

Table 1. PMDs and Authorized Uses.

Title of Decoration	Valor Only	Valor “V” Device	Meritorious Service or Achievement Under Combat Conditions. “C”	Remote Combat Impacts “R” Device	Non-Combat Heroism	Other Specific Achievement	Other Meritorious Service
MOH ¹	•						
DSC (Army)	•						
NX	•						
AFC	•						
DDSM			•			•	•
Distinguished Service Medal ¹			•			•	•
SSM	•						
DSSM			•	•		•	•
LOM			•	•		•	•
DFC		•	•		•	•	
Soldier’s Medal ²					•		
Navy and Marine Corps Medal ²					•		
Airman’s Medal ²					•	•	•
BSM ³		•					
Defense Meritorious Service Medal (DMSM) ⁴				•		•	•
MSM ⁴				•		•	•
Air Medal		•	•		•	•	•
Joint Service Commendation Medal (JSCM)		•	•	•	•	•	•
Military Department-specific Commendation Medals ⁵		•	•	•	•	•	•
Joint Service Achievement Medal (JSAM) ⁶			•	•		•	•
Military Department-specific Achievement Medals ^{6, 7}			•	•		•	•

¹ Each Military Department has its own distinct design of this medal.
² The “V” and “C” devices are not authorized; these PMDs are awarded for non-combat heroism. If the heroism to be recognized was performed under combat conditions, a PMD for valor is the appropriate award. This determination must be made solely on the specific circumstances of the event. The fact that the heroic act occurred within a combat zone, a combat zone tax exclusion area, or an area designated for imminent danger pay (IDP), hostile fire pay (HFP), or hazardous duty pay (HDP) does not satisfy the definition of “under combat conditions”.
³ The “C” device is not authorized. All awards for non-valorous achievement or service must satisfy the requirements for personal exposure to hostile action or significant risk of exposure to hostile action.
⁴ The “V” and “C” devices are not authorized. These medals are of equivalent level to the BSM. Accordingly, if the achievement or service was performed under combat conditions, the BSM is the appropriate award.
⁵ Includes Army Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and Air Force Commendation Medal.
⁶ Achievement medals are not authorized for award to recognize combat valor.
⁷ Includes Army Achievement Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and Air Force Achievement Medal.

SECTION 4: VALOR RECOGNITION

4.1. GENERAL INFORMATION. Providing distinctive recognition to Service members for acts of valor is the top priority of the DoD Military Decorations and Awards Program.

a. Valor is an act or acts of heroism by an individual above what is normally expected while engaged in direct combat with an enemy of the United States, or an opposing foreign or armed force, with exposure to enemy hostilities and personal risk.

b. A Service member who performs an act(s) of valor will be accorded appropriate recognition based solely on the merits of their actions.

c. The Service member's grade will not be a factor in determining the type or level of valor recognition accorded, nor will any quotas be established limiting the number of valor decorations that may be recommended or approved.

4.2. DECORATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL VALOR. The five PMDs that solely recognize valor are the MOH, DSC, NX, AFC, and SSM. The MOH, the highest-precedence and most prestigious U.S. military PMD, is normally awarded by the President of the United States.

4.3. MULTI-PURPOSE PMDS USED TO RECOGNIZE VALOR.

a. Several multi-purpose PMDs are also used to recognize valor. When these medals are used to recognize valor, they are awarded with the "V" device. The multi-purpose PMDs that may be used to recognize valor with the "V" device are the DFC, BSM, Air Medal, JSCM, Army Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

b. Any use of the "V" device other than to denote valor is prohibited in accordance with the January 7, 2016 Secretary of Defense Memorandum that standardized the use of the "V" device as a valor-only device.

4.4. VALOR DECORATION TIMELINESS.

a. Each valor decoration recommendation will be acted on within 20 work days of receipt at each echelon in the review process.

b. DoD goals for initiating and processing valor decoration recommendations:

(1) Initiate valor decoration recommendations within 90 days of the act justifying award. Timely initiation helps ensure witness statements and other evidence justifying the decoration is collected as close to the date of the combat action as possible.

(2) Military Departments forward endorsed MOH recommendations to the Secretary of Defense within 12 months of decoration initiation.

(3) The award authority concerned take final action on recommendations for Military Service Cross, SSM, and lower-level valor decorations within 12 months of award initiation.

c. Valor decoration authorities must establish means to measure valor decoration timeliness in relation to the DoD goals in accordance with the aforementioned January 7, 2016 Secretary of Defense Memorandum.

d. Though better decoration initiation and processing timeliness are desired, the Department's preeminent goal is that all Service members who perform valorous acts receive appropriate recognition. The goals stated above must not be used to avoid processing any recommendation that is initiated within statutory or regulatory time limits. Whether an individual decoration recommendation meets the DoD timeliness goals must not be a factor in determining the level of the decoration approved. The level of the decoration approved must be based solely on the merits of the act(s).

4.5. PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF MOH RECOMMENDATIONS.

a. The President is the MOH approval authority and normally presents the MOH at a formal ceremony in Washington, District of Columbia (D.C.). The White House makes the initial public announcement of an approved MOH.

(1) Premature public disclosure of information concerning MOH recommendations, processing, and approval or disapproval actions is a potential source of embarrassment to those recommended and the U.S. Government.

(2) In the case of approved recommendations, premature disclosure of MOH awards could diminish the impact of Presidential notification or official MOH presentation.

b. To prevent premature disclosure, public comments must not be made on any MOH case under consideration. The processing of MOH recommendations will be handled on a "FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY" basis until the awards are announced officially by the White House.

c. Pending MOH recommendations are deliberative, pre-decisional and are exempt from public release in accordance with Section 552(b)(5) of Title 5, U.S.C., also known as the "Freedom of Information Act."

4.6. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR VALOR AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS.

a. Valor award recommendations must, at a minimum, contain:

(1) Award recommendation form. Forms vary by Military Service, but all contain vital information about the nominee, the command making the nomination, and the place and time of the action.

- (2) Narrative or summary of action.
 - (3) Proposed citation.
 - (4) Sworn statement(s) detailing the nominee's valorous act(s).
 - (5) Other evidence that provides necessary context or supports the veracity of the recommendation (e.g., maps, drawings, photographs, or video).
 - (6) Copies of any investigations related to the combat engagement during which the valorous actions were performed, for instance an Army Regulation 15-6 investigation, Judge Advocate General Manual investigation, or after-action report.
- b. Further guidance regarding submission of valor awards is contained in Volumes 1, 3, and 4 of DoDM 1348.33.

4.7. MANDATORY REVIEW OF VALOR DECORATIONS. To ensure consistent and appropriate recognition of Service members who perform acts of valor:

- a. All DSC, NX, and AFC medals awarded by an authority other than the Secretary of the Military Department concerned will be reviewed against MOH award criteria by the applicable Military Department's higher headquarters organization that is responsible for the final processing of MOH recommendations. The review will be accomplished within 120 days of award to ensure the Service member's extraordinary combat heroism does not justify award of the MOH pursuant to Sections 7272, 8292, or 9272 of Title 10, U.S.C.
- b. All SSMs awarded by an authority other than the Secretary of the Military Department concerned will be reviewed against MOH and Service Cross award criteria by the applicable Military Department's higher headquarters organization that is responsible for the final processing of Service Cross recommendations. The review will be accomplished within 120 days of award to ensure the Service member's gallantry in action does not warrant award of the MOH or pertinent Service Cross pursuant to Sections 7272, 7276, 8292, 8294, 9272, or 9276 of Title 10, U.S.C.
- c. If the Military Department's higher headquarters review, in accordance with Paragraph 4.7.a. or 4.7.b., results in a recommendation to upgrade the originally awarded valor decoration, then the basis for the upgrade request may be based solely on the merit of the original recommendation (i.e., there is no requirement for new and substantive material information, or an error or injustice with processing of the original award recommendation). In such cases, the initially approved valor decoration will be considered an interim award.