

= Medal of Honor =

The Medal of Honor is the United States of America 's highest military honor , awarded for personal acts of valor above and beyond the call of duty . The medal is awarded by the President of the United States in the name of the U.S. Congress to U.S. military personnel only . There are three versions of the medal , one for the Army , one for the Navy , and one for the Air Force . Personnel of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard receive the Navy version .

The Medal of Honor was created as a Navy version in 1861 named the " Medal of Valor " , and an Army version of the medal named the " Medal of Honor " was established in 1862 to give recognition to men who distinguished themselves " conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity " in combat with an enemy of the United States . Because the medal is presented " in the name of Congress " , it is often referred to as the " Congressional Medal of Honor " . However , the official name is the " Medal of Honor " , which began with the U.S. Army 's version . Within United States Code the medal is referred to as the " Medal of Honor " , and less frequently as " Congressional Medal of Honor " .

The Medal of Honor is usually presented by the President in a formal ceremony at the White House , intended to represent the gratitude of the American people , with posthumous presentations made to the primary next of kin . According to the Medal of Honor Historical Society of the United States , there have been 3 @, @ 515 Medals of Honor awarded to the nation 's soldiers , sailors , airmen , Marines , and Coast Guardsmen since the decoration 's creation , with just less than half of them awarded for actions during the four years of the American Civil War .

In 1990 , Congress designated March 25 annually as " National Medal of Honor Day " . Due to its prestige and status , the Medal of Honor is afforded special protection under U.S. law against any unauthorized adornment , sale , or manufacture , which includes any associated ribbon or badge .

= = History = =

1780 : The Fidelity Medallion was a small medal worn on a chain around the neck , similar to a religious medal , that was awarded only to three militiamen from New York state , for the capture of John André , a British officer and spy connected directly to General Benedict Arnold (American and British general @-@ 1780) during the American Revolutionary War (1775 ? 1783) . The capture saved the fort of West Point from the British Army .

1782 : Badge of Military Merit : The first formal system for rewarding acts of individual gallantry by American soldiers was established by George Washington when he issued a field order on August 7 , 1782 , for a Badge of Military Merit to recognize those members of the Continental Army who performed " any singular meritorious action " . This decoration is America 's first combat decoration and was preceded only by the Fidelity Medallion , the Congressional medal for Henry Lee awarded in September 1779 in recognition of his attack on the British at Paulus Hook , the Congressional medal for General Horatio Gates awarded in November 1777 in recognition of his victory over the British at Saratoga , and the Congressional medal for George Washington awarded in March 1776 . Although the Badge of Military Merit fell into disuse after the American Revolutionary War , the concept of a military award for individual gallantry by members of the U.S. Armed Forces had been established .

1847 : Certificate of Merit : After the outbreak of the Mexican @-@ American War (1846 ? 1848) a Certificate of Merit (Meritorious Service Citation Certificate) was established by Act of Congress on March 3 , 1847 " to any private soldier who had distinguished himself by gallantry performed in the presence of the enemy " . 539 Certificates were approved for this period . The certificate was discontinued and reintroduced in 1876 effective from June 22 , 1874 to February 10 , 1892 when it was awarded for extraordinary gallantry by private soldiers in the presence of the enemy . From February 11 , 1892 through July 9 , 1918 (Certificate of Merit disestablished) it could be awarded to members of the Army for distinguished service in combat or noncombat ; from January 11 , 1905 through July 9 , 1918 the certificate was granted medal status as the Certificate of Merit Medal (first awarded to a soldier who was awarded the Certificate of Merit for combat action on August 13 , 1898) . This medal was later replaced by the Army Distinguished Service Medal which was

established on January 2 , 1918 (the Navy Distinguished Service Medal was established in 1919) . Those Army members who held the Distinguished Service Medal in place of the Certificate of Merit could apply for the Army Distinguished Service Cross (established 1918) effective March 5 , 1934 .

= = = Medal of Valor = = =

There were no military awards or medals at the beginning of the Civil War (1861 ? 1865) except for the Certificate of Merit which was awarded for the Mexican @-@ American War . In the fall of 1861 , a proposal for a battlefield decoration for valor was submitted to Winfield Scott , the general @-@ in @-@ chief of the army , by Lt. Colonel Edward D. Townsend , an assistant adjutant at the War Department and Scott 's chief of staff . Scott however , was strictly against medals being awarded which was the European tradition . After Scott retired in October 1861 , the Secretary of the Navy , Gideon Welles , adopted the idea of a decoration to recognize and honor distinguished naval service . On December 9 , U.S. Senator (Iowa) James W. Grimes , Chairman on the Committee on Naval Affairs , proposed Public Resolution Number 82 (Bill 82 : 37th Congress , Second Session , 12 Stat . 329) " to promote the efficiency of the Navy " which included a provision for a Navy Medal of Valor which was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on December 21 , 1861 (Medal of Honor had been established for the Navy) , " to be bestowed upon such petty officers , seamen , landsmen , and marines as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry and other seamen @-@ like qualities during the present war . " Secretary Wells directed the Philadelphia Mint to design the new military decoration . On May 15 , 1862 , the United States Navy Department ordered 175 medals (\$ 1 @.@ 85 each) with the words " Personal Valor " on the back from the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia .

= = = Medal of Honor = = =

Senator Henry Wilson , the chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs , introduced a resolution on February 15 , 1862 for an Army Medal of Honor . The resolution (37th Congress , Second Session , 12 Stat . 623) was approved by Congress and signed into law on July 12 , 1862 (" Medals of Honor " were established for enlisted men of the Army) . This measure provided for awarding a medal of honor " 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 . " During the war , Townsend would have some medals delivered to some recipients with a letter requesting acknowledgement of the " Medal of Honor " . The letter written and signed by Townsend on behalf of the Secretary of War , stated that the resolution was " to provide for the presentation of medals of honor to the enlisted men of the army and volunteer forces who have distinguished or may distinguish themselves in battle during the present rebellion . " By mid @-@ November the War Department contracted with Philadelphia silversmith William Wilson and Son , who had been responsible for the Navy design , to prepare 2 @,@ 000 Army medals (\$ 2 @.@ 00 each) to be cast at the mint . The Army version had " The Congress to " written on the back of the medal . Both versions were made of copper and coated with bronze , which " gave them a reddish tint " .

1863 : Congress made the Medal of Honor a permanent decoration . On March 3 , Medals of Honor were authorized for officers of the Army (37th Congress , Third Session , 12 Stat . 751) . The Secretary of War first presented the Medal of Honor to six Union Army volunteers on March 25 , 1863 in his office .

1890 : On April 23 , the Medal of Honor Legion is established in Washington , D.C.

1896 : The ribbon of the Army version Medal of Honor was redesigned with all stripes being vertical .

1904 : The planchet of the Army version of the Medal of Honor was redesigned by General George Lewis Gillespie . The purpose of the redesign was to help distinguish the Medal of Honor from other medals , including a medal issued by the Grand Army of the Republic .

1915 : On March 3 , Navy , Marine Corps , and Coast Guard officers became eligible for the Medal

of Honor .

1963 : A separate Coast Guard medal was authorized in 1963 , but not yet designed or awarded .

1965 : A separate design for a version of the medal for the U.S. Air Force was created in 1956 , authorized in 1960 , and officially adopted on April 14 , 1965 . Previously , members of the U.S. Army Air Corps , U.S. Army Air Forces , and the U.S. Air Force received the Army version of the medal .

= = Appearance = =

There are three versions of the Medal of Honor , one for each of the military departments of the Department of Defense : Army , Navy , and Air Force . Members of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard are eligible to receive the Navy version . Each is constructed differently and the components are made from gilding metals and red brass alloys with some gold plating , enamel , and bronze pieces . The United States Congress considered a bill in 2004 which would require the Medal of Honor to be made with 90 % gold , the same composition as the lesser @-@ known Congressional Gold Medal , but the measure was dropped .

= = Army Medal of Honor = =

The Army version is described by the Institute of Heraldry as " a gold five pointed star , each point tipped with trefoils , 1 1/2 inches [3 @. @ 8 cm] wide , surrounded by a green laurel wreath and suspended from a gold bar inscribed VALOR , surmounted by an eagle . In the center of the star , Minerva 's head surrounded by the words UNITED STATES OF AMERICA . On each ray of the star is a green oak leaf . On the reverse is a bar engraved THE CONGRESS TO with a space for engraving the name of the recipient . " The pendant and suspension bar are made of gilding metal , with the eye , jump rings , and suspension ring made of red brass . The finish on the pendant and suspension bar is hard enameled , gold plated , and rose gold plated , with polished highlights .

= = Navy , Marine , and Coast Guard Medal of Honor = =

The Navy version is described as " a five @-@ pointed bronze star , tipped with trefoils containing a crown of laurel and oak . In the center is Minerva , personifying the United States , standing with left hand resting on fasces and right hand holding a shield blazoned with the shield from the coat of arms of the United States . She repulses Discord , represented by snakes . The medal is suspended from the flukes of an anchor . " It is made of solid red brass , oxidized and buffed .

= = Air Force Medal of Honor = =

The Air Force version is described as " within a wreath of green laurel , a gold five @-@ pointed star , one point down , tipped with trefoils and each point containing a crown of laurel and oak on a green background . Centered on the star , an annulet of 34 stars is a representation of the head of the Statue of Liberty . The star is suspended from a bar inscribed with the word VALOR above an adaptation of the thunderbolt from the Air Force Coat of Arms . " The pendant is made of gilding metal . The connecting bar , hinge , and pin are made of bronze . The finish on the pendant and suspension bar is hard enameled , gold plated , and rose gold plated , with buffed relief .

= = Neck ribbon , service ribbon , lapel button , and " V " device = =

Since 1944 , the Medal of Honor has been attached to a light blue colored moiré silk Neck ribbon that is 1 3/16 in (30 mm) in width and 21 3/4 in (550 mm) in length . The center of the ribbon displays thirteen white stars in the form of three chevron . Both the top and middle chevrons are made up of 5 stars , with the bottom chevron made of 3 stars . The Medal of Honor is one of only two United States military awards suspended from a neck ribbon . The other , the Commander 's

Degree of the Legion of Merit , and is usually awarded to individuals serving foreign governments .

On May 2 , 1896 , Congress authorized a " ribbon to be worn with the medal and [a] rosette or knot to be worn in lieu of the medal . " The service ribbon is light blue with five white stars in the form of an " M " . It is placed first in the top position in the order of precedence and is worn for situations other than full @-@ dress military uniform . The lapel button is a 1 ½ 2 @-@ inch (13 mm) , six @-@ sided light blue bowknot rosette with thirteen white stars and may be worn on appropriate civilian clothing on the left lapel .

In 2011 , Department of Defense instructions were amended to read " for each succeeding act that would otherwise justify award of the Medal of Honor , the individual receiving the subsequent award is authorized to wear an additional Medal of Honor ribbon and / or a ' V ' device on the Medal of Honor suspension ribbon " (the " V " device is a 1 ¼ 4 @-@ inch (6 @.@ 4 mm) high bronze miniature letter " V " with serifs that denotes valor) . The Medal of Honor was the only decoration authorized the use of the " V " device to designate subsequent awards in such fashion . Nineteen individuals , all now deceased , were double Medal of Honor recipients . This was discontinued in July 2014 , and changed to read " A separate MOH is presented to an individual for each succeeding act that justified award . " As of 2014 , no devices are authorized for the Medal of Honor .

== = Historical versions == =

The Medal of Honor has evolved in appearance over time . The upside @-@ down star design of the Navy version 's pendant adopted in early 1862 has not changed since its inception . The Army 1862 version followed and was identical to the Navy version except an eagle perched atop cannons was used instead of an anchor to connect the pendant to the suspension ribbon . In 1896 , the Army version changed the ribbon 's design and colors due to misuse and imitation by nonmilitary organizations . In 1904 , the Army " Gillespie " version introduced a smaller redesigned star and the ribbon was changed to the light blue pattern with white stars seen today . In 1913 , the Navy version adopted the same ribbon pattern .

After World War I , the Navy decided to separate the Medal of Honor into two versions , one for combat and one for non @-@ combat . The original upside @-@ down star was designated as the non @-@ combat version and a new pattern of the medal pendant , in cross form , was designed by the Tiffany Company in 1919 . It was to be presented to a sailor or Marine who " in action involving actual conflict with the enemy , distinguish [es] himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty " Despite the " actual conflict " guidelines ? the Tiffany Cross was awarded to Navy CDR (later RADM) Richard E. Byrd and Floyd Bennett for arctic exploration . The Tiffany Cross itself was not popular . In 1942 , the Navy returned to using only the original 1862 inverted 5 @-@ point star design , and ceased issuing the award for non @-@ combat action .

In 1944 , the suspension ribbons for both the Army and Navy version were replaced with the now familiar neck ribbon . When the Air Force version was designed in 1956 , it incorporated similar elements and design from the Army version . It used a larger star with the Statue of Liberty image in place of Minerva on the medal and changed the connecting device from an eagle to an heraldic thunderbolt flanked with wings as found on the service seal .

== = Flag == =

On October 23 , 2002 , Pub.L. 107 ? 248 was enacted , modifying 36 U.S.C. § 903 , authorizing a Medal of Honor flag to be presented to recipients of the decoration .

The flag was based on a concept by retired Army Special Forces First Sergeant Bill Kendall of Jefferson , Iowa , who designed a flag to honor Medal of Honor recipient Captain Darrell Lindsey , a B @-@ 26 pilot from Jefferson who was killed in World War II . Kendall 's design of a light blue field emblazoned with 13 white five @-@ pointed stars was nearly identical to that of Sarah LeClerc 's of the Institute of Heraldry . LeClerc 's design , ultimately accepted as the official flag , does not include

the words " Medal of Honor " and is fringed in gold . The color of the field and the 13 white stars , arranged in the form of a three bar chevron , consisting of two chevrons of five stars and one chevron of three stars , emulate the suspension ribbon of the Medal of Honor . The flag has no set proportions .

The first Medal of Honor recipient to receive the official Medal of Honor flag was Sergeant First Class Paul R. Smith . The Medal of Honor with the flag was presented by President George W. Bush to his family during a ceremony at the White House on April 4 , 2005 .

A special Medal of Honor Flag presentation ceremony was held for over 60 living Medal of Honor recipients on board the USS Constitution on September 30 , 2006 .

= = Presenting = =

There are two distinct protocols for awarding the Medal of Honor . The first and most common is nomination and approval through the chain of command of the service member . The second method is nomination by a member of the U.S. Congress , generally at the request of a constituent . In both cases , if the proposal is outside the time limits for the recommendation , approval to waive the time limit requires a special Act of Congress . The Medal of Honor is presented by the President on behalf of , and in the name of , the Congress . Since 1980 , nearly all Medal of Honor recipients or in the case of posthumous awards , the next of kin have been personally decorated by the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief . Since 1941 , more than half of the Medals of Honor have been awarded posthumously .

= = Evolution of criteria = =

1800s : Several months after President Abraham Lincoln signed Public Resolution 82 into law on December 21 , 1861 for a Navy medal of honor , a similar resolution was passed in July 1862 for an Army version of the medal . Six Union Army soldiers who hijacked a Confederate locomotive named The General in 1862 , were the first Medal of Honor recipients ; James J. Andrews , a civilian , led the raid . He was caught and hanged as a Union spy , but was a civilian and not eligible to receive the medal . Many Medals of Honor awarded in the 19th century were associated with " saving the flag " (and country) , not just for patriotic reasons , but because the U.S. flag was a primary means of battlefield communication at the time . Because no other military decoration was authorized during the Civil War , some seemingly less exceptional and notable actions were recognized by a Medal of Honor during that conflict .

1900s : Early in the twentieth century , the Navy awarded many Medals of Honor for peacetime bravery . For instance , in 1901 , John Henry Helms aboard the USS Chicago (CA @-@ 14) was awarded the medal for saving the ship 's cook from drowning . Seven sailors aboard the USS Iowa (BB @-@ 4) were awarded the medal after the ship 's boiler exploded on January 25 , 1904 . Richard Byrd and Floyd Bennett were awarded the medal ? combat (" Tiffany ") version despite the existence then of a non @-@ combat form of the Navy medal ? for the 1926 flight they claim reached the North Pole . And Admiral Thomas J. Ryan was awarded the medal for saving a woman from the burning Grand Hotel in Yokohama , Japan , following the 1923 Great Kant? earthquake . Between 1919 and 1942 , the Navy issued two separate versions of the Medal of Honor , one for acts related to combat and one for non @-@ combat bravery . The criteria for the award tightened during World War I for the Army version of the Medal of Honor , while the Navy version retained a non @-@ combat provision until 1963 . In an Act of Congress of July 9 , 1918 , the War Department version of the medal required that the recipient " distinguish himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty " , and also required that the act of valor be performed " in action involving actual conflict with an enemy " . This was in reaction to the results of the Army Medal of Honor Review Board , which struck 911 medals from the Medal of Honor Roll in February 1917 for lack of basic prerequisites . These included the members of the 27th Maine erroneously awarded the medal for reenlisting to guard the capital during the Civil War , 29 members of Abraham Lincoln 's funeral detail , and six civilians , including Buffalo Bill Cody and

Mary Edwards Walker (though the latter 's was restored posthumously in 1977) .

World War II : Starting in 1942 , the Medal would only be awarded for action in combat , although the Navy version of the Medal of Honor technically allowed non @-@ combat awards until 1963 . Official accounts vary , but generally , the Medal of Honor for combat was known as the " Tiffany Cross " , after the company that designed the medal . The Tiffany Cross was first awarded in 1919 , but was unpopular partly because of its design . The Tiffany Cross Medal of Honor was awarded at least three times for non @-@ combat . By a special authorized Act of Congress , the medal was presented to Byrd and Bennett (see above) . In 1942 , the United States Navy reverted to a single Medal of Honor , although the statute still contained a loophole allowing the award for both " action involving actual conflict with the enemy " or " in the line of his profession " . Arising from these criteria , approximately 60 percent of the medals earned during and after World War II have been awarded posthumously .

Public Law 88 @-@ 77 , July 25 , 1963 : The requirements for the Medal of Honor were standardized among all the services , requiring that a recipient had " distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty . " Thus , the act removed the loophole allowing non @-@ combat awards to Navy personnel . The act also clarified that the act of valor must occur during one of three circumstances :

While engaged in action against an enemy of the United States

While engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force .

While 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 .

Congress drew the three permutations of combat from President Kennedy 's executive order of April 25 , 1962 , which previously added the same criteria to the Purple Heart . On August 24 , Kennedy added similar criteria for the Bronze Star Medal . The amendment was necessary because Cold War armed conflicts did not qualify for consideration under previous statutes such as the 1918 Army Medal of Honor Statute that required valor " in action involving actual conflict with an enemy " , since the United States has not formally declared war since World War II as a result of the provisions of the United Nations Charter . According to congressional testimony by the Army 's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel , the services were seeking authority to award the Medal of Honor and other valor awards retroactive to July 1 , 1958 , in areas such as Berlin , Lebanon , Quemoy and Matsu Islands , Taiwan Straits , Congo , Laos , Vietnam , and Cuba .

= = Authority and privileges = =

The four specific authorizing statutes amended July 25 , 1963 :

Army : 10 U.S.C. § 3741

Navy and Marine Corps : 10 U.S.C. § 6241

Air Force : 10 U.S.C. § 8741

Coast Guard : 14 U.S.C. § 491 A version is authorized but it has never been awarded .

The President may award , and present in the name of Congress , a medal of honor of appropriate design , with ribbons and appurtenances , to a person who while a member of the Army (naval service ; Navy and Marine Corps) (Air Force) (Coast Guard) , distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty .

= = = Privileges and courtesies = = =

The Medal of Honor confers special privileges on its recipients . By law , recipients have several benefits :

Each Medal of Honor recipient may have his or her name entered on the Medal of Honor Roll (38 U.S.C. § 1560) .

Each person whose name is placed on the Medal of Honor Roll is certified to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being entitled to receive a monthly pension above and beyond any military pensions or other benefits for which they may be eligible . The pension is subject to cost

@-@ of @-@ living increases ; as of December 1 , 2012 , it is \$ 1 @, @ 259 a month .

Enlisted recipients of the Medal of Honor are entitled to a supplemental uniform allowance .

Recipients receive special entitlements to air transportation under the provisions of DOD Regulation 4515 @. @ 13 @-@ R. This benefit allows the recipient to travel as he or she deems fit across geographical locations , and allows the recipient 's dependents to travel either Overseas @-@ Overseas , Overseas @-@ Continental US , or Continental US @-@ Overseas when accompanied by the recipient .

Special identification cards and commissary and exchange privileges are provided for Medal of Honor recipients and their eligible dependents .

Recipients are granted eligibility for interment at Arlington National Cemetery , if not otherwise eligible .

Fully qualified children of recipients are eligible for admission to the United States military academies without regard to the nomination and quota requirements .

Recipients receive a 10 percent increase in retired pay .

Those awarded the medal after October 23 , 2002 , receive a Medal of Honor Flag . The law specified that all 103 living prior recipients as of that date would receive a flag .

Recipients receive an invitation to all future presidential inaugurations and inaugural balls .

As with all medals , retired personnel may wear the Medal of Honor on " appropriate " civilian clothing . Regulations specify that recipients of the Medal of Honor are allowed to wear the uniform " at their pleasure " with standard restrictions on political , commercial , or extremist purposes (other former members of the armed forces may do so only at certain ceremonial occasions) .

Most states (40) offer a special license plate for certain types of vehicles to recipients at little or no cost to the recipient . The states that do not offer Medal of Honor specific license plate offer special license plates for veterans for which recipients may be eligible .

= = = Saluting = = =

Although not required by law or military regulation , members of the uniformed services are encouraged to render salutes to recipients of the Medal of Honor as a matter of respect and courtesy regardless of rank or status , whether or not they are in uniform . This is one of the few instances where a living member of the military will receive salutes from members of a higher rank .

= = Legal protection = =

1904 : The Army redesigned its Medal of Honor . To prevent the making of copies of the medal , Brigadier General George Gillespie , Jr . , a Medal of Honor recipient from the Civil War , applied for and obtained a patent for the new design . General Gillespie received the patent on November 22 , 1904 , and he transferred it the following month to the Secretary of War at the time , William Howard Taft .

1923 : Congress enacted a statute (the year before the 20 @-@ year term of the patent would expire) ? which would later be codified at 18 U.S.C. § 704 ? prohibiting the unauthorized wearing , manufacturing , or sale of military medals or decorations . In 1994 , Congress amended the statute to permit an enhanced penalty if the offense involved the Medal of Honor .

2005 : Congress enacted the Stolen Valor Act of 2005 . (Section 1 of the Act provided that the law could be cited as the " Stolen Valor Act of 2005 " , but the bill received final passage and was signed into law in 2006 .) The law amended 18 U.S.C. § 704 to make it a federal criminal offense for a person to deliberately state falsely that he or she had been awarded a military decoration , service medal , or badge . The law also permitted an enhanced penalty for someone who falsely claimed to have been awarded the Medal of Honor .

June 28 , 2012 : In the case of United States v. Alvarez , the Supreme Court of the United States held that the Stolen Valor Act of 2005 's criminalization of the making of false claims of having been awarded a military medal , decoration , or badge was an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment 's guarantee of free speech . The case involved an elected official in California , Xavier

Alvarez , who had falsely stated at a public meeting that he had been awarded the Medal of Honor , even though he had never served in any branch of the armed forces .

The Supreme Court 's decision did not specifically address the constitutionality of the older portion of the statute which prohibits the unauthorized wearing , manufacturing , or sale of military medals or decorations . Under the law , the unauthorized wearing , manufacturing , or sale of the Medal of Honor is punishable by a fine of up to \$ 100 @, @ 000 and imprisonment of up to one year .

June 3 , 2013 : President Barack Obama signs into law a revised version of the Stolen Valor Act , making it a federal offense for someone to pass themselves off as awardees of medals for valor in order to receive benefits or other privileges (such as grants , educational benefits , housing , etc .) that are set aside for veterans and other service members .

A number of veteran support organizations and private companies devote themselves to exposing those who falsely claim to have received the Medal of Honor .

= = = Enforcement = = =

1996 : HLI Lordship Industries Inc . , a former Medal of Honor contractor , was fined for selling 300 medals for US \$ 75 each .

1996 : Fort Lauderdale , Florida , resident Jackie Stern was convicted of wearing a Medal of Honor to which he was not entitled . A federal judge sentenced him to serve one year of probation and to write a letter of apology to each of the then @-@ living 171 recipients of the medal . His letter was published in the local newspaper .

2003 : Edward Fedora and Gisela Fedora were charged with violating 18 U.S.C. § 704 (b) , Unlawful Sale of a Medal of Honor , for selling medals awarded to U.S. Navy Sailor Robert Blume (for action in the Spanish ? American War) and to U.S. Army First Sergeant George Washington Roosevelt (for action in the Civil War) to an FBI agent . Edward Fedora pleaded guilty and was sentenced to prison .

= = Duplicate medals = =

Medal of Honor recipients may apply in writing to the headquarters of the service branch of the medal awarded for a replacement or display Medal of Honor , ribbon , and appurtenance (Medal of Honor flag) without charge . Primary next of kin may also do the same and have any questions answered in regard to the Medal of Honor that was awarded .

= = Recipients = =

The Medal of Honor has been awarded to 3 @, @ 496 different persons . Of the 19 men have been awarded the Medal of Honor twice , 14 received two separate medals for two separate actions , while five received both the Navy and Army Medals of Honor for the same action . As of June 2011 , since the beginning of World War II , 851 Medals of Honor have been awarded , 523 (61 @. @ 45 %) posthumously . One has been awarded to a woman : Mary Edwards Walker .

The first Medals of Honor (Army) were awarded by and presented to six " Andrews Raiders " on March 25 , 1863 , by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton , in his office in the War Department . Private Jacob Parrott , a Union Army volunteer from Ohio , became the first recipient of the medal , awarded for his volunteering for and participation in a raid on a Confederate train in Big Shanty , Georgia on April 12 , 1862 during the American Civil War . The six decorated raiders met privately afterward with President Lincoln in his office , in the White House .

The first Medal of Honor (Navy) was awarded by Secretary of War Stanton to 41 sailors on April 4 , 1863 (17 for action during the Battle of Forts Jackson and St. Philip) .

The first Marine awarded the Medal of Honor (Navy) was John F. Mackie on July 10 , 1863 , for his rifle action aboard the USS Galena on May 15 , 1862 .

The only Coast Guardsman to be awarded the Medal of Honor (Navy , posthumous) was Signalman First Class Douglas Munro on May 27 , 1943 , for evacuating 500 Marines under fire on

September 27 , 1942 during the Battle of Guadalcanal . Munro was a Canadian @-@ born , naturalized U.S. citizen .

The only woman awarded the Medal of Honor (Army) is Mary Edwards Walker , who was a civilian Union Army surgeon during the American Civil War . She received the award in 1865 for the First Battle of Bull Run (July 21 , 1861) and a series of battles to the Battle of Atlanta in Sept . 1864 ... " for usual medal of honor meritorious services . "

The 1917 Medal of Honor Board deleted 911 awards , but only 910 names from the Army Medal of Honor Roll , including awards to Dr. Mary Edwards Walker , William F. " Buffalo Bill " Cody and the first of two awards issued February 10 , 1887 , to George W. Midil , who retained his award issued October 25 , 1893 . None of the 910 " deleted " recipients were ordered to return their medals , although on the question of whether the recipients could continue to wear their medals , the Judge Advocate General advised the Medal of Honor Board the Army was not obligated to police the matter . Walker continued to wear her medal until her death . President Jimmy Carter formally restored her medal posthumously in 1977 .

61 Canadians who served in the United States Armed Forces , mostly during the American Civil War . Since 1900 , four Canadians have received the medal . The only Canadian @-@ born , naturalized U.S. citizen to receive the medal for heroism during the Vietnam War was Peter C. Lemon .

While the governing statute for the Army Medal of Honor (10 U.S.C. § 6241) , beginning in 1918 , explicitly stated that a recipient must be " an officer or enlisted man of the Army " , " distinguish himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty " , and perform an act of valor " in action involving actual conflict with an enemy " , exceptions have been made :

Charles Lindbergh , 1927 , civilian pilot , and U.S. Army Air Corps reserve officer . Lindbergh 's medal was authorized by a special act of Congress that directly contradicted the July 1918 act of Congress that required that all Army recipients be " in action involving actual conflict with an enemy " . The award was based on the previous acts authorizing the Navy medal to Byrd and Bennett (see above) . Some congressmen objected to Lindbergh 's award because it contradicted the 1918 statute , but Representative Snell reportedly quelled this dissent by explaining that " it was and it wasn 't the Congressional Medal of Honor which Lindbergh would receive under his bill ; that the Lindbergh medal would be entirely distinct from the valor award for war service . "

Major General (Retired) Adolphus Greely was awarded the medal in 1935 , on his 91st birthday , " for his life of splendid public service " . The result of a special act of Congress similar to Lindbergh 's , Greely 's medal citation did not reference any acts of valor .

Foreign unknown recipients include the British Unknown Warrior , the French Unknown Soldier , the Romanian Unknown Soldier , the Italian Unknown Soldier , and the Belgian Unknown Soldier .

U.S. unknown recipients include the Unknowns of World War I , World War II , Korea , and Vietnam . The Vietnam Unknown was later identified as Air Force 1st Lt. Michael J. Blassie through the use of DNA identification . Blassie 's family asked for his Medal of Honor , but the Department of Defense denied the request in 1998 . According to Undersecretary of Defense Rudy de Leon , the medal was awarded symbolically to all Vietnam unknowns , not to Blassie specifically .

= = = Double recipients = = =

Nineteen men have been awarded the Medal of Honor twice . The first two @-@ time Medal of Honor recipient was Thomas Custer (brother of George Armstrong Custer) for two separate actions that took place several days apart during the American Civil War .

Five " double recipients " were awarded both the Army and Navy Medal of Honor for the same action ; all five of these occurrences took place during World War I. Since February 1919 , no single individual can be awarded more than one Medal of Honor for the same action , although a member of one branch of the armed forces can receive the Medal of Honor from another branch if the actions for which it was awarded occurred under the authority of the second branch .

To date , the maximum number of Medals of Honor earned by any service member has been two .

The last individual to be awarded two Medals of Honor was John J. Kelly in 1918 ; the last individual to receive two Medals of Honor for two different actions was Smedley Butler , in 1914 and 1915 .

§ Rank refers to rank held at time of Medal of Honor action .

= = = Related recipients = = =

Arthur MacArthur , Jr. and Douglas MacArthur are the first father and son to be awarded the Medal of Honor . The only other such pairing is Theodore Roosevelt (awarded in 2001) and Theodore Roosevelt , Jr .

Five pairs of brothers have received the Medal of Honor :

John and William Black , in the American Civil War . The Blacks are the first brothers to be so honored .

Charles and Henry Capehart , in the American Civil War , the latter for saving a drowning man while under fire .

Antoine and Julien Gaujot . The Gaujots also have the unique distinction of receiving their medals for actions in separate conflicts , Antoine in the Philippine ? American War and Julien when he crossed the border to rescue Mexicans and Americans in a Mexican Revolution skirmish .

Harry and Willard Miller , during the same naval action in the Spanish ? American War .

Allen and James Thompson , in the same American Civil War action .

Another notable pair of related recipients are Admiral Frank Friday Fletcher (rear admiral at the time of award) and his nephew , Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher (lieutenant at the time of award) , both awarded for actions during the United States occupation of Veracruz .

= = = Belated recognition = = =

Since 1979 , 85 belated Medal of Honor decorations were presented to recognize actions from the Civil War to the Vietnam War . In addition , five recipients whose names were not included on the Army Medal of Honor Roll in 1917 had their awards restored .

A 1993 study commissioned by the U.S. Army investigated " racial disparity " in the awarding of medals . At the time , no Medals of Honor had been awarded to American soldiers of African descent who served in World War II . After an exhaustive review , the study recommended that ten Distinguished Service Cross recipients be awarded the Medal of Honor . On January 13 , 1997 , President Bill Clinton presented the Medal of Honor to seven of these World War II veterans , six of them posthumously and one to former Second Lieutenant Vernon Baker .

In 1998 , a similar study of Asian Americans resulted in President Bill Clinton presenting 22 Medals of Honor in 2000 . Twenty of these medals went to American soldiers of Japanese descent of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (442nd RCT) that served in the European Theater of Operations during World War II . One of these Medal of Honor recipients was Senator Daniel Inouye , a former U.S. Army officer in the 442nd RCT .

In 2005 , President George W. Bush presented the Medal of Honor to Tibor Rubin , a Hungarian @-@ born American Jew who was a Holocaust survivor of World War II and enlisted U.S. infantryman and prisoner of war in the Korean War , whom many believed to have been overlooked because of his religion .

On April 11 , 2013 , President Obama presented the Medal of Honor posthumously to Army chaplain Captain Emil Kapaun for his actions as a prisoner of war during the Korean war . This follows other awards to Army Sergeant Leslie H. Sabo , Jr. for conspicuous gallantry in action on May 10 , 1970 , near Se San , Cambodia , during the Vietnam War and to Army Private First Class Henry Svehla and Army Private First Class Anthony T. Kaho?ohanohano for their heroic actions during the Korean War .

As a result of a Congressionally mandated review to ensure brave acts were not overlooked due to prejudice or discrimination , on March 18 , 2014 President Obama upgraded Distinguished Service Crosses to Medals of Honor for 24 Hispanic , Jewish , and African American individuals ? the " Valor 24 " ? for their actions in World War II , the Korean War and the Vietnam War . Three were still living

at the time of the ceremony .

= = 27th Maine and other revoked awardings = =

During the Civil War , Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton promised a Medal of Honor to every man in the 27th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment who extended his enlistment beyond the agreed @-@ upon date . The Battle of Gettysburg was imminent , and 311 men of the regiment volunteered to serve until the battle was resolved . The remaining men returned to Maine , but with the Union victory at Gettysburg the 311 volunteers soon followed . The volunteers arrived back in Maine in time to be discharged with the men who had earlier returned . Since there seemed to be no official list of the 311 volunteers , the War Department exacerbated the situation by forwarding 864 medals to the commanding officer of the regiment . The commanding officer only issued the medals to the volunteers who stayed behind and retained the others on the grounds that , if he returned the remainder to the War Department , the War Department would try to reissue the medals .

In 1916 , a board of five Army generals on the retired list convened under act of law to review every Army Medal of Honor awarded . The board was to report on any Medals of Honor awarded or issued for any cause other than distinguished service . The commission , led by Nelson A. Miles , identified 911 awards for causes other than distinguished service . This included the 864 medals awarded to members of the 27th Maine regiment ; 29 servicemen who served as Abraham Lincoln 's funeral guard ; six civilians , including Mary Edwards Walker and Buffalo Bill Cody ; and 12 others . Walker 's medal was restored by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 . Cody and four other civilian scouts who rendered distinguished service in action , and who were therefore considered by the board to have fully earned their medals , had theirs restored in 1989 . The report was endorsed by the Judge Advocate General , who also advised that the War Department should not seek the return of the revoked medals from the recipients identified by the board . In the case of recipients who continued to wear the medal , the War Department was advised to take no action to enforce the statute .

= = Nomination under current consideration = =

David Dunnells White 's nomination is under consideration for the capture of Confederate Major General G. W. Custis Lee , eldest son of General Robert E. Lee , at the Battle of Sailors Creek , Virginia , on April 6 , 1865 .

= = Similar American decorations = =

The following decorations , in one degree or another , bear similar names to the Medal of Honor , but are entirely separate awards with different criteria for issuance :

Cardenas Medal of Honor : decoration of the United States Revenue Cutter Service , which was later merged into the United States Coast Guard

Chaplain 's Medal for Heroism : awarded posthumously for a single action to four recipients

Congressional Gold Medal : the highest civilian honor bestowed by the United States (along with the Presidential Medal of Freedom)

Congressional Space Medal of Honor : intended for issuance to astronauts , but despite its name , it is not equal to the Medal of Honor

Presidential Medal of Freedom : the highest civilian honor bestowed by the United States (along with the Congressional Gold Medal)

Several United States law enforcement decorations bear the name " Medal of Honor " . The Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor , established by Congress in 2001 and stated to be " the highest National award for valor by a public safety officer " , is also awarded by the President of the United States .