

**THE STORY OF AND FACTS ABOUT THE MEDAL OF HONOR**  
**OUR NATIONS HIGHEST MILITARY HONOR FOR VALOR**

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**CORRECT TITLE**

The correct title for the award often called the "Congressional Medal of Honor" is simply "Medal of Honor" and the men who have received it prefer to be called "Recipients" (of the award), not "winners". It is the only United States Military Award that is worn from a ribbon hung around the neck, and the only award presented "By the President in the Name of the Congress".



AMERICAN VALOR FOUNDATION  
SUPPORTING OUR HEROES

**WHAT IS VALOR**



MERRIAM-WEBSTER says that Valor is strength of mind or spirit that enables a person to encounter danger with firmness: personal bravery.

Carl Sandburg adds that " Valor is a gift. Those who have it never know for sure if they have it till the test comes. And those having it in one test never know for sure if they will have it when the next test comes." For those who have valiantly engaged themselves in war, Sandburg's reflections likely ring true.

Bravery is not uncommon; it can be argued that all soldiers demonstrate courage during combat, even if others never witness their acts.

But there are great acts of military valor that do not go unnoticed. These are recognized through the Medal of Honor— presented by the president in the name of Congress— the highest military honor that can be bestowed upon any American.



### HISTORY OF THE MEDAL

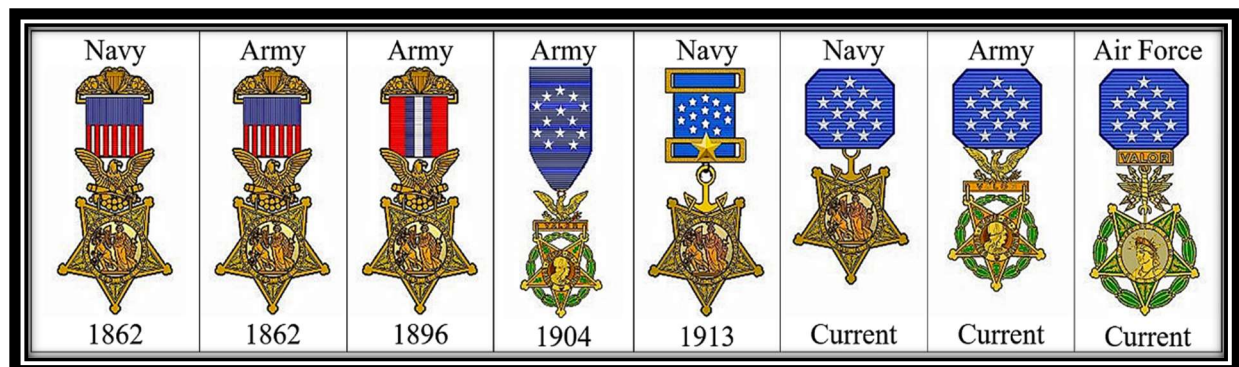
On December 9, 1861, Iowa Senator James W. Grimes introduced S. No. 82 in the United States Senate, a bill designed to "promote the efficiency of the Navy" by authorizing the production and distribution of "medals of honor".

On December 21st the bill was passed, authorizing 200 such medals be produced" which shall be bestowed upon such petty officers, seamen, landsmen and marines as shall distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action and other seamanlike qualities during the present war (Civil War)." President Lincoln signed the bill and the (Navy) Medal of Honor was born.

Two months later on February 17, 1862, Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson introduced a similar bill, this one to authorize "the President to distribute medals to privates in the Army of the United States who shall distinguish themselves in battle." Over the following months wording changed slightly as the bill made its way through Congress. When President Abraham Lincoln signed S.J.R. No 82 into law as 12 Stat. 623-624 on July 14, 1862, the Army Medal of Honor was born. It read in part:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized to cause two thousand "medals of honor" to be prepared with suitable emblematic devices, and to direct that the same be presented, in the name of the Congress, to such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection (Civil War).

### THE MEDAL OF HONOR OVER THE YEARS



### REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD

The Medal of Honor is earned in action, at the risk of one's life. In their provisions for judging whether someone is entitled to the Medal of Honor, the armed services have set up regulations that permit no margin of doubt or error. The deed of the person must:

- Be proven by incontestable evidence of at least two eyewitnesses.
- Be so outstanding that it clearly distinguishes gallantry beyond the call of duty from lesser forms of bravery.

- C. Involve the risk of life; and  
D. Be the type of deed which, if not done, would not subject the recipient to any justified criticism.



### THE THREE DIFFERENT MEDALS OF THE SERVICES



Conceived in 1860 and first awarded in 1863, the Medal of Honor has been awarded only 3,459 times to 3,440 recipients, almost half of them Civil War soldiers.

More than half of those who have received the Medal of Honor did not survive the action for which it was awarded.

Only one woman, a Civil War doctor named Mary Walker, has received the medal.

It was presented to her in 1866 for treating wounded soldiers. In 1916 Congress revised the Medal of Honor standards to include, "only actual combat with an enemy" and Walker's medal was rescinded. Prior to her death in 1919, she made appeals to Congress and the War Department but was unsuccessful in reversing the decision.



Nearly 60 years later, a descendant persuaded the Army to restore her medal. Many historians and some recipients objected, citing her civilian status and allegations of incompetence, but she remains on record as the sole female recipient.

Over the years, the Medal of Honor's parameters have undergone revisions to ensure it is justly bestowed upon those who merit it, even if this is done in a belated fashion. It took nearly 60 years, for example, for 29 African American and Asian-American heroes to be recognized for their actions in World War II.

They were finally honored, many posthumously, at ceremonies at the White House in 1997 and 2000. There have also been cases where medals were rescinded and then reinstated, mistakenly awarded, and even abused by recipients.

On rare occasions, the Medal of Honor has been issued for individual acts of bravery occurring during peacetime. Capt. Charles A. Lindbergh, for example, received the medal for his "heroic courage and skills as a navigator, at the risk of his life, for his nonstop flight in his airplane from New York to Paris, France, 20-21 May 1927."



### MEDAL OF HONOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**1. Has a woman ever received Medal of Honor?**

Yes, Dr. Mary Walker was the only woman awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor at Bull Run on July 21, 1861.

**2. Who was the only Coast Guard MOH recipient?**

Douglas Munro was the only Coast Guard recipient. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions at Point Cruz, Guadalcanal, on September 27, 1942.

**3. How many Air Force MOH recipients are there?**

Since the formation of a separate Air Force in 1947 there have been seventeen recipients. Prior to 1963 members of the Army Air Corps and the Air Force were awarded the Army Medal. In 1963 the Air Force acquired its own MOH design.

**4. How many double recipients are there?**

There are nineteen double recipients.

**5. Is it required to be a U.S. citizen in order to be awarded the MOH?**

It is not required to be a U.S. citizen, but you must be in the U.S. military in order to qualify for the Medal of Honor.

**6. Who was the first recipient?**

The earliest actions for which the Medal was awarded took place before the Civil War had even begun, February 13-14, 1861, in what is now Arizona. Bernard J.D. Irwin was an Assistant Surgeon in the Army when he voluntarily led a command of troops to relieve a surrounded detachment of the 7th Infantry. Irwin's Medal was not awarded until January 24, 1894, over 30 years after he had performed his deed. But on March 25, 1863, Pvt. Jacob Parrott was the first of a group of 6 men awarded the Medal for their actions in "The Great Locomotive Chase" in April 1862. They were the first ever to wear the Medal of Honor.

**7. Who was the first African American recipient?**

William Carney was the first African American recipient. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on July 18, 1863 at Fort Wagner, SC.

**8. Is the Medal of Honor only awarded to enlisted personnel?**

Originally the Medal of Honor was only presented to the enlisted, but on March 3, 1863, this was extended to officers as well.

**9. Is it illegal to sell the Medal of Honor?**

It is illegal to sell, wear, or manufacture any decorations or medals authorized by Congress for the armed forces of the United States. In General. Whoever knowingly wears, manufactures, or sells any decoration or medal authorized by Congress for the armed forces of the United States, or any of the service medals or badges awarded to the members of such forces, or the ribbon, button, or rosette of any such badge, decoration or medal, or any colorable imitation thereof, except when authorized under regulations made pursuant to law, shall be fined under this title (18 United State Code) or imprisoned not more than six months or both. (Title 18 United States Code. Sec. 1001, entitled "Statements or entries generally," June 25, 1948, ch. 45, 62 Stat. 749.)

**10. What are the guidelines for which the medal could be awarded?**

On July 25, 1963 Congress established a set of guidelines under which the Medal of Honor could be awarded:

- a.) while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.
- b.) while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or,
- c.) while serving with friendly forces engaged in armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

**11. What was the last action in which the MOH was awarded**

The last action in which the Medal of Honor was awarded was Mogadishu, Somalia on October 3, 1993. The Medals were awarded posthumously to the families of Gary I. Gordon and Randall D. Shugart, whose story was told in the 2001 film "Black Hawk Down." They were members of "The Delta Force" aka Special Forces Operational Detachment Delta.

**12. How many minority recipients of the MOH have been awarded (African American, Hispanic-American, Asian-American and Native-American)?**

There have been 87 African American MOH Recipients.

There have been 41 Hispanic American MOH Recipients

There have been 31 Asian American MOH Recipients.

There have been 22 Native-American MOH Recipients.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MOH**

Since 1863 there have been: 3,459 Medals of Honor Awarded for 3,454 separate acts of heroism performed by 3,440 individuals (including 9 "Unknowns")

**Today, there are fewer than 137 living Recipients of the Medal of Honor.**

Since 1993, 39 other Medals of Honor have been awarded to correct past errors, follow up on lost recommendations or were the result of new evidence. Of those 39 Recipients, 13 were living at the time the Medal of Honor was presented.



## **MEDAL OF HONOR BENEFITS**

There is a military tradition that *dictates all uniformed members of the service render a salute to Medal of Honor awardees regardless of rank*; this is one of the unique customs and courtesies associated with the medal. Even the most senior military officer will participate in this tradition out of respect for the sacrifices made in combat by all awardees.

### **MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS RECEIVE THESE BENEFITS FOR LIFE:**

Added to the Medal of Honor Roll.

Retired pay is increased by 10%.

A special Medal of Honor pension of \$1,406.73 (effective date: December 1, 2020) per month above and beyond any other benefits including pensions.

A special supplemental clothing allowance of \$841.36.

Free lifelong travel on DoD military aircraft as a priority "Space-A" traveler. This benefit is subject to whether seats are available, hence the "Space-A" designation.

Priority level #1 (of 8) consideration when it comes to claims before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Exempt from co-payments for their medical care.

Access to MWR retail and lodging facilities (effective Jan. 1, 2020).

*Children of awardees are offered automatic appointment to any military service academy they are qualified to enter, without regard to nomination or quota regulations.* Normally, a nomination is required to enter a military academy such as West Point, and there is a rigorous screening process.

Recipients are given preferential accommodations at on-base billeting facilities, are provided with special military ID cards, plus access to on-base commissary and BX/PX privileges.

Some base facilities offer special parking spaces, plus access to on-base recreation facilities. This on-base access is normally limited to currently serving military members, retirees, and dependents with valid military ID. Those who did not retire, but separated from the military don't have such access otherwise.

Invites to presidential inauguration events and special recognition ceremonies at the state and local level.

A variety of non-military benefits. Those include special license plates, licenses, and ID cards with application requirements and availability varying by state.

Some private companies offer special gifts, incentive programs, or access for Medal of Honor awardees and others receiving high military honors such as The Purple Heart. Individual programs and requirements may vary.

Surviving spouses and dependent children of Medal of Honor awardees may, depending on the state, be eligible to receive added consideration *for state education benefits.*

Special military burial honors include headstones with gold lettering and a nine-member team of six pallbearers, a chaplain, an officer-in-charge or non-commissioned-officer-in-charge and a bugler.

Uniform privileges which allow recipients to wear their uniforms at any time or place they choose, unlike other military personnel or retirees. Interment at Arlington National Cemetery, if not already eligible.





#### MEDAL OF HONOR ORIGINS

The first Medal of Honor recipient was Army Private Jacob Parrott, recognized in 1863 (just a month after his return from being a Confederate prisoner) for his part in a raid on Confederate railroad facilities and bridges far across enemy lines in Georgia.

#### MEDAL OF HONOR REQUIREMENTS

On July 25, 1963, Congress established a set of guidelines under which the Medal of Honor could be awarded:

while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States

while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force

while serving with friendly forces engaged in armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

#### MEDAL OF HONOR FACTS

It is not required to be a U.S. citizen, but one must be in the U.S. military in order to qualify for the Medal of Honor.

It is illegal to buy, sell, barter, or manufacture any decorations or medals authorized by Congress for the United States armed forces. Title 18 U.S. Code § 704 (Public Law 113-296).

There are three distinct versions (one for the Army, one for the Air Force, and one for the Navy the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard).'



There is the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, which represents recipients of the Medal of Honor, maintains their records and organizes reunion events, among other responsibilities.

#### MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

The Army has by far received the most Medals of Honor, with more than 2,400 going to soldiers.

Double Medal of Honor Awards: Nineteen service members have been awarded the Medal of Honor twice as of 2020, 14 of them for two separate events.

There are eight civilians who have received the Medal of Honor. The civilian recipients were all from the Civil War era.

William Carney was the first African American recipient. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on July 18, 1863 at Fort Wagner, SC.

The Coast Guard's sole Medal of Honor belongs to Signalman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Douglas Munro who led a rescue of an entire battalion of Marines who were attacked by an overwhelming Japanese force during Battle of Guadalcanal.

*Teddy Roosevelt is the only president who has ever received the Medal of Honor.* He served in the 1898 Spanish-American War as the lieutenant colonel of the famously known "Rough Riders," who helped turn the tide of the war against Cuba to America's favor. He didn't actually receive the Medal of Honor, though, until more than a century later, on Jan. 16, 2001.

Arthur MacArthur (Civil War) and General Douglas MacArthur (WWII) were the only father and son in history to each receive a Medal of Honor until Teddy Roosevelt received the honor.

Roosevelt's son Theodore Roosevelt Jr. also received the Medal of Honor who served in World War I and WWII and at 56 was the oldest man and only general to storm the beaches of Normandy on D-Day with the first wave of American troops.

*The oldest recipient was General Douglas MacArthur who was 62 years old when he earned the Medal.*

The award has been presented to 5 sets of brothers.

*The youngest Medal of Honor recipient was earned at 11 and was granted it at 13 during the Civil War.*

The conflict with the most Medal of Honor recipients is the Civil War with 1,522 recipients. The number of recipients can increase due to posthumous awards.

864 soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry Regiment were awarded the medal for their service during the Civil War only to have them recalled when the Army changed eligibility criteria.

## **ADDITIONAL MILITARY AWARDS**

### **THE PYRAMID OF HONOR**



To recognize degrees of bravery below that honored by the Medal of Honor, several other medals are awarded for gallantry, valor, and heroism. The Pyramid of Honor is a hierarchy of military awards—with the Medal of Honor at the peak—awarded to American veterans of military service.

### **THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS**

Second in precedence to the Medal of Honor, the armed services award the Distinguished Service Cross (Army), the Navy Cross (Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard), and the Air Force Cross (Air Force) to



individuals who distinguish themselves by extraordinary heroism rising to a level below that required for the Medal of Honor.

*For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force. For service members serving in any capacity with the Army.*

#### THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS



THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS is our *Nation's second highest award for* **military valor** behind only the MEDAL OF HONOR.

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THE NAVY CROSS (Navy, Marines and Coast Guard) and the AIR FORCE CROSS all join the DSC as our Nation's *second highest military award*.

#### THE NAVY CROSS



#### THE AIR FORCE CROSS



#### THE SILVER STAR



*The Silver Star* is the *third highest military award designated solely for* **heroism in combat**.

Established in 1918 as the Citation Star, in 1932 it was redesignated as a medal with a retroactive provision that allowed servicemen as far back as the Spanish-American War (1898) to receive it for gallant actions.

*For distinguished gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States or while serving with friendly forces against an opposing enemy force.*

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#### **DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS**



Established in 1926 and made retroactive for actions after 1918, the first recipient of the DFC was Charles A. Lindberg. Other distinguished aviators to receive the award were Commander Richard Byrd and Amelia Earhart. The Distinguished Flying Cross can be awarded for achievements in aviation as demonstrated by these three recipients, or for heroism in aerial combat.

*For heroism or extraordinary achievement in aerial flight.*

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#### **THE BRONZE STAR**



Authorized on February 4, 1944, the Bronze Star Medal is awarded to members of all branches of military service and may be awarded either for combat heroism or for meritorious service.

*For heroic or meritorious achievement of service, not involving aerial flight in connection with operations against an opposing armed force.*

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#### **THE PURPLE HEART**



The oldest of our military awards, the predecessor for the Purple Heart was George Washington's "Badge of Military Merit" (1782). Washington's award was resurrected in 1932 as the Purple Heart and is awarded to any person wounded in action while serving in any of our Armed Forces. It is also presented posthumously to the next of kin of personnel killed in action or who die of wounds sustained in action.

*Awarded for wounds or death as result of an act of any opposing armed force, as a result of an international terrorist attack or as a result of military operations while serving as part of a peacekeeping force.*

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#### THE AIR MEDAL



Established in 1942, the Air Medal is awarded for meritorious achievement in aerial operations, for heroic acts in aerial operations against an armed enemy, or for merit in operational activities. During the Vietnam War, for instance, a single award of the Air Medal denoted participation by ground troops in a requisite number of "Combat Air Assaults".

*For meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight or for a single act of heroism against an armed enemy.*

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#### **DISCLAIMER**

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HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AUTHENTIC WEBSITES  
I CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT ALL THE DATA IN THIS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE AND CORRECT.