



**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1000

DEC 20 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing Advisory for Military Members

It has come to the attention of the DoD that some direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing companies are encouraging DoD personnel to purchase genetic ancestry and health information through the offering of military discounts or other incentives. These DTC genetic tests are largely unregulated and could expose personal and genetic information, and potentially create unintended security consequences and increased risk to the joint force and mission.

Exposing sensitive genetic information to outside parties poses personal and operational risks to Service members. DTC genetic tests that provide health information have varying levels of validity, and many are not reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration before they are offered, meaning they may be sold without independent analysis to verify the claims of the seller. Possible inaccuracies pose more risk to DoD military personnel than the public due to Service member requirements to disclose medical information that affects readiness (see DoD Instruction 6025.19, "Individual Medical Readiness"). Testing outside the Military Health System is unlikely to include a clear description of this risk.

Moreover, there is increased concern in the scientific community that outside parties are exploiting the use of genetic data for questionable purposes, including mass surveillance and the ability to track individuals without their authorization or awareness.

Until notified otherwise, DoD military personnel are advised to refrain from the purchase and/or use of DTC genetic services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph D. Kernan".

Joseph D. Kernan  
Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James N. Stewart".

James N. Stewart  
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower  
and Reserve Affairs, Performing the Duties  
of the Under Secretary of Defense for  
Personnel and Readiness

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