


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

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Application for the Correction of  
the Coast Guard Record of:

**BCMR Docket No. 2024-187**

  
AT2 (former)

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**FINAL DECISION**

This proceeding was conducted according to the provisions of 10 U.S.C. § 1552 and 14 U.S.C. § 2507. The Chair docketed the case after receiving the applicant's completed application on September 10, 2024 and this decision of the Board was prepared pursuant to 33 C.F.R. § 52.61(c).

This final decision, dated June 26, 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, a former aviation technician, second class (AT2) who was honorably discharged from the Coast Guard on November 8, 1984, asked the Board to correct his DD 214<sup>1</sup> to show that he received the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon and the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon. He argued that he is eligible to receive the Sea Service Ribbon because he completed exactly one year of sea service aboard the Coast Guard Cutter (CGC) *Sassafras* during his four-year enlistment. He further argued that he is eligible for "E" Ribbon because he served aboard the *Sassafras* during the period for which it received the ribbon.

The applicant did not state when he discovered the alleged errors in his record.

**SUMMARY OF THE RECORD**

The applicant served on active duty in the Coast Guard from June 9, 1980 to November 8, 1984, and his DD 214 shows that during his enlistment he had completed one year of foreign

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<sup>1</sup> The DD Form 214 provides the member and the service with a concise record of a period of service with the Armed Forces at the time of the member's separation, discharge or change in military status (reserve/active duty). In addition, the form is an authoritative source of information for both governmental agencies and the Armed Forces for purposes of employment, benefit and reenlistment eligibility, respectively. The DD Form 214 is issued to members who change their military status among active duty, reserve, or retired components or are separated/discharged from the Coast Guard to a civilian status. COMDTINST M1900.4D.

and/or sea service aboard the CGC Sassafras from August 10, 1980 to August 10, 1981. Block 13 of his DD 214 shows that he received the following medals, badges, commendations, citations, and campaign ribbons:

Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation with ‘O’ Device  
Rifle Marksmanship Ribbon  
Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal

### **APPLICABLE LAW AND REGULATIONS**

COMDTINST M1900.4D contains the Commandant’s instructions for completing the DD 214, and Chapter 1.D.2 provides that it must be accurate as of the date of separation. Chapter 1.E of the instruction states that the DD 214 should show “all decorations, medals, badges, commendations, citations, and campaign ribbons awarded or authorized for all periods of service.”

Chapter 5.A.19 of the Coast Guard Medals and Awards Manual states that the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon is 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. For the purposes of the award, sea duty is defined as duty performed aboard any commissioned Coast Guard cutter 65 feet or more in length. The CGC Sassafras is a 180’ buoy tender.

Chapter 3.B.8 of the Awards Manual states that the Coast Guard “E” Ribbon may be awarded by area commanders to Coast Guard cutter personnel earning the overall operational readiness “E” award during Tailored Annual Cutter Training (TACT). General eligibility requirements are as follows:

- a. All personnel serving aboard their unit for more than 50 percent of the period during which it conducted TACT are eligible for the “E” Ribbon. Personnel aboard less than 50 percent of the period are not eligible, unless specifically recommended by the commanding officer.
- b. Commanding officers or officers-in-charge may authorize the “E” Ribbon to any member of their command who previously served aboard the units listed in enclosure (10) to this Manual upon evidence of their assignment to and presence at that unit during the training period.
- c. With the exception of the units listed in enclosure (10), no permanent record of TACT results exists. In order to recognize all ships’ crews who have previously met the intent of this policy, individual commands are encouraged to submit documentation verifying eligibility to CG PSC-PSD-ma.

Enclosure (10) of the Awards manual shows that the CGC Sassafras earned the Coast Guard “E” ribbon for the training period September 8-19, 1980 in Little Creek, Virginia.

### **VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD**

On April 9, 2025, a judge advocate (JA) of the Coast Guard submitted an advisory opinion in which he recommended that the Board grant partial relief in this case. In doing so, he adopted the findings and analysis provided in a memorandum prepared by the Personnel Service Center (PSC).

PSC recommended that the applicant's record be corrected to show that he received the Sea Service Ribbon because his record shows he was attached to the CGC Sassafras from August 10, 1980 to August 10, 1981 and thus meets the one-year requirement to earn the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon.

PSC recommended that the applicant's request for the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon be denied because although he was on the CGC Sassafras for all but two days of the cutter's eligibility period for the ribbon, he provided no evidence that he was recommended for the award by his commanding officer. PSC also noted that it is likely the applicant was not nominated because he reported to the cutter after TACT commenced and was a brand-new shipmate still undergoing check-in and indoctrination procedures aboard. PSC argued that this is consistent with current practice in today's Coast Guard.

#### **APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO THE VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD**

On April 24, 2025 the BCMR sent the applicant a copy of the Coast Guard's views and invited him to respond within 30 days. He responded on April 30, 2025 and argued that the Coast Guard's recommendation incorrectly stated that he was attached to the CGC Sassafras two days after the training period began. He provided a copy of a document from his record showing that the training period was September 9, 1980 through September 19, 1980, and he stated that he reported to the cutter on August 11, 1980, almost one month prior to the training. The applicant further stated that he made the trip from Governors Island to Little Creek for the training on board the Sassafras and completed all of the training to the standards which earned the crew the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon.

#### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

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

1. The Board has jurisdiction concerning this matter pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1552. An application to the Board must be filed within three years after the applicant discovers the alleged error or injustice.<sup>2</sup> The applicant was discharged from the Coast Guard on November 8, 1984 and did not submit his application to the Board until June 29, 2021. Moreover, he did not explain the delay in discovering the error nor did he argue why the Board should waive the statute of limitations and consider his request.

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<sup>2</sup> 10 U.S.C. § 1552(b) and 33 C.F.R. § 52.22.

3. The preponderance of the evidence shows that his application is untimely because nothing prevented the applicant from discovering the alleged errors shortly after his discharge. However, the Coast Guard and the Board have identified errors in his record that should be corrected, so the Board will waive the statute of limitations.

4. The applicant asked that his record be corrected to show that he received two ribbons for his sea service. When considering allegations of error and injustice, the Board begins its analysis by presuming that the disputed information in the applicant's military record is correct as it appears in his record, and the applicant bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that the disputed information is erroneous or unjust.<sup>3</sup> Absent evidence to the contrary, the Board presumes that Coast Guard officials and other Government employees have carried out their duties "correctly, lawfully, and in good faith."<sup>4</sup>

5. The Board finds that the applicant's record should be corrected to show that he received the Sea Service Medal, because he served aboard the CGC *Sassafras* for one year. Chapter 5.A.19 of the Awards Manual states that the Sea Service Ribbon is awarded to active duty members of the Coast Guard who satisfactorily complete a minimum of 12 months cumulative sea duty. For the purposes of the award, sea duty is defined as duty performed aboard any commissioned Coast Guard cutter 65 feet or more in length. The CGC *Sassafras* is a 180' buoy tender.

6. The Board finds that the applicant is eligible to receive the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon. The record shows that he served aboard the CGC *Sassafras* from August 10, 1980 to August 10, 1981, and Enclosure (10) of the Awards manual shows that the CGC *Sassafras* earned the "E" ribbon for the training period September 8-19, 1980 in Little Creek, Virginia. Chapter 3.B.8 of the awards manual states that all personnel serving aboard their unit for more than 50 percent of the period during which it conducted TACT are eligible for the "E" Ribbon.

7. The Coast Guard argued that the applicant is ineligible for the "E" Ribbon because there is nothing in his record to show that his commanding officer recommended him for the ribbon, and opined that he was not recommended because he had only recently arrived on board. The Board disagrees. The Board notes that the awards manual does not require the commanding officer recommend each member of the crew for the ribbon – the manual simply states that the ribbon may be awarded to all personnel serving aboard their unit for more than 50 percent of the period during which it conducted TACT. The record clearly shows that the applicant was aboard the CGC *Sassafras* from August 10, 1980 to August 10, 1981, and was aboard during the TACT from September 8-19, 1980.

8. The applicant has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that his DD 214 does not list all of the awards he is eligible to receive. Accordingly, the Board should order the Coast Guard to correct his record to show that he received the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon and the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon.

**(ORDER AND SIGNATURES ON NEXT PAGE)**

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<sup>3</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 52.24(b).

<sup>4</sup> *Arens v. United States*, 969 F.2d 1034, 1037 (Fed. Cir. 1992); *Sanders v. United States*, 594 F.2d 804, 813 (Ct. Cl. 1979).

**ORDER**

The application of former AT2 [REDACTED], USCG, for correction of his military record is granted. The Coast Guard shall correct his record to show that that he received the Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon and the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon for his service aboard the CGC *Sassafras*.

June 26, 2025

