MEMORANDUM FOR Commanders in the United States National Support Element-National Support Element - Afghanistan Combined Joint Operation Area - Afghanistan (CJOA-A)

SUBJECT: U.S. National Support Element - Afghanistan Awards Policy (2.0 Update)

1. PURPOSE: This policy establishes administrative procedures for the USNSE-A Awards Program for units in support of OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL (OFS) and applies to all personnel assigned, attached, or under Operational Control (OPCON) to USFOR-A.

2. REFERENCES:
   a. AR 600-8-22, Military Awards, 25 June 2015
   b. AR 600-8-2, Suspension of Favorable Actions, 11 May 2016
   d. MILPER 17-095, Implementation of "C" and "R" Device, 15 March 2017
   e. MILPER 15-362, Writing Eyewitness Statements for Heroism Awards, 13 November 2015
   f. AR 672-20, Incentive Awards, Decorations, Awards, and Honors, 30 November 2018

3. GENERAL:
   a. The USNSE-A CDR's intent is that all personnel serving in the USFOR-A CJOA-A should receive tangible recognition for acts of valor, heroism, exceptional service or achievement.
   b. All recommendations for awards will be prepared in accordance with this policy and cited references.
   c. All Soldiers may receive recommendation for, but are not entitled to, a service award at completion of their tour. Soldiers deserving of the award may receive recognition with an appropriate award prior to their departure.
d. Awards for meritorious service will not be made upon the rank/grade of the intended recipient. Rather, the award should reflect the individual's level of responsibility and his or her manner of performance that are commensurate for that level of award.

e. All awards must arrive to the J-1 Awards Section generally free of errors. Subordinate commands are solely responsible for ensuring award submissions meet compliance listed on the J-1 Awards SharePoint. DA Form 638s will be sent back to the unit for corrections when significant errors are present in the achievement blocks.


g. Army unit commanders or S1s will certify Soldier eligibility on DA Form 638, block 22a. Acting commanders must include a copy of assumption of command orders when signing for commanders.

h. In an effort to ensure all awards are being properly screened prior to processing, all awards will be endorsed by a supervising Commander, Director, Directorate SGM, Branch Head or Chief of Staff. In addition, all award recommendations will have an O-6 Commander, Deputy Commander, Chief of Staff or higher as an intermediate authority.

i. All intermediate authorities will comment on the reason why the service member deserves the award.

j. Soldiers flagged for Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) failure or Army Body Composition Program (ABCP) will only be eligible for recommendation of awards based on valor and heroism. A waiver of the ABCP or Army Physical Fitness Test flag must be processed for length of service retirement awards to the first general officer in the Soldier's chain of command IAW AR 600-8-22 para 1-17.

k. Decisions are final and not up for reconsideration once signed by the Approval Authority. Once the Approval Authority signs/approves an award, the decision becomes final.

4. AWARDS APPROVAL AUTHORITY:

a. USNSE-A CDR Approval Authority includes:

   (1) U.S. Military. Bronze Star Medal (BSM) with Valor and below, to include BSM, Meritorious Service Medal (MSM), Air Medal (AM) with Valor, AM, Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM) with Valor, ARCOM, Army Achievement Medal (AAM), Purple Heart
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(Army only) and combat badges to U.S. Military assigned, attached or OPCON to their unit.

(2) U.S. Civilian. Meritorious Civilian Service Medal (MCSM), Civilian Service Commendation (CSCM), Civilian Service Achievement Medal (CSAM) to Department of the Army (DA) civilian personnel and the Meritorious Public Service Medal (MPSM), Joint Civilian Service Commendation Award (JCSCA), Joint Civilian Service Achievement Award (JCSAA) to Department of Defense (DoD) civilian personnel assigned, attached, or OPCON to their unit.

(3) Foreign Military. BSM and below to include the MSM, ARCOM, AAM (excluding PH) to personnel in ranks comparable to the grade of O-6 below (both at the time the act was performed and at the time the decoration is presented).

(4) Joint Awards. Defense Meritorious Service Medal (DMSM), Joint Service Commendation Medal (JSCM), and Joint Service Achievement Medal (JSAM) to U.S. military personnel assigned or attached to their headquarters, serving in a CENTCOM JMD Billet.

b. I delegate Wartime Army Awards Approval Authority to U.S. Army Brigadier General (BG) Commanders as follows:

(1) U.S. Military. MSM and below, to include the ARCOM with Valor, ARCOM, AAM, and combat badges to U.S. Military assigned, attached or OPCON to their unit; excluding approval of BSM, AM and PH.

(2) U.S. Civilian. CSCM, and CSAM to DA civilian personnel assigned, attached, or OPCON to their unit.

c. I delegate Wartime Army Awards Approval Authority to U.S. Army Colonel/O-6 (COL) Commanders as follows:

(1) U.S. Military ARCOM and below, to include the AAM, and combat badges to U.S. Military assigned, attached or OPCON to their unit; excluding ARCOM with Valor.

(2) U.S. Civilian. CSCM, and CSAM to DA civilian personnel assigned, attached, or OPCON to their unit.

d. Disapproval/Downgrade Authority:

(1) U.S. Army Commanders are delegated downgrade and/or disapproval authority for U.S. Army decorations, provided they have approval authority for the next lower level award.
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(2) USNSE-A CDR reserves the authority to downgrade and/or disapprove all valorous award recommendations.

5. TIMELINESS AND ROUTING:

a. Awards Quick Reference Guide (encl 2) outlines the award submission timeline. The command will not process military decorations or badges more than two years after the act or period of service to be honored. All retroactive/lost decorations or badges past this two year timeline will be processed through the originating unit’s organic headquarters and/or the Human Resources Command.

b. Presentation dates should not exceed Service Members (SM) end of tour or redeployment date.

c. Unit S-1 must resubmit awards to the J-1 Awards SharePoint after making corrections.

d. Reconsideration is only available for joint awards previously downgraded or disapproved. Recommending officials may request reconsideration within 90 days of the date of the Award Approval Authority's decision. The reconsideration decision by the Award Approval Authority will be final.

e. Reconsideration requests will route through memo to the J-1 Awards SharePoint along with the original decoration recommendation. J-1 Awards Section will return all requests that do not provide new information and/or specific reasons or provide new evidence supporting the original decoration.

f. All awards MUST be submitted through the J-1 Awards SharePoint (https://usfora.afghan.swa.army.mil/sites//Pages/Awards.aspx) and contain all required documentation or J-1 Awards Section will return without action. Only select administrative personnel may have permission to submit awards.

6. JOINT AWARDS:

a. Only SMs assigned to a joint duty activity (JOA), joint task force (JTF) headquarters or performing duties related to joint matters in accordance with Section 668 of Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.), are eligible for joint awards. JOA and JTF service members performing joint duty will receive a Joint Manning Document (JMD) billet or Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL) number aligning the SMs to their duty position.

b. There are five eligible joint headquarters in the CJOA-A: Resolute Support Headquarters, U.S. National Support Element-Afghanistan, Combined Security
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Transition Command-Afghanistan, 9th Air and Expeditionary Task Force-Afghanistan, and Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan. Only SM's assigned to a JTF HQs on a JMD are eligible for joint awards without an Exception to Policy (ETP).

c. Those not assigned to a JMD billet are NOT eligible without an ETP. Being under the OPCON of a JOA, JTF or working alongside foreign forces does not constitute eligibility for a joint decoration ETP.

d. Only individual augmenters not on the JMD, who are embedded/attached to a joint headquarters as individuals may submit an ETP memorandum. Service members deployed as part of a unit who are not in a JMD billet are NOT eligible for joint decorations or an ETP.

e. Any level of command has authority to disapprove an ETP request. Encl 4, Eligibility for Exception to Policy, shows how to determine if a SM has eligibility for an ETP.

f. Encl 1 lists all Joint decorations, eligibility, and requirements. USFOR-A J-1 Awards Section will return without action all awards not meeting eligibility requirements.

g. Units will submit all joint awards on a CC Form 25 along with a narrative, citation, and most recent Soldier Record Brief.

h. Joint award ETP submissions must be recommended by a supervisor in a joint billet; must include Temporary Change of Station (TCS) Orders, and memorandum from recommender describing how Service Member is performing duties related to joint matters in accordance with Section 668 of Title 10, United States Code.

7. ARMY AWARDS TO SISTER SERVICES:

a. Only SMs assigned or attached to an Army unit with a force tracking number on their orders qualify for sister service awards.

b. J-1 Awards Section will return without action Army award requests with any act or period of meritorious service that the service member was previously awarded. SMs can only receive one award for the same act, achievement, or period.

c. Award recommendation must meet the requirements outlined in AR 600-8-22.

8. U.S AWARDS TO FOREIGN FORCES:

a. For administrative efficiency, timely processing, and preserving the integrity of U.S. Awards, U.S. commanders may only recommend truly deserving foreign partners
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directly embedded in a U.S. Headquarters; simply being under OPCON does not constitute a decoration.

b. Commanders are encouraged to use certificates of achievement/appreciation to reward truly deserving foreign partners who are not eligible for U.S. decorations. Recommendations for U.S. awards for foreign military partners not embedded in a U.S. Headquarters will be returned without action.

c. U.S. awards are only to recognize acts of heroism, extraordinary achievement, or meritorious achievement when such acts have been of significant benefit to the U.S. or contributions to U.S. operations.

d. Awards MUST have embassy concurrence and security vetting completed before submission to J-1 Awards SharePoint. The process takes 3-6 months to receive approval/disapproval.

e. Foreign military commanders cannot be delegated U.S. Army Awards Approval Authority.

f. J-1 Awards SharePoint contains the packet requirements and list of embassy points of contact for award recommendations.

g. No foreign military in the CJOA-A meet the definition of "assigned or attached" to a U.S. Army unit. As such, they do not qualify for Combat Badges and/or joint awards.

9. CIVILIAN AWARDS:

a. Only Civilian employees occupying a joint manning document billet are eligible for consideration of recognition by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for significant achievements provided to the joint community.

b. DA Form 1256 is for all DOD/DA Civilian Awards. Requests for Civilian joint awards will possess a memorandum signed by the senior member of the unit.

c. Global War on Terrorism Civilian Service Medal submissions will NOT be included in any award submission packet sent to USFOR-A J-1 Awards. The unit level will process these awards.

d. Once the Approval Authority signs an award, the decision is final and will not be eligible for reconsideration.
10. UNIT AWARDS:

   a. Unit awards recognize outstanding heroism or exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services. Awards are for organizations that display heroism or meritorious service performed as a result of group effort.

   b. Only the unit, not individuals, can earn a unit award (PUC, VUA or MUC). Members who participated in the cited action can wear the respective unit award. Personnel who did not participate in the cited action, but assigned to the cited unit, are authorized temporary wear of the unit award.

   c. Only Joint units or JDAs are eligible for the JMU A. To qualify for the JMU A, the JOA must meet one of the following criteria:

      (1) Report through combatant or combined command channels.

      (2) Pursue a joint mission under the cognizance of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the commander of a unified, specified, or combined command that is also a joint command.

      (3) The Secretary of a Military Department that has been designated the Executive Agent (EA) for the Secretary of Defense.

   d. Joint units and activities, including JTFs, are eligible for award of the JMU A. Members of military-specific units (i.e., Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) assigned or attached to joint units, activities, or JTFs, even if they are under the OPCON of the joint unit, are not eligible for the JMU A, but retain eligibility for unit awards from their respective Military Service.

11. Valor "V", Combat "C", Remote "R" Device:

   a. An event or action recommended can only earn one device.

   b. "V" device submissions require a standard packet along with the following requirements:

      (1) Narrative or summary of action.

      (2) Proposed citation.

      (3) MILPER 15-362 outlines the requirements sworn statements must contain when detailing the nominee's valorous act(s).
c. MILPER 17-095 outlines the "C" and "R" device requirements.

d. Encl 1 explains requirements and eligible awards for each device.

e. The BSM and the "C" device should only be awarded to recognize achievement(s) or service rendered under combat conditions (i.e. Soldier was exposed to hostile action or was at significant risk of exposure to hostile action during the award period). The MSM and other awards without "C" device may be awarded for outstanding achievement or service in a combat zone (CZ), when Soldiers were not exposed to hostile action or at significant risk or exposure to hostile action.

(1) Level of personal risk needs to be evaluated when submitting a combat award. Commanders must consider each recommendation holistically, defining whether the Soldier performed the service or action(s) under combat conditions, or if it was rendered under relatively safe, non-hostile conditions. Not all Soldiers in CZ serve in roles or perform functions under combat conditions. In these cases, MSM/DMSM, JSCM/ARCOM and JSAM/AAM without the "C" device are the proper awards as they recognize noncombat achievements and/or service.

(2) The fact alone that the service was performed in a designated CZ or similarly defined location does not justify award of BSM or "C" device. Similarly, being located on an installation which receives indirect fire, does not by itself, justify award of BSM or "C" Device.

12. This memorandum supersedes all previous policies pertaining to USNSE-A Awards.

13. The point of contact for this memorandum is LTC Richard M. Strong, USFOR-A J1, at NVOIP 318-481-3069 or richard.m.strong.mil@mail.mil.

4 Encls
1. Awards Smart book
2. Awards Quick Reference Guide
4. Eligibility for Exception to Policy

RANDY A. GEORGE
Major General, U.S. Army
Commander,
U.S. National Support Element – Afghanistan