



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

15 April 97

**MEMORANDUM FOR: LEAD AGENTS  
THROUGH SURGEONS GENERAL**

**SUBJECT: Detailed Policy Guidance for Joint Awards**

In view of HA Policy 97-0022 that granted Lead Agents the authority to approve specific Joint Awards, and the recent revision to DoD 1348.33-M, Manual of Military Decorations and Awards, the attached is provided. This document replaces HA Policy 95-014 of September 26, 1995, Joint Awards for Lead Agent Personnel.

[Current policies and procedures for processing joint awards](#) are at Attachment A. Additional information and examples are contained in the HA Joint Awards Guide (Attachment B). The point of contact for this action, Mr. Paul DiPalma, can be reached at (703) 681-8910 or DSN 761-8910 or by emailing [pdipalma@ha.osd.mil](mailto:pdipalma@ha.osd.mil).

Gary A. Christopherson  
Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

Attachments:  
As stated

**HA POLICY 97-044**

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**IMPLEMENTING GUIDANCE**

**DEFENSE AWARDS FOR LEAD AGENT PERSONNEL**

**Reference.** DoD 1348.33-M, Manual of Military Decorations and Awards, September 1996.

**A. GENERAL PROVISIONS:**

1. Authority to award the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal and Joint Service Achievement Medal (JSAM) has been delegated to Lead Agents in the grade of O-7 or higher. In the case of a Lead Agent that holds the grade of O-6, the authority to award the JSAM is delegated as long as all provisions outlined in the above manual are followed. All other Joint awards must be forwarded through the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) to the Director of Administration and Management, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for approval.

2. In order to maintain credibility of the awards program, the award given to an individual should be based on his or her level of responsibility, significance of accomplishments, and manner of performance. Performance must be above and beyond that which is expected of the nominee's grade and the established responsibility and performance level of the position. Inflated assessments of performance and contributions to DoD will result in the loss of the ability to provide distinctive recognition to that individual who truly deserve higher awards.

3. Individual service awards shall be granted to personnel who are working with but not assigned to the Lead Agent, if an award is deserved.

4. No Defense decoration shall be awarded or presented to any service member whose entire service during or after the time of the distinguished act, achievement, or service has not been honorable.

5. The number of decorations that may be awarded to a service member is not limited; however, only one decoration is awarded for the same act, achievement, or period of service. Defense decorations may not be awarded to any service member for an act, achievement, or period of service for which a service decoration has been awarded.

**B. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS:**

1. The Defense Distinguished Service Medal (DDSM) shall be awarded by the Secretary of Defense to any military officer of the United States who, while assigned to a joint staff or activity, distinguishes himself or herself by exceptionally meritorious service in a position of unique and great responsibility. It shall not be awarded to any officer, for a period of service for which a Service Distinguished Service Medal, or similar decoration, has been awarded.

2. The Defense Superior Service Medal (DSSM) shall be awarded by the Secretary of Defense to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who has rendered superior meritorious service in a position of significant responsibility while assigned to a joint activity and whose performance cannot be recognized properly by any other Defense Medal.

3. The Defense Meritorious Service Medal (DMSM) is awarded in the name of the Secretary of Defense to any active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States who, while serving in a joint activity, distinguishes himself or herself by noncombat meritorious achievement or service. The required achievement or

service, while of a lesser degree than that required for award of the DSSM, nevertheless must have been accomplished with distinction.

4. The Joint Service Commendation Medal (JSCM) is awarded in the name of the Secretary of Defense to members of the Armed Forces of the United States who, while assigned to a joint activity after January 1, 1963, distinguished themselves by meritorious achievement or service.

5. The Joint Service Achievement Medal (JSAM) is awarded in the name of the Secretary of Defense to members of the Armed Forces of the United States, below the grade of O-6, who, while assigned to a joint activity after August 3, 1983, distinguished themselves by meritorious achievement or service. The required achievement or service, while of a lesser degree than that required of the JSCM, must have been accomplished with distinction.

### C. ELIGIBILITY:

1. Members of the U.S. Armed Forces assigned to a Lead Agent for at least 12 consecutive months.

2. The following exceptions shall be considered on a case by case basis:

a. Personnel who are permanently assigned greater than 90 days and are reassigned out of the geographical area by their service. This does not include those personnel who have been assigned to a Lead Agent with less than 12 months left in the area before they are eligible to receive credit for a complete tour in that area.

b. Individual Mobilization Augmentees permanently assigned to and working for the Lead Agent for at least 12 months.

c. Reservists attached to a Lead Agent for a minimum of 90 consecutive days and the achievement is truly outstanding.

d. TDY personnel assigned to the Lead Agent for at least 90 consecutive days and the achievement is truly outstanding.

### D. PROCEDURES:

1. For each award approved by a Lead Agent, a copy of the cover memo with the Lead Agent's endorsement shall be submitted to Mr. Paul DiPalma, Health Affairs (HA).

2. For awards that must be sent to HA for approval, recommendations shall be submitted by official memorandum (original plus 3 copies) from the Lead Agent to Mr. Paul DiPalma. A Surgeon General's endorsement is no longer required. Attachment B provides guidelines for preparation of awards.

3. Each recommendation submitted to HA shall be evaluated on the merits of its written justification. Recommendations based on generalities, broad or vague terminology, superlative adjectives, or a recapitulation

of duties performed do not permit competent evaluation. The justification must be specific, factual and provide concrete examples of exactly what the person did, how well he or she did it, and what the impact or benefits were and how they significantly exceeded expected performance of duty.

4. All award recommendations submitted to HA for approval shall be reviewed by the HA awards board that shall consist of a Chairperson from HA and a representative from each Surgeon General.

5. All recommendations with a unanimous vote by the HA awards board shall be sent to the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) awards board with the results of that vote.

6. All recommendations with a split vote by the HA awards board shall be reviewed by the Principal Deputy for HA and forwarded to the WHS awards board with a recommendation.

7. All recommendations submitted to HA for approval must be received at least 90 days before the desired presentation date. If an award is to be sent to a gaining command, the address and point of contact must be included.

#### E. RESPONSIBILITIES:

##### 1. Lead Agents shall:

a. Ensure that personnel meet the eligibility requirements for awards.

b. Approve awards for which authority has been delegated.

c. Submit documentation to HA for each award they approve, in accordance with subsection D.1. above.

d. Forward recommendations to HA for awards that they do not have the authority to approve, in accordance with the instructions at attachment B.

##### 2. Surgeons General shall:

Appoint a primary and alternate representative to the HA awards review board.

##### 3. Health Affairs shall:

a. Establish an awards board to review all joint service recommendations submitted by Lead Agents.

b. Maintain accountability for all awards approved by the Lead Agents.

c. Ensure that all awards submitted for OSD approval are reviewed and forwarded to the WHS awards board in a timely manner.

d. Forward the results of the WHS awards board back to the appropriate Lead Agent.

4. Washington Headquarters Services shall:

a. Process all awards submitted by Lead Agents and return the board results or awards to HA.

b. Provide the appropriate medal with each of the awards.

5. Individual(s) shall:

Ensure that a copy of the award is placed in their personnel records.