

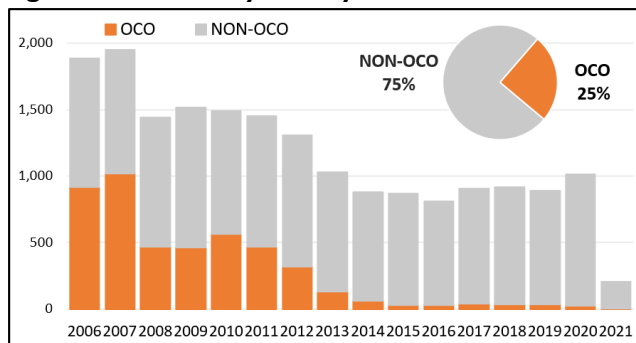
# Trends in Active-Duty Military Deaths Since 2006

## Summary of Deaths

Between 2006 and 2021, a total of 18,571 active-duty personnel have died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. (Throughout this In Focus, the designation “active duty” refers to all active duty troops, including mobilized Reserve and Guard components.) Of those that died, 25% were killed while serving in OCO operations—primarily within the territory of Iraq and Afghanistan. The remaining 75% died during operations classified in this In Focus as *Non-Overseas Contingency Operations*, or *Non-OCO*.

**Figure 1** summarizes all service deaths since 2006.

**Figure 1. Active Duty Military Deaths Since 2006**



**Source:** U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, April 6, 2021.

**Note:** Dataset for 2021 is incomplete.

## Scope and References

Section 101 of Title 10, United States Code, defines a *contingency operation* as any Secretary of Defense-designated military operation “in which members of the armed forces are or may become involved in military actions, operations, or hostilities against an enemy of the United States or against an opposing military force.” OCO operations related to *Afghanistan* refers to: Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel. President Biden has announced a drawdown of all 2,500 U.S. troops in that country beginning May 1 and concluding by Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the war. OCO operations primarily related to *Iraq* include Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve. On May 21, 2020, President Trump extended for one year the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq. Due to quality issues with pre-2006 data, earlier years have been excluded from this analysis.

## Non-OCO Deaths

Approximately 13,969 servicemembers have died in circumstances unrelated to OCO operations since 2006. On average, this amounts to approximately 918 non-war-related deaths each year (excluding 2021). Personnel

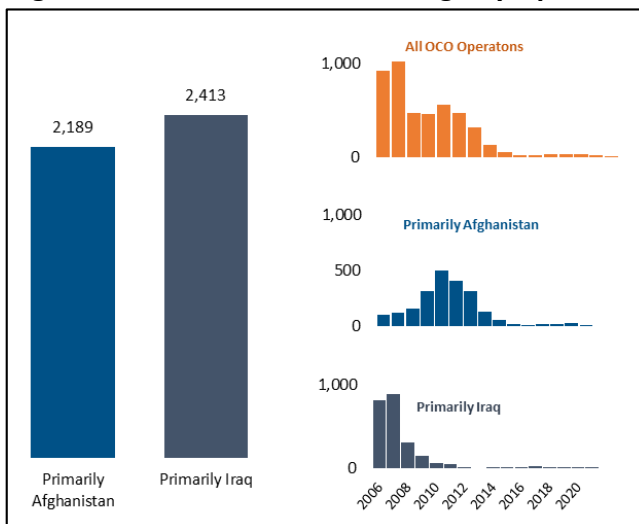
perished in approximately 75 countries (and at sea), with the majority (93%) of deaths occurring in the United States. Other locations included Germany, Japan, South Korea, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

Generally, servicemembers died as the result of accident, self-inflicted wounds, or illness. Approximately 15% (2,146) involved vehicles. Alcohol or substance abuse was a factor in 7% of all accidental deaths. The data do not indicate whether alcohol and/or substance abuse was involved in deaths due to self-inflicted wounds, illness, or vehicles.

## OCO Deaths

Approximately 4,602 military personnel have died in (or as the result of) OCO operations in 28 countries and locations at sea. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) caused approximately half (45%) of all U.S. deaths in operational war zones. The lethality of IEDs closely tracked surges of troop deployments to OCO operations, primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Figure 2. Deaths in Overseas Contingency Operations**



**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, April 6, 2021.

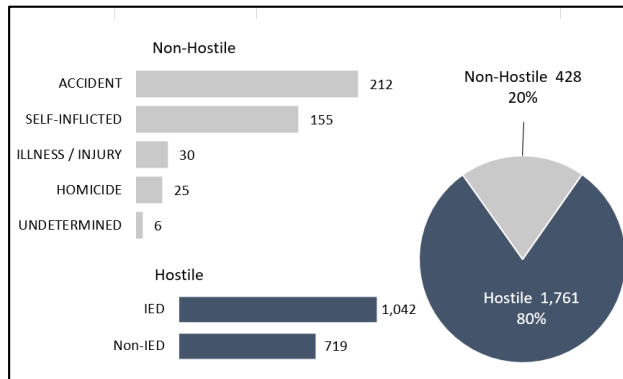
**Notes:** *Primarily Iraq* comprises Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve; *Primarily Afghanistan* comprises Enduring Freedom and Freedom’s Sentinel. Includes casualties at all associated locations. Dataset for 2021 is incomplete.

## Overall Deaths in Iraq

Since 2006, approximately 2,189 U.S. troops have died as part of OCO operations in Iraq, with 48% of these military deaths attributable to IEDs (and their variants). Of those who were not killed in IED related incidents, 37% died under nonhostile conditions, primarily from accidents

(including loss of aircraft or ground vehicle) or as the result of self-inflicted injury.

**Figure 3. Overall Deaths in Iraq**



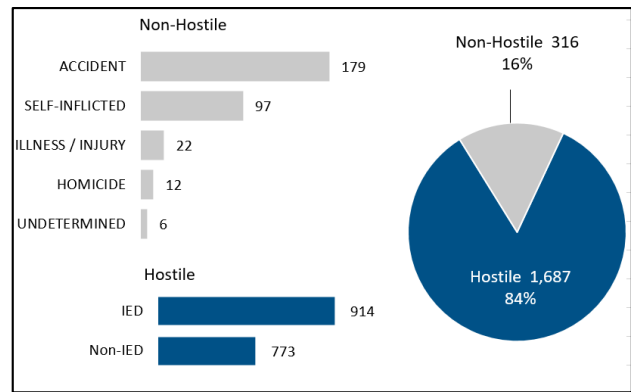
**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, April 6, 2021.

**Note:** Dataset for 2021 is incomplete.

### Overall Deaths in Afghanistan

Since 2006, approximately 2,004 U.S. troops have died in Afghanistan. Nearly half (46%) of all these military deaths are attributable to IEDs and their variants, which took their greatest toll between 2009 and 2012. Most U.S. personnel not killed by IEDs during this period died as the result of gunshot wounds, or after suffering other multiple physical trauma in action (529). Between 2006 and 2021, a substantial number (168) died in connection with the loss of an aircraft or ground vehicle. Most such incidents were classified as accidental (70%), and occurred under nonhostile conditions.

**Figure 4. Overall Deaths in Afghanistan**



**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, April 6, 2021.

**Note:** Dataset for 2021 is incomplete.

### Source of Casualty Data

Data in this In Focus were provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). When a U.S. casualty occurs, each service is required to complete a form (DD 1300 Report of Casualty) that includes circumstances related to death. This information is subsequently entered into the service's Casualty and Mortuary Affairs database (Defense Casualty Information Processing System, or DCIPS) which, in turn, is made accessible to DMDC. Casualty data are refreshed daily, and past records are subject to change. For details on casualty matters, policies, and procedures, see Department of Defense Instruction 1300.18.

**Table 1. U.S. Active-Duty Military Deaths in all Countries, 2006-2021 (April)**

Casualty Category	Non-OCO	OCO	Sum of Category	Category (as % of Total)
Accident	5,419	494	5,913	31.8%
Self-inflicted	4,315	297	4,612	24.8%
Illness / Injury	3,133	128	3,261	17.6%
Killed in Action	6	2,723	2,729	14.7%
Died of Wounds	1	889	890	4.8%
Homicide	547	44	591	3.2%
Undetermined	295	18	313	1.7%
Pending	234	3	237	1.3%
Terrorist	19	2	21	0.1%
While Captured	0	4	4	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,969</b>	<b>4,602</b>	<b>18,571</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, April 6, 2021.

**Notes:** The self-inflicted subcategory includes an apparent-suicide designation; for comprehensive statistics on this subject, please consult the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO). Non-OCO deaths between 2019-2020 saw a significant (136%) rise in deaths categorized as "pending" or "uncategorized." According to DMDC, these deaths may be recategorized at a later date.

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