

# Sailors, Marines Now Eligible for New Award Devices



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PERSONAL DECORATIONS AND DEVICES AFTER 7 JANUARY 2016

VALOR	MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNDER COMBAT CONDITIONS (WHILE EXPOSED TO, OR AT SIGNIFICANT RISK OF EXPOSURE TO, HOSTILE ACTION)	REMOTE BUT DIRECT IMPACT ON COMBAT OPERATIONS (NO GEOGRAPHIC RESTRICTION)	ALL OTHER MERITORIOUS SERVICE AND ACHIEVEMENT (NO GEOGRAPHIC RESTRICTION)	NON-COMBAT HEROISM (NO GEOGRAPHIC RESTRICTION)

An information graphic illustrates the changes to the letter-type devices worn on certain medals and ribbons. (U.S. Navy graphic by Jim Nierle/Released)

A policy developed more than a year ago that creates new distinctions for performance and valor awards has taken effect for the Department of the [Navy](#).

According to an all-Navy message released in late August, [Marines](#) and sailors can begin to receive awards bearing new "C" and "R" devices, indicating the award was earned under combat conditions or for remote

impact on a fight, a condition that would apply to drone operators, among others.

The policy also establishes more stringent criteria for the existing "V" device, stipulating that it applies only to awards for actions demonstrating valor above what is expected of a service member in combat.

The changes were first announced in January 2016, when then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced a Pentagon-wide review of high-level combat awards, a measure designed to ensure that troops serving since Sept. 11, 2001, had been appropriately honored.

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- [Air Force Announces Who's Eligible for New 'R' Device](#)
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Carter also approved the creation of the new devices as a way to distinguish clearly the conditions under which an award had been earned.

Development of the C device for awards earned under combat conditions enabled more selective use of the V device, giving it added weight and significance as an indicator of heroism.

"We're raising the bar," a Pentagon official told reporters at the time of the policy rollout. "What we've seen is, maybe it has been ... a little too loose in the past."

Notably, the ALNAV states, authorization of the C device does not entitle award recipients to wear the Combat Action Ribbon, which has more restrictive criteria.

The R device, meanwhile, is the product of conversations about how to recognize those who have direct impact on a fight from afar in a changing battlespace, such as unmanned aerial vehicle operators.

According to the all-Navy message, the sailors and Marines who might be eligible for this award are not just drone pilots. They also include:

- Those who conduct ship-to-shore or surface-to-surface weapon system strikes.
- Operators who remotely pilot aircraft that provide direct and real-time support that directly contributes to the success of ground forces in combat or engaged in a mission, such as a raid or hostage rescue.
- Cyberwarfare that disrupts enemy capabilities or actions.
- Surface-to-air engagement that disrupts an enemy attack or enemy surveillance of friendly forces.
- Troops exercising real-time tactical control of a raid or combat mission from a remote location not exposed to hostile action.

For awards in which certain conduct or conditions is presupposed, the rules are not changing.

Bronze Stars, for example, are not eligible for the new C device, as combat conditions are inherent in the award.

Likewise, Silver Stars, Navy Crosses and [Medal of Honor](#) awards are not eligible for the V device, as all these awards are presented for extraordinary valor or heroism.

For the Department of the Navy, processing of awards with the new devices began with the release of the ALNAV, Lt. Cmdr. Ryan De Vera, a service spokesman, told Military.com.

While the Navy will not retroactively remove V devices from any awards in keeping with the new rules, De Vera said Marines and sailors who believe they merit one of the new devices for awards earned since Jan. 7, 2016 can contact their command to initiate a review of the relevant award.

"The onus is on the sailor or the Marine to do that," he said.

Awards given before the new policy was announced will not receive any additional scrutiny.

"All previous decorations that had a V device remain valid," De Vera said. "It's important to note that they are in no way diminished or called into question by the new policy."

The [Army](#) announced in late March that it had implemented a policy for awarding the new devices; the [Air Force](#) did likewise in June.

The Navy and the Marine Corps are the last of the services within the Defense Department to roll out guidance for incorporating the new devices.

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