

DCMA Civilian, Military Medals Process

by Mr. Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs

Most people, at some time in their lives, have half-jokingly asked, “What does it take for a person to get recognized around here?”

The root of this frustration can often be pinpointed to two problem areas within an organization. First, the organization has no system in place to recognize an employee; second, supervisors don’t utilize the existing recognition system.

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As a new employee to the Defense Contact Management Agency (DCMA), I began a quest to see whether I was associated with an Agency that suffered from the first problem. After a little research, I was surprised to find many avenues within the Agency

to recognize employees for their hard work. So many avenues, in fact, if I was to try to write about them all it would take up this and many of the following issues of *Communicator*.

So, for both our sakes, let’s look at the one avenue that has the furthest reach within our organization — DCMA civilian and military medals.

DCMA Civilian Medals

DCMA has four honorary medals associated with the Agency’s name that are awarded to civilians for outstanding service. They are the DCMA Distinguished Civilian Service Award (DCSA), DCMA Meritorious Civilian Service Award (MCSA), DCMA Exceptional Civilian Service Award (ECSA) and DCMA Civilian Career Service Award (CCSA).

The first three medals are given to recognize employees for their contributions to the Agency’s mission while the latter is to recognize employees for their service within the federal government at the time of their retirement.

The DCSA, MCSA and ECSA medals are very similar in the terms of eligibility requirements except for slight wording differences for each. For the DCSA, the criterion states an employee’s contributions must have had an Agency-level or theater-wide impact. For the MCSA, an employee’s contributions must have had significant Headquarters, division, contract management office (CMO) or area of responsibility impact. For the ECSA, an employee’s contributions must have had a Headquarters, division headquarters or CMO impact, or the medal can be presented for

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outstanding deployment service. For the CCSA, the criterion states that an employee must have a history of superior performance that has had impact on the accomplishment of mission objectives.

The on-site supervisor should make a determination of how far-reaching an employee's service was or, in the case of the CCSA, whether an employee has a history of superior performance and write the recommendation based on each medal's criterion. The supervisor should send the recommendation to Headquarters for processing within 60 days

of the act, achievement or period of service. The recommendation is then passed along to the director for consideration or sent back to the requester for rewording or resubmission.

According to Ms. Donna Lopez, DCMA Human Resources specialist who oversees the civilian awards program, the Agency as a whole could see an increase in employee morale by using the awards program more robustly.

“People sometimes think you have to leave the Agency in order to get recognized,” she said. “This really is the last thing we want people to think. Recognizing people for their work while they are with the Agency, and shortly after they have performed their service, tells people they are valued and the Agency values their hard work.”

Ms. Lopez equates some recognition not happening to supervisors' fear of paperwork. “The process is not laborious, but there seems to be a stigma in people's minds that it is going to take them as long to write up the award as it did for the person to complete their accomplishment,” she said.

The best tip Ms. Lopez could give someone who is considering an employee for an award is simply, “Do it while it is new and fresh in your mind. As time goes on we tend to forget the actual impact of the person's service or forget to put the person in for recognition all together.”

For further details on criteria standards and process instructions for civilian medals and other incentive awards visit the Web site: <http://home.dcma.mil/guidebook/139/instructions.htm>.

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(Above) The DCMA Distinguished Civilian Service Award medal. (Photo by Mr. Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)

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Military Medals

There are five medals a servicemember can be awarded for his or her service within DCMA.

They are the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal and Joint Service Achievement Medal. These medals are broken down administratively into three different categories that have different submission timetables supervisors need to keep in mind when putting in a recommendation. These categories are Department of Defense (DoD) approval, Agency approval and military department approval.

For both the DoD and service approval medals, paperwork is required to be sent outside the Agency to either DoD or a servicemember's parent branch for final approval. Because of this, these recommendations must be submitted so they arrive at the Headquarters Military Personnel Operations Center no later than 120 days prior to the desired presentation date, according to Mr. John Patrick, DCMA deputy director, Military Personnel Center and director of Personnel Operations. This allows 30 days for Headquarters to review and prepare an endorsement for the DCMA director to sign before forwarding the recommendation on

and allows both DoD and the military services the required 90 days prior to the desired presentation date. Once approved and signed, Headquarters will receive the award certificate, medal, general order and narrative and will forward them back to the appropriate CMO or division office.

The medals that fall into the DoD and service approval categories include the Defense Superior Service Medal and the Legion of Merit.

For Agency-approved medals, DoD has delegated the approval authority to the Agency director. Recommendations for these medals must be submitted so they arrive at the Headquarters Military Personnel Operations Center no later than 60 days prior to the desired presentation date.

This allows 30 days for Headquarters to review the recommendation for completeness and prepare the certificate and citation for forwarding to the director for a signature. For recommendations where the justification does not support the level of the award, the submitting division or CMO is requested to submit additional information or



(Above Left) The DCMA Meritorious Civilian Service Award medal.

(Photo by Mr. Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)

(Right) The DCMA Exceptional Civilian Service Award medal.

(Photo by Mr. Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)

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further justify the recommendation. At times, this may result in the recommendation having to be re-written or re-submitted for a lower-level award.

If, after this process has taken place, the justification still falls short of supporting the level of the award recommended, an executive summary is prepared for the Agency director with a recommendation based on the award package against similar past submissions and their outcomes. Once the director approves the recommendation and signs the certificate, Headquarters sends the certificate, medal, general order and narrative to the appropriate CMO or division office.

The medals that fall into this category include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal and Joint Service Achievement Medal.

Servicemembers who deploy during their time with DCMA can be submitted for a medal based on the on-site commander’s recommendation. This recommendation is forwarded through the DCMA International chain of command to Headquarters and must be received no later than 60 days after a servicemember’s deployment ends. This guideline differs, according to Mr. Patrick, to allow the military member the opportunity to be recognized shortly after their deployment is complete. These guidelines apply to the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal and Joint Service Achievement Medal.

If a DCMA deployed commander determines a DCMA member’s service in theater warrants consideration for a Bronze Star Medal, the recommendation is forwarded through the DCMA International chain of command to Headquarters and sent to the director for review before being sent to the military member’s service branch for consideration and approval. According to Mr. Patrick, the services’ approval process for Bronze Star Medals can take three to six months.

The best tip Mr. Patrick could give someone before they begin to put someone in for a medal is, “Don’t wait until the last minute to decide if a servicemember is going to be recommended for an award. Make the determination early and forward the recommendation to meet the established deadlines.”

Further detailed criteria and processing instructions of military medals can be found at: http://www.js.pentagon.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/134833m_0996/p134833m.pdf.

Now, going back to the issue of getting your boss to utilize the Agency’s reward system in place ... Well, that’s going to have to be a different story for a whole different day.



(Right) The DCMA Civilian Career Service Award medal.
(Photo by Mr. Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)