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**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS**

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

IN THE MATTER OF:

DOCKET NUMBER: BC-2022-00893

Work-Product

COUNSEL: NONE

HEARING REQUESTED: NOT INDICATED

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

His Meritorious Service Medal, with One Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster (MSM, w/1BOLC) be upgraded to a Bronze Star Medal (BSM).

APPLICANT'S CONTENTIONS

The recommendation for award of the BSM was downgraded at an unauthorized level per the Air Force Central Command (AFCENT) Decoration Guide, which states AFCENT is the approval authority for the BSM. The downgraded MSM citation removed verbiage of his exposure to hostile action or significant risk of hostile actions and other accomplishments.

The applicant's complete submission is at Exhibit A.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The applicant is a retired Air Force master sergeant (E-7). He retired on 1 Jun 23.

The applicant provides an email from the originator for award of the BSM, the Chief, U.S. National Support Element, *Work-Product* International Airport, *Work-Pro...* Afghanistan, dated 20 Dec 17. The email states the applicant's award was initially turned in as an MSM but it was pushed up to a BSM based on his contributions over the past 12 months. The recommendation for award of the BSM was pushed to the commander after he approved the upgrade.

The applicant provides AF Form 3994, *Recommendation for Decoration Deployment Contingency Operations*, dated 15 Dec 17 and citation for award of the BSM for the inclusive period 12 Jan 17 to 12 Jan 18 for actions while deployed to Forward Operating Base *Work-P...* *Work-Pro...* *Work-Product* International Airport, Afghanistan in support of Operation FREEDOM SENTINEL. The AF Form 3994 and the citation state he was exposed to significant danger from rocket attacks, insider threats and direct engagements. The applicant during an attack of 48 rounds of indirect fire ensured the safety and security of personnel. Additionally, he traveled five miles outside of coalition controlled locations on 16 convoy missions advising and providing security amongst heavily armed Afghan National Police members. The AF Form 3994 is signed by the originator; however, is missing signed endorsements.

In a letter dated 27 Mar 19, AFCENT/A1 informed the applicant's congressman the recommendation for award of the MSM in Feb 18 was processed as recommended by his deployed leadership, to include the deployed wing commander (WG/CC), and that the BSM and MSM were equivalent level awards. On 6 Jun 17, the Secretary of the Air Force released policy stating a

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member recommended for award of the BSM must be eligible for the “C” (combat) device. The “C” device criteria specifies the member must have been personally exposed to hostile action or under significant risk of exposure to hostile action. The MSM submission received did not indicate the specific personal exposure or significant risk. Therefore, it did not meet criteria for award of the BSM.

The MSM, w/1 BOLC citation in the applicant’s automated records management system (ARMS) record for outstanding achievement for the inclusive period 12 Jan 17 to 12 Jan 18 includes “under threat from rocket attacks, insider threats and direct fire engagements.” However, the draft BSM citation and MSM citation are dissimilar.

On 12 Apr 22, the AFBCMR returned the applicant’s AFBCMR request for failure to exhaust administrative remedy for upgrade of his award prior to requesting relief from the AFBCMR.

On 14 Apr 22, the applicant requested the AFBCMR re-open his case. He contacted AFCENT to obtain information on the possibility of submitting his award recommendation through his previous unit leadership; however, he was advised AFCENT inactivated all Afghanistan organizations and there was no one remaining in the chain of command. The applicant further states, all members, except the commanding general, from 2018 are no longer currently serving. He provides an email from AFCENT stating all of the Afghanistan organizations had been deactivated.

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

AIR FORCE EVALUATION

AFPC/DP3SP recommends denial. The documentation for possible administrative relief for upgrade of the MSM to the BSM is unable to be verified. On 12 Apr 22, the AFBCMR provided the applicant guidance to request his deployed chain submit an amended decoration. There is no indication the applicant accomplished this. It was also suggested the applicant appeal to the authority that downgraded his original submission.

In accordance with DAFMAN 36-2806, *Military Awards: Criteria and Procedures*, the BSM is awarded to any person who has distinguished themselves by heroism (valor), meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States, engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force or 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. Effective 7 Jan 16, meritorious service that ended on or after 7 Jan 16, the BSM may only be awarded if during the period of the decoration, the nominee was exposed to hostile action. Per DAFMAN 36-2806, a one-time request for reconsideration may be submitted through the same official channels as the original recommendation to the current approval authority (in that chain of command).

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 23 Feb 23 for comment (Exhibit D) but has received no response.

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/DP3SP and finds a preponderance of the evidence does not substantiate the applicant’s contentions. The Board notes the applicant provides an AF Form 3394 and a BSM citation; however, the AF Form 3994 is not complete and required signatures are absent. The applicant also contends the recommendation for award of the BSM was improperly denied outside of the AFCENT chain of command in violation of the AFCENT Decoration Processing Guide; however, there is no evidence to indicate this to be the case. Therefore, the Board recommends against correcting the applicant’s records.
4. The applicant has not shown a personal appearance, with or without counsel, would materially add to the Board’s understanding of the issues involved.

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-2022-00893 in Executive Session on 21 Sep 23:

- Work-Product** Panel Chair
- Work-Product** Panel Member
- Work-Product** Panel Member

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

- Exhibit A: Application, DD Form 149, w/atchs, dated 22 Mar 22.
- Exhibit B: Documentary evidence, including relevant excerpts from official records.
- Exhibit C: Advisory Opinion, AFPC/DP3SP, dated 22 Feb 23.
- Exhibit D: Notification of Advisory, SAF/MRBC to Applicant, dated 23 Feb 23.

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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.

10/2/2023

Work-Product

Board Operations Manager, AFBCMR

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