

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS**

Application for Correction of
the Coast Guard Record of:

BCMR Docket No. 2024-173


E7 (retired)

FINAL DECISION

This proceeding was conducted according to the provisions of 10 U.S.C. § 1552. The Chair docketed the case after receiving the completed application on July 12, 2022, and assigned it to an attorney to prepare the decision for the Board pursuant to 33 C.F.R. § 52.61(c).

This final decision dated July 10, 2025, is approved and signed by the three duly appointed members who were designated to serve as the Board in this case.

APPLICANT'S REQUEST AND ALLEGATIONS

The applicant is a retired E7 who left active-duty service on June 30, 1977, after serving in the US Coast Guard for just over twenty (20) years according to the applicant's DD214. The applicant asserts he is entitled to the following awards and requests these be added to his DD214: the Coast Guard Sea Service Medal with three (3) bronze stars, the Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon with one bronze (1) star, and the Coast Guard Overseas Service Medal with one (1) bronze star to his DD214.

SUMMARY OF THE RECORD

In 2020, the applicant realized the missing awards within his DD214 and sought to have these awards added. The applicant provided letters of support from congressional representatives as well as Coast Guard policy highlighting that he qualifies to receive these awards. The applicant also submitted an undated and unsigned memo from the Coast Guard in response to congressional inquiry C1214768 claiming after a review of his record he was determined to be eligible for the awards requested.

VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

On May 12, 2025, a Judge Advocate (JA) for the Coast Guard submitted an advisory opinion in which he recommended that the Board grant partial relief in this case and adopted the findings and analysis prepared by the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center (PSC).

The JA argues that the applicant's request is untimely. The military record of the applicant is over fifty (50) years old and can make gathering a clear picture challenging. From what can be verified the JA identifies some award eligibility for the applicant.

The JA explains that per criteria of the sea service ribbon, the applicant should be eligible for the initial ribbon after one (1) year of sea service, and one (1) bronze star for each additional three (3) years of completed service.¹ The applicant appears to have served around five (5) years of sea service making him eligible for the sea service ribbon with one (1) bronze star.

The JA asserts the applicant appears to have serviced at least twelve (12) months of restricted duty service at a listed duty station within the Enclosure (18) of COMDTINST M1650.25E making the applicant eligible for the Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon. However, Coast Guard policy restricts members from receiving the Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon for the same period as the Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon.² For this reason the applicants request for the Overseas Ribbon should be denied.

APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO THE VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

On May 28, 2025, the Chair sent the applicant a copy of the Coast Guard's views and invited him to respond within thirty (30) days. The applicant's response was received on June 17, 2025.

The applicant disagrees with the JA's reading of the Coast Guard Medals and Awards manual. For the Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon, the applicant asserts that the JA overlooked the part that read receiving a similar award from a different branch of service are ineligible to receive also the Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon. The applicant asserts he never served in another branch and thus the JA has read this eligibility requirement in error.

Additionally, the applicant claims to have served a cumulative nine (9) years, six (6) months, and twelve (12) days of seas service and overseas service. The applicant feels this qualifies him for the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon with three (3) 3/16-inch bronze stars, not only one (1) 3/16-inch bronze star as the JA recommends.

The applicant requests that Item 22c on his DD214 be corrected because sea service time is cumulative. The applicant states the total time should read eleven (11) years, six (6) months, and twelve (12) days.

The applicant disagrees with the JA's interpretation of the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon because sea time if review in a cumulative manner. The applicant states he served nine (9) years, six (6) months, and twelve (12) days of cumulative sea time, which awards him three (3) 3/16-inch bronze stars along with the Sea Service Ribbon. The applicant concurs with the JA's assessment of the Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon award.

¹ Art. 5.A.19 of Coast Guard Military Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25(series).

² Art. 5.A.21.c of Coast Guard Military Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25(series).

The applicant concludes by reasserting his request to correct his DD214 and add service Medals and Ribbons earned while on active duty: DD 214 should read: Record of service (f) Foreign and/or sea service cumulative 11 years, 6 months, 12 days, less 2 years for restricted duty:

1. Coast Guard Sea Service Medal with 3 bronze Stars: (9 years 6 months, 12 days) cumulative.

2. Coast Guard Restricted Duty with 1 Bronze Star, Marcus Island, Japan January 1970 to January 1971, Kargabaran, Turkey June 1973 to June 1974. Retroactively.

3. Coast Guard Overseas Service Medal with 1 Bronze Star. Marcus Island, Japan, January 1970 to January 1971, Kargabaran, Turkey June 1973 to June 1974. Retroactively.

APPLICABLE LAW AND POLICY

1. 33 C.F.R. § 52.22. An application for correction of a record must be filed within three years after the Applicant discovered or reasonably should have discovered the alleged error or injustice.

2. Coast Guard Military Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25(series)

19. Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon.

- a. Eligibility Requirements. Awarded to active and inactive duty members of the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve or non-Coast Guard personnel who, under temporary or permanent assignment, satisfactorily complete a minimum of 12 months cumulative sea duty (first award).
- c. Subsequent Awards. A 3/16-inch bronze star is authorized for each additional three year period of eligible sea duty. A 3/16-inch silver star denotes the sixth award.

20. Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon.

- a. Eligibility Requirements. Awarded to Coast Guard personnel who have completed a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) tour of duty at a shore unit listed in Enclosure (18).
- c. Subsequent Awards. A 3/16-inch bronze star is authorized for subsequent awards of the Restricted Duty Ribbon. A 3/16-inch silver star denotes the sixth award.

Section 21. Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon.

(2) Active duty members of the Coast Guard on a permanent assignment and who successfully complete a tour of duty of at least 12 months at an overseas shore based duty station or on-board a Cutter permanently assigned to an overseas area.

c. Personnel who receive or are eligible to receive the Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon or an award for similar service from another branch of the Armed Forces are not eligible to receive the Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon for the same period. No waivers or exceptions are authorized.

e. Subsequent awards of the Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon are authorized for completion of additional tours of duty meeting the requirements above. A 3/16-inch bronze star is authorized for each additional eligible period of duty. A 3/16-inch silver star denotes a sixth award.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Board makes the following findings and conclusions on the basis of the applicant's submissions, the Coast Guard's submission, and applicable law:

1. The Board has jurisdiction concerning this matter pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1552.
2. The Board may excuse the untimeliness of an application if it is in the interest of justice to do so.³ In *Allen v. Card*, 799 F. Supp. 158 (D.D.C. 1992), the court stated that the Board should not deny an application for untimeliness without “analyz[ing] both the reasons for the delay and the potential merits of the claim based on a cursory review”⁴ to determine whether the interest of justice supports a waiver of the statute of limitations. The court noted that “the longer the delay has been and the weaker the reasons are for the delay, the more compelling the merits would need to be to justify a full review.”
3. Regarding the delay in applying to the Board, the applicant explained that he did not discover the missing awards on his DD214 until 2020. Though this is not a reasonable delay as the applicant could have discovered the error sooner, there is in fact error within his record. For this reason, the Board will waive timeliness and provide a full review.
4. The applicant responded to the JA's recommendation with a counter reading to the manual for the Restricted Duty ribbon and Overseas Service ribbon. The applicant explained the JA missed the part of the restriction to receiving both awards was limited if awarded while serving in another service. However, the JA was not concerned with the service restriction but instead the timeframe. The policy restrictions do not permit allowing the Coast Guard Restricted Duty ribbon and the Overseas Service ribbon to be awarded for the *same period* of service. The goal of the

³ 10 U.S.C. § 1552(b).

⁴ *Allen v. Card*, 799 F. Supp. 158, 164 (D.D.C. 1992).

policy is likely to avoid double dipping awards for one service performed. The applicant served overseas at a restricted duty station from 1973 to 1974 and is attempting to receive both awards for the same service period. The Coast Guard does not permit this for these awards specifically, as outlined in the awards manual. Further, the applicant seeks a bronze star to account presumably for each year he served at the Restricted Duty station, however this is not how the award is awarded. The successful completion of a *tour of duty*, not measured by years, is what the manual requires. The applicant completed one tour of duty at a restricted unit and therefore would be eligible for the Restricted Duty ribbon, but not any additional stars.

5. Additionally, the applicant misinterprets the policy for the number of bronze 3/16-inch stars permitted. The policy awards a Sea Service ribbon for one (1) year (can be achieved cumulatively) and one (1) 3/16-inch bronze star for each three (3) years of sea service. The applicant states he served nine (9) years. The JA could only account for five (5) years of sea service, which led to the recommendation of the Sea Service ribbon with one (1) bronze 3/16-inch star. After review of the record, the Board concurs with the JA of an established documented five (5) years of sea time. The applicant may have served additional years upon additional cutters, however given the prejudice of time the applicant waited to bring this request (over 50 years) the documentation may have been lost. The documentation available confirms five (5) years of sea time to grant the applicant a Sea Service Ribbon with one (1) bronze 3/16-inch star.

6. The applicant requests that block 22c, Foreign and/or Sea time, should be corrected to read 11 years, 6 months, and 12 days. This request cannot be verified with the current records available and thus the Coast Guard will maintain its presumption of regularity.⁵ The DD214 will not be amended at block 22c.

7. The Board, in full review of the facts, statements, and files available, finds the applicant is owed partial relief to his request. The applicant should be awarded a Sea Service ribbon with one (1) bronze 3/16-inch stars for his time at sea. The applicant should be awarded the Coast Guard Restricted Duty ribbon for his time served in Japan at a LORSTA listed on the approved list of eligible units for this award. No other awards requested by the applicant meet the policy requirements for eligibility and should be denied.

[ORDER AND SIGNATURES ON NEXT PAGE]

⁵ 33 C.F.R. § 52.24 (b) Presumption of Regularity: “The Board begins its consideration of each case presuming administrative regularity on the part of the Coast Guard and other Government officials. The Applicant has the burden of proving the existence of an error or injustice by the preponderance of the evidence.”

ORDER

The application of former E7 [REDACTED], USCG, for additional awards is granted partial relief. The Coast Guard will award the applicant his earned Sea Service ribbon with one (1) bronze star and his earned Restricted Duty Ribbon.

July 10, 2025

