

Presenters: William Selby, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs; Juliet Beyler, Acting Director, Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management; Mark Seavey, The American Legion; Dale Kissinger, Military Avenue; John Doyle, 4G War; Gail Harris, Foreign Policy Blogs; Michelle Cowell, Military Matters; Bryant Jordan, Military.com

February 20, 2013

DODLive Blogger's Roundtable with Juliet Beyler, Acting Director, Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management on the creation of DOD's new Distinguished Warfare Medal

MR. WILLIAM SELBY: I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense blogger's roundtable for Wednesday, February 20th, 2013. My name is William Selby with the Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating the call today.

Today, we are honored to have as our guest Ms. Juliet Beyler, acting director, officer and enlisted personnel management, who will discuss the creation of DOD's new Distinguished Warfare Medal, which will be awarded to recognize a servicemember's extraordinary achievements directly impacting combat operations since September 11th, 2001.

A note to the bloggers on the line, please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question. Respect our guest's time, keeping your question succinct and to the point. And if you are not asking a question, we please ask that you place your phone on mute.

With that, Ms. Beyler, if you have an opening statement, the floor is yours.

ACTING DIRECTOR JULIET BEYLER: Great. Thank you. Good morning. Thanks for having me.

I thought briefly I'd just make a quick opening statement, because a lot of the feedback that we've seen since the announcement has -- have mischaracterized the medal. And so we'd like to be clear on the purpose of the medal and -- and what it's for.

So as -- as the secretary announced on February 13th, he was creating the Distinguished Warfare Medal to recognize a servicemember's extraordinary achievements directly impacting combat operations. As you all know, modern technology enables servicemembers with special training and capabilities to more directly and precisely impact military operations, at times far from the battlefield.

The DWM will be awarded in the name of the secretary of defense to servicemembers whose extraordinary achievements, regardless of their distance to the traditional combat theater, deserve distinct department-wide recognition.

The secretary himself said that he has seen first-hand how modern tools, like remotely piloted platforms and cyber-systems, have changed the way that wars can be fought, and that we

should have the ability to honor extraordinary actions that make a true difference in combat operations, even if those actions are physically removed from the fight.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff further said that the new medal recognizes this changing character of warfare and those who make extraordinary contributions to it.

The criteria for the award will be highly selective and will reflect high standards. And lastly, the medal, which is being designed by the Institute of Heraldry, will be available sometime in the coming months.

So with that, I'm available to take your questions.

MR. SELBY: Thank you very much, ma'am.

And Mark, you were first on the line. If you'd just introduce yourself and go ahead with your question.

MR. MARK SEAVEY: Yeah, I'm Mark Seavey. I'm calling from The American Legion.

I'm curious in particular what circumstances led to this award being higher than a Bronze Star? What actions would warrant this medal that would have been so above the criteria for things like an MSM that it warrants the creation of a new medal?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Certainly. Well, the -- all -- the service chiefs recognized that there was a gap in ability -- again, the changing nature of warfare, and there was a gap in our ability to recognize servicemembers for those, like I said, extraordinary achievements that direct, non-valorous, that directly impact combat operations. So this was vetted through several joint chiefs and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Tanks, and they brought their recommendation forward to the secretary of defense.

With regard to the precedence, again, he wanted specifically to recognize distinct impacts on combat operations. There are several. For instance, the meritorious achievement -- meritorious service medal is lower than the DWM, but it is higher than the service achievement medal. So there are various -- there's a longstanding history of how we set precedence for awards.

MR. SELBY: Thank you, ma'am.

And Dale, you're next.

MR. DALE KISSINGER: Yes, ma'am. Dale Kissinger from MilitaryAvenue.com

My question comes down to, do you feel like there's opposition to this medal? Is it based on service issues?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: The medal was unanimously recommended by the chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So, no, this -- this was brought to the secretary, again, unanimously by all

the services. So no -- I would -- I would not believe that there is opposition to the medal. In fact, it was supported by all the service secretaries and all the service chiefs.

MR. KISSINGER: And how would you characterize the opposition, then, from, like, the VFW?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: We certainly respect the opinion of the VFW. But, again, there are only three medals that are given solely for valor, and those are the Medal of Honor, the service crosses -- the Silver Star -- I'm sorry -- and the service crosses. And those -- those are the only three medals that are given solely for valor and the DWM is below -- below in precedence than those three medals.

MR. KISSINGER: Thank you, ma'am.

MR. SELBY: And Michelle, you're next.

MS. MICHELLE COWELL: Hi. This is Michelle Cowell from Military Matters. I was wanting to know -- I know that this is going to be retroacted to September 11. And they have yet to award this, is that correct? This has not been awarded as of yet to anyone?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: That's correct. The secretary announced the creation of the medal, so now the Institute of Heraldry needs to actually create the medal. That will take a period of months.

In addition to that, each of the -- again, the military department secretaries are the approval authority for the award. And that approval authority cannot be delegated.

So each service secretary will define the procedures by which servicemembers will be nominated, as well as they'll define the procedures for how they're gonna look at retroactive awards back to 2001.

MS. COWELL: So they will determine at some point in time -- they may very well have their set of lists who might be receiving this award, but it's just a matter of going through the back stages?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: I -- I believe so, yes. They -- they need to -- similar to how we do all awards policy, each department does things a little bit differently procedurally, and so they'll insert the new DWM into their procedures how they see fit.

MS. COWELL: So those who -- (inaudible) -- they want to input for this medal, they will go through the same procedure that they do now, all the way up to the secretary of each branch?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Correct. The one key point that I would have to point out, because this medal is for direct impacts on combat operation, one key is that the geographic combatant commander will have to certify those impacts before an award is presented to the military department secretary.

MS. COWELL: Very good.

MR. SELBY: And John, you were next.

MR. JOHN DOYLE: Hi. I'm sorry I had the mute button on.

John Doyle, the 4G War blog.

Ma'am, it seems like the biggest controversy about this -- and I know you've addressed this already -- the placement of this new medal above the Bronze Star. And I realize the Bronze Star is not solely for valor, but when the Bronze Star does -- is awarded with that "V", I guess understandably some people who feel like they've been in peril feel a little slighted.

Is there any plan to somehow differentiate that so that these folks who have the combat "V" on their Bronze Star won't feel slighted, or is there any plans on language or -- or whatever to assuage this situation?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: At this time, there's no plans to change. I mean, the secretary and -- and the chiefs have made their decision.

But one thing I would point out, is there are -- there are a number of medals that can have the "V" distinguishing (advice ?), ranging from the Air Force Achievement Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Joint Service -- so there are a number of awards far lower in precedence that are also eligible to have a "V" device, similarly to the Bronze Star.

So as I mentioned, you can have -- the Bronze Star is higher, but the Legion of Merit is higher than the Bronze Star in precedence right now. And that's for meritorious service over a period of time.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you.

MR. SELBY (?): And --

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Actually, I would want to add one more point to -- to clarify. The information we have is that only about 2 percent of Bronze Stars that have been issued since September 2000 -- September 11th -- have been issued with a "V" device. So the vast -- by far the vast majority of Bronze Stars are not issued with the "V" device.

MR. DOYLE: OK. Thank you for that clarification.

MR. SELBY: And, Gail, you're next.

MS. GAIL HARRIS: Yeah. Gail Harris with the Foreign Policy Association.

Just a short quick story, and then my question -- is the best talk I ever heard was given by Charles Plumb, a Navy pilot who was shot down over Vietnam; as he successfully pilot -- parachuted out of his aircraft, but was held POW for six years. He said years later he was sitting in a restaurant and this guy kept staring at him. And finally he came over and said -- started talking to him. He (knew ?) him. He said, "How much do you know -- how do you know so much about me?"

And the man replied, "I'm the guy that packed your parachute that day. Guess it worked."

So my question is, do you have any stories that you'll be able to tell, if not today, but perhaps in the future that illustrates the heroism of people who, although they might not be on the front line, but put our -- are an important part of the team?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Absolutely. I -- I -- I think we will. I don't -- as I said, the services are still -- the military departments are still going through their procedures, so we don't have anybody lined up for the award at this point. Again, it's just been approved, and so they're going through their processes.

But I think that -- that you absolutely will hear stories like that. And I think that that was one of the -- one of the reasons that the joint chiefs and the chairman brought this forward to the secretaries. They recognized that there were people out there doing things, and that they had -- that were extraordinary and that having -- but they were actually having direct impacts on the battlefield. And they wanted an ability to actually have a distinct medal that would recognize that type of impact.

MS. HARRIS: I -- I was happy to -- I personally was happy to see that. And I remember Charles Plumb said that he was a little bit ashamed, because he thought of all the time he strutted around the carrier as a pilot ignoring the people who didn't fly.

That's -- I'll shut up now.

MR. SELBY: Thank you, Gail, for the question and that statement.

Bryant, you're next.

MR. BRYANT JORDAN: Hi. Thank you very much for doing this.

I know you've already answered several times questions about precedence in terms of the valor awards. And it's also been said that this takes precedence over the Purple Heart, as well.

Again, is it -- is this fully -- are you all fully finished with this? Is there any -- going to be any reconsideration of that taking precedence over the Purple Heart?

And also, it's been awhile since I dealt with awards and decorations, but in terms of the Legion of Merit, my own recollection is that was an achievement medal that was basically for

people lieutenant colonel and above. It was very rare, as I recollect, that any enlisted person got it or any officer that was still in the company grade got that.

So that may be -- that may rank higher, but it was basically an achievement award for senior officers, as well.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Well, with regard -- with regard to the Legion of Merit itself, I -- (inaudible) -- the medals are not based on a rank. I mean, they're based on the impact, the level of meritorious service.

So, you know, although generally, yes, you will see more senior people getting those medals, it is not restricted to the higher ranks.

MR. JORDAN: But generally that's where they go?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: I would -- I would say that's a good generalization.

MR. JORDAN: Yeah.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: With regard to your first question now, at this point again this was thoroughly vetted through several Joint Chiefs Tanks and -- as well as all of the service chiefs, and all of the secretaries over the -- over a period of time vetted this. And it was unanimous, decision was brought forward to the secretary of defense, who at this point -- (inaudible) -- know the -- the decision -- (inaudible).

MR. SELBY: You get that Bryant?

MR. JORDAN: Yes, I -- I believe so. The decision has been made.

MR. SELBY: Yup.

MR. JORDAN: OK.

MR. SELBY: And was -- did anybody else join after Bryant? Anybody hadn't had -- had the chance to ask a question?

OK, we'll go back around to Mark.

MR. SEAVEY: Yeah, I mean, I really don't have anything to add. I know the Legion is -- is, frankly, very opposed to this. And -- and we just fail to see a distinction between why this would be higher than a meritorious service medal, which seems to encompass exactly the same sorts of things we're talking about here.

So I think mostly we're just confused at how -- granted, as you say, the -- the "V" device on the Bronze Star only goes to 2 percent, but I -- I fail to see how moving it down in order of precedence really encapsulates what -- (inaudible).

I was an infantry guy, so obviously I'm gonna be biased right from jump street. But the vast bulk of the people we're hearing for, no one is arguing that -- that there shouldn't be a Distinguished Warfare Medal. I don't -- I don't see anyone arguing that.

There seems to be great disagreement among my people and from the other people I'm hearing from on the precedence value, and just the fact that it's -- it's going to be higher than a Bronze Star with a "V" device. I think it's what we find most troubling.

And really just -- I'd love to know what would warrant this medal over an MSM? What action would -- would fall sort of in the -- in the median there? What would warrant an MSM but not the Distinguished Warfare Medal, or what would warrant the Distinguished Warfare Medal that's above an MSM, what sort of action?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: So the Legion of Merit and the MSMs are generally awarded for sustained meritorious service over a period of time, typically about 24 months, or those are often given at -- at retirement and things like that.

The key with the DWM, it's for extraordinary, non-valorous achievement which impacts combat operations. And again, it's only going to be awarded for direct impacts on combat operations. So that's the difference. And -- and the secretary and the joint chiefs felt that, that deserved to be recognized with a stand-alone medal.

And we certainly understand the concern, but they -- they felt that -- that, that warranted a distinct recognition on its own. And I, as a retired -- I served 23 years in the Marine Corps, and I'm -- I was a combat engineer. I did two tours in Iraq. So I -- I do certainly recognize the concerns, but we feel strongly that the changing nature of warfare warrants this type of new recognition.

MR. SELBY: And Dale, you're next.

MR. KISSINGER: No, I -- I'm done with questions.

Thank you very much, ma'am, for the answers to the others.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Thank you.

MR. SELBY: Michelle, did you have a follow-up?

MS. COWELL: I was, but I'm not thinking real clear right now. Doing two things at one time, so I think I'll pass on this.

MR. SELBY: OK.

And John?

MR. DOYLE: Yes, I do have a follow-up question, thanks.

Two things I just wanted to clarify. You said something about the -- the Heraldry Department is -- is still working on this medal, and I'm confused at what you mean by that. Because I believe when the secretary made his announcement, an image of the medal both front and back and the ribbon were made available. Has -- is that -- is that just a -- a preliminary idea, or is that what the final medal is gonna look like?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Yeah -- no -- thanks for the opportunity to clarify, no. So when the secretary made his decision -- the way that it works is we work with the Institute of Heraldry any time we create a new award or decoration. And throughout the process, this was briefed to the Institute of Fine Arts to make sure that the proposed designs were in line with history and tradition.

And then options were presented to the secretary of defense, through the Joint Chiefs and the service secretaries. And then the secretary chose the design that you saw on the date of the announcement.

But now the Institute of Heraldry actually has to go forward with the manufacturing process. We have to actually make the ribbon, mint the medal and that kind of thing. And that's what's gonna take several months.

So we expect we'll get about 100 in the -- in approximately 45 to 90 days, but the actual medal won't be available throughout the supply system for several months.

Does that clarify?

MR. DOYLE: Yes, it does, very much. And if I could -- (inaudible) -- a quick follow-up. Will the medal look the same for all of the services or will it vary the way the Medal of Honor and some of the other awards vary --

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: No.

MR. DOYLE: -- service to service?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Sure. Actually, that's a great question.

No, it will look the same for all services because this is a DOD-wide medal which will be awarded -- even though by the various military department secretaries, it will be awarded in the name of the secretary of defense -- (inaudible) -- medal.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Absolutely.

MR. SELBY: Gail, did you have a follow-up?

MS. HARRIS: No, I don't, thanks.

MR. SELBY: OK.

And, Bryant?

MR. JORDAN: Yeah, just one more: When do you -- you may have said this and I missed it, but any time frame for when you believe the first of these may be actually awarded to anyone?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: None of the services have indicated they are ready to go. But, like we said, it will take approximately 45 to 90 days to get the first 100. So I would imagine that if -- if a military department is -- has anybody ready, we wouldn't see that until at least then.

MR. JORDAN: OK.

MS. HARRIS: Hey, William, I do have a follow-up.

MR. SELBY: OK.

MS. HARRIS: Real briefly, I know that the -- we have the (valor page ?), which has all of the other awards on. Will this be included in that page, even though it's in spite of an act of valor?

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: No. Again, our -- the Department of Defense valor awards website only -- again, the three awards for valor, which are the Medal of Honor, the service crosses and the Silver Star. Those are the only awards -- those are the only awards which are given solely for valor, and those are the only awards that will be on that page.

MS. HARRIS: Good. I wanted to just clarify that, with that being a new page this year, as well.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: And that's a key with the DWM. Again, this -- this is a non-valorous award. That's the difference. It will -- it -- it's restricted. It cannot be given for valorous action.

MR. SELBY: Thank you.

And did anybody else have any follow-ups?

MR. DOYLE: Yeah, John Doyle again, very quickly?

MR. SELBY: Go ahead.

MR. DOYLE: On -- on -- on -- I had a little trouble hearing when you were explaining the review by the various service chiefs, and I think you said their -- their "tanks," and I wasn't familiar with that term. And I just wanted to know what the process -- very quickly what the process was by the various services and service chiefs in -- in weighing in on this.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: Right. So, again, the services recognized that there was a gap in their ability to recognize servicemembers. So it was brought forward.

And the way that ideas are vetted in -- in the department, they call them -- the chairman of the Joint Chiefs has a "Tank," and that's the chairman and all of the services come together and they vet these ideas. So -- and that's the senior service venue for vetting decisions of this nature.

And so, again, the idea was brought forward, and it worked up through the standard staffing chains, and it was presented and -- and discussed by the chairman and the Joint Chiefs at several of these Joint Chiefs Tanks. And then a unanimous recommendation was then brought forward out of the Tank to the secretary of defense, and then was further vetted through the military department secretaries on up -- on its way up to the secretary of defense.

MR. DOYLE: OK, thank you. Thanks for clearing that up.

MR. SELBY: Any other follow-ups?

Okay. Well, with that, thank you all for your questions.

Ms. Beyler, if you have a closing statement, the floor is yours for that.

ACTING DIR. BEYLER: No, I don't have any specific closing statement. I thank you for the opportunity to clarify. Again, we understand -- we understand everyone's concerns, but we hope that as we go forward with -- with the medal that the people will understand.

And again, I guess the final point that I would make is the military department secretaries are the approving -- approval authority for this, and that authority cannot be delegated. And that was done precisely to ensure that we maintain the integrity of the award.

Thank you.

MR. SELBY: Thank you very much, ma'am.

And thank you again to all of our participants for your questions today.

Today's program will be available online at [DODlive.mil](http://DODlive.mil), where you'll be able to access the -- the audio for this call, and -- as well as a print story.

Again, thank you, everybody, for your time.

**-END-**