A. Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1348.33 (Military Decorations and Awards Program), 21 December 2016.


D. Memorandum, Secretary of Defense, 7 January 2016, subject: Results of Comprehensive Military Decorations and Awards Review.

E. Army Regulation (AR) 600-8-22 (Military Awards), 25 June 2015.

1. This message will expire on 15 March 2018.

2. References A through C were published on 21 December 2016 and implemented the recommendations from the comprehensive Military Decorations and Awards Review (MDAR) approved by the Secretary of Defense in Reference D. This message announces the implementation guidance pertaining to the newly established “C” and “R” devices found in applicable portions of References A, B, and C that have an immediate and significant impact on the Army Awards Program. The guidance below and other changes approved in reference D are being incorporated into the next version of reference E.

3. The MDAR determined Soldiers should receive appropriate, distinct recognition for qualifying meritorious service or achievement performed under combat conditions or remotely impacting combat operations. The “C” and “R” devices were created to
recognize such service. The criteria and implementation guidance for these devices are listed below.

4. The “C” device:

a. The “C” device is an appurtenance which may be placed on designated individual awards to denote recognition of meritorious service or achievement under combat conditions. The “C” device is only authorized if the service or achievement was performed under combat conditions (while the Soldier was personally exposed to hostile action or in an area where other Soldiers were actively engaged), while:

(1) Engaged in action against an enemy of the United States;

(2) Engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or

(3) Serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

b. Award of the “C” device is based on the specific circumstances under which the service or achievement was performed. The award is not determined solely on geographic location or unit of assignment, and the award may recognize specific achievements and/or extended periods of service, under the following circumstances:

(1) The unit is operating in a location with delegated wartime awards authority.

(2) The Soldier was personally exposed to hostile action or in an area where other Soldiers were actively engaged. This is not to say the Soldier must qualify for a combat badge as defined in reference E. The commander with awards approval authority must consider the totality of the situation and determine if the Soldier performed the service or action(s) under combat conditions, or if it was rendered under relatively safe, non-hostile conditions.

(3) The fact alone that the service was performed in a designated combat zone (CZ) or similarly defined location (areas designated for combat zone tax exclusion (CZTE), imminent danger pay (IDP), hazardous duty pay (HDP), or hostile fire pay (HFP)) does not justify award of the “C” device. Because these locations are typically very large and defined by known geographic features and boundaries, not all Soldiers in that designated area operate under combat conditions. Moreover, not all Soldiers in a CZ or similar area serve in roles or perform functions under combat conditions. For example, Soldiers serving in staging areas, some higher headquarters locations, or locations outside the joint operational area may not necessarily be at risk of experiencing hostile action. Such determinations should be made on a case-by-case basis by the commander with awards approval authority.

c. Grade must not be a factor in determining whether the “C” device is warranted, nor
will any quotas, official or unofficial, be established limiting the number of “C” devices authorized for a given combat engagement, a given operation, or cumulatively within a given expanse of area or time.

d. The “C” device may be awarded with the following Army awards to recognize exceptionally meritorious service or achievement performed under combat conditions on or after 7 January 2016:

(1) Distinguished Service Medal (DSM)
(2) Legion of Merit (LOM)
(3) Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC)
(4) Air Medal (AM)
(5) Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM)
(6) Army Achievement Medal (AAM)

e. Commanders are authorized to award the “C” device commensurate with their delegated wartime awards authority for the medals listed in paragraph 4d (1) through (6) above. If a commander has authority to approve the award and is operating in a combat zone with delegated wartime awards authority, he or she may approve the corresponding appurtenances.

f. The “C” device is not authorized for wear on the Bronze Star Medal (BSM) because the medal itself is defined as a combat medal. By definition, award of the BSM indicates the service or action(s) occurred under combat conditions (while exposed to hostile action or was at significant risk of exposure to hostile action).

g. As a point of clarification, the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) and BSM are equivalent awards; the BSM is for combat conditions, and the MSM is for non-combat conditions.

(1) On or after 7 January 2016, the BSM should only be awarded to recognize achievement(s) or service rendered under combat conditions (the Soldier was exposed to hostile action or was at significant risk of exposure to hostile action during the award period).

(2) The MSM may still be awarded for outstanding achievement or service in a CZ or areas designated for CZTE, HFP, IDP, or HDP, but only if the service or achievement was rendered under other than combat conditions (the Soldier was not exposed to hostile action or at significant risk of exposure to hostile action during the award period). For this reason, the MSM may not be awarded with the “C” device.
5. The “R” Device:

a. The “R” device is an appurtenance which may be placed on designated individual awards to denote recognition for qualifying exceptional achievements involving hands-on employment of a weapon system or other warfighting activities with a direct and immediate impact on a combat operation or other military operation but from a location where the Soldier was neither personally exposed to hostile action, nor at risk of exposure to hostile action.

b. The action may have been performed through any domain while:

(1) Engaged in military operations against an enemy of the United States;

(2) Engaged in military operations involving conflict against an opposing foreign force; or

(3) Serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in military operations with an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

c. The “R” device may be awarded with the following Army awards to recognize a specific meritorious achievement:

(1) LOM

(2) MSM

(3) ARCOM

(4) AAM

d. Commanders are authorized to award the “R” device commensurate with their peacetime awards approval authority or delegated wartime awards approval authority for the medals listed in paragraph 5c (1) through (4) above. If a commander has authority to approve the award, he or she may approve the corresponding appurtenances.

e. The Army awards listed in paragraph 5c (1) through (4) may be awarded for a specific achievement with the “R” device on or after 7 January 2016. The “R” device is not authorized on medals awarded for sustained meritorious service (such as end of tour or retirement awards).

f. The “R” device may be awarded for support of combat or other military operations including Title 10, United States Code, support of non-Title 10 operations, and operations authorized by an approved execute order.
g. Examples of hands-on employment of a weapons system or other warfighting activities, performed remotely, without physical combat risk that may qualify for the “R” device include:

(1) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) weapon-system strikes.

(2) Activities that mitigate or disrupt adversary anti-access/area denial capabilities (for example, cyberwarfare).

(3) Terminal High Altitude Area Defense operations.

h. Examples of warfighting activities, performed remotely without physical combat risk that do not qualify for the “R” device include:

(1) Headquarters (HQ) military decision making process (operations and/or fragmentary order generation) or support operations from an HQ outside the operational area.

(2) UAV intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance operations (if such operations did not directly result in an immediate impact on a combat operation or other military operation).

(3) Rear Detachment support operations.

6. The order of precedence will be “V”, “C”, “R” when these devices are worn on the same award. As in the case of the "V" device, when multiple "C" or "R" devices are awarded for the same type award, only one of each device is worn on the service ribbon.

7. Because award of the “V”, “C”, and “R” devices requires specific criteria to be met in accordance with the award criteria in Reference E, paragraph 6-5 and paragraphs 4 and 5 above, only one device may be authorized for the same event or action. For example, Soldiers cannot get both a “V” and “C” device for the same valorous action, even though it is under combat conditions. In this case, only the “V” device is authorized.

8. Award of the "C" and "R" devices may be made retroactive to 7 January 2016 to Soldiers previously approved for the awards listed in paragraphs 4d (1) through (6) and 5c (1) through (4) as follows:

a. Requests will be made using Department of the Army (DA) 4187 which includes justification for the device along with the original DA Form 638, citation and/or narrative, and other applicable supporting documentation. Combat badges, the Purple Heart (PH), and valorous awards received while deployed are sufficient documentation to support award of the “C” device during the specified period of deployment in which the
badge or medals were earned.

b. When Soldiers are still assigned to the wartime command that issued the original award, the commander will make the determination to award the “C” or “R” device as applicable by amending the original order to reflect award of the device provided the criteria in paragraphs 4 or 5 above have been met. Instructions for amending the award order are in paragraph 9 below.

c. When Soldiers are no longer assigned to the command that issued the original award, requests for determination of award of the “C” or “R” device will be processed as follows:

(1) “C” device with the DSM will be submitted to U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Awards and Decorations Branch (AHRC-PDP-A), 1600 Spearhead Division Avenue, Fort Knox, KY 40122-5408 or by email to usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-awards@mail.mil and will include the required documentation listed in paragraph 8a above.

(2) “C” device with the DFC and AM will be submitted to the first LTG in the chain of command for determination and will include the required documentation listed in paragraph 8a above. If the device is warranted, the LTG commander will amend the original award order to award the “C” device.

(3) “C” or “R” device with the LOM will be submitted to the first LTG in the chain of command for determination and will include the required documentation listed in paragraph 8a above. If the device is warranted, the LTG commander will amend the original award order to award the “C” or “R” device. In accordance with paragraph 7 above, only one device may be authorized for the same event or action.

(4) “R” device with MSM will be submitted to the first MG in the chain of command for determination and will include the required documentation listed in paragraph 8a above. If the device is warranted, the MG commander will amend the original award order to award the “R” device.

(5) “C” or “R” devices with the ARCOM and AAM will be forwarded to the first Colonel/O-6 commander (ARCOM) or Lieutenant Colonel/O-5 Commander (AAM) in the chain of command for determination and will include the required documentation listed in paragraph 8a above. If the device is warranted, the Colonel/O-6 commander will amend the original award order to award the “C” or “R” device, as applicable. In accordance with paragraph 7 above, only one device may be authorized for the same event or action.

(6) Instructions for amending the award order are in paragraph 9 below.

d. General Officers, Veterans, Retirees, Soldiers without an appropriate Commander in the chain of command in accordance with paragraph 8c(1) through (5) above, or
primary next of kin (PNOK) of deceased Soldiers will submit their requests for award of the “C” and “R” devices for all awards authorized the devices to Commander, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Awards and Decorations Branch (AHRC-PDP-A), but for Veterans, Retirees, and PNOK will include a memorandum instead of the DA Form 4187 along with the other documents listed in paragraph 8a above.

e. Note that the procedures and guidance in paragraphs 8a through d above only apply to already approved awards which may be eligible for “C” or “R” devices. Any new award recommendations must be initiated and submitted in accordance with Reference E, paragraph 3-20 and table 3-5. Additionally, Army personnel who were previously awarded joint or Sister Service awards recognized with the “C” or “R” devices must request consideration for retroactive award of the devices from the joint or Sister Service command that approved the original award.

9. The command approving the “C” and “R” devices as explained and delegated in paragraphs 8b through d above will amend the original order using format 700 and submit a transaction through the Electronic Military Personnel Office (eMILPO) to update the Officer or Enlisted Records Brief. A copy of the amended order will also be uploaded to the Soldier’s Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR) in the Personnel Electronic Records Management System. The Awards and Decorations Branch will also ensure that Department of Defense Form 215 is prepared and uploaded to the AMHRR for Retirees, Veterans, and deceased Soldiers, as applicable.

10. The “C” and “R” devices are available for commercial purchase through Military Clothing Sales Stores. The date the devices will be available for requisitioning through normal supply channels cannot be determined at this time.

11. The DA Form 638 has been modified to allow for selection of the “C” and “R” devices in the “Recommended Award” block 10. Data codes have been added in eMILPO to reflect the “C” and “R” devices for applicable awards. For promotion point purposes, no additional points are awarded for the “C” and “R” devices.

12. The point of contact for this message is the Awards and Decorations Branch (AHRC-PDP-A) usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-awards@mail.mil or 502-613-9126.