



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE MATTER OF:

DOCKET NUMBER: BC-2021-01855

Work-Product

COUNSEL: NONE

HEARING REQUESTED: NO

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

He be awarded the Purple Heart (PH).

APPLICANT'S CONTENTIONS

He sustained an injury on 11 Dec 19 when terrorists conducted a high-profile attack on Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. He met the criteria and satisfied the requirements for award of the PH. He was wounded as a direct result of the Taliban's detonation of a truck full of explosives, his injury was not due to an accident, self-inflicted, or by willful misconduct. The wound to his right eye was due to an outside force and he was ordered to the hospital by a general officer. His eye injury was treated, and it was documented he had debris in his right eye. At all levels of analysis, there is no dispute of how his injury occurred. He was under a doctor's care for three days and was in incredible pain. A causality report was generated for this injury. Denials of his request have included information which is not PH criteria, inaccurate or misleading information, and facts being ignored making the denial decisions unjust.

The applicant's complete submission is at Exhibit A.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The applicant is a currently serving Air Force senior master sergeant (E-8).

On 11 Dec 19, a casualty report, provided by the applicant indicates he was injured when Bagram Airfield was under indirect fire, small arms fire, and a ground attack. He was sleeping in the dorms when a blast caused the structure to weaken resulting in debris falling into his eye. He was taken to the outpatient clinic to receive treatment and was classified as not seriously injured (NSI). He was never admitted and was cleared to return to duty the same day.

On 10 Nov 20, according to a memorandum provided by the applicant, 9 AF (AFCENT)/A1 disapproved the applicant's request for award of the PH. It was noted the injury sustained did not meet the criteria for the award. It was noted a wound for which the award is made is of such severity that it required treatment, not merely examination, by a medical officer. Treatment of the

wound is documented in the applicant's medical or health record; however, corneal and conjunctival abrasions are common, self-limited injuries, which rapidly heal without any significant intervention and result in no permanent impairment to corneal function or vision.

On 18 Mar 21, according to a memorandum provided by the applicant, 9 AF (AFCENT)/A1 disapproved of the applicant's appeal request for award of the PH. It was noted award of the PH includes injuries caused by enemy bullets, shrapnel injuries that require wound closure or have retained foreign bodies. The applicant was seen in the clinic for a corneal abrasion without foreign body and he was placed on eye drops/medication and was instructed to follow-up the next day. On 13 Dec 19, he was again seen for corneal abrasion without foreign body with additional complaints of headache and photophobia. Subsequently, his vision was restored. On 23 May 20, he was seen in the clinic for corneal abrasion follow-up with recorded correction of right versus left eye.

On 9 Feb 22, the AFBCMR staff sent a letter to the applicant notifying him he failed to exhaust all avenues of relief before petitioning the AFBCMR and directed the applicant to AFPC.

On 30 Jul 24, according to a memorandum provided by the applicant, AFPC/DPSTTC determined the applicant's decorations package for award of the PH did not meet the criteria for review by the Purple Heart Review Board (PHRB).

On 27 Dec 24, the PHRB disapproved the applicant's request for award of the PH. The board's decision was consistent with the criteria for award of the PH found in Executive Order 11016; Title 10 U.S.C, Section 1131; DoDM 1348.33 Volume 3, *Manual of Military Decorations and Awards: DoD Service Awards-Campaign, Expeditionary, and Service Medals*, and DAFMAN 36-2806, *Military Awards: Criteria and Procedures*. That criteria specifies the wounds must be the result of enemy action and must have required treatment by a medical official and documented in the member's medical record as such.

For more information, see the excerpt of the applicant's record at Exhibit B and the advisory at Exhibit C.

AIR FORCE EVALUATION

AFPC/DPSTTC recommends denying the applicant's request for award of the PH, indicating no new evidence was presented that was not previously considered by PHRB and AFCENT. Per DAFMAN 36-2806, dated 18 Jan 24, paragraph A2.10, the PH was established by General George Washington on 7 Aug 82. It was reestablished by War Department General Order Number 3, 1932, and is currently awarded pursuant to Executive Order 11016, dated 25 Apr 62, subject to the provisions in 10 U.S.C. Section 1127, 1129, 1129a, and 1131; Public Law (PL) 104-106; DoDI 1348.33, *DoD Military Decorations and Awards Program*; and DoDM 1348.33 Volume 3. The PH is awarded to any service member who is killed or wounded as a result of enemy action. The

wounds received must have required treatment by a medical officer. The PH differs from other decorations in that a member is entitled to the PH if the approval authority determines the member meets the eligibility criteria.

The complete advisory opinion is at Exhibit C.

APPLICANT'S REVIEW OF AIR FORCE EVALUATION

The Board sent a copy of the advisory opinion to the applicant on 2 Apr 25 for comment (Exhibit D) but has received no response.

The applicant's complete response is at Exhibit E.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. The application was timely filed.
2. The applicant exhausted all available non-judicial relief before applying to the Board.
3. After reviewing all Exhibits, the Board concludes the applicant is not the victim of an error or injustice. The Board concurs with the rationale and recommendation of AFPC/DPSTTC and finds a preponderance of the evidence does not substantiate the applicant's contentions. While the Board notes the applicant's contention, he received a casualty report and medical treatment and therefore was eligible to receive PH consideration. The Board disagrees. Specifically, the Board notes the applicant was given PH consideration by two different organizations which found his injury did not meet criteria for award of a PH. While the Board notes the applicant's injury was documented in his medical or health record; however, his injury was noted as a corneal abrasion of the right eye without foreign body. He was placed on eye drops/medications, returned to duty the same day and instructed to follow up the next day. Further, the Board notes enemy related injuries which clearly justify award of the PH include injuries caused by enemy bullet, shrapnel injuries that require wound closure or have retained foreign bodies. Therefore, the Board finds the severity of the applicant's injury does not meet the criteria for award of the PH. Therefore, the Board recommends against correcting the applicant's records.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board recommends informing the applicant the evidence did not demonstrate material error or injustice, and the Board will reconsider the application only upon receipt of relevant evidence not already presented.

CERTIFICATION

The following quorum of the Board, as defined in Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 36-2603, *Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR)*, paragraph 2.1, considered Docket Number BC-2021-01855 in Executive Session on 13 May 25:

Work-Product Panel Chair

AFBCMR Docket Number BC-2021-01855

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All members voted against correcting the record. The panel considered the following:

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Exhibit A: Application, DD Form 149, w/atchs, dated 14 Feb 25.

Exhibit B: Documentary evidence, including relevant excerpts from official records.

Exhibit C: Advisory Opinion, AFPC/DPSTTC, dated 1 Apr 25.

Exhibit D: Notification of Advisory, SAF/MRBC to Applicant, dated 2 Apr 25.

Taken together with all Exhibits, this document constitutes the true and complete Record of Proceedings, as required by DAFI 36-2603, paragraph 4.12.9.

5/13/2025

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