



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

U. S. MARINE CORPS FORCES COMMAND
1775 FORRESTAL DRIVE
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11 JUL 2014

U.S. MARINE CORPS FORCES COMMAND POLICY LETTER 3-14

From: Commander
To: Distribution List

Subj: AWARDS

1. The purpose of the military system of awards is to provide a visible way for us to recognize those who have served with distinction in combat and in an extraordinary way in garrison. In order to properly manage this process, in a fair, balanced and equitable way, the following guidance is provided for all leaders within U.S. Marine Corps Forces Command (MARFORCOM).

2. The performance of all Marines and Sailors serving with Marines is expected to be above average. That said, all leaders want to recognize extraordinary performance of those in our charge. There are many ways to do this; fitness reports, public acknowledgement, letter of appreciation, meritorious mast and Commanding General Certificate of Commendation, to name a few. That said, there should be no expectation by any Marine or Sailor that they will be recognized by a personal award simply by doing their job/meeting their billet requirements.

3. I say this because in the past decade plus, we, as an institution, seem to have developed the habit of recommending Marines and Sailors for awards who have merely done their duty satisfactorily. In many cases, the summaries of action for personal awards fail to accurately define what distinguishes the specific performance of duty. Frequently, the summaries of action are simply lists and descriptions of daily tasks associated with deployment planning, deployments and exercise participation. They lack specificity and detail regarding levels of impact, leadership and responsibility needed to justify the award. Merely working hard for a tour is not sufficient justification to warrant an award. Additionally, there has been a visible increase in the level of awards given. There seems to be a notion that because the candidate already holds one or more awards at one level, all subsequent awards must be higher.

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Consequently, we must recalibrate our thought processes on how we recognize the performance of those in our charge.

4. Therefore the following guidance is provided:

a. Leaders will carefully consider the summary of action and the recommendation of the Awards Board in each case to ensure the integrity of the system is preserved. This also applies to unit awards. When considering unit awards, the accomplishments must be weighed/measured against like or peer units for true determination of merit.

b. Routinely recommendations for awards ranging from the Commander's Certificate of Commendation to the Legion of Merit are submitted for approval or a forwarding recommendation. Numerous factors must be considered when recommending an award: The length of the period of the meritorious service and the grade (the more junior the Marine the weight given to recommending an award should be higher) of the candidate are two critical elements. In general, the longer the period of sustained superior service, the higher the award. Similarly, the awards at the higher end of the scale are normally reserved for senior enlisted and commissioned Marines and Sailors. An award for a retiring Marine or Sailor should be given greater weight in the level of the award than an end of tour award. Based on the aforementioned, the following guidelines are offered for making award recommendations:

Rank	Three-Year Tour/Retirement
Colonels	LOM
Majors and Lieutenant Colonels	MSM
WO & Co Grade Officers	NMCAM or NMCCM
SgtMaj/MGySgt/CWO5	MSM or LOM
SSgt through MSgt	NMCAM or NMCCM or MSM
Sgt and below	NMCAM or NMCCM

5. These guidelines are by no means prescriptive. There will always be exceptions to them, both up and down. The Marines or Sailors who are given responsibilities greater than normal and who tackle them with efficiency, effectiveness, and enthusiasm are potentially eligible for a higher award than the guidelines depict. To those who bear greater responsibility and are effective in their duties with an increased span of control goes the higher recognition. Therefore those who make enduring contributions impacting the readiness of the Marine Corps or the

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command above their grade can be recognized above their grade. Further, the guidelines should not be taken as a guarantee that an award is forthcoming. Merely serving for a particular length of time does not qualify one for an award. Only those who are truly deserving, should be recognized.

6. For those of you who recommend Marines and Sailors for awards consider the following to guide:

a. Consider the actions of the candidate and ask if their service was truly above and beyond the grade and responsibility of the Marine or Sailor. Were the contributions enduring and important for the combat readiness and operational effectiveness of the command?

b. Consider the overall, Marine Corps-wide impact of the award. Would the approval of the award contribute to inflation in the award system and devalue awards in general?

7. If you can answer "yes" to the first question and "no" to the second prepare your award recommendation with detail and specificity. Write with clear, compelling, convincing style. Avoid exaggeration, hyperbole and finally, compose a citation that does not have to be rewritten-please! Read it out loud before submitting it. If it sounds like something you would be proud to have your family read/hear, it is ready.



ROBERT B. NELLER

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