

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

**Application for Correction of
The Coast Guard Record of:**

BCMR Docket No. 2025-071


SN/E-3 (Former)

FINAL DECISION

This proceeding was conducted according to the provisions of 10 U.S.C. §1552 and 14 U.S.C. §2507. The Chair, after receiving the completed application, docketed the case on March 13, 2025 and assigned it to a staff attorney to prepare the decision in accordance with 33 C.F.R. § 52.61(c).

This final decision, dated November 6, 2025, is approved and signed by the three (3) duly appointed members who were designated to serve as the Board in this case.

APPLICANT'S REQUEST AND ALLEGATIONS

Applicant requests correction to his DD Form 214. Specifically, he asserts that he was awarded a National Defense Ribbon, having served during an eligible time of war, but that the award was not reflected on his DD 214.

In support of his request, Applicant submitted his DD 214 and a DD 149 on which he states that he “served during war time and received veterans benefits accordingly.” Applicant entered service on September 28, 1974. He states that his “DD-214 shows [he] served during the Vietnam War era[,]” and then includes the following:

Veterans who served outside the Republic of Vietnam (August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975)

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A veteran's entire period of service does not need to have been entirely within a designated period of war. Even if only part of the veterans' service occurred during an official [statement cuts off].

Applicant adds that he recently retired and "noticed the error".

SUMMARY OF THE RECORD

Applicant served in the Coast Guard from September 28, 1974, until he was honorably discharged on September 27, 1978. He does not claim, and Coast Guard records available for the Board's review did not indicate, any other military service outside of this period of active duty in the Coast Guard.

VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

On , the Judge Advocate General of the Coast Guard submitted an advisory opinion recommending the Board deny relief in accordance with a memorandum submitted by the Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center (CG PSC). The PSC asserts that eligibility for the National Defense Service Medal (NDSM) ended on August 14, 1974, and they cite to the Coast Guard Military Medals and Awards Manual that indicates that a subsequent NDSM award period did not resume until August 2, 1990. Therefore, the applicant did not serve during a period of eligibility for the NDSM.

APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO THE VIEWS OF THE COAST GUARD

On July 23, 2025, the Chair of the BCMR sent the Coast Guard's Opinion to the Applicant and invited a response within thirty days. No response was received.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

The Coast Guard's Manual for Military Medals and Awards (COMDTINST M1650.25E (2016), Ch. 5.A.4), provides, in pertinent part:

4. National Defense Service Medal (NDSM).

a. Eligibility Requirements. Awarded to personnel under the following conditions (See Table 1-1 for authorized awarding authority):

(1) Honorable active service as a member of the Armed Forces for any period (inclusive) from 27 June 1950 to 28 July 1954; from 1 January 1961 to 14 August 1974; from 2 August 1990 to 30 November 1995; or from 12 September 2001 to a date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense. Only one award of the National Defense Service Medal may be authorized for each period of eligibility.

(2) Any member of the Coast Guard Reserve who, after 31 December 1960, becomes eligible for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal or the Vietnam Service Medal¹ must be

¹ The Vietnam Service medal was awarded to members who served in Vietnam, or the contiguous waters and airspace, between July 4, 1965, and March 28, 1973.

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considered to be performing active service for the purpose of eligibility for the National Defense Service Medal.

(3) Members of the Selected Reserve in good standing who served for any period between 2 August 1990 and 30 November 1995, or from 12 September 2001 to a date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense will be eligible for the National Defense Service Medal. Any member of the Coast Guard Reserve, who, between 2 August 1990 and 30 November 1995, became eligible for the Southwest Asia Service Medal, will also be eligible for the award of the National Defense Service Medal.

(4) Cadets attending the Coast Guard Academy during the above periods are eligible for this medal. Public Health Service members and the Chaplain Corps are also eligible.

(5) For purposes of this award, the following individuals are NOT eligible unless specifically included in the paragraphs above:

(a) Reserve personnel on short tours of active duty to fulfill training obligations under an inactive duty training program;

(b) Any person on temporary active duty to serve on boards, courts, commissions, and like organizations;

(c) Any person on active duty for the sole purpose of undergoing a physical examination; or

(d) Any person on active duty for purposes other than for extended active duty.

b. Subsequent Awards. A 3/16-inch bronze star is authorized for subsequent awards of the GCM. A 3/16-inch silver star denotes the sixth award.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

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

1. The Board has jurisdiction concerning this matter pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1552. The applicant has exhausted available administrative remedies, as required by 33 C.F.R. § 52.13(b), because there is no other currently available forum or procedure provided by the Coast Guard for correcting the alleged error or injustice that the applicant has not already pursued.

2. An application is untimely if not submitted to the Board within three years after the applicant discovered the alleged error or injustice underlying the application, but the Board may excuse untimeliness if it is in the interests of justice to do so.² The applicant separated from this period of active Coast Guard duty in 1978 and did not apply to the Board until 2024. He claims that he hadn't noticed the allegedly missing award until he

² 10 U.S.C. § 1552(b); 33 C.F.R. § 52.22.

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started “going through [his] records” when he retired. Although the Board finds it reasonable that the applicant may not have fully appreciated or understood the potential error immediately upon his discharge, a simple failure to “notice[]” an omission from a document that had been in the applicant’s possession for more than forty years is not sufficient to establish a more recent date of discovery. His application is therefore untimely.

3. The Board may excuse the untimeliness of an application if it is in the interest of justice to do so. In *Allen v. Card*, 799 F. Supp. 158 (D.D.C. 1992), the court stated that in determining whether the interest of justice supports a waiver of the limitations period, the Board should “analyze both the reasons for the delay and the potential merits of the claim based on a cursory review.” 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.”

4. The Board first turns to the reasons for delay. The record presented by the applicant shows that he received a DD 214 upon his 1978 discharge that he claims did not properly reflect award of the “National Defense Ribbon.” There may be any number of reasons why the applicant failed to appreciate or understand the omission from his DD 214. However, he asserts only that he didn’t notice the omission until he was reviewing his records more than forty years later. Simply not checking his records for more than forty years, as he claims, is not strong justification for delay.

5. The Board next turns to the potential merits of this claim. The Military Medals and Awards Manual is clear that the NDSM was awarded for one period of service between 1954 and 1990. This period generally corresponded with the Vietnam conflict and was from January 1, 1961 through August 14, 1974. Any “honorable active service” during that time period would qualify the applicant for the NDSM. The applicant does not assert that he performed any active duty service before September 28, 1974 or after September 27, 1978, and the record supports the applicant’s assertions. As the applicant clearly did not perform active military duty during any authorized period of award for the NDSM, he is not eligible for the award.

6. Upon cursory review, the Board finds that the applicant’s reasons for delay are not persuasive and that his claim is without merit. As a result, the Board will not excuse the applicant’s untimeliness. His request for relief is denied.

[ORDER AND SIGNATURE ON NEXT PAGE]

ORDER

The application of former E-3, [REDACTED], USCG, for correction of his military record, is denied.

November 6, 2025

