

**BY ORDER OF THE  
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

**HEADQUARTERS OPERATING  
INSTRUCTION 36-2**

**2 FEBRUARY 2018**

**Personnel**



**HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE  
MILITARY DECORATIONS PROGRAM**

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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This Headquarters Operating Instruction (HOI) implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-28, *Awards and Decorations Program* and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2803, *The Air Force Military Awards and Decorations Program*. This instruction applies to all military personnel including Regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel assigned at the Headquarters Air Force (HAF). In collaboration with the Chief of Air Force Reserve and the Director of the Air National Guard, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services develops policy for the Military Awards and Decorations Program. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. The authorities to waive requirements in this publication are identified with a Tier (“T-0, T-1, T-2, T-3”) number following the compliance statement. See AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, for a description of the authorities associated with the Tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the Publication OPR for non-tiered compliance items. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with Air Force Records Information Management System Records Disposition Schedule. This publication requires the collection and or maintenance of information protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. Vigilance should be taken to protect Personally Identifying Information when submitting or sending nominations, applications or other documents to Department of Defense (DoD) agencies whether by postal methods, faxing or

through government internet systems. At a minimum, review the following references for items that contain sensitive or For Official Use Only information: AFI 33-332, *Privacy Act Program*, DoD 5400.11-R, *Department of Defense Privacy Program*, AFI 17-100, *Air Force Information Technology (IT) Service Management*, and AFI 17-130, *Cybersecurity Program Management*. The authorities to collect and or maintain the records prescribed in this publication is Section 8014 of Title 10 United States Code. System of Records Notice F036 AF PC V, *Awards and Decorations*, applies.

## **SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

This revision adds the Distinguished Service Medal approval authority for the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (para 3.3.2), provides the time in position requirement for the Distinguished Service Medal (para 6.2.8.1) and the Legion of Merit (para 6.2.8.2) nominations, updates the Legion of Merit qualifying positions (para 6.2.8.2.2 and 6.2.8.2.3), and adds the maximum citation lines allowed for the Distinguished Service Medal and Legion of Merit (para 6.2.3.2).

**1. Overview.** This instruction sets forth approval levels and submission procedures for recognizing officer and enlisted personnel assigned to HAF (Secretariat and Air Staff offices).

**2. Privacy Act Statement.** Vigilance should be taken to protect personal identifying information when submitting or sending nominations or other documents through government internet systems (e-mail), postal methods, faxing or scanning.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities.**

#### 3.1. Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/AA):

3.1.1. Endorses Distinguished Service Medals nominations for two-letter Secretariats headed by a 2-star General Officer (or below), or an equivalent civilian leader, and forwards nominations to the Air Force Personnel Center, Military Promotions, Evaluations, and Recognition Branch (AFPC/DP1SP) Workflow ([afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil](mailto:afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil)).

3.1.2. Approval authority for Legion of Merit nominations for personnel assigned to the office of the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/OS) and the Under Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/US).

3.1.3. Approval authority for Legion of Merit nominations for two-letter Secretariats headed by a 2-star General Officer (or below), or an equivalent Civilian Leader.

3.2. Chief of Staff of the Air Force (AF/CC): Approval authority for Distinguished Service Medal nominations for rotating and retiring Major Command Commanders (MAJCOM/CC), with no time in position requirement.

#### 3.3. Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force (AF/CV):

3.3.1. Approval authority for Distinguished Service Medal nominations for retiring General Officers assigned to the office of the AF/CC.

3.3.2. Approval authority for Distinguished Service Medal nominations for the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (AF/CCC).

3.3.3. Approval authority for Distinguished Service Medal nominations for retiring General Officers assigned to Air Staff and their Field Operating Agencies and Direct Reporting Units.

3.4. Air Force Director of Staff (AF/DS):

3.4.1. Approval authority for Legion of Merit (and below) nominations for personnel assigned to the office of the AF/CC and the AF/CCC.

3.4.2. Approval authority for Legion of Merit nominations for Air Staff directorates headed by a 2-star General Officer (or below) or an equivalent Civilian Leader.

3.4.3. Endorses exception to policy nominations for Air Staff directorates not headed by a General Officer or equivalent Civilian Leader, and forwards the nominations to AFPC/DP1SP Workflow ([afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil](mailto:afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil)).

3.5. 811th Force Support Squadron (811 FSS):

3.5.1. Processes all decorations for the SAF/OS, SAF/US, AF/CC, AF/CV, AF/DS, and AF/CCC; prepares certificates and issues special orders. Excluded from this are decorations processed by AFPC/DP1SP.

3.5.2. Establish procedures and standards for matters concerning the processing of decorations within HAF.

3.5.3. Maintain an adequate supply of decorations, service and achievement awards, as well as devices to provide initial issue of these items to eligible recipients. Provide initial issue of all United States (U.S.) and United States Air Force (USAF) military decorations, service/achievement medals, decoration binders/folders, service award ribbons, individual ribbons for unit awards, and subsequent devices awarded, authorized, or presented to the recipient. (T-1).

3.6. **Two-Letter Executive Offices.**

3.6.1. Ensures that this instruction is implemented and that nominations are processed in a timely manner. (T-3).

3.6.2. Act as a focal point where personnel may acquire advice and assistance on any questions relating to the application and implementation of this instruction. (T-3).

3.6.3. Issue special orders for all decorations approved within their organization. Refer to AFI 36-2803 for guidance on preparing special orders. (T-1).

3.6.4. Obtains 2-letter endorsement on nominations requiring AFPC/DP1SP action.

**4. Military Awards Policy.** AFI 36-2803 prescribes the military awards policy. This instruction does not supersede or take precedence over AFI 36-2803.

**5. Approval Authority.** Approval authority for HAF is shown in Table 5.1., and is authorized by AFI 36-2803.

**Table 5.1. Decoration Approval Authority (see notes).**

<i>An "X" in a column indicates approval authority for the decoration in the heading.</i>	<b>Distinguished Service Medal</b>	<b>Legion of Merit</b>	<b>Meritorious Service Medal</b>	<b>Air Force Commendation Medal</b>	<b>Air Force Achievement Medal</b>
SAF/AA		X (see note 2)	X	X	X
AF/CC	X (see note 7)				
AF/CV	X (see note 2)	X	X	X	X
AF/DS		X (see note 2)	X	X	X
Secretariat, Air Staff Deputy Chief of Staff and two-letter Directors (3- star Generals or higher and Civilian Leader equivalent)		X (see note 3)	X	X	X
Deputy Chief of Staff, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff and two- letter Directors (2-star Generals and civilian leader equivalent) (see note 2)			X	X	X
Deputy Chief of Staff, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff and two- letter Directors (1-star Generals and Civilian Leader equivalent) (see note 2)			X	X (see note 5)	X
Three-letter Directors (Colonels or above and Civilian Leader equivalent)			X (see note 4)	X (see note 5)	X

Heads of Special Staff (Colonels or above and Civilian Leader equivalent) (see note 6)			X	X (see note 5)	X
<p><i>Notes:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SECAF approved delegations are outlined in this table. Do not delegate these authorities further. Refer to AFI 36-2803 for the approval authority for other awards.</li> <li>2. SECAF delegated approval/disapproval authority for Distinguished Service Medal nominations that meet the criteria outlined in AFI 36-2803 to AF/CV for retiring General Officers assigned to Air Staff and their Field Operating Agencies and Direct Reporting Units. In addition, AF/DS is the Legion of Merit approval/disapproval authority for Air Staff directorates headed by 2-star Generals and below, or equivalent Civilian Leader; and SAF/AA is the Legion of Merit approval/disapproval authority for two-letter Secretariats headed by 2-star Generals and below, or equivalent Civilian Leader. Additionally, on 15 Feb 17, SECAF delegated to AF/CV approval authority for Distinguished Service Medal nominations for the AF/CCC.</li> <li>3. Retirement, separation and posthumous for Colonels and above only that meet the eligibility criteria.</li> <li>4. SECAF authorized HAF: Secretariat, Air Staff Deputy Chiefs of Staff and Assistant Chiefs of Staff to delegate Meritorious Service Medal approval authority, all conditions, and lesser decorations, to their Directors in the grade of Colonel and above (to include equivalent Civilian Leaders). This authority may not be further delegated.</li> <li>5. Not authorized to award the Air Force Commendation Medal under Condition for acts of courage (condition code 0).</li> <li>6. "Heads of special staff" refers to those offices/teams headed by a Colonel or above and Civilian Leader equivalent who report directly to AF/CC, AF/CV or AF/DS, i.e., Inauguration Team, etc.</li> <li>7. The AF/CC is the approval authority for rotating and retiring MAJCOM commanders, with no time in position requirement.</li> </ol>					

**6. Award Procedures:**

6.1. Nominations for the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal and Air Force Achievement Medal will be process in the virtual Personnel Center dashboard located on myPers (<https://mypers.af.mil/>). Online help is available within the dashboard.

6.2. Nominations for all other awards not processed in the virtual Personnel Center will include an endorsement memorandum from the senior official in the member’s chain of command, recommendation for Decoration Printout (DÉCOR-6), narrative justification, and a proposed citation.

6.2.1. Ensure the dates, job titles, etc. on the Decoration Printout matches the nominee’s Duty History Rip and includes the presentation/ceremony date.

6.2.2. Narrative Justification. The justification shall be prepared as a narrative using blocked, paragraphed or talking paper format (bullet) and will highlight the achievements: what the nominee did, how the nominee did it and the impact of the achievements. The justification page for the Distinguished Service Medal will not exceed 3 pages. A narrative justification is optional for retiring General Officers. Limit

the justification for the Legion of Merit and lesser decorations to one page. The justification is signed, utilizing the appropriate signature block.

6.2.3. Citation. Citations will be left and right (full) justified, not to exceed:

6.2.3.1. For the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal and Air Force Achievement Medal: 14 lines maximum.

6.2.3.2. For the Bronze Star Medal and above: 14 to 16 lines maximum.

6.2.3.3. Refer to AFI 36-2803 for additional guidance.

6.2.4. Approval Authority. Refer to Table 5.1. Nominations for awards not covered by Table 5.1 will be forwarded through the head of the two-letter organization to AFPC/DP1SP Workflow ([afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil](mailto:afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil)).

6.2.5. Submission. Nominations for the Distinguished Service Medal and Legion of Merit must be submitted 45 days in advance of presentation/ceremony. All lesser decorations shall be submitted 30 days in advance. For nominations not meeting this criterion, a late letter must be included in the nomination package.

6.2.5.1. Nominations requiring SECAF, SAF/US, AF/CC, AF/CV, or AF/DS approval will be submitted to 811 FSS for processing. The 811 FSS will obtain AF/DS coordination prior to staffing nomination to SECAF, SAF/US, AF/CC, or AF/CV. This excludes exception to policy nominations and awards requiring AFPC/DP1SP action.

6.2.5.2. Distinguished Service Medal nominations for the MAJCOM/CCs will be submitted to 811 FSS Workflow ([usaf.jbanafw.afdw-staff.mbx.811-fss-ccq-workflow@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.jbanafw.afdw-staff.mbx.811-fss-ccq-workflow@mail.mil)).

6.2.5.3. Nominations for personnel assigned to organizations outside of HAF are processed in accordance with AFI 36-2803.

6.2.6. Ensure member has not received another decoration for the same act, achievement or period of meritorious service.

6.2.7. Retirement decorations are primarily awarded based on current position and the responsibilities and achievements the member made in their current billet.

6.2.8. Distinguished Service Medal and Legion of Merit Limitations.

6.2.8.1. Distinguished Service Medal nominations for U.S. military personnel are restricted to a minimum of 18 months (time in position) in a general officer position and 36 months as a general officer (including frocked time, if applicable). Only 4 Distinguished Service Medals are authorized in a career (3 for exceptional service and 1 at retirement). Refer to AFI 36-2803 for additional eligibility criteria.

6.2.8.2. Legion of Merit nominations for U.S. military personnel are restricted to officers in the rank of Colonel (O-6) and above and Chief Master Sergeants in a qualifying position for a minimum of 12 months. Refer to AFI 36-2803 for additional eligibility criteria.

6.2.8.3. Upon retirement, after a long and distinguished career, liberal interpretation of the Legion of Merit criteria is appropriate for officers serving in the grade of

Colonel and above, provided the officer's most recent performance warrants such consideration.

6.3. Record Management and Disposition. Include a copy of the award in office files plan and retain and dispose of the recommendation and approval records in accordance with AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*. Refer to AFI 36-2803 for the documents that are required to be maintained.

**7. Exceptions to Policy.** Exception to policy requests are unique in nature and shall be rare. Simply meeting the routine demands of a challenging job shall not be the sole deciding factor to determine if someone rates the award.

7.1. Award nominations that do not meet the criteria outlined in AFI 36-2803 must be forwarded as an Exception to Policy through the head of the two-letter organization to AFPC/DP1SP Workflow ([afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil](mailto:afpc.dp1sp.recognitionprocess@us.af.mil)) for processing to the Air Force Decorations Board.

7.2. Nominations submitted as an Exception to Policy must include justification for the exception and an endorsement supported by the senior official in the chain of command.

7.3. Two-letters may disapprove or downgrade nominations from lower offices when they deem exceptions inappropriate or not warranted.

**8. Awards for Non-Government Personnel.** Persons or organizations not in a commercial or profit making relationship with DoD or a DoD component may be considered for recognition. Refer to Chapter 7 of AFI 36-1004, *The Air Force Civilian Recognition Program*, for criteria and eligibility.

**9. Foreign Decorations.** HQ AFPC/DP1SP approves or disapproves acceptance of foreign decorations for Air Force members assigned to Headquarters Air Force. Requests are processed IAW AFI 36-2803.

**10. USAF Awards to Foreign Military Personnel.** Refer to AFI 36-2803 for criteria and procedures for awarding USAF decorations to foreign military personnel.

**11. U.S. Non-Military Decorations and Awards.** HQ AFPC/DP1SP approves or disapproves acceptance of foreign decorations for Air Force members assigned to Headquarters Air Force. Requests are processed IAW AFI 36-2803.

**12. Coins.** HOI 36-15, *Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff, USAF, Recognition Program*, describes the presentation of coins by SECAF, AF/CC, SAF/US, AF/CV, AF/DS and AF/CCC.

**13. HAF Quarterly and Annual Recognition Program.** HOI 36-3, *Headquarters Air Force Quarterly and Annual Recognition Program*, prescribes criteria and processing procedures for HAF quarterly and annual awards.

**14. HAF Field Operating Agencies and Direct Reporting Units.** Nominations are processed IAW AFI 36-2803 and AFI 36-1004.

PATRICIA J. ZARODKIEWICZ  
Administrative Assistant

**Attachment 1****GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

AFI 17-100, *Air Force Information Technology (IT) Service Management*, 16 September 2014

AFI 17-130, *Cybersecurity Program Management*, 31 August 2015

AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program*, 4 June 2012

AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, 1 December 2015

AFPD 36-28, *Awards and Decorations Program*, 26 April 2016

AFI 36-1004, *The Air Force Civilian Recognition Program*, 29 August 2016

AFI 36-2803, *The Air Force Military Awards and Decorations Program*, 18 December 2013

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 March 2008

AFH 33-337, *Tongue and Quill*, 27 May 2015

DoD 5400.11-R, *Department of Defense Privacy Program*, 8 May 2007

HOI 36-15, *Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff, USAF, Recognition Program*, 23 August 2010

HOI 36-3, *Headquarters Air Force Quarterly and Annual Recognition Program*, 21 March 2011

***Adopted Forms***

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

***Abbreviations and Acronyms***

**AF/CC**—Chief of Staff of the Air Force

**AF/CV**—Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force

**AF/DS**—Air Force Director of Staff of the Air Force

**AFI**—Air Force Instruction

**AFPD**—Air Force Policy Directive

**DECOR6**—Decoration Printout

**DOD**—Department of Defense

**HAF**—Headquarters Air Force

**HOI**—Headquarters Operating Instruction

**OPR**—Office of Primary Responsibility

**SAF/US**—Under Secretary of the Air Force

**SECAF**—Secretary of the Air Force

**US**—United States



USAF—United States Air Force

*Terms*

**Approval Authority**—Senior leader responsible for contributing to and implementing policies and guidance/procedures pertaining to his/her functional area(s) (e.g., heads of two-letter offices).

**Chain of Command (Command Channels)**—A hierarchy of officials, each reporting to and taking orders from the next most senior person.