
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
THE BASIC SCHOOL
MARINE CORPS TRAINING COMMAND
CAMP BARRETT, VIRGINIA 22134-5019

**MARINE CORPS
AWARDS
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STUDENT HANDOUT**

Marine Corps Awards

Introduction

“Prompt and judicious recognition of an individual’s achievement or service is a vital factor of morale and an indispensable responsibility of leadership.” – Napoleon

Awards serve to reward the actions, service, or achievements of a Marine above and beyond what is expected. In order to retain their value, awards must only be given when clearly deserved. There are three main categories of awards: unit awards, personal/military decorations, and campaign/service awards. It is the obligation of every leader to be familiar with the awards available for Marines, know how to recommend Marines for awards, understand the approval process for awards and be familiar with the resources to track all types of awards.

Importance

Awards serve many purposes. They award individual Marines for exemplary service, action, or achievement. They also serve as encouragement for non-awarded Marines to improve or increase performance. Furthermore, the receipt of an award by a Marine (Sergeant, Staff Noncommissioned Officer [SNCO] or officer) requires a directed comment on the next fitness report, and thus may play a role in promotion or retention. As a company grade officer you will initiate or make recommendations on awards for your Marines. As a leader of Marines, you owe it to your Marines to understand the Marine Corps Awards Program. Award criteria and seniority, approving authorities, and the recommendation and approval process are three topics deserving of attention. A solid understanding of Marine Corps awards is inherent to Marine Corps leadership.

In This Lesson

Initially, we shall discuss the three types of Marine Corps awards: personal/military decorations, unit awards and campaign/ service awards. We will also discuss the role a platoon commander or officer-in-charge plays in the submission and approval process. We will also discuss the iAPS system.

Marine Corps Awards (Continued)

This lesson covers the following topics:

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Learning Objectives

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE (S) :

1. Without the aid of references, define the classification of Marine Corps Awards, without omitting key components.

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE (S) :

1. Without the aid of references, identify the process for submitting award recommendations to recognize Marines.
2. Given the awards manual, know the submission process, to ensure that appropriate actions are taken by endorsing and awarding authorities.
3. Without the aid of reference, identify the elements required to develop an award, without omission.
4. Without the aid of reference, identify the types of Marine Corps awards, without omission.

Testing:

You will be tested on this material via an open book test that will concentrate on your ability to navigate through the Awards Manual, SECNAVINST 1650.1H. The focus will be on chapters 1-4, however may contain information outside of those chapters.

Marine Corps Awards

Marine Corps awards are divided into three main categories: personal/ military decorations, unit awards and campaign/service awards. There are also three other methods of formal recognition available that lack a corresponding ribbon or medal. They are the Certificate of Commendation, Meritorious Mast, and Letter of Appreciation.

- **Personal/Military Decorations.** According to SECNAVINST 1650.1H, “a Military decoration (personal award) is an award bestowed on an individual for a specific act or acts of gallantry or meritorious service.” Military decorations have a long history dating back to the rewards that kings and tribal chiefs could bestow upon brave warriors for actions committed on the battlefield. In the Marine Corps today, there exist an array of awards that serve to recognize individual Marines for exhibiting bravery on the field of battle or exemplary service in a peacetime environment.
 - **The basic awarding authority structure** in Chapter 1, SECNAVINST 1650.1H, details by listing each military decoration and the corresponding rank or billet empowered with approval authority. Also in Chapter 1 of SECNAVINST 1650.1H, there is a list of all the recognized military decorations. In Chapter 2 of the 1650.1H, there is detailed information on all details pertaining to military decorations including criteria required for issuance and the process for submission and approval.
 - **The Combat Action Ribbon and Purple Heart.** These awards are personal awards that are awarded for honorable service under certain circumstances or in certain situations. It is important to note that there are stringent criteria that must be met prior to awarding these decorations, and they are approved by the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) or his delegate.
- **Unit Awards.** According to SECNAVINST 1650.1H, “unit awards recognize entire organizations for outstanding heroism or achievement performed during periods of war, international tension, national emergencies, or extraordinary situations that involve national interests.” The most common unit awards are (in descending order) the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC), the Joint Meritorious Unit Award (JMUA), the Navy Unit Citation (NUC), and the Meritorious Unit Commendation (MUC). All personnel who were a part of the unit and served honorably during the period recognized will receive the unit award. (As you may have observed from your Marine Corps Uniforms class, there is no authorized medal for unit awards.) The approval process for unit awards is clearly documented in Chapter 3 of SECNAVINST 1650.1H.
- **Campaign/Service Awards.** SECNAVINST 1650.1H describes campaign or service award as “an award issued to an individual to denote participation in a campaign, war, national emergency or expedition, or to denote service requirements fulfilled in a credible manner.” Upon approval of a particular campaign/service award, CMC will release a message identifying the awards

Marine Corps Awards (Continued)

criteria and/or units authorized to receive the award. Typically, the unit's administration section will submit a roster to the unit diary of all personnel who served honorably with the command during the period awarded and are therefore eligible for the award. Once approved, personnel will be notified through their chain of command that they rate the award.

- **Campaign/Service Awards (Continued)**

There is typically no formal award presentation to each individual Marine. Examples of campaign awards include the Global War on Terrorism (Expeditionary) Medal or the Korean Service Medal. CMC has established the general criteria for service awards, which can be found in SECNAVINST 1650.1H. Some service awards are individual awards, awarded on a by name basis (Humanitarian Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal). Some service awards (such as the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon and the Kosovo Campaign Medal) are earned by service in a given area for a set period of time.

Other Methods of Formal Recognition

- **Certificate of Commendation (CertComm).** By Marine Corps order, a commander with Navy and Marine Corps Achievement approval authority can approve a CertComm. CertComms are not included in the Marine Corps Awards Processing System (APS), but are forwarded to the CMC for entry into the Marine's official military personnel file (OMPF).
- **Meritorious Mast (MM).** A Meritorious Mast may be approved by a Battalion Commander or equivalent authority. MM's are not processed through the APS, however are to be forwarded to the CMC for entry into the Marine's OMPF.
- **Letter of Appreciation (LOA).** A Letter of Appreciation may be written by any officer senior to the proposed recipient. A LOA is not processed through the APS, and is not to be forwarded to the CMC for entry into the Marine's OMPF.

Award Submission Process

A “recommendation for an award may be submitted by any commissioned officer, senior to the individual being recommended....” Thus, it is the responsibility of every Marine officer to be familiar with the award submission process. Too often, junior Marines are not adequately recognized for their efforts and accomplishments. This represents a failure of the officer corps for not upholding the established obligations.

- **Chain of Command.** Any officer may submit a recommendation for a junior Marine, either officer or enlisted. (Marine Corps policy dictates that if they are not in the same chain of command, the recommendation shall be forwarded to the recipient’s commanding officer.)
- **Timeliness.** Awards should be submitted as soon as possible after the action or achievement in order to create positive ramifications within the unit. If Marines link efforts and achievements to recognition and reward, the overall performance and morale of the unit tends to increase. The longer a command takes to submit recommendations for military decorations, the less impact the award presentation will have upon the unit. In SECNAVINST 1650.1H, Chapter 2, Paragraph 211, specific time limits for submission of each military decoration are identified.
- **Award-Recommendation Process** All officers should be knowledgeable about the awards-recommendation process. Every recommendation for a personal decoration starts with the Personal Award Recommendation Form (OPNAV 1650/3, called “a 1650 form”). In SECNAVINST 1650.1H, Chapter 2, Appendix B, there are block-by-block instructions for completing this form. Marine Corps commands are using the Marine Corps Improved Awards Processing System (IAPS) to process all recommendations for military decorations which can be accessed via the IAPS Website:
<https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/iaps/>
All personnel who originate endorse or administratively process awards must have an IAPS account. Instructions for creating an account can be found via the IAPS Website:
<https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/registration>.
An example of a Personal Award Recommendation form (OPNAV 1650/3) is in Appendix A, Chapter 2, SECNAVINST 1650.1H.
- **Citation and Summary of Action.** The recommending officer must author the citation and (if required) summary of action. SECNAVINST 1650.1H provides detailed instructions on the required sentence structure and terms pertaining to each specific decoration. There is a strict template, to which each award citation should adhere, and individual commands may have their own particular requirements; failure to properly format the award in the prescribed way will often result in the award being delayed. The unit S-1 (Admin) section can provide further assistance. Examples of citations for each military decoration are included in Appendix B, Chapter 2, SECNAVINST 1650.1H.

Award Submission Process (Continued)

- **Award Process** Once an officer has completed the recommendation/originated the award, it is submitted to the proposed recipient's chain of command. The award is forwarded up the chain of command to the appropriate level. Each intermediate level of the chain of command must endorse an award recommendation with either (1) recommend approval; (2) recommend approve a lower award; (3) recommend a higher award; (4) disapprove the award/recommend inclusion in a later award; or (5) return the recommendation for further clarification.

Once the recommendation reaches the approving authority, there are five available options: (1) approve the award; (2) approve a lower award; (3) approve a higher award (if so empowered) or recommend a higher award to the appropriate authority; (4) disapprove the award; or (5) return the recommendation for further clarification. Once an award is submitted, it must be forwarded to the approval authority of the originally requested award; an intermediary commander can not approve a lower award. Once decided, an award cannot be resubmitted for the same action unless accompanied by new material and each action/period of service can only be covered by one award. Approved awards not yet presented may be revoked by the awarding authority. However, once an award has been presented, only SECNAV has revocation authority.

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- **Award Elements** Once a military decoration is approved, the approving authority is responsible for furnishing three elements: (1) the medal (or star, if a subsequent award); (2) the certificate or citation; and (3) the presentation folder. The command is responsible for ensuring these items are procured and forwarded to the award recipient as applicable.
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Summary

During this lesson we discussed the importance of company-grade officers being fluent in the Marine Corps awards process. We introduced the various categories of Marine Corps awards: unit awards, military/personal decorations, and campaign/service awards. We also discussed other methods of recognition including the Certificate of Commendation, Meritorious Mast, and Letter of Appreciation. Furthermore, the student was introduced to the Marine Corps award submission process. Each lieutenant, upon reaching his/her duty station, should establish an Awards Processing System account through their unit S-1 shop. This will provide the lieutenant the ability to process and track awards for his/her Marines.

References

Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
SECNAVINST 1650.1H	Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual
SECNAVINST 5216.5D	Naval Correspondence Manual
MCO 5215.1J	Marine Corps Directives Management System
MCO 1650.19J	Marine Corps Awards
MCRP 6-11B	Discussion Guide for Marine Corps Values

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term or Acronym	Definition or Identification
APS	Awards Processing System
CertComm	Certificate of Commendation
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
JMUA	Joint Meritorious Unit Award
LOA	Letter of Appreciation
MM	Meritorious Mast
MUC	Meritorious Unit Commendation
NUC	Navy Unit Citation
OMPF	Official military personnel file
PUC	Presidential Unit Citation
SNCO	Staff Noncommissioned Officer

Summary of Action (NA)

From 7 July to 26 August 2011, while serving as supply chief for 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, Staff Sergeant Thomas executed a total account turnover, including all non-deploying equipment and all property records, from 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, to 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. This process included:

- The creation of 11 new Consolidated Memoranda of Receipt (CMRs) to delineate which equipment was deploying to Afghanistan with the battalion, which was remaining with the battalion's Remain Behind Element, and which was being turned over to 2d Battalion, 5th Marines.

- The transfer of thousands of individual pieces of equipment and the associated records into each of the new CMRs. This process would generally take several hours for each company or staff section. Additionally, this process went through several rounds of revision, requiring fresh changes to each CMR.

- Causative research into hundreds of individual CMR discrepancies that were identified during the turnover process, and corrective action to fix those discrepancies.

- The drafting of 35 vouchers detailing specific discrepancies and corrective action that required command-level attention.

- The drafting of 3 requests for investigation into discrepancies that could not be easily explained.

- A total inventory of all items in the custody of the 2/4 supply section, including 2 warehouses and 20 quadcons.

- The creation of a locator deck detailing the exact location of every item under the supply section's custody.

- The drafting of a final Certificate of Relief for the Battalion Commander's signature, totaling some 500 pages and detailing the status of the account from a supply and maintenance readiness standpoint.

During this same timeframe, Staff Sergeant Thomas was instrumental in preparing the battalion for its OEF deployment by supervising Training Allowance Pool gear issue to every Marine and making sure that all Marines made the proper exchanges at the Consolidated Issue Facility to ensure that they had the necessary gear for deployment.

Staff Sergeant Thomas's tireless efforts were critical to ensuring total battalion material readiness and to completing the account turnover on time despite an extremely compressed timeline.

Summary of Action (NV)

Corporal Taylor was in receipt of imminent danger pay during this period.

Corporal Taylor served as a fire team leader and machine gunner for Company G, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines while the battalion was deployed between

Upon arriving in Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, Corporal Taylor trained all Marines in his platoon in the proper use and employment of all variants of machine guns organic to his unit. This was critical due to the presence of both Mk-19 and M2 heavy machine guns (HMG) on all posts at his platoon position and at least one M240B medium machine gun (MMG) on every dismounted patrol from his platoon. His proficiency and skillful instruction of machine guns and machine gunnery was evidenced by numerous direct fire engagements where riflemen would effectively employ machine guns against enemy forces.

On 7 December 2011, Corporal Taylor once again showed his value as a machine gunner and advisor to the platoon commander. Unsatisfied with the effects of his M240B during previous engagements, Corporal Taylor had recommended to his Platoon Commander that they use an M2 .50 caliber machine gun on an upcoming operation. Approved to do so by his platoon leadership, Corporal Taylor selflessly volunteered to carry the 58 pound receiver more than 2km to his initial overwatch position. Once there, he personally dug in the machine gun under the cover of darkness. As the sun rose, enemy forces engaged his squad from multiple firing points to his Northeast. Corporal Taylor immediately obtained positive identification and despite accurate enemy machine gun fire impacting around his position, returned deadly, effective heavy fire. His first burst impacted directly on an enemy firing position, quickly silencing the enemy at that location. Despite the shock effect of the .50 cal, the enemy continued to engage his squad. As the enemy identified his contribution in the firefight and shifted the focus of their fires on his position, Corporal Taylor remained in place and provided accurate suppression of enemy firing points, directing the platoon's small arms and medium machine gun fires onto enemy positions. His fire fixed the enemy in place, allowing the company to prosecute an artillery mission on the enemy positions, wounding one enemy fighter and killing another. His squad then closed on the enemy, killing all enemy fighters in their fighting positions.

His creative thinking and physical discipline shown by hand carrying the receiver of a vehicle-mounted weapon, followed by his willingness to remain exposed to focused enemy fire, demonstrated bold and decisive action under fire.

Summary of Action (NC)

Sergeant Taylor served as S-4 platoon sergeant, Headquarters and Service Company, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, from August 2010 to April 2013.

Sergeant Taylor is an 0311 rifleman who began working with 2d Battalion, 4th Marines logistics section in August of 2010. During Exercise Valiant Mark/Steel Knight 10 he worked with the S-4 by coordinating, planning, and executing multiple logistics convoys in support of the battalion. His dedication helped push the logistics section to succeed beyond what it was previously capable of. Having demonstrated his natural ability to be successful in any position and with the desperate need of leadership in the S-4 at the time, Sergeant Taylor took over as the battalion police sergeant, battalion barracks manager, and facilities chief. These billets are normally held by two sergeants, but due to personnel shortfalls, Sergeant Taylor had to assume these duties to keep the battalion functioning. The quality of work he produced was exceptional despite his immense work load, a direct result of his leadership, organizational talents, and ability to efficiently delegate and track multiple projects at once. At the time, these were vital jobs due to the battalion's recent move to Camp San Mateo from Camp Horno. As the police sergeant, he worked with company leadership, the battalion sergeant major, Regiment and Base Facilities to coordinate self-help projects and work requests totaling well over 1,500 man hours of work that gave the battalion facilities they could be proud of. Sergeant Taylor further proved the excellent quality of work he consistently produced when he received a 100% in the Commanding General's Inspection Program for his work in facilities and having transformed the command post. His efforts made the battalion an example to emulate across the regiment and the regimental commander praised him by name for his efforts during a regiment-wide formation.

In February 2011, Sergeant Taylor was assigned as the battalion logistics chief, a Staff Non-Commissioned Officer billet, after the previous chief was tasked as an augment to the embedded training team for the upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. Again Sergeant Taylor took the challenge head-on and surpassed everyone's expectations. In a little over two months, Sergeant Taylor grasped the billet of logistics chief and pushed battalion logistics efforts in the right direction by using his experience as a rifleman to anticipate the needs of the line companies. He assisted in the planning, coordination, and execution of the battalion's first all hands pre-deployment training program field exercise, Block II Field Exercise. Through Sergeant Taylor's insight as an 0311 and his leadership, the logistics section was rarely in a defensive or reactive posture and was able to anticipate the logistical requirements of the companies throughout the training. Sergeant Taylor is well ahead of his peers in both maturity and professionalism and earned the respect of the battalion staff and company leadership through his excellent performance and quality logistic support provided under his supervision.

From March to August of 2011, Sergeant Taylor maintained his billets as police sergeant and battalion facilities chief, but more importantly he filled in the gap for the battalion logistics section by taking on extra responsibilities when critical vulnerabilities were identified. He assisted the ammunitions chief with ammo breakouts and distribution during the Integrated Training Exercise pre-deployment training in order to allow the ammunition holding area to be established and then relocated. He conducted

liaison with company leadership on a daily basis, collecting logistic statuses and requests and helping the new logistics chief forecast and execute required support for five companies and several attachments during Integrated Training Exercise. He also filled in as the acting logistics chief again at the end of the Integrated Training Exercise due to the logistics chief having to depart a week early to complete embark requirements for the deployment. Sergeant Taylor's most notable accomplishment during that time was the execution of the battalion's retrograde from 29 Palms back to Camp Pendleton with 100% accountability of hundreds of pieces of equipment and over 1,000 personnel in less than 12 hours. It is because of Sergeant Taylor's ability to stay flexible, maintain a positive attitude, and power through adversity that the logistics section was able to succeed during a challenging pre-deployment work up and high tempo combat deployment to Afghanistan.

In August of 2011 Sergeant Taylor deployed to Afghanistan. He drew upon his experience to tactically advise the Motor Transport platoon commander and the logistics convoy commanders, resulting in the successful completion of over 20 combat logistics patrols. Sergeant Taylor's leadership resulted in 500 miles of accident-free driving and zero combat-related injuries in harsh terrain and maintaining a high operational tempo in a kinetic environment. While on these convoys, Sergeant Taylor seized the opportunity at each objective to mentor and ensure the professional development of 25 logistics Marines spread across 13 battalion outposts and forward operating bases. He kept the Marines informed of possible future career paths, required professional military education, and maintained the unit cohesion of the logistics section. Sergeant Taylor also acted as the logistics representative with company staff to provide seamless communication and support, increasing the effectiveness of the unit's role in theater. Due to Sergeant Taylor's insight and experience as a rifleman, he was able to amplify the efforts of the S-4 by identifying shortfalls and requirements on the ground level that would have otherwise not been addressed. He ensured the battalion's warfighters received personal and quality support for all their logistical and personal needs in the 2/4's area of operations.

Almost three months into the deployment, retrograde requirements were being identified and planned for and the liaison office was in need of additional support. Despite his desire to stay with his Marines, Sergeant Taylor recognized the importance of the retrograde efforts and once again volunteered to learn the roles and responsibilities of an unfamiliar senior billet. With very limited supervision, Sergeant Taylor was responsible for creating and maintaining a Consolidated Memorandum Receipt (CMR) consisting of over 450 Table of Authorized Material Control Numbers (TAMCNs) valued at over \$4.9 million. He established a hard copy filing system and supervised a small team in the creation and completion of six-part record jackets for 1025 pieces of gear in order to facilitate the turnover process for retrograde. To manage and track all of this equipment, he created and implemented an electronic management and tracking system.

Through Sergeant Taylor's leadership and intellectual know how, he set the standard for the Regimental Command Team by turning in more gear than any other battalion. Sergeant Taylor proved his trustworthiness, strong character and resourcefulness in seemingly accomplishing or solving any problem that came to him. In addition to handling the retrograde efforts in the liaison office, he also facilitated the consistent

support to the battalion when the companies in combat were in great need of gear or supplies. He scrounged for Marines from multiple companies and units to organize working parties and personally assisted in acquiring and preparing supplies for embark to the Marines at the forward operating bases and patrol bases. Sergeant Taylor is a true force multiplier and improves the efficiency, production, and morale of all Marines around him.

In April of 2012, Sergeant Taylor went back to work as the facilities chief as well as the S-4 chief. He inputted over 500 facilities work requests valued at over \$10,000 to improve the quality of life for Marines in the barracks and work spaces. He acquired close to \$500,000 in new furniture through relentless communication with facilities personnel and by elevating requests to the appropriate levels. Sergeant Taylor ensured the logistics section was ready for their deployment by creating an electronic tracking spreadsheet of every training requirement for the deployment, which was then adopted by the Headquarters and Support Company leadership to track all the sections. This resulted in 95% completion of over 50 training requirements for nearly 80 Marines across the S-4.

A true unit team player, Sergeant Taylor volunteered to plan and supervise four battalion ceremonies, coordinating with five companies and agencies across Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. These events included two retirements, a posthumous Bronze Star ceremony, and a posthumous Navy & Marine Corps Medal presentation. Through his coordination with the Public Affairs Office for inviting media representatives, public dignitaries and local community members to these ceremonies, Sergeant Taylor substantially contributed to the public image of the battalion, its Marines and the Marine Corps.

Sergeant Taylor's performance has been of the highest caliber. His leadership and acute awareness of what is going on around him make him a force multiplier. He consistently performs with the proficiency of a senior Staff Non-Commissioned Officer and is ready to take on the responsibilities of the next rank. Sergeant Taylor's intelligence and advanced problem solving skills make him an invaluable asset within the battalion.