



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20350

SECNAVINST 1650.32
NDBDM:CEC
23 June 1969

SECNAV INSTRUCTION 1650.32

From: Secretary of the Navy
To: Distribution List
Subj: Adjudication of Extraordinary Heroism
Ref: (a) Section 6330, Title 10, U. S. Code
Encl: (1) Criteria for adjudication of extraordinary heroism

1. Purpose. To establish revised procedures for the adjudication of extraordinary heroism and to prescribe policy guidance and pertinent administrative procedures.

2. Cancellation. Secretary of the Navy's letter of 29 September 1959 (NOTAL), same subject, is superseded and cancelled.

3. Authority. 10 U.S.C. 6330 provides that each enlisted member of the Regular Navy or Regular Marine Corps who is transferred to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve under this section and who has been credited by the Secretary of the Navy with extraordinary heroism in line of duty, is entitled to an increase of 10 percent in his retainer pay. Reference (a) further states that the determination of extraordinary heroism by the Secretary of the Navy is final and conclusive for all purposes.

4. Discussion

a. An affirmative determination that extraordinary heroism was involved will now be made by the Secretary of the Navy at the time the award is processed. Awards approved by delegated authorities will contain a recommendation as to the eligibility of the individual for the benefits of the additional retainer pay. The Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals (NDBDM) will review all awards and, in those instances in which extraordinary heroism is considered justified, will forward an affirmative recommendation to the Secretary of the Navy. If approved by the Secretary

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of the Navy, the recipient will be advised by the Chief of Naval Operations or the Commandant of the Marine Corps as appropriate. The NDBDM will forward those cases in which extraordinary heroism is not considered justified to Chief of Naval Operations or Commandant of the Marine Corps for retention in the individual's record. If requested by the individual at the time of his transfer to the Fleet or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve, the NDBDM will again review his awards correspondence.

b. The adjudication of extraordinary heroism for decorations awarded prior to implementation of this directive will be made when the serviceman applies for transfer to the Fleet or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve.

5. Action. Upon receipt the following procedures are effective for the determination of extraordinary heroism benefits:

a. Commanders possessing delegated award authority - Review all heroic awards approved and provide recommendation as to whether or not the individual qualifies for extraordinary heroism within the criteria contained in enclosure (1).

b. Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps -

(1) When an individual applies for transfer to the Fleet or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve, forward correspondence concerning any act of heroism, not previously adjudicated, to the NDBDM. Every attempt should be made to provide all supporting documents including copy of award citation, award recommendation, witnesses statements and other documentation as appropriate.

(2) At the time of application for transfer, advise the applicant that his awards correspondence for heroism will be reviewed, although previously adjudicated, if he so requests, and if requested forward the pertinent correspondence to the NDBDM.

(3) Provide notification to personnel whose acts of heroism have been affirmatively determined by the Secretary of the Navy as qualifying for the additional retainer pay.

CRITERIA FOR ADJUDICATION OF EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM

1. The following guidelines will be used in considering cases of extraordinary heroism:

a. An individual whose action in line of duty is determined to have been such as to entitle him to the benefits of extraordinary heroism, is allowed 10% additional pay upon his transfer to the U. S. Navy Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve. The basic law does not stipulate any qualifications for extraordinary heroism. The determination is thus left entirely within the prerogatives of the Secretary of the Navy.

b. Before an individual can be considered at all for the benefits of extraordinary heroism he must have been commended for a specific act (or acts) and this commendation must be a matter of record. The commendation need not necessarily be in connection with the award of a medal or ribbon and need not be made by an officer more senior than the individual's commanding officer, provided that the act has been properly reported by a person authorized to do so.

c. The cases of those individuals who have fulfilled the requirements set forth in paragraph b, above, are eligible for consideration. In making its recommendation to the Secretary of the Navy, for or against the awarding of the benefits of extraordinary heroism in any particular case, the NDBDM and where appropriate, the delegated authority, will examine the record to determine which of the following questions can be answered affirmatively, keeping in mind that the absence of an affirmative answer is not necessarily disqualifying. When the wording of the citation or commendation is not sufficiently descriptive by itself to support either a recommendation for or against extraordinary heroism, reference is made to other official reports such as logs, action reports and war diaries.

(1) Was the act or acts recognized by the award of a medal? Although it is legal and possible to find extraordinary heroism for acts not recognized by the award of a medal, this is the exception rather than the rule. As a rule, acts deserving to be classified as extraordinarily heroic would have been recognized by the award of a medal. The absence of such an award is not disqualifying.

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(2) Was the act extraordinary, in fact? Individuals are singled out when they are given an award of any kind for heroism. To qualify, then, for extraordinary heroism, it would follow that the individual must have distinguished himself even above those who have already won distinction for heroism.

(3) Did the individual perform a worthwhile act or one that he would have had reason to believe was worthwhile at the time? For example, needless and foolish risking of life or tempting of fate, would not be considered worthwhile.

(4) Was the act performed voluntarily? This requirement should not be applied so strictly that a person would be excluded from consideration who in carrying out his orders does more on his own volition than could ordinarily be expected of him under the circumstances.

(5) Did the individual choose not to seek cover or did he leave a place of comparative safety to perform the act without direct orders or without being forced into the more dangerous situation by circumstances over which he had no control?

(6) Had the individual not performed the act that he did perform, would there be no cause for censure or blame? A person who failed to perform the duties that are expected of one of his rank and experience and for which he had been trained might be considered a candidate for censure rather than praise.

(7) Is all doubt removed that the act performed by the individual may have been motivated by a desire for self-preservation alone?

d. In summary, the delegated authority and the NDBDM, in recommending that an individual be accorded the benefits of extraordinary heroism, should compare his act (or acts) with other acts of heroism and believe that it stands out well above ordinary acts of heroism.

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c. Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals. Research and evaluate each case received, including all awards approved by delegated authority, to determine if the individual concerned qualifies within the criteria contained in enclosure (1) and forward its recommendation to the Secretary of the Navy.



John W. Warner
Under Secretary of the Navy

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