

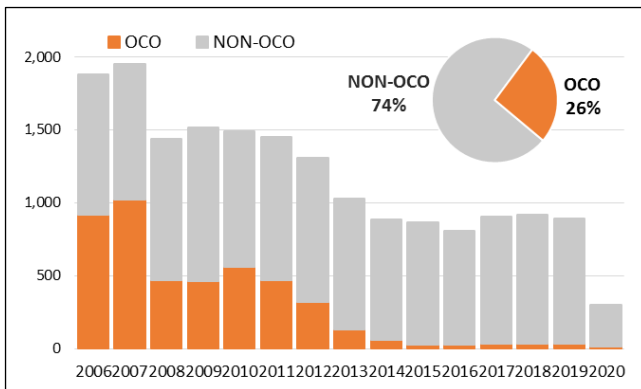


# Trends in Active-Duty Military Deaths Since 2006

## Summary of Deaths

Between 2006 and 2020, a total of 17,645 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, 26% were killed while serving in OCO operations—primarily within the territory of Iraq and Afghanistan. The remaining 74% 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, June 6, 2020.

**Note:** Dataset for 2020 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* refer to: Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel. OCO operations primarily related to *Iraq* include Iraq Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve. Due to quality issues with pre-2006 data, earlier years have been excluded from this analysis.

## Non-OCO Deaths

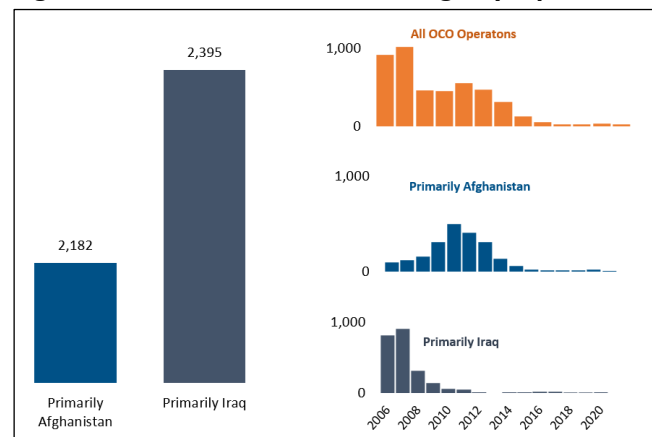
Approximately 13,068 servicemembers have died in circumstances unrelated to OCO operations since 2006. On average, this amounts to approximately 913 non-war-related deaths each year (excluding 2020). Personnel perished in more than 70 countries (and at sea), with the majority (93%) of deaths occurring in the United States. Other locations included Germany, Japan, Korea, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

Generally, servicemembers died as the result of accident, self-inflicted wounds, or illness. Approximately 16% (1,915) involved vehicles. Alcohol was a factor in 14% of all accidental deaths. The data do not indicate whether alcohol was also involved in deaths due to self-inflicted wounds, illness, or vehicles.

## OCO Deaths

Approximately 4,577 military personnel have died in OCO operations in 25 countries (and locations at sea). Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) caused 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**

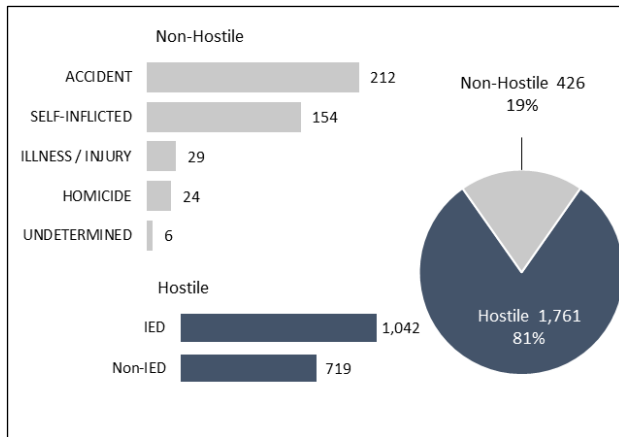


**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, June 9, 2020.

**Note:** *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 2020 is incomplete.

## Overall Deaths in Iraq

Since 2006, approximately 2,187 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.

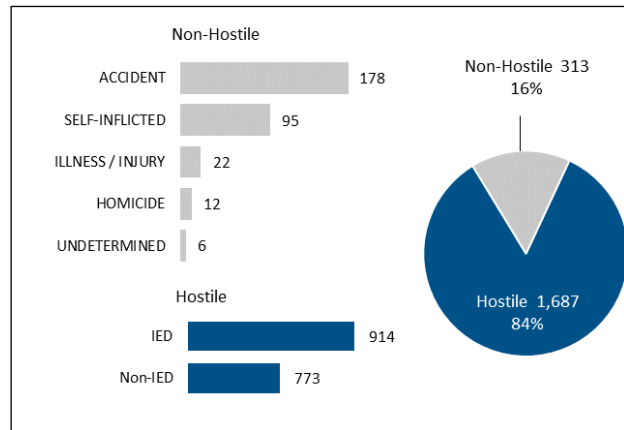
**Figure 3. Overall Deaths in Iraq**

**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, June 6, 2020.

**Note:** Dataset for 2020 is incomplete.

### Overall Deaths in Afghanistan

Since 2006, approximately 2,000 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). From 2006 to June 6, 2020, a substantial number (166) have 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, June 6, 2020.

**Note:** Dataset for 2020 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), 2006-2020**

Casualty Category	Non-OCO	OCO	Sum of Category	Category (as % of Total)
Accident	5,120	485	5,605	31.8%
Self-inflicted	3,940	291	4,231	24.0%
Illness / Injury	2,971	121	3,092	17.5%
Killed in Action	7	2,722	2,729	15.5%
Died of Wounds	1	889	890	5.0%
Homicide	514	42	556	3.2%
Undetermined	286	17	303	1.7%
Pending	211	4	215	1.2%
Terrorist	18	2	20	0.1%
While Captured	0	4	4	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,068</b>	<b>4,577</b>	<b>17,645</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** DMDC Defense Casualty Analysis System report provided to CRS, June 6, 2020.

**Notes:** The self-inflicted subcategory includes an apparent-suicide designation; for comprehensive statistics on this subject, please consult the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO). Of the seven personnel killed in action during Non-OCO operations, four were killed in Niger, one in Iraq, one in Kenya, and one in Somalia. Includes 35 alcohol or substance abuse related casualties during OCO operations. Dataset for 2020 is incomplete.

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