



Air Force releases combat action medal criteria

by Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski
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4/9/2007 - **WASHINGTON (AFNEWS)**-- Air Force officials at the Air Force Personnel Center released criteria this week for award of the new combat action medal, an award for Airmen who have been involved in direct fighting situations where they risked their lives in an enemy engagement.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley authorized the medal's creation March 15. Any Airman who believes he or she may be eligible can now submit an award package for consideration. The first approval of the Air Force Combat Action Medal is expected within the next few weeks, according to John Balducci, the chief of Air Force recognition programs.

Airmen are eligible for the combat action medal "if their primary role includes performing duties in a combat zone, either on the ground or from the air, by entering into an unsecured area away from an established installation," Mr. Balducci said. "While performing their duties, they must have come under fire or fire upon an enemy to qualify."

A combat zone is defined as a geographic area for which an Airman receives imminent danger/hostile fire pay.

In addition, while encampments, compounds and protected areas aren't normally qualifying locations for the AFCAM, Airmen augmenting a defensive fighting position could be eligible should they meet the award criteria, Mr. Balducci said.

Aircrew members must be flying in direct support of a combat zone and in combat. They also must be performing official duties and not manifested as a passenger. While performing close air support, taking fire from an enemy is not a prerequisite as long as the Airman is at "great risk," Mr. Balducci said.

"For Airmen still on active duty who believe they may be eligible for the medal, their submission must include a narrative explanation of circumstances on an Air Force Form 3994 describing the event, to include date, time, location and incident details, as well as witness statements," Mr. Balducci said. "That package should be submitted to the first O-6 (colonel) in their operational chain of command, who will submit it to the commander of Air Force forces."

Award eligibility is retroactive to Sept. 11, 2001, through a date to be determined and is available across the total force. Personnel no longer on active duty can submit packages to the Board for Correction of Military Records. This will apply to posthumous awards as well, he said.

The medal does come with some restrictions. For example, only one can be awarded during a qualifying period, and for now, operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom count as one eligible time frame. In addition, there are no promotion points for the AFCAM. However, events that garner the combat action medal also can be referenced for other decorations, Mr. Balducci said.

The AFCAM is worn between the Air Force Achievement Medal and the Air Force Presidential Unit Citation.

The medal is designed to evoke Air Force heritage, scarlet with diagonal yellow stripes - adapted from the art insignia on the aircraft of Gen. Billy Mitchell, who coordinated the first air-to-ground offensive in history. Further, the AFCAM features an eagle grasping arrows in one talon and an olive branch in the other, the arrows reflecting preparedness for war while the olive branch represents a goal of peace, according to official Air Force wear guidance.

For more information, Airmen should contact their local military personnel flight or the Air Force Contact Center at DSN 665-5000 or (800) 616-3775.

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Air Force combat action medal, front view. (U.S. Air Force graphic)