

## **Air Force Combat Action Medal**

### **Establishing Authority**

The Air Force Combat Action Medal was established on March 15, 2007 by the Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne.

### **Effective Dates**

The Air Force Combat Action Medal is retroactive to September 11, 2001.

### **Criteria**

The Air Force Combat Action Medal may be awarded to members of the United States Air Force through the grade of colonel (O-6) who come under direct and hostile fire while operating in unsecured space (outside a defended perimeter) or who personally engage hostile force with direct and lethal fire.

This award recognizes specifically defined combat conditions. These conditions are met when:

1. Individuals deliberately go outside the defended perimeter to conduct official duties (either ground or air); and,
2. They come under enemy attack by lethal weapons while performing those duties; and
3. Are at risk of grave danger.

Or,

1. Individuals defending the base (on the defended perimeter); and,
2. Come under fire and engage the enemy with direct and lethal fire; and,
3. Are at risk of grave danger.

### **Award Criteria - Ground**

The individual must be in combat as defined above, and the combat must take place in a combat zone defined as a geographic area designated by the President via Executive Order, or a qualified hazardous duty area in which a member is receiving imminent danger pay or hostile fire pay. The individual must be physically present, at risk of grave danger, and performing in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement.

Personnel outside the defended perimeter must be fired upon by the enemy with lethal weapons; returning of fire is situation-dependent and is not necessarily a precondition of this award. The risk of grave danger to the individual must be detailed in the award submission.

Encampments, compounds, and protected areas (inside the defended perimeter) will normally not qualify as venues for this award unless the individual is serving in a defensive capacity, taking fire, and engaging the enemy. Augmenting a defensive fighting position and taking fire, regardless of official duties, would also qualify as combat action if all other criteria are met. Receiving mortar fire, responding to alarm conditions, or reporting to bunkers, do not independently constitute "combat action" for the purpose of this award.

Personnel who are eligible for award of the Purple Heart do not automatically qualify for this award.

### **Award Criteria - Air**

Individuals must be flying as authorized aircrew members on aeronautical orders in direct support of a combat zone and in combat as previously defined. The combat must take place in a combat zone, defined as a geographic area designated by the President via Executive Order, or a qualified hazardous duty area in which the member is receiving imminent danger pay or hostile fire pay. The individual must be physically present, at risk of grave danger, and must be performing satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement.

The individual must be performing assigned duties. Traveling passengers, including aircrew manifested as passengers, are not eligible based solely on their presence, if the aircraft comes under fire.

Offensive air operations may qualify if they are engaging hostile forces with direct and lethal fire. Taking fire from the enemy is not a prerequisite as long as the individual is physically present and the risk of grave danger is imminent.

### **Related Considerations**

1. Award of the Air Force Combat Action Medal does not prevent award of other types of performance recognition (decorations) normally associated with combat.
2. There are no promotion points associated with this award.
3. The criteria apply identically to active, Reserve, and Guard personnel.

4. Personnel who earned the Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Action Badge, Combat Medical Badge, or the Combat Action Ribbon while assigned with the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps, may submit a copy of that award (along with other documentation) for consideration for award of the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

5. No device is authorized for the ABU or other functional uniforms

#### **Order of Precedence**

The Air Force Combat Action Medal is a service medal and is worn after the Air Force Achievement Medal and before any unit awards.

#### **Devices**

No devices have been specified for this medal.

#### **Designer**

The design of the Air Force Combat Action Medal was adapted from the insignia used by General Billy Mitchell on his De Haviland DH-4B Osprey airplane. The design on the obverse of the medal was executed by Susan Gamble (a graphic designer for the National League of Cities). The reverse was designed by the Army's Institute of Heraldry under the personal supervision of its Director, Charles V. Mugno

#### **First Recipient**

The first recipient of the Air Force Combat Action Medal was Major Steven A. Raspet. His medal was presented by General Michael Moseley, the Air Force Chief of Staff, at a special ceremony held at the Air Force Memorial in Washington, D.C. on June 12, 2007. Five other individuals also received the medal at the ceremony; they were:

- Captain Allison K. Black (1st Special Operations, Hurlburt Field, Florida)
- Senior Master Sergeant Ramon Colon-Lopez (USAF Para Rescue, Kirtland AFB, New Mexico)
- Master Sergeant Byron P. Allen (1st Special Operations, Hurlburt Field, Florida)
- Master Sergeant Charlie Peterson (927 LRS, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan)
- Staff Sergeant Daniel L. Paxton (USAF Aerospace Medical Center, Brooks AFB, Texas)

#### **Description and Symbolism**

##### **Obverse**

A silver medal one and a half inches in width overall, consisting of a laurel wreath superimposed by an eagle with wings displayed bearing on its chest a shield as shown in the Great Seal of the United States, clutching in its right talons an olive branch and in its left talons three demi-arrows. Above the eagle's head (and attached on the inner top of the laurel wreath) is a five-pointed star, point-up.

The eagle represents strength and vigilance and embodies the American spirit of freedom. The star and eagle, adapted from the art insignia on the aircraft of General Billy Mitchell, gives this medal the heritage and honor of that history. Billy Mitchell was an energetic airpower advocate who planned and led the first coordinated air-ground offensive in history during World War I. The eagle is facing toward the olive branch for peace and emphasizes the looking forward to peace while the arrows represent the maintaining of lethal capability. The laurel wreath is symbolic of respect and high achievement.

##### **Reverse**

The reverse of this medal has been finished as a mirror image of the obverse, but with the addition of a scroll superimposed over the eagle's breast containing the words, [U.S. AIR FORCE / COMBAT ACTION](#).

##### **Ribbon**



The ribbon to the Air Force Combat Action Medal are taken from the background colors of Billy Mitchell's aircraft insignia.

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