

Military Decorations and Awards Review Results

Medal of Honor and Other Valor Awards

1. Existing Medal of Honor valor requirements are time-tested; the review recommended no change to Medal of Honor award criteria.
2. To improve timeliness of Medal of Honor and other valor awards, the Department of Defense will adopt new goals for efficient processing:
 - Nominations for valor awards should be initiated within 45 days of the valorous action;
 - Nominations should be expeditiously processed through the appropriate chain of command to ensure that the recommendation reaches the Secretary of Defense within 12 months of initiation;
 - Award of the Service Cross, Silver Star, and other valor awards should be made within 12 months of initiation.
3. Each Military Department will establish means to measure valor award timeliness in comparison to these goals to ensure efficient processing.
4. To enhance tracking of nominations, the first General Officer or Flag Officer endorsing a Medal of Honor nomination will notify the appropriate Military Service Headquarters' Decorations and Awards branch.
5. The appropriate Combatant Commander will now review a Medal of Honor nomination after a Military Department Secretary has recommended award; this ensures the Combatant Commander reviews the final package, in parallel with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to advise the Secretary of Defense and the President.
6. The Department will standardize the format for all valor awards to enhance timeliness and completeness of each nomination.
7. To ensure standardization, all award citations from the same combat action must accompany a Medal of Honor nomination submitted to the Secretary of Defense.
8. Military Department Secretaries will establish procedures for notifying the other Military Services when members of multiple Services are nominated for valor awards from the same combat action.
9. The "V" device will be used by all Services to only denote valor on medals that have multiple uses to ensure that valor is preeminently and unambiguously recognized.

Purple Heart

10. The review considered eligibility criteria for the Purple Heart and recommends no changes.
11. The Department will recommend updating the Executive Order governing the Purple Heart to incorporate statutory changes subsequent to 1984, clarify intent of the Purple Heart, and emphasize required severity of wounds for eligibility.
12. The Military Services will update their specific Purple Heart policies to ensure uniformity across the Department and reinforce the requirement that Military Service-policies with regard to the Purple Heart are subject to Secretary of Defense approval.
13. Military Services will ensure policies regarding the standard of treatment necessary to qualify for the Purple Heart in cases of mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) are consistent with latest Health Affairs medical treatment guidance.

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Combat Awards

- 14.** To make personal recognition of meritorious service in combat appropriately distinctive and to ensure the heritage and legacy of combat medals, the Department will establish a common definition of “Meritorious Service Under Combat Conditions” to establish eligibility for specific combat awards; the definition will encompass meritorious service while personally exposed to hostile action or while under significant risk of hostile action.
- 15.** Award of the Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service will be limited to those individuals meeting the definition of “Meritorious Service under Combat Conditions.”
- 16.** To further emphasize the value placed on meritorious service under combat conditions, the Department will establish a Combat “C” device that may be affixed to multi-purpose performance awards earned while serving under combat conditions.
- 17.** Each Military Service will continue to maintain separate authority to recognize combat participation through use of the Combat Action Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, or Combat Action Badge based on Service cultures and historical legacies.
- 18.** While considered, this review did not recommend changing existing eligibility criteria for the Army Combat Action Badge.

Remote Operations

- 19.** As the impact of remote operations on combat continues to increase, the necessity of ensuring those actions are distinctly recognized grows. Accordingly, the Department will create a “R” device that may be affixed to non-combat performance awards to specifically recognize remote but direct impact on combat operations.
- 20.** The Department will adopt a common definition of “Direct Impact on Combat Operations” for purposes of recognizing remote impacts on combat operations through award of the “R” device.

Joint Awards Authority and Eligibility

- 21.** While considered, this review recommended against expanding existing authorities to award the Bronze Star or other Military Service-specific combat awards.
- 22.** Joint/DoD award criteria will be clarified to ensure eligible Service members are appropriately recognized with joint awards while eliminating the use of Military Service-specific awards, other than valor/combat awards, for members assigned to joint duty activities.
- 23.** The Department will clarify procedures for granting exceptions to policy for award of Defense/Joint awards to Service members performing joint duties but not assigned to a joint duty activity.
- 24.** Combatant Commanders will be delegated authority to award the Defense Superior Service Medal.
- 25.** The Department will modify policy to allow delegation of Joint Service Commendation Medal approval authority to an officer in the grade of O-6 when that officer is in command of a joint duty activity or joint task force.
- 26.** The Department will clarify eligibility for joint awards to specify that exceptions to policy may only be made for individuals performing inherently joint duties per the 10 U.S.C. definition of joint matters.
- 27.** Criteria for nominating units for the Joint Meritorious Unit Award will specify the normal period of unit performance ranges from 1-3 years, but with an absolute minimum of 30 days.

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Campaign, Expeditionary, and Service Medals

28. Service stars are now authorized for wear on the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal to recognize participation by an individual in each of the currently-authorized operations, which includes operations ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, NEW DAWN, NOMAD SHADOW, FREEDOM'S SENTINEL, and INHERENT RESOLVE. (*effective as of February 9, 2015*)
29. Criteria for the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal will be clarified to more closely mirror its present-day usage and eliminate authority for "battle stars."
30. The Global War on Terrorism Service Medal will be discontinued upon termination of the President's current Declaration of National Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks subsequent to September 11, 2001.
31. Award criteria for the Humanitarian Service Medal will be clarified to ensure all deployed Service members directly contributing to a humanitarian operation are eligible for this medal.
32. Award criteria for the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal will specifically exclude eligibility while deployed to a combat theater.

Administrative Issues

33. DoD policy will emphasize that awards must be performance-based and not based on completion of a tour of duty or deployment alone.
34. Military Departments are encouraged to continue developing electronic awards tracking systems that track award nominations from initiation to award and maintain an official record.
35. The Department will establish policy and procedures to automatically review, for potential revocation, awards received by Service members who are adjudicated guilty of a criminal offense and receive a court-martial, or civilian criminal conviction for an offense that occurs during the same period for the performance award of which they were previously considered or are being currently considered.
36. The Department will endeavor to standardize provisions precluding award of medals to members whose service has not been honorable, establishing a common standard for "honorable service" for all Military Departments.