


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

Application for Correction of
the Coast Guard Record of:

BCMR Docket No. 2025-042


CWO-4 (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 January 15, 2025, 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 September 24, 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 Chief Warrant Officer (W4) in the Coast Guard Reserve. The applicant requests to add the Combat Valor "V" device to a Bronze Star Medal awarded to him in 2007. The applicant asserts he has repeatedly attempted to add the "V" device to his award. He feels the award is authorized for similar circumstances other than combat.

SUMMARY OF THE RECORD

In 2007, the applicant served on active-duty orders as the Special Assistant to the Department of Homeland Security detachment in Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. There were two different noted moments of bravery exhibited by the applicant in the protection of others, which led to the award of the Bronze Star Medal. The applicant selflessly left a protected position to assist an exposed coworker to safety and during a separate rocket attack incident the applicant received shrapnel wounds while shielding another life with his own body. The applicant's Bronze Star Medal award write-up describes the applicant acting heroically and exhibiting valor in his attempt to keep others safe. The applicant demonstrated courage and devotion duty during this deployment.

In December of 2020, the applicant discovered that the "V" device is authorized for combat valor or heroism from the same decoration being awarded. He has attempted to request this upgrade to his award but has been unsuccessful.

VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

On May 8, 2025, a Judge Advocate (JA) for the Coast Guard submitted an advisory opinion in which he recommended that the Board denying 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 award in question for the applicant is over fifteen (15) years old. From what can be verified, the JA rejects the applicant's reasoning that a "V" device can be added to the applicant's award for other than combat. The JA explains that per criteria of the "V" device, the applicant is not eligible. The language within the applicant's award reads, "Meritorious Achievement" making it consistent with the criteria listed in 9.b(2) for Meritorious Achievement or Service, but not for Heroic Achievement or Service in 9.b(1). Additionally, the valor device must be approved by the U.S. Coast Guard Military Board of Awards for concurrence.¹

The JA recommends denying relief.

APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO THE VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

On May 27, 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 has not responded as of the date of this decision.

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)

Chapter 9.b The Bronze Star Medal may only be awarded to members of the Armed Forces who are in receipt of Imminent Danger Pay at the time of the actions or service for which they are being recognized. To merit this award, the acts or services must be performed in a manner significantly above that normally expected, and sufficient to distinguish the individual above those performing similar acts or services. The award may be authorized as follows:

- (1) Heroic Achievement or Service. A single act of heroism worthy of special recognition, although not to the degree required for the Silver Star Medal; such award does not preclude receipt of an additional award for a specific act within that period, if warranted.

¹ Chapter 1.C.9 of Military Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25E

- (2) Meritorious Achievement or Service in Connection with Combat Operations. A single achievement or a period of service worthy of special recognition, although not to the degree required for the Legion of Merit. An award for meritorious service may cover an extended period of time; such award does not preclude receipt of an additional award for a specific act within that period, if warranted.

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.² The applicant notes his efforts in attempting to upgrade his award through other channels, which have failed to be successful. The board in the pursuit of justice will review the applicant's request in full.
3. The JA cites to the appropriate Awards Manual to review the terminology difference in what qualifies for the "V" device to be awarded within the Bronze Star. The Board does not find clearly that the applicant's award language would or would not qualify him for a "V" device. The command did not authorize the "V" device alongside the Bronze Star at the time of the award. Therefore, the Board defers to the Coast Guard Military Board of Awards for the review of the applicant's request. The provided documentation and manuals do not support a clear approval of the "V" device for the Board to determine error or injustice for not receiving this award.
4. While the actions of the applicant were certainly brave, it is not within the power of this Board to determine eligibility of additional awards not supported by the Coast Guard Awards Manual or conferred by command. The applicant provides no evidence to support that his chain of command ever recommended him for award of the "V" device, or that the approval authority intended to confer such an award. This Board's role is not to substitute its judgment for that of the command that recommended and approved an award, an act that in this case was purely discretionary. The command recommended and approved the appropriate award, and the Coast Guard will maintain its presumption of regularity.³
5. The Board, in full review of the facts, statements, and files available, finds the applicant's request should be denied.

² 10 U.S.C. § 1552(b).

³ 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 retired CWO-4 [REDACTED], USCG Reserve, for authorization to wear the “V” device with his Bronze Star Medal is denied.

September 24, 2025

