



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JUN 29 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE  
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
DEFENSE  
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
DEFENSE  
ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT  
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES  
DIRECTORS OF THE FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Award of Military Decorations to U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS)  
Officers

The attached policy titled, *Military Awards to U.S. Public Health Service Officers*, provides updated guidance regarding eligibility of USPHS officers for military decorations and awards. It supersedes the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness memorandum, *Award of Military Medals to Public Health Service Officers*, August 26, 1993 (attached).

The updated policy will be incorporated into the next revision of DoD 1348.33-M, Manual of Military Decorations and Awards.

Gail H. McGinn

Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Plans)  
Performing the Duties of the  
Under Secretary of Defense  
(Personnel and Readiness)

Attachments:  
As stated

cc:

Director, Joint Staff

Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army

Chief of Naval Personnel, U.S. Navy

Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Air Force

Deputy Commandant Manpower and Reserve Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps

## 1. MILITARY AWARDS TO U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE (USPHS) OFFICERS.

a. INTRODUCTION In accordance with section 213 of title 42 U.S.C., “The President may prescribe conditions under which commissioned officers of the USPHS may be awarded military ribbons, medals and decorations.” On December 30, 1992, through a Presidential memorandum, the Secretary of Defense was delegated this authority, provided that “no military ribbon, medal, or decoration is awarded to an officer of the Public Health Service, without the approval of the Secretary of Health and Human Services.”

### b. POLICY.

(1) Effective Date. On or after August 2, 1990, USPHS officers assigned, attached, or detailed for full-time or part-time duty to DoD and any of its components are eligible for U.S. military ribbons, medals, and decorations on the same basis as a member of the Armed Forces assigned to DoD and any of its components.

(2) Dual Recognition Prohibition. DoD policy precludes duplicate recognition for the same act or service. No U.S. military ribbon, medal, or decoration shall be awarded to a USPHS officer who has been recognized for the same act or service through award of a USPHS ribbon, medal, or decoration.

(3) Secretary of Health and Human Services Consent. No U.S. military ribbon, medal, or decoration shall be awarded to a USPHS officer without the administrative concurrence of the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) or his or her designee. The administrative concurrence of the Secretary of HHS shall include confirmation that the USPHS officer is in good standing and has not or will not receive a USPHS ribbon, medal, or decoration for the same act or service for which the U.S. military ribbon, medal, or decoration is being proffered or awarded. The single point of contact within DoD for obtaining Secretary of HHS administrative approval is:

USPHS Commissioned Corps Liaison Office  
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)  
1200 Defense Pentagon, Room 3D886  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1200

### c. PROCEDURES.

(1) Personal/Individual Performance Awards. USPHS officers assigned, attached, or detailed for full-time or part-time duty to:

(a) A Military Department – shall be processed for personal/individual awards under the policy and procedures established by the respective Military Department. Prior to award of a personal/individual performance award, the award authority shall obtain administrative approval from the Secretary of HHS for the USPHS officer to accept and wear the award.

(b) The Office of the Secretary of Defense, DoD Field Activities, Defense Agencies, or joint DoD activities that report directly to an OSD Principal Staff Assistant, the Joint Staff or those Agencies and activities reporting through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including the Combatant Commands – shall be processed for personal/individual awards in accordance with the policy and procedures established in this manual and implemented by the applicable organization (e.g., Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, Washington Headquarters Services), with the exception of the Purple Heart medal.

1. Prior to award of a personal/individual performance award, the award approval authority shall obtain administrative approval from the Secretary of HHS for the USPHS officer to accept and wear the award.

2. The determination as to whether a USPHS officer is eligible to a Purple Heart medal shall be made by the Secretary of the Navy Board of Decorations and Medals following the policies and procedures established by the Department of the Navy and the Department of Defense. USPHS officers who believe they are eligible for a Purple Heart should forward documentation showing that Purple Heart award criteria has been met to:

Secretary of the Navy  
Board of Decorations and Medals  
1000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington DC 20350-2000

(2) Service Awards (Campaign, Expeditionary, and Service medals). A USPHS officer assigned, attached, or detailed for full-time duty to:

(a) A Military Department – shall have his/her eligibility for Service Awards verified by the applicable Military Department. Upon verification of eligibility, the Military Department shall forward documented eligibility for the applicable campaign, expeditionary, or service medal to the Secretary of HHS for administrative approval before the USPHS officer may accept and wear the award.

(b) The Office of the Secretary of Defense, DoD Field Activities, Defense Agencies, joint DoD activities that report directly to an OSD Principal Staff Assistant, the Joint Staff or those Agencies and activities reporting through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including the Combatant Commands – shall have their eligibility for DoD Service Awards (e.g. National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal) verified by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA)). Specific eligibility for the DoD campaign, expeditionary, and service medals is contained in DoD 1348.33-M, *Manual of Military Decorations and Awards*. Upon verification of eligibility, the ASD(HA) shall forward documented eligibility for the applicable DoD campaign, expeditionary, or service medal to the Secretary of HHS for administrative approval before the USPHS officer may accept and wear the award.

(3) Unit Awards. A USPHS officer assigned, attached, or detailed for full-time or part-time duty to:

(a) A Military Department – shall have his/her eligibility for unit awards verified by the applicable Military Department. Upon verification of eligibility, the Military Department shall forward documented eligibility for the applicable unit award to the Secretary of HHS for administrative approval before the USPHS officer may accept and wear the award.

(b) The Office of the Secretary of Defense, DoD Field Activities, Defense Agencies, joint DoD activities that report directly to an OSD Principal Staff Assistant, the Joint Staff or those Agencies and activities reporting through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including the Combatant Commands – shall have their eligibility for DoD unit awards verified by the applicable organization (e.g., Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, Washington Headquarters Service). Upon verification of eligibility, the award approval authority shall forward documented eligibility for the applicable DoD unit award to the Secretary of HHS for administrative approval before the USPHS officer may accept and wear the award.