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DECORATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

§ 578.1 Purpose.

The primary purpose of the awards program is to provide tangible evidence of public recognition for acts of valor and for exceptional service or achievement. Medals constitute one of the principal forms for such evidence; in the United States Army, medals are of the following categories:

(a) Military decorations are awarded on a restricted individual basis in recognition of and as a reward for heroic, extraordinary, outstanding, and meritorious acts, achievements, and services; and such visible evidence of recognition is cherished by recipients. Decorations are primarily intended to recognize acts, achievements, and services in time of war.

(b) The Good Conduct Medal is awarded in recognition of exemplary behavior, efficiency, and fidelity during enlisted status in active Federal military service.

(c) Service medals are awarded generally in recognition of honorable performance of duty during designated campaigns or conflicts. Award of decorations, and to a lesser degree, award of the Good Conduct Medal and of service medals, provide a potent incentive

to greater effort, and are instrumental in building and maintaining morale.

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§ 578.2 Definitions.

The following definitions are furnished for clarity and uniformity in the determination and award of decorations:

(a) *Above and beyond the call of duty.* Exercise of a voluntary course of action, the omission of which would not justly subject the individual to censure for failure in the performance of duty. It usually includes the acceptance of existing danger or extraordinary responsibilities with praiseworthy fortitude and exemplary courage. In its highest degrees it involves the voluntary acceptance of additional danger and risk of life.

(b) *Combat heroism.* Act or acts of heroism by an individual engaged in:

- (1) Actual conflict with an armed enemy, or
- (2) Military operations which involve exposure to personal hazards, due to direct enemy action or the imminence of such action.

(c) *Combat zone.* The region where fighting is going on; the forward area of the theater of operations where combat troops are actively engaged. It extends from the front line to the front of the communications zone.

(d) *Duty of great responsibility.* Duty which, by virtue of the position held, carries the ultimate responsibility for the successful operation of a major command, activity, agency, installation, or project. The discharge of such duty must involve the acceptance and fulfillment of the obligation so as to greatly benefit the interests of the United States.

(e) *Duty of responsibility.* Duty, which by virtue of the positions held, carries a high degree of the responsibility for the successful operation of a major command, activity, agency, installation, or project, or which requires the exercise of judgment and decision affecting plans, policies, operations, or the lives and well being of others.

(f) *Heroism.* Specific acts of bravery or outstanding courage, or a closely related series of heroic acts performed within an exceptionally short period of time.

(g) *In connection with military operations against an armed enemy.* This phrase covers all military operations including combat, support, and supply which have a direct bearing on the outcome of an engagement or engagements against armed opposition. To perform duty or to accomplish an act of achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy, the individual must have been subjected either to personal hazard as a result of direct enemy action (or the imminence of such action) or must have had the conditions under which his duty or accomplishment took place complicated by enemy action or the imminence of enemy action.

(h) *Key individual.* A person who is occupying a position that is indispensable to an organization, activity, or project.

(i) *Meritorious achievement.* A praiseworthy accomplishment, with easily discernible beginning and end, carried through to completion. The length of time involved is not a consideration but speed of accomplishment may be a factor in determining the worth of the enterprise.

(j) *Meritorious service.* Praiseworthy execution of duties over a period of time. Service differs from achievement in that service concerns a period of time while achievement concerns an enterprise having a definite beginning and end but not necessarily connected with a specific period of time.

(k) *Peacetime criteria.* The criteria applied:

(1) In a period when the United States is not engaged in the prosecution of a formal declared war, or

(2) Outside a combat zone when the United States is engaged in military operations against an armed enemy, but is not prosecuting a formal declared war, except that in the communications zone, those individuals whose duties are in connection with military operations against an armed enemy may be considered under war criteria.

(1) *Shall have distinguished himself or herself by.* The person thus described must have, by praiseworthy accomplishment, set himself apart from his comrades or from other persons in the same or similar circumstances. Determination of this distinction requires