

Dr. David J. Smith

Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs



Dr. David J. Smith is currently the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and Acting Director, Defense Health Agency. Prior to his present role, he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Readiness Policy and Oversight. In this role he directed Department-wide efforts to develop and implement policies and programs relating to DOD deployment medicine, force health protection, national disaster support, medical research and development, international health agreements and missions, and medical readiness for 2.3 million Service members.

Smith also performed the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs from Feb. 2017 - Aug. 2017 and again from Nov. 2021 - April 2022, and acted as the Principal Deputy for Health Affairs from Sept. 2017 – Oct. 2017, Feb. 2019 - Jan. 2020, and April 2022 - March 2023.

Smith received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois in 1977 and completed his Doctor of Medicine degree at Northwestern University Medical School in 1981. He completed his Occupational Medicine Training at the University of Cincinnati Medical School in 1989, where he received a Master of Science in Environmental Health. Smith is a certified physician executive (CPE), fellow of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (FACOEM) and is board certified in Occupational Medicine with a certificate of added qualification in Undersea Medicine. He also has a Certificate in Medical Management from the American College of Physician Executives at Tulane University.

After receiving his Master's degree and completing his residency in Occupational and Environmental medicine, he served as the United States Navy medical exchange officer, Institute of Naval Medicine, Alverstoke, England. He then held positions as the head of the Safety and Health Department at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute; occupational health consultant for the Defense Nuclear Agency; Director of Occupational and Community Health at National Naval Medical Center, and Commanding Officer, Naval Hospital Rota, Spain.

In July 2003, Smith accepted the appointment as chief of staff, TRICARE Management Activity, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs). Smith helped lead the migration to the new TRICARE contracts, expanded the Reserve Health Benefit, and implemented new regional governance. Afterwards, he served as the Deputy Chief for Health Care Operations (M3) at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and became chief of Operations in June 2005, responsible for all Navy peacetime and deployed medical operations.

In May 2008, Smith became the Joint Staff Surgeon where he served as the chief medical advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, providing counsel to the chairman, the joint staff, and combatant commanders. In October 2010, Smith deployed as the International Security Assistance Force-Afghanistan (ISAF) medical advisor and Chief, Joint Medical overseeing medical care and health development for the Afghan theater of operations. Prior to retiring from the Navy as a Rear Admiral, upper half, in October 2012, he was Director, Medical Resources, Plans and Policy Division on the Chief of Naval Operations staff where he developed and evaluated plans and policy for medical support to current and future Navy and Marine Corps operations.