-19 outbreaks through March 31, 2020.

Data surveillance reports from military treatment facilities indicate no statistically significant difference in COVID-19-like symptoms cases at installations with participating athletes when compared to installations without them. In addition, no significant increase in COVID-19-like signs and/or symptoms was documented for the dates of October 2019 through March 2020 as a result of U.S. Army separate surveillance testing.

Whether the Department tested members of the Armed Forces who traveled to Wuhan, China for the World Military Games for COVID-19 antibodies, and if so, what portion, if any, of those results were positive, and when such testing was conducted.

Service members were not tested for COVID-19 or antibodies due to their participation in the 2019 World Military Games, as testing was not available at this early stage of the pandemic.

Whether there are, or have been, any investigations, including whether under the auspices of an Inspector General, across the Department of Defense or the military departments into possible connections between United States athletes who traveled to Wuhan, China, and the outbreak of COVID-19.

DoD has not conducted or opened an investigation into connections between the outbreak of COVID-19 and the 2019 World Military Games.

Whether the Department has engaged with the militaries of allied or partner countries about illnesses surrounding the 2019 World Military Games, and if so, how many participating militaries have indicated to the Department that their athletes or staff may have contracted COVID-19-like symptoms during or immediately after the Games.

DoD has not engaged in any discussions with allied or partner militaries about illness associated with participation in the 2019 World Military Games.

Conclusion

Seven Service members who attended the games exhibited COVID-19-like signs and/or symptoms during the timeframe of October 18, 2019 through January 21, 2020. All 7 Service members' symptoms resolved within 6 days. Service members were not tested for COVID-19 or antibodies given that testing was not available during this early stage of the pandemic. Data surveillance reports from military treatment facilities indicate no statistically significant difference in COVID-19-like symptoms cases at installations with participating athletes when compared to installations without them. In addition, no significant increase in COVID-19-like signs and/or symptoms was documented for the dates of October 2019 through March 2020.