

**Frequently Asked Questions About Awards from Individual Augmentation Sailors**

**What are the normal types of awards for service in the Middle East (Central Command) area?**

Sailors serving in Iraq or Afghanistan are eligible for the specific campaign medals for those countries if they meet the eligibility requirements. Sailors may also qualify for the Combat Action Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve 'M' Device and/or a personal award based on specific achievements and performance. Individuals Augmentation Sailors are not authorized the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon or the Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon.

**What are the requirements for the campaign medals?**

The campaign medals are approved by the Sailor's commanding officer for service in Afghanistan or Iraq and the airspace above and contiguous waters for 30 consecutive or 60 non consecutive days. For the Afghanistan Campaign Medal service is retroactive to 24 Oct 01. For Iraq it is retroactive to 19 Mar 03. These are the only authorized medals for service in Afghanistan or Iraq after 30 Apr 05.

**How long does it take to get a personal award for my service in a combat area, if I am assigned to a non-Navy command?**

If your command nominates you for an award of a Commendation or Achievement Medal (as long as it does not also include a "V" device) and you serve in an Army command, it is normally processed up the chain of command in about 40 days.

If your command nominates you for a Meritorious Service Medal and higher or any medal with a "V" device, that nomination requires Navy concurrence and takes about 80 days.

**What is concurrence?**

Concurrence is the policy and process each service uses to acknowledge the award nomination from another service and agree to the appropriateness and presentation of that award.

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why is concurrence required?**

Concurrence is both a policy and a process. As a policy it ensures the integrity of that service's award is maintained. As a process, concurrence serves to prevent duplication of awards and to notify the parent command of the intended award. The parent service will either concur with the award and it is presented by the other service or the parent service will non-concur. Each concurrence request to the Navy is reviewed by the CNO Awards Board comprised of senior officers on the CNO's staff. When CNO Awards Board non-concurs, the award nomination is returned to the nominating service to either present additional justification or clarification for the award or present a different award.

### **What does it mean to "ensure the integrity" of an award?**

Ensuring the integrity of an award means protecting its value or prestige by maintaining standards over time. For instance, integrity is maintained when a veteran Sailor who earned a certain award during his/her career knows that a Sailor today must display the same level of meritorious service and courage to earn that same award.

### **Why is there such a difference in processing time for awards that require concurrence and those that don't?**

The Army has granted awarding authority for the Army Commendation Medal and below to the appropriate awarding authority in the field therefore the chain of command that must review the award is relatively short. Awards higher than the Army Commendation Medal or valor awards must be routed through an Army Commanding General enroute to CNO Awards board, therefore the reviewing chain of command is longer. The processing time within CNO Awards branch once such a request is received currently averages 20 days and efforts are being made to lower that number.

### **What is the Navy policy on awarding the Bronze Star?**

The Navy requires meritorious service in a combat zone of the level equivalent to the Navy Meritorious Service Medal (MM) and

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

personal exposure to hostile action. The Director Navy Staff signed a memo 2 March 2007 stating "Navy's interpretation of the warfighting intent of the Bronze Star has always included a requirement for personal exposure to hostile action. However, in today's complex combat environment, our Awards must also give credit to those who are exposed to significant risk of hostile action." As of 11 April 2007, the Navy had awarded 1,922 Bronze Star Medals since 9/11/2001.

### **How is the Navy policy on awarding the Bronze Star different from the Army's?**

The Army requires meritorious service in a combat zone of the level equivalent to the Army Meritorious Service Medal (MM). There is no specific requirement for personal exposure to hostile action. As a matter of fact, Army regulations prior to 2004 prohibited the award of the Meritorious Service Medal or the Army Achievement Medal in a combat zone, because they are viewed as "peacetime awards." An exception to policy was granted 15 October 2004 and now the Army allows the award of the Meritorious Service Medal and Army Achievement Medal in a combat zone but not for service directly related to combat operations. As of 28 February 2007, the Army had awarded 57, 972 Bronze Star Medals for service/achievement in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

### **How can a Soldier or Airman receive a higher award than a Sailor when both performed the same job under the same conditions?**

This is usually only the case when concurrence is required and the Navy does not concur with the award submitted by the other service. Due to different cultures and history, each military service interprets the general guidelines of the Department of Defense Awards Manual a bit differently. A Soldier or Airman's performance may meet award criteria for their respective services, however the same performance may not meet the Navy's criteria for the award. For example, in a combat zone, the Army will generally award the Bronze Star rather than a Meritorious Service Medal for meritorious service. The Navy, because it additionally requires personal exposure to hostile action to merit a Bronze Star, will award the Meritorious Service Medal.

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why would the CNO Awards board in Washington DC not concur with an award submitted by an Army general officer who has a better feel of the conditions in theater?**

A key element of the CNO Awards board mission is to maintain the integrity of the Navy awards process. If the award summary of action meets the necessary criteria for the Navy award the CNO Awards board concurs with the Army general officer's recommendation. However, as explained above, the Army and the Navy through culture and tradition have developed different approaches to certain awards. As a result, there are cases in which an Army general officer may sign an award recommendation that does not meet Navy criteria. In those cases, to avoid presentation of an award that could be detrimental to the integrity of the Navy Awards system, the CNO Awards board either non-concurs or, if they believe the missing criteria elements are an administrative oversight, return the award to the submitting Army general officer's award processing office for additional information.

**I've heard that some Bronze Star nominations get sent back because they don't address "exposure to danger." Everyplace and everything is dangerous where I work so why would CNO Awards board send back an award asking for more information about exposure to danger?**

The CNO awards board absolutely recognizes the danger all personnel face operating in CENTCOM AOR. The key factor is to capture the nature of the danger in the Summary Of Action. Awards must be written so that somebody 20 years from now with absolutely no knowledge of the operating environment will read the award and think "Roger...that sailor earned the BSM because of outstanding meritorious service while exposed to significant danger/risk of danger." Each citation must stand-up to the "scrutiny of history" to ensure the integrity of the award is maintained. When CNO Awards board reviews a Bronze Star nomination that is missing that information, they may choose to send it back to the submitting command and request more information.

**What happens to an award that CNO Awards board does not concur with?**

It is returned to the Army general officer's award processing office with a recommendation for a different award. Generally,

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

in the case of Bronze Star Medal nominations, the recommended award is a Meritorious Service Medal. It is up to the Army award processing office to generate the new award.

### **Do Army Commanding Generals intentionally submit Sailors for lower awards just to avoid the concurrence process?**

CNO Awards branch has no evidence that this happens. The total number of awards being submitted for concurrence has remained steady since 2004. At the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), many Army awarding authorities were unaware of the service differences in Bronze Star criteria resulting in a significant number of Bronze Star recommendations for Sailors receiving non-concurrence due to summaries of action not documenting personal exposure to hostile action. Due to an ongoing education process, concurrence rates have significantly increased and Sailors who are not exposed to hostile action or significant risk of hostile action are being submitted for Meritorious Service Medals.

### **According to a story in the 2 April 2007 edition of Navy Times, the Navy updated its administrative guidance for the award of the Bronze Star to include exposure to "risk" of hostile action. Will CNO Awards board review past awards to apply the updated guidance?**

Not in general, however per SECNAV Awards manual paragraph 211 guidance on reconsideration, approved awards may be reconsidered "upon the presentation of new and relevant material evidence that was not available at the time the original recommendation was submitted." By practice, the information must come from the authority that originated the award.

### **Why can't I get my award presented in front of my command before I depart the theatre?**

Many Sailor tours are six months. When you consider the time for award processing, many of your accomplishments lie ahead of you while your award is being processed for an in-theater presentation. Many commands opt to wait as long as possible to ensure your performance is well documented so that you will receive the award that best represents your service. This sometimes precludes an award in theater.

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

**Does the Navy have a policy of presenting awards at the command where the award was earned?**

No, there is no written policy. In the past it was routine for awards to follow you to your next command. The philosophy of presenting an award at the command you earned it in is increasingly the standard. In any case Navy Awards is dedicated to continually improving processing time. Check with your command about how they process awards.

**I received a Combat Badge from the Army, can I wear it?**

No, the current Navy policy does not allow the wear of other service badges on the Navy uniform. Sailors who served in the United States Army prior to joining the Navy and were awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) or the Combat Medical Badge (CMB) may apply to convert those badges to the Combat Action Ribbon for wear on the Navy uniform.

U.S. Navy Personnel assigned either permanently or temporarily to U.S. Army Commands in Combat in support of GWOT, who, with the concurrence of CNO (or his designee), are awarded the CIB or CMB, are authorized to wear the CAR upon completion of their assignment with the Army. (**For additional information, see ALNAV 036/08 in the NAVADMIN Section**)

**What is the Combat Action Ribbon?**

The Combat Action Ribbon (CAR) was established in 1969 by the Secretary of the Navy and was made retroactive to 7 December 1941. The CAR recognizes a Sailor's satisfactory performance under enemy fire while actively participating in ground or surface combat.

**I understand the general meaning of combat, what is active participation?**

Generally that means if the enemy shoots at you, you shoot back. There are other ways to be active in a combat situation, tending the wounded, running ammo, spotting to name a few. Also direct exposure to an IED or VBED explosion may qualify. Special warfare personnel may also qualify if they are in a situation

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

were enemy fire is expected, but the rules of engagement do not allow return fire. Your command should have a good idea if your service qualifies. The award nomination must contain the details because each CAR nomination is approved on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate Awards Board (CNO, NAVCENT).

**I am an EOD Technician and am significantly exposed to the danger of an explosion every time I do my job. Do I qualify for the CAR?**

Not unless you meet the specific criteria listed in SECNAV Awards manual (SECNAVINST 1650.1H). The intentional destruction of an IED or VBED does not qualify for the CAR. Additionally, EOD Sailors and Minesweeper crews who successfully search for and destroy explosive devices are not eligible for the CAR.

**I recall two ships getting the CAR for just having a missile overfly and didn't Mine Sweepers get the CAR during Desert Storm?**

Desert Storm awards to the mine sweepers were an exception to policy signed by SECNAV. The case of USS KEARSARGE and USS ASHLAND in Jordan brought great scrutiny on CAR policy by USMC and USN. Marines did not receive the CAR in this case. This issue lead to a rewriting of the section on CAR policy within SECNAVINST 1650.1H to include amplifying guidance for direct exposure to IED detonation and special ops folks where the risk of enemy fire is great but rules of engagement restrict return fire.

**How close do I have to be to an IED detonation to qualify for the CAR?**

Each CAR nomination is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Key points are:

1. Were you injured from an IED detonation?
2. Did an IED or its fragmentation hit the vehicle you were in?

**Does the CNO receive regular briefings on award issues?**

Briefings are periodic and as required by Sailor feedback and changes to policy. As a result of IA Sailor feedback during a

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

2006 trip to CENTCOM AOR, CNO has requested monthly updates on awards submitted for concurrence.

### **How do I find out the status of my award?**

CNO Awards Branch is working to improve the Navy Department Awards Web Service (NDAWS) and we hope to have an easier method for awards tracking in a future software upgrade. Until then, the easiest way to find out status of your award is probably to ask your PSD or your command Admin office. You can also go to the Personal Awards tab on the Navy awards website at <https://awards.navy.mil> select "Query Awards" from the left side box, fill in your data and hit search. All your awards should appear. If the projected award appears and

- a. all columns are filled in, the award is approved at that level and enroute for presentation
- b. all columns are not complete, the award has been received by the Navy awarding authority (typically NAVCENT or CNO) and is being processed
- c. if an award for which you know you were submitted does not appear, then it may not have been received by the Navy awarding authority and you need to check with your chain-of-command to ensure it has not been misrouted.

### **How is the "V" device earned?**

The "V" device is earned through an act of heroism or through services performed while exposed to personal hazard involving direct participation in combat operations.

The major difference between the Navy and other Services is that Navy can also earn a Combat Distinguishing Device 'V' for a series of multiple acts of valor for hazardous situations during combat operations in conjunction with an end of tour or deployment award.

### **Why can't we do things like the Army and Air Force, don't they have a better system?**

CNO Awards branch have reviewed the Army and Air Force systems and are working to incorporate those features that would improve the Navy system. Through a variety of working groups the gaps between how each service views award policy continues to narrow.

## **Award Frequently Asked Questions**

The most important issue challenge in the short term is to get the Sailor the appropriate award at the right time.

Other service systems are not necessarily better or worse, just different. Their systems were developed to meet the needs of the individual service based on their culture and tradition. The Navy is working with both services and we respect their cultures. At the same time we are very proud of our own and seek to improve our process without compromising the longstanding awards tradition in the naval service.

### **Can a Navy officer commanding a Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) award a Navy decoration?**

The Chief of Naval Operations delegated Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal authority to the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Commanders on 22 May 2007. See attached memo. <H:\Policy\PRT AUTHORITY.pdf>