

THE TOP THREE VALOR AWARDS AND THE UNITED STATES  
MARINE CORPS: A STUDY FROM WORLD WAR I TO  
PRESENT DAY IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

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by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

THE TOP THREE VALOR AWARDS AND THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS: A STUDY FROM WORLD WAR I TO PRESENT DAY IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, by Major Christopher B. Mays, 105 pages.

The war in Afghanistan signifies the longest period of war in United States history. The purpose of this research is to investigate the perception of the decrease in valor awards in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. This research addresses the perception question with regard to the U.S. Marine Corps. This thesis conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star awards presented to U.S. Marines. It reviewed professional articles written by Marines concerning awards in every war from World War I through Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. It also reviewed and conducted analysis of news media articles and a Congressional Committee meeting regarding valor awards. Reviewing all awards data and documents, there is evidence that the perception of the U.S. Marines is valid that during the Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom time frame the U.S. Marine Corps awarding level does not reach that of the wars since World War I through the Vietnam War.

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## ACRONYMS

DOD	Department of Defense
HQMC	Headquarters Marine Corps
IAPS	Improved Awards Processing System
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This device, the Badge of Military Merit, was affixed to the uniform coat above the left breast and permitted its wearer to pass guards and sentinels without challenge and to have his name and regiment inscribed in a Book of Merit. The Badge specifically honored the lower ranks, where decorations were unknown in contemporary European Armies. As Washington intended, the road to glory in a patriot army is thus open to all.

— U.S. Army Center for Military History,  
“The Badge of Military Merit/The Purple Heart”

The U.S. Marine Corps officially began fighting the War on Terror in October of 2001.<sup>1</sup> Since then hundreds of thousands of U.S. Marines have served with honor and courage fighting predominantly in the countries of Iraq and Afghanistan. Throughout its 238-year history, U.S. Marines have fought on six continents, against enemies of varying degrees of organization from bandits and rebels to professional armies. This current war is not unlike previous campaigns throughout every clime and place, although it has been the longest United States involvement in any war since the founding of the country.<sup>2</sup> Throughout America’s history, U.S. Marines in combat have been awarded valor decorations from the Navy Achievement Medal (with combat V device)<sup>3</sup> to the Medal of Honor.

The nature of war from World War I (WWI) to present day is largely similar although many technological advantages exist today that were not present 100 years ago. WWI saw the integration of artillery fire, combat aviation, and infantry units. This combined arms action is the same method of combat employed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).<sup>4</sup> Combined arms maneuver warfare seeks to isolate and immobilize the enemy with indirect fires both artillery and aviation,

while simultaneously destroying the enemy with infantry or cavalry fire and maneuver. Although the technology of warfare has changed, the basic premise of two belligerents fighting to impose their will on the other has remained constant.<sup>5</sup>

The U.S. military awards for valor have changed as well during the past 100 years. The most significant change to the U.S. valor decorations has been the addition of awards since WWI. Prior to WWI, only the Medal of Honor existed to distinguish superior courage in battle. Immediately following WWI, the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy added a specific Service Cross.<sup>6</sup> Those were awarded retroactively for actions in WWI. In addition, following WWI the Service Citation Medal was renamed the Silver Star. Since WWI, the Department of Navy has added nine medals that could be awarded for valor.

### Research Question

There is a perception by Marines that the award process is more restrictive and that fewer valor awards have been awarded in Iraq and Afghanistan than in previous wars. This thesis quantitatively and qualitatively evaluates this perception with respect to the top valor awards for U.S. Marines during the periods of war from WWI to OEF and OIF. Analysis of the statistical data will assist in determining any significant differences in the awarding of the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star to U.S. Marines in combat since WWI.

A multitude of potential questions could be asked concerning the awarding of personal decorations for valor in combat. Is it a valid perception that the U.S. Marine Corps is more restrictive in awarding valor decorations in OIF/OEF? Is there a significant difference in the frequency of valor decorations awarded for each conflict or war during the period from WWI to the War on Terror? If so, why? Is there a fixed relationship

among the number of Marines deployed, the duration of the conflict, the number of casualties, and the number of valor awards? Have the process and criteria for the top valor awards changed during the past 100 years? Is there a noticeable change in perception with respect to the top valor awards in each war during the period studied? Is that change in perception related to the number of valor awards awarded?

### Assumptions

To complete the statistical analysis this thesis assumes that the data provided by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) are accurate.<sup>7</sup> Based on periodical publications, books, congressional testimony, and informal discussions by the author with Marines over the past several years, this thesis assumes that the perception of fewer valor awards given is generally understood by current active duty U.S. Marines. This thesis assumes that the perception of the U.S. Marines regarding the value of valor awards in previous wars can be determined by professional writings on the subject. It also assumes that the current Naval Awards Order will not change significantly during compilation of the research material, conduct of analysis, and finalizing of the thesis.

### Definitions

This thesis deals with the perception of the top three valor awards from WWI to OIF/OEF. The perception involves three questions regarding awards: has the awards process changed, have there been any deviations in the application of that process, and has the value of the top three valor awards decreased or increased? The author of this thesis defines perception as the value of the top three valor awards. The perception of the

top three valor awards could have an effect on the number of top valor decorations awarded.

Military awards are important symbols in recognition of heroism or valor and other acts or services which are often above and beyond the call of duty and which distinguish an individual among those performing similar acts or services.<sup>8</sup> To best understand the Marine Corps awards system one must have a basic knowledge of the valor awards, meritorious awards, and awarding criteria. The Secretary of Navy Instruction 1650.1H, the current awards order for naval services,<sup>9</sup> mandates the U.S. Marine Corps awards system. “A military decoration is an award bestowed on an individual for a specific act or acts of gallantry or meritorious service.”<sup>10</sup>

Awards are clearly defined by the U.S. Navy as a means to recognize those men and women who go above and beyond what is expected. “Awards are intended to recognize Sailors and Marines who demonstrate exceptional valor, heroism, or meritorious service. An award should only be recommended in cases where the circumstances clearly merit special recognition of the actions or service.”<sup>11</sup> This thesis research only addresses the top three military awards for valor in the U.S. Marine Corps: the Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross, and the Silver Star.

### Medal of Honor

The Medal of Honor is the highest honor that can be bestowed on a member of the U.S. military for valor in combat. There are three Medals of Honor: one for the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force. Each service’s medal carries the same weight as the other, but the medals have distinct designs. All three are similar in size and worn around the neck on a blue ribbon. When referring to the Medal of Honor, one need not

indicate which service gave the award. The Navy's Medal of Honor would be awarded to members of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard or other service members serving with those branches. The Medal of Honor was conceived in 1860 and first awarded in 1863.<sup>12</sup> The Medal of Honor is presented and approved by the President of the United States in a ceremony that befits the award. The award carries so much prestige that an awardee's children can receive an appointment to any service academy.<sup>13</sup> In addition, an awardee receives a lifetime monthly gratuity pension. To receive the Medal of Honor one must meet the following criteria:

1. "Awarded by the President, in the name of Congress, to members of the Naval service who conspicuously distinguish themselves by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty.
  - a. While engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
  - b. While engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force;
  - c. While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party."<sup>14</sup>
2. "There must be no margin of doubt or possibility of error in awarding this honor. To justify the decoration, the individual's service must clearly be rendered conspicuous above his or her comrades by an act so outstanding that it clearly distinguishes his or her gallantry beyond the call of duty from lesser forms of bravery; and it must be the type of deed which if not done would not subject the individual to any justified criticism. The deed must be without

detriment to the mission of the command or to the command to which attached.”<sup>15</sup>

### Navy Cross

The Navy Cross is the second highest award that can be presented to a member of the U.S. Marine Corps (or Naval Service) for bravery in combat. When the United States entered WWI, there was no valor award below the Medal of Honor to reward lesser acts of valor.<sup>16</sup> Following WWI, the Army created the Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy resolved to wear allied medals, this was met with some contention and later the Navy Cross was born.<sup>17</sup> It was created in 1919 and awarded retroactively for actions in Haiti and Nicaragua (1915-1918) and WWI.<sup>18</sup> This medal carries great significance and is presented usually by the Secretary of the Navy in a ceremony that befits the award.

Lieutenant General Lewis Burwell “Chesty” Puller is the only Marine to receive five Navy Cross awards.<sup>19</sup> This legendary feat was achieved for actions in the Banana Wars in Central America, in World War II (WWII) and in the Korean War. To receive the Navy Cross the following criteria must be met:

1. “Awarded to individuals who, while serving in any capacity with the Navy or Marine Corps, distinguish themselves by extraordinary heroism, not justifying the award of the Medal of Honor.
  - a. While engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
  - b. While engaged in military operations, involving conflict with an opposing foreign force;



c. or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force, in which the United States is not a belligerent party.”<sup>20</sup>

2. “To warrant this distinctive decoration, the act or execution of duty must be performed in the presence of great danger, or at great personal risk, and must be performed in such a manner as to set individuals apart from their shipmates or fellow Marines. An accumulation of minor acts of heroism normally does not justify the award. The high standards demanded must be borne in mind when recommending the award.”<sup>21</sup>

### Silver Star

The Silver Star is the newest valor award of the three reviewed in this thesis (Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star). The Silver Star was not authorized until 1942. It was originally established by the War Department for the Army as the “Citation Star” for soldiers in 1918.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. Army later created the Silver Star in 1932, replacing the Citation Star, and authority to award it to naval service personnel was granted by Congress in 1942.<sup>23</sup> To receive the Silver Star one must meet the following criteria:

1. “Awarded to a person who, while serving in any capacity with the Navy or Marine Corps, is cited for gallantry in action that does not warrant a Medal of Honor or Navy Cross.
  - a. While engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
  - b. While engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force;

c. or serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.”<sup>24</sup>

2. “The heroic act(s) performed must render the individual conspicuous and well above the standard expected. An accumulation of minor acts of heroism normally does not justify the award, but unusual or exceptional cases will be decided on their merits.”<sup>25</sup>

### Delimitations

This thesis does not include any awards below the Silver Star. It focuses only on the most significant combat valor decorations and does not confuse the issue by including meritorious awards information. One should understand that a Marine who is awarded a lesser award (Navy Commendation Medal or Navy Achievement Medal with combat device) would not have been recommended for a Silver Star or higher decoration.

### Limitations

There are several limitations to conducting the research for this thesis. Limited time was available to compile the material from HQMC Awards Branch, the Naval Archives, the U.S. Marine Corps Archives, and the DOD. This constrained the research to be narrow in scope. There was difficulty in acquiring some of the data necessary to conduct the quantitative analysis. Due to incomplete records and the inability of HQMC to furnish all data requested this study was limited in some areas. It was not possible to visit the contributing headquarters to have a more thorough level of discovery from the supporting offices. Few scholarly works exist pertaining to comparing awards in the

periods covered by this study. This might be the first quantitative study of valor awards and the perception of those awards that looks at the U.S. Marine Corps from WWI to OIF/OEF.

### Scope

This study is limited to the top three valor awards of the U.S. Marine Corps from WWI to OIF/OEF. This was done to limit the scope to that which was germane to combat valor within the U.S. Marine Corps. The U.S. Marine Corps has 19 personal awards, three of which are for valor only, seven are for either valor or meritorious achievement, and the remaining nine are for meritorious or superior achievement. This research will only assess the top three awards for valor: the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star. It will not assess the meritorious awards or those awards that can be awarded for valor or merit. The meritorious awards include in precedence order (high to low): Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.<sup>26</sup> The Naval Service also awards one medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, for heroic action in the act of life saving if the awardee's life was at risk during the action. The Navy and Marine Corps Medal can be awarded in combat or non-combat situations, but it is not a valor award.<sup>27</sup> By limiting the data to only the top three awards of the U.S. Marine Corps, this study will be focused on how perception affects those valor awards from WWI through OIF/OEF.

### Significance of Study

This study could assist in determining if the naval awards manual needs updating or revision to meet the current needs. The results could show that the Marine Corps needs to help shape or improve the perception of commanders who review, submit, forward, and approve awards. The goal is to utilize current and historical data to determine if the standards or the perception of the standards is different for OIF/OEF than in previous wars. If those standards are different, can a determination be made that explains why, which might involve further study? The results could show that additional research should be performed to review other services to determine if this is a DOD wide issue. The data could also reflect that the Marine Corps valor awards are consistent with all previous wars in which case no action would be necessary. A result that shows no action is needed would counter the perception that fewer valor awards have been awarded in OIF/OEF than in previous wars.

### Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provides a basic overview of the topic and its significance to U.S. Marines. The basis for this thesis is the idea that U.S. Marines deserve to be acknowledged properly for their actions in combat during OIF/OEF. It is understood that U.S. Marines would not gloat about the honors bestowed upon them for valor in combat, but that some acts may go unrecognized. Chapter 2 will consist of a literature review outlining all the documents and previous works pertaining to this study. It will also lay the foundation to explain the perceptions of awards in the U.S. Marine Corps from WWI to OIF/OEF. Subsequent chapters will delve deeper into the specifics surrounding the

research material and provide analysis of the findings, in an attempt to answer the research questions and detail the issues regarding awards in OIF/OEF.

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<sup>1</sup>The War on Terror was declared by the President of the United States against the enemies of the state who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Over 12 years since the beginning of these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Vietnam War previously held this dubious honor at 10 years long.

<sup>3</sup>A valor device or Combat “V” attached to a meritorious award to signify that the award was awarded for a combat action with valor and not for meritorious achievement.

<sup>4</sup>Combined Arms is the military term for integrating different mediums (artillery, infantry, cavalry, and infantry) of warfare.

<sup>5</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

<sup>6</sup>The specific Service Cross for each service is the Distinguished Service Cross (U.S. Army), the Navy Cross (U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard) and the Air Force Cross (U.S. Air Force). The U.S. Army and U.S. Navy medals were enacted following WWI and the U.S. Air Force medal was enacted in 1947.

<sup>7</sup>Mr. Herbert from the Marine Corps Awards Branch Historical Section, attested that their awards records are as complete as possible, but could contain errors given the 100-year time frame.

<sup>8</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup>The U.S. Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard awards order is Commandant Instruction 1625.25D although most of the Awards are shared with the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard does have several service specific awards. When serving under direct control of the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard is eligible for all U.S. Navy awards.

<sup>10</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, August 22, 2006), 2-1.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-3.

<sup>12</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Veterans Affairs, 96th Congress, *The Congressional Medal of Honor: The Names, The Deeds* (Forest Ranch, CA: Sharp and Dunnigan Publications, 1984), 1.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 2-21 to 2-22.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Fred L. Borch and Charles P. McDowell, *Sea Service Medals: Military Awards and Decorations of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>James E. Wise, Jr. and Scott Baron, *The Navy Cross: Extraordinary Heroism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Conflicts* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), xiii.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>20</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 2-22 and 2-23.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Borch and McDowell, 18.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 2-23.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The Medal of Honor has become rare during the war on terror. Have we no heroes? Could it be that the young men, some even kids, who fight today, are unworthy of this honor?

— Mr. Joseph A. Kinney, *Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Military Personnel*

There is a perception that the current award process is more restrictive and that fewer top valor awards have been awarded in Iraq and Afghanistan than in previous wars. This is evident in several periodicals, books and weekly publications, and in discussing with fellow service members the topic of valor awards for Marines and Soldiers in combat. The validity of this perception is the subject of this study.

This chapter outlines historical references that provide background concerning the top valor decorations and writings that address perceptions about these awards from WWI to OIF/OEF. First, this chapter reviews the reference materials about the top valor decorations and awards in general. There are historical documents and publications pertaining to valor decorations that have been awarded to U.S. Marines from all wars to OIF/OEF. Next, this chapter chronologically outlines documents and material regarding valor decorations and awards perceptions from WWI to OIF/OEF as published in Marine Corps professional journals. Third, the topic of valor decorations as discussed by the authors of mainstream media articles. Finally, this chapter summarizes the 2006 congressional hearing before the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee (HASC) regarding valor awards and the current awards process.<sup>1</sup>

There are few statistical analyses dealing with this topic, but there is discussion about valor awards given in every war. Not surprisingly, U.S. Marines have discussed this topic since the inception of the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star. What current material is available directly addresses the perception that fewer valor awards have been given in OIF/OEF than in previous conflicts. Similarly, articles pertaining to each of the past wars are available in professional journals for U.S. Marines, the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck*. These professional journals are the source documents that provide insight into these perceptions.

#### Awards Historical Reference

Historical reference materials regarding valor awards are available since the U.S. Congress authorized the Medal of Honor. The U.S. government has published books that detail every recipient since the Civil War until today. Unfortunately, for the lesser awards, such detailed documents do not exist and records must be sourced from the DOD and specific service. Several authors have compiled information regarding military awards for publication as comprehensive references on specific awards, services, and citations.

The U.S. Navy has published the *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manuals*, which are issued for the information and guidance of personnel of the Navy, and Marine Corps in all matters pertaining to Decorations, Medals, and Awards.<sup>2</sup> This thesis reviewed four Naval Awards Orders: “Decorations, Medals, Ribbons, and Badges of the United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard 1861-1948,” *Summary of Regulations Governing the Issuance and Wearing of Decorations, Medals, and Ribbons* NAVPERS 15016 June 1943; *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual* NAVPERS



15.790 REV. 1953; and Secretary of Navy Instruction 1650.1H, *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual*.<sup>3</sup> These awards orders form the basis of analysis regarding the requirements and criteria for each award within the Department of Navy.

A recent comprehensive review of all U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard awards is *Sea Service Medals*, published by the Naval Institute Press in 2009.<sup>4</sup> *Sea Service Medals* provides an excellent source of historical information regarding all sea service medals including: decorations for valor, decorations and medals for noncombat valor, dual-purpose decorations for performance or valor, and awards for outstanding achievement or meritorious service. The authors included the criteria for the awards, illustrative citations, and history for each award. Also included were detailed pictures and order of precedence figures. Overall, *Sea Service Medals* is a detailed source for developing a solid understanding of each U.S. naval service award.

The Naval Institute Press also published *The Navy Cross*, a detailed study of the Navy Cross from its inception to the current wars (OIF/OEF) up to 2007.<sup>5</sup> One of the findings highlighted by the authors was the low number of Navy Cross recipients in Iraq and Afghanistan. The authors of this historical reference looked closely at specific actions of valor, where the heroism was sufficient to warrant the Navy Cross. The book detailed the individuals who received the award and a brief synopsis of their personal lives. *The Navy Cross* details actions that include WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the present day campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The authors used their own opinion and judgment in detailing the most historically significant and interesting individuals to highlight.

For historical background on the Medal of Honor, *The Congressional Medal of Honor: The Names, The Deeds* published by Sharp & Dunnigan Publications list every citation for all recipients from the Civil War until Vietnam.<sup>6</sup> The Senate Veteran Affairs Committee commissioned *The Congressional Medal of Honor: The Names, The Deeds* in 1984. It is an excellent source of statistical data regarding the Medal of Honor pertaining to each war, homes of record for recipients and service components, among other tables listed in the reference. This reference also provides excellent historical background on the award and its inception.

*Double Winners of the Medal of Honor*, by Dr. David Tassin details each of the individuals who have been awarded two Medals of Honor. The most significant fact is that no recipient of the Medal of Honor has been awarded two Medals of Honor since 1918.<sup>7</sup> Only 19 U.S. servicemen have ever been awarded the Medal of Honor twice and seven of those were U.S. Marines. Of those seven recipients, five were awarded two Medals of Honor for actions in WWI; however, they received one Navy Medal of Honor and one Army Medal of Honor for the same action. The two most well known U.S. Marines are Joseph Daniel (Dan) Daly and Smedley D. Butler. Both were awarded Naval Medals of Honor for separate combat actions. Only one person has ever been recommended for a third Medal of Honor, Gunnery Sergeant Joseph D. Daly for actions in Belleau Wood France, WWI. “For his actions of 5-7 June, Daly was recommended for a third Medal of Honor. But higher military authority didn’t think anyone should have three so he received the second highest decoration, the Navy Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross, and, from the French, the Medaille Militaire. General Pershing also offered him a battlefield commission, but he rejected it.”<sup>8</sup>

### Chronological Review of Writings on Awards

An anonymous article from the February 10, 1926 issue of *The Leatherneck* highlighted some of the issues resulting from the Civil War concerning the awarding of the Medal of Honor. “Unfortunately, sufficient discrimination was not always exercised in the early awards of the Medal of Honor, and, as a consequence, a few fell into undeserving hands. This tended to detract from its value, but in the war with Germany this fault was corrected and the medal’s prestige was restored.”<sup>9</sup>

This article also highlighted the perception of the Medal of Honor six years after WWI. At the time of this article, the U.S. government had only three military honors, the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Distinguished Service Medal.<sup>10</sup> To solidify the re-establishment of the Medal of Honor’s prestige, only 78 Medals of Honor were awarded to the nearly two million servicemen who served in the American Expeditionary Forces.<sup>11</sup> This article provides the Marine Corps perception of the awards of WWI, indicating that a private or a senior officer earned the awards equally easily.<sup>12</sup> In 1926, the United States had fewer types of awards than any other nation.<sup>13</sup> The author provided the history of awards prior to WWI and how after this war the value of the Medal of Honor was restored to a level befitting of the nation’s highest valor award.

In the August 1931 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “For Valor,” an anonymous author detailed the history of the Medal of Honor. The author detailed how under early constitutional law personal medals were illegal and it was not until 1861, 85 years after our nation’s founding, that Congress first authorized a naval Medal of Honor.<sup>14</sup> This article is an excellent piece of detailed Medal of Honor history; the author further detailed the two-time recipients of the Medal of Honor. The overall theme is that of explanation

and understanding of the award and its significance. The author provided no reference to any negative perception regarding the Medal of Honor or its recipients.

In the 1945 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “Ribbons—How They’re Awarded,” author P. B. McNicol outlined his ideas that awards for gallantry, heroism, and leadership should be rewarded to improve morale.<sup>15</sup> His thesis suggested the need for a uniform policy to ensure a fair and equitable system. At the time of this article, the Administration Section handled all awards but the Commander in Chief, Pacific authorized a new over-all board of awards for Marines in the Pacific.<sup>16</sup> This board reviewed all awards and was authorized to award all medals, except the Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Medal.<sup>17</sup> McNicol stated that at this time the Marine Corps wanted to ensure the uniformity of awards so that not too many or too few were awarded.<sup>18</sup> He also stated that it is the commander’s duty to watch for heroic actions and outstanding leadership that should be recognized. All recommendations and submissions were to be made as soon after an action as possible to avoid delays that could prevent the awarding.<sup>19</sup> “With this in mind, serious consideration should be given to the phrase ‘above and beyond the call of duty.’ After all, a Marine’s call of duty is to do each and every task as well as he can.”<sup>20</sup>

The overall tone of McNicol’s article was that commanders and officers should take appropriate steps to ensure that Marines be recognized for heroic and outstanding service. In addition, steps should be taken by the Marine Corps to ensure that awards were properly reviewed and vetted before being approved. It is interesting that in 1945, a Marine Lieutenant General could award all but two awards. This reduced the time it took to approve and award medals. The perception of this author helps to establish the idea

that awards should be reviewed quickly, approved, and awarded to recognize Marines and improve morale.

In the October 1946 *Leatherneck* article “The Nation’s Highest,” Sergeant Harry Polete provided a historical piece regarding the Medal of Honor and its recipients. Polete further described the number of Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipients since the medal’s inception, 184 at the time of this article.<sup>21</sup> He further provided data for each war and the number of Marine Corps Medal of Honor awardees in each conflict from the Civil War to WWII. In the Civil War, approximately 3,000 U.S. Marines participated and 17 were awarded the Medal of Honor, or one for every 176.<sup>22</sup> In China during the Boxer Rebellion, 33 Medal of Honor awardees, or one for every 60 Marines.<sup>23</sup> In the Mexican War, officers were first awarded the Medal of Honor, nine total.<sup>24</sup> During WWI, only eight Medals of Honor were awarded or one for every 2500; also, for the first time half of those had died during their heroic act.<sup>25</sup> In WWII, the ratio of Medal of Honor recipients was one for every 9,000 U.S. Marines and more than half had been awarded posthumously.<sup>26</sup> Polete clearly illustrates how the Medal of Honor ratio of awardees to total Marines continued to decrease from the medal’s beginning until WWII and how this increase included in posthumous recipients.

An article by an anonymous author, “In Keeping the Highest Traditions of the United States Naval Service,” a *Leatherneck* article from January 1952 highlighted the heroes of the Korean conflict at this time. This simple article only served to honor those who have been awarded the highest awards in service to their country.

In the March 1954 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “Your Korean Decorations,” Jane F. Blakeney outlined all the pending rules for the authorization of the Republic of

Korea awards presented for the defense of Korea. She provided a detailed description and the significance of each Republic of Korea award and the time period for eligibility. This article was written to inform Marines about the timeline expected for Congress to authorize these awards for wear on uniforms. Blakney wrote in her final line, “Meanwhile, LtGen Oliver P. Smith’s medal will remain in the State Department vault . . . and so will yours.”<sup>27</sup> The author’s tone was positive concerning the awarding of additional decorations for Korean War Veterans.

Captain Marvin T. Hopgood, Jr., author of the 1968 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “A Bit of Ribbon” believed in equal award criteria for all ranks.<sup>28</sup> “The decorated PFCs of Inchon and Chosin are the dependable, senior NCOs in Vietnam. The young Marines of today will undoubtedly lead another generation of Marines in combat. Let’s not leave a sour taste in their mouths or drive them from the Marine Corps by not recognizing their actions.”<sup>29</sup> He clearly stated that he did not want to see a cheapening of awards and was worried that was beginning to happen in Vietnam. He shared his opinion that the Medal of Honor had not been awarded at the same rate as in WWII and Korea. Hopgood stated that “awarding personal decorations lies somewhere between these two extremes and can best be achieved by a more conscientious determination by those commanders empowered to render such decisions.”<sup>30</sup> He also saw it as the duty of the commander to accurately document and ensure that deserving Marines receive the appropriate level award. Captain Hopgood had a distinguished Marine Corps career. He retired as a Major General, as the President, Marine Corps University and Commanding General, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia.

Major John McKay author of the 1982 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “Too Many Awards,” stated that:

Today, certainly, one of the time-honored tenets of leadership is that those deserving recognition should receive it. Unfortunately, the recognition pendulum may have swung too far; rather than ignoring exceptional performance, we have taken a stand where recognition is accorded whether exceptional performance is involved or not.<sup>31</sup>

McKay based his thesis on the premise that the awards system was inflated and as such, Marines were receiving awards for simply doing their jobs, even if mediocre at best. This cheapened the award and lowered the self-worth of the Marine.<sup>32</sup> McKay laid the blame squarely on the unpopularity of the Vietnam War. A strong anti-military public feeling in the post war era contributed to awards being awarded to those who were simply serving.<sup>33</sup> The perception that Marines were not earning their awards was clearly displayed in this article, although the author did not discount awards that should be earned for doing a difficult job exceptionally well.<sup>34</sup>

In a 1985 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, “Our Flawed Awards System,” Captain B. P. Ryan highlighted his belief that awards should not be given to officers, who should always perform at a high level and were only doing what was required by their commissions as officers.<sup>35</sup> His thesis rested on an awards summary reported by the *Navy Times*; he only discussed service awards and not valor awards.<sup>36</sup> He provided an insight into the potential perception shared by the officer corps at the time following the Vietnam War. Ryan stated that the officer corps should not require an external symbol of the high calling expressed by the officer commission.<sup>37</sup> An interesting fact about his essay is that it was a 1984 professional writing contest runner-up submission while he was an Amphibious Warfare Student.<sup>38</sup>

In the same 1985 *Marine Corps Gazette*, Colonel Fred Anthony (Retired) provided “Decorations and Awards: An Update.”<sup>39</sup> Anthony highlighted the fundamentals of awards, “The purpose of military decorations and awards is to publicly recognize extraordinary, exceptionally meritorious, of conspicuously outstanding acts of heroism and other acts or services that are above and beyond that normally expected.”<sup>40</sup>

In opposing the opinion of Captain Ryan, Anthony’s article applied the standards set forth in the earlier articles from WWII. It is the commander’s duty to apply the awards criteria equally and fairly to all Marines, to retain the true meaning and character of the awards, Anthony argued.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1987 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “Fixing the Awards System,” Captain Robert Putnam outlined a radical idea to reduce the number of medals to 10, five for valor and five for merit.<sup>42</sup> He also offered a second proposal, which further reduced the number of medals, wherein the services lost their individual service crosses and the meritorious medals would stay as in his first proposal. He was of the opinion that there were too many awards and no one could understand what the medals represented. Putnam further stated, “our top awards have been lost in this over-blown array.”<sup>43</sup> Overall, the author’s thesis was that the original intention of the awards has been lost, “The problem simply stated is our present awards system does not provide the respect and lasting recognition, whether for merit or valor, due deserving individuals.”<sup>44</sup> His thesis fell short of explaining why having more medals detracted from the top awards, especially those for valor.

In the April 1991 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “The Awards System Needs Revision,” Captain C. J. Potempa stated that awards were devalued by the overuse of



medals as a reward for merely doing one's duty.<sup>45</sup> This article shared the same tone as that of Captain Ryan's 1985 *Marine Corps Gazette* article. Potempa used awards for actions in Grenada and Panama as the bases for his argument:<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, the peacetime military establishment has searched for reasons to bestow awards during the long periods of time when there has been no conflict, and it could be argued that the issuance of awards is another example of inter-service rivalry, each trying to outdo the other. A belief has permeated the military that there is a need to issue awards to personnel who are just doing their jobs.<sup>47</sup>

Potempa further argued, using his figures from the limited conflicts in the 1980s, that he expected approximately one million decorations (merit and valor) to be awarded following operation Desert Storm.<sup>48</sup> His estimate was terribly wrong for top valor awards given to U.S. Marines in Desert Storm: two Navy Crosses and 15 Silver Stars.<sup>49</sup> This article reinforces the negative perception that the awards system present in the 1980s and 1990s was inflated and merely rewards Marines for simply doing their jobs. Potempa stated, "During the current crisis in the Middle East, the entire inflated awards system needs to be brought back down to the level for which it was established."<sup>50</sup>

In April 1991, the *Marine Corps Gazette* published "Medals: For Warriors or Bureaucrats?" by Captain John Berry, Jr. The author took a similar approach suggesting that the number of awards should be reduced to 10 personal medals and three unit awards. All of the personal awards were for valor except the Bronze Star, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, and the Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal.<sup>51</sup> Berry discussed his first experience in an Infantry Battalion, where all of the officers above captain were Vietnam veterans, all having earned the Bronze Star with combat "V." The author recalled overhearing two combat veteran Staff Non-Commissioned Officers "refer to the Bronze Star as an officers good conduct medal."<sup>52</sup> This is when he first suspected

the awards system to be flawed. He presented several similar examples to argue that the awards system was broken and that Marines were cynical and embittered by the post-Vietnam awards system.<sup>53</sup> He made the point that “8,000 personnel earned 5,000 awards for action in Grenada.”<sup>54</sup> Although he felt that the award system was broken and that awards were given needlessly to unappreciative recipients, he did make some good points. First, he stated that commanders must take the appropriate steps to document valor and to forward recommendations to the next higher commander as soon as possible.<sup>55</sup> The next higher commander should review and forward these to the awarding authority, who must review them. If they are approved, the award must be awarded within 30 days of submission.<sup>56</sup> These steps would have gotten the awarding timeline on par with that during WWII or Korea, but they were never employed. This article reinforced the negative perception that the awards system was broken following Vietnam.

In the July 1991 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “Meaningless Medals” Colonel P.F.C. Armstrong (Retired) also decried a cheapening of the awards system.<sup>57</sup> One significant difference in Armstrong’s argument was the extent to which he believed the awards system was inflated. Armstrong believed that the awards system began to lose its luster after WWII and that it became further tarnished after Korea. He stated that the creation of several occupation, service, and unit awards created too many unneeded medals.<sup>58</sup> He argued that from the end of WWII until 1991, the U.S. Marine Corps added too many meritorious and joint medals. Armstrong recommended that the Commandant of the Marine Corps take action to get the awards system back on track and get leaders to stop awarding peacetime staff decorations for Marines by Marines.<sup>59</sup> He suggested a different approach for combat awards:

Concerning combat decorations, the way to bring this under scrutiny is to establish much more stringent award criteria and require Commandant-level award approval. While some would argue that this would create a bureaucratic monster, a closely monitored awards program would quickly get its message across to the subordinate levels that a new critical awards program had been established. Very quickly thereafter, the number of award recommendations forwarded to the Commandant would rapidly diminish.<sup>60</sup>

The approach of Colonel Armstrong left little room for subordinate commanders to reward those Marines who perform at a level that merits an award, especially for valor. Under these circumstances there would have been no need for a Secretary of Naval Instruction 1650.1H, the *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual*, which outlined detailed guidance for submission of awards. It would have been unrealistic to expect one man, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, to review and approve every award submitted for approval.

The March 1994 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “Maintaining the Quality of our Military Awards System” by Major Charles V. Mungo, detailed his ideas for preventing the Marine Corps awards system from becoming more flawed and inflated. Mungo first provided historical background regarding military awards and then further explained the current military awards from all branches of the U.S. military.<sup>61</sup> He then used charts detailing the number of four specific meritorious awards over an 18-year period from 1972 to 1990.<sup>62</sup> He posited, “the beginning of the liberalization of the award system during the absence of a lengthy armed conflict, 1980 serves as a good benchmark.”<sup>63</sup> In his conclusion, he wrote:

Our military award system must return to the basis which it was founded. The system should provide a tangible reward to those who distinguish themselves in combat and to recognize those who demonstrate exceptional peacetime performance. We must not let our military awards system follow the path of our inflated performance evaluation system. Consequently, the award of a military decoration should not be used as an added inflation factor for fitness reporting.

Commanders at all levels need to ensure that these ‘pieces of ribbon’ are awarded to those who deserve them. Anything less serves to devalue the awards given to our Nation’s heroes, many of whom gave their lives in the performance of their duty.<sup>64</sup>

At the time, Mungo clearly believed that the Marine Corps awards system was inflated and flawed. This reinforced the negative perception that all Marines held the same view during the 1980s and 1990s.

In the April 2000 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor Says it All,” retired Colonel Thomas X. Hammes offered some radical ideas about awards and what the Marine Corps should do about them. “This author believes that ‘something’ (an award) for ‘nothing’ (doing your job) has gotten out of hand in today’s award system.”<sup>65</sup> He provided two examples of awards during his time in the Marine Corps, in 1979 and in 1983. In the 1979 example, he detailed the regiment being formed to award the only two medals in the previous three years, two Navy Achievement Medals.<sup>66</sup> In 1983, while a student at the Army’s Advanced Infantry Officer Course, he saw nearly all of the 200 Army Officers receive an Army Commendation Medal during his months as a student.<sup>67</sup> He wrote, “Today [2000], the second scene is much more relative of our Corps than the first.”<sup>68</sup> Hammes opinion was anecdotal.<sup>69</sup> He then detailed his idea to reestablish award standards; the first option was to immediately publish a directive reinstating the standards.<sup>70</sup> He clearly assumed that none of his fellow officers or general officers followed the published *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual*. He then admitted that this approach would be flawed, because his fellow officers would immediately begin backsliding from this directive with Marine leaders taking care of their subordinates.<sup>71</sup> Next, he outlined his radical idea, “A much more equitable approach is to simply void all noncombat awards. Effective on a specified date, all medals which

do not have a combat V will be declared invalid. Marines will no longer be authorized to wear them.”<sup>72</sup>

The author then went on to recount an error in Army military history, when all members of the 27th Maine were awarded the Medal of Honor for simply enlisting, since no other medal existed.<sup>73</sup> This is a flawed argument because the Medal of Honor had a different meaning prior to WWI, after which the Medal of Honor was only awarded for the highest of courageous acts in combat. In the author’s closing argument, he looked back with zeal to the perceived overly stingy period in the late 1980s when awards were rare and Marines thought the awards system overinflated and this was corrected by not awarding any.<sup>74</sup>

In the 2005 *Leatherneck* article “Medals and Decorations Acts of Valor: How the Corps Awards Combat Medals and Decorations,” R. R. Keene answered several potential questions about how medals were awarded. “In these times of war, there are, as in all recent wars, questions about the number of awards, the types of awards and their value.”<sup>75</sup> The majority of this article centered on an interview with the U.S. Marine Corps, head of the Military Awards Branch, Charles V. Mungo, a retired USMC colonel. Mungo spent over two decades in the Marine Corps and had some unique experience studying awards and the history of decorations since he was a captain. Keene wrote that Mungo stated there had been very little awards inflation in the war on terror or awards being biased to officers.<sup>76</sup> “Of the eight Navy Crosses, two went to officers, six to enlisted. Silver Stars break down to eight officers and 16 enlisted.”<sup>77</sup> Mungo also stated that it was his job to ensure that all orders and directives were applied fairly. “However

some say the Corps has always ranged from being judicious to downright miserly in awarding of combat medals. And that is not necessarily a bad thing.”<sup>78</sup>

Military Decorations provide a tangible reminder of the many sacrifices made to support our country and should be a source of pride to those who wear them. Decorations serve not only to reward someone of his or her past performance, but also to motivate others to a higher level of performance. This was best described by Napoleon when he stated that ‘men will risk their lives for a small piece of ribbon.’ In light of [that], leaders at all levels of authority must apply strong leadership to ensure that the sanctity of our military decorations maintained.<sup>79</sup>

Mungo went on to say that today’s Marine Corps allows lieutenant generals in command to approve awards up to Bronze Star and Brigadier Generals can approve awards of lesser acts up to the Navy Commendation Medal with combat “V.” He further stated that the new automated Improved Awards Processing System (IAPS) had streamlined the awards process.<sup>80</sup> This is an interesting statement given the extended time it now takes for the top valor awards to be approved, much longer than that of previous wars.

Keene’s article went on to discuss Mungo’s comparison of the number of awards available in WWII to the number available in OIF/OEF. Mungo stated that WWII lasted four years and a Marine could have earned five awards for serving throughout. A Marine could have earned four awards for service during the Korean War. A Marine could have earned three in Vietnam, then four in Desert Storm, and five today if serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>81</sup> Mungo discussed the proposed Congressional legislation that would require the DOD to conduct a complete review of the entire awards process.<sup>82</sup> This legislation was brought forward after the HASC held hearings concerning the low number of valor awards in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the excessive length of time to

approve the top valor awards, sometimes over two years after the submission.<sup>83</sup> Keene quotes Mungo:

In my 1994 article for the Gazette, I argued that the system was inflated. I have since changed my opinion and don't believe that the system has gone through an inflationary trend but an evolutionary trend. There's a big difference between the two. The system has evolved, but it has not evolved in a structured way. And because the evolution has not been guided by a set of well-defined principles to ensure equity and consistency, it is time to review the awards system, which quite frankly, is a healthy thing to do.<sup>84</sup>

The legislation was not passed and a DOD wide review of the awards system never occurred. Mungo shared the negative perception in the 1980s and 1990s, which was that of an inflated award system. It is insightful that 10 years later he saw the awards system not as inflated but as evolving. How that distinction was made is not clear, considering that the *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual* (Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H) explicitly outlines the criteria and requirements for awards. It appears that evolution is another way to say inflation without defamation to the process he led for the U.S. Marine Corps until the mid-2000s.

Captain Wes J. Deaver's 2010 article, "The Medal of Honor: An Era of Overprotection," highlighted the lack of Medals of Honor awarded in the present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the time of its publication, it had been nine years since the "war on terror" began and only six servicemen had been awarded the Medal of Honor.<sup>85</sup>

"The process by which the MOH is awarded has become flawed, and the DOD must strive to bring an end to an era of overprotection of the nation's highest awards for valor."<sup>86</sup> The author clearly highlighted the fact that the DOD had not awarded a Medal of Honor to a living recipient in nearly 30 years, even after nine years of war. During the Civil War 1,522 Medals of Honor had been awarded to Union Soldiers. Another 426

Medals of Honor had been awarded during the Indian Campaigns, for a total of 1,948 Medals of Honor.<sup>87</sup> These numbers helped to illustrate the number of Medals of Honor awarded since the medal's inception. "From World War I through the Vietnam conflict, another 967 MOHs were presented for acts of heroism"<sup>88</sup> This shows the decline in the number of Medals of Honor in WWI, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

An article written by Brendan McCarry of the *Air Force Times* evaluated the statistics from WWI to Vietnam, and they showed that Medal of Honor recipients per 100,000 service-members stayed between a low of 2.3 (Korea) and a high of 2.9 (WWII). Since the terrorist attacks of 2001, the six people awarded the Medal of Honor amount to a rate of 0.1 per 100,000. This equates to one recipient per 1,000,000.<sup>89</sup>

As expressed in this article, U.S. Marines wondered if death was a requirement to receive the Medal of Honor. Of the six Medals of Honor awarded in OIF/OEF, none had been awarded to a living recipient.<sup>90</sup> In reference to this understanding of death, the Commandant of the Marines Corps General James T. Conway stated, "We have a case that I've sent an investigating officer out to take a look at on the West Coast that, if proven. I think will prompt me to recommend the Medal of Honor for a living Marine."<sup>91</sup> Another important point made by this author is that there was an extremely high level of scrutiny given to awards in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Captain Deaver then discussed the merits of First Lieutenant Brian R. Chontosh who, in March 2003, during a deadly ambush singled handedly attacked through the ambush. During this action, First Lieutenant Chontosh killed several enemies with his weapon before expending all ammunition, he then picked up several enemy weapons, killing enemy and clearing the entrenched enemy ambush. During his attack, he also used



enemy rocket propelled grenades to kill the attacking enemy. When this was completed, First Lieutenant Chontosh cleared over 200 meters of enemy trenches, killing more than 20 of the enemy.<sup>92</sup> For his actions, First Lieutenant Chontosh was awarded the Navy Cross. Captain Deaver asked if this Marine would have been awarded the Medal of Honor had he died? This is plausible when First Lieutenant Chontosh's Navy Cross citation is compared with those other Medal of Honor citations from earlier wars.

Captain Deaver's next example was that of Sergeant Rafael Peralta, a U.S. Marine who was killed in action in 2004 during Operation Phantom Fury,<sup>93</sup> smothering a grenade to protect fellow squad members. Sergeant Peralta was recommended for the Medal of Honor and after two years, in 2006, his approved award was forwarded from the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Secretary of the Navy.<sup>94</sup> It then was forwarded to the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who sent the recommendation back asking for more information.<sup>95</sup> After further information was collected, the award was returned in 2007 to then Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.<sup>96</sup> Gates assigned five individuals to conduct another review of the recommendation, including a forensic pathologist. The Secretary ultimately denied the Medal of Honor and awarded the Navy Cross instead.<sup>97</sup> This certainly is the most brazen example of an act of valor being scrutinized, even in the act of death to protect fellow Marines.<sup>98</sup> Captain Deaver provided some interesting figures concerning the ratio of Medals of Honor awarded posthumously or to living recipients from the Civil War to present day, "Of the nearly 1,500 medals awarded in that era (Civil War) only 33 were awarded posthumously, roughly 2.1 percent. From World War I through Vietnam there were 967 MOHs, 548 of which were posthumous, over 57 percent. Of the final eight MOHs awarded since Vietnam, 100 percent have been

posthumous.”<sup>99</sup> Captain Deaver’s article provided insight into the Medal of Honor and how it had been awarded up to the time of publication in September 2010. In the counter argument, he quoted Mungo, “The Medal of Honor was essentially the military’s sole valor award until 1917. Today, there are 24 valor decorations. A lot of Medals of Honor were given out [early on] because there was no substitute.” Captain Deaver’s response outlined the fact that President Lincoln created the Medal of Honor to be awarded for acts of valor that went above and beyond the call of duty.<sup>100</sup> He noted that Mungo also failed to acknowledge the facts of refinement undertaken by not only the U.S. Marine Corps, but also the government at large, to solidify the criteria for the Medal of Honor.

“For a Bit of Colored Ribbon” the 2011 *Marine Corps Gazette* article by Lieutenant Colonel Michael D. Grice, argued why the awards process was broken. He noted that the bureaucratic system failed to approve valor awards in a timely manner. He wrote that on August 7, 1942 Marines landed at Guadalcanal and on September 30, 1942, within 54 days of the first actions in the Pacific Campaign, Admiral Chester Nimitz flew in to personally decorate several Marines with the Navy Cross.<sup>101</sup> “According to the Marine Corps’ improved awards processing system, the current average time to process a Navy Cross is 451 days, and a Silver Star takes over a year.”<sup>102</sup> The author asked why the authority to approve awards cannot be delegated to a lower level and why in the age of computers awards cannot be approved in a more responsible and timely manner?<sup>103</sup> A significant number of awards are presented to Marines after they leave active duty.

Retired Colonel, Lee W. Freund’s 2012 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, “Enabling Timely Combat Awards” outlined the steps that should be taken to ensure that awards are not delayed in the IAPS due to administrative errors. The opening paragraphs of this

article highlighted how impressed an awarding battalion commander was that two Marines and a Navy corpsman received their awards (a Silver Star and two Bronze Stars with “V”) just six months after the actions.<sup>104</sup> In the computer age and with IAPS, six months seemed rather slow when compared to the presentation time in past wars. The thesis of his article was that it is the commander’s responsibility to ensure that awards are submitted properly. Commanders always must be involved in the awards process. Troop welfare is their second highest responsibility, after mission accomplishment.

In the 2012 *Marine Corps Gazette* article “The Awards Buffet,” Captain Roberto Scribner outlined ideas that are more aligned with the 1980s and 1990s, than with 2012. The basis of his argument was that officers do not need awards and they have received more awards than their enlisted counterparts have. He defended his thesis with data that included all 20 personal awards (including the Combat Action Ribbon), both meritorious and for valor, except the Medal of Honor.<sup>105</sup> This methodology outlines a flaw in his argument; looking at meritorious awards that generally are awarded to officers because of the great scope of responsibility outlined by the criteria set forth in the *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual* (Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H).

Scribner used percentages to evaluate the difference between officers and enlisted, but he failed to provide a significant statistical difference in proportionality. According to the author’s data, enlisted Marines greatly outnumber officers for the top valor awards. The Navy Cross had been awarded to 17 enlisted and one officer; the Silver Star had been awarded to 26 enlisted and six officers; and the Medal of Honor to no officers.<sup>106</sup> He argued that officers received awards as a short cut, instead of ensuring that officers received timely effective fitness reports, which articulate their true value as it

related to future service.<sup>107</sup> He stated, “The standards and review process for the Silver Star, Navy Cross, and Medal of Honor are stringent and not prone to manipulation in the way that lesser awards are.”<sup>108</sup> This argument makes little sense, considering that all awards originate from an officer and must be recommended and approved at every command level. It implies that officers might be manipulating awards in their favor. Why would a Marine officer lie for a medal? This goes against their ethos.

The *Marine Corps Gazette* article “A Flawed Awards System” by Major Scott Huesing mentioned little about the top valor awards researched in this thesis, but it did help to support the negative perception of the awards process.<sup>109</sup> Huesing noted the frustration the U.S. Marines have with the current awards system, the displeasure they share about the IAPS, and the disgust they have with the time it takes to get awards approved.<sup>110</sup> This article reflects the negative perception that the current awards system does not facilitate the awarding of valor awards to U.S. Marines in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 2014 *Joint Forces Quarterly* article “Gallantry and Intrepidity” by Dr. Eileen Chollet provided a comparative analysis of valor decorations for all services in OIF/OEF and past conflicts.<sup>111</sup> Her article looked at all U.S. military branches. It compared the difference in awards from the Chosin Reservoir, a battle in Korea, to that of the current wars:

During 11 years of war, nearly 2.5 million U.S. troops have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than 5,000 have been killed, and nearly 50,000 have been wounded due to hostile action. However, only 13 Medals of Honor have been awarded for actions in those 11 years, compared with 17 awarded for those 17 days in Korea. Service-members and civilians alike wonder why.<sup>112</sup>

Chollet discussed the difficulties of working with awards data and incomplete records, but her analysis showed, “Although the incompleteness of the data complicates the analysis, a comparison of awards rates for current and past conflicts shows that 20 times fewer valor decorations have been awarded during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars than during Vietnam and Korea”<sup>113</sup> (see table 1).

Table 1. U.S. Valor Decorations Awarded by War(s)

	<b>Korea</b>	<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>OIF/OEF</b>
Medal of Honor	135 awarded	248 awarded	13 awarded
	1 per 13,000 Service members in theater	1 per 14,000 Service members in theater	1 per 200,000 Service members in theater
Service Crosses	1,100 awarded	1,700 awarded	70 awarded
	1 per 2,000 Service members in theater	1 per 2,000 Service members in theater	1 per 37,000 Service members in theater
Silver Star	88,000 awarded	35,000 awarded	1,000 awarded
	1 per 20 Service members in theater	1 per 100 Service members in theater	1 per 2,600 Service members in theater

*Source:* Eileen Chollet, “Gallantry and Intrepidity: Valor Decorations in Current and Past Conflicts.” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 72 (1st Quarter March 2014): 63. Notes: Chollett developed this table for this article. The award rate in Iraq and Afghanistan had a 20-fold decrease from Korea and Vietnam for all valor decorations.

Her article showed that compared to previous wars, OIF/OEF had a 20-fold decrease in Medal of Honor numbers.<sup>114</sup> The Service Crosses and Silver Star have also dropped by a factor of 20.<sup>115</sup> When combined, all services had a 20-fold decrease in the

number of valor awards in OIF/OEF when compared to all previous wars. Chollet was able to use more detailed casualty data to account for types of injury and compared it to awards given. The most interesting part of the article was that when she compared the data of the current wars and corrected for the improvised explosive device effect this only accounted for a factor of six. Where does the remaining difference come from?<sup>116</sup>

Chollet investigated the DOD's response that improvised explosive devices and drones explain the decreased number of top valor decorations awarded, called the standoff effect.<sup>117</sup> However, Chollet argued that the DOD's response to fewer awards is flawed and provided two reasons:

First, explosives were extensively used in Korea and Vietnam, and they historically account for more casualties than small-arms fire. Even the Vietnam War, known for its close fighting in the jungle rather than distant shelling, had more casualties due to explosives such as artillery, land mines, and grenades than to small-arms fire according to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Southeast Asia Combat Casualties Current File. While it might be "Hard to be a hero against an IED," as one military historian put it, it is just as hard to be a hero against artillery fire, which can have an effective range of more than 10 miles. Second, all the Medals of Honor awarded for combat in Afghanistan were for incidents that occurred in 2005 or later, when IEDs were most heavily used. If IEDs were causing the drop in award rates, we would expect the awards to be clustered at the beginning of the war when IED use was minimal.<sup>118</sup>

In her conclusion, Chollet discussed the changes that have occurred since the Vietnam War. The standoff effect accounts for a small portion of the decrease in medals awarded, but does not really explain the reason for the 20-fold decrease. The military did allow lesser personal decorations to signify valor with the addition of the combat "V," following the Vietnam War.<sup>119</sup> She highlighted that during the 1990s military officials debated internally whether awards might be given too loosely; this resulted in the review of the Bronze Star process for Kosovo:<sup>120</sup>

Delegations of approval authority for the Iraq and Afghanistan operations admonish commanders to reserve awards for those ‘who truly distinguish themselves from among their comrades by exceptional performance in combat or in support of combat operations.’ It would be unusual for these cultural factors not to affect the number of decorations awarded.<sup>121</sup>

Finally, Chollet could not really identify the definitive reason for the significant decrease.

However, she definitely showed that there was a significant decrease since the Vietnam

War, one that is concerning to service-members and civilians alike.<sup>122</sup>

### Valor Awards in the Media

Several newspapers and periodicals have directly addressed the limited number of top valor awards for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>123</sup> These have appeared mainly in service specific or military publications, but 12 were in the mainstream media. *The Economist* published an article in November 2006, which stated that before the war on terror no one had complained about not receiving valor awards in previous wars.<sup>124</sup> *The Economist* article highlighted the negative perception that the U.S. military was not awarding as many valor awards as in Vietnam. Over 21,000 U.S. veterans had received the Silver Star in Vietnam and only a few hundred by 2006, the fifth year since actions began in Afghanistan and the third year since they began in Iraq.<sup>125</sup> *The Economist* reported that the Pentagon was conducting a study regarding the awards process in OIF/OEF.

The most current articles from 2012 forward discussed the shortcomings of the process and the low number of top valor decorations being awarded in OIF/OEF. Internet articles from Fox-News, CNN, and other national outlets reported issues with the awards system. In the most recent announcement from the Secretary of Defense, a complete review of the awards processes from each service must be completed by early 2015.<sup>126</sup>

The *Marine Corps Times* is a weekly news publication that reports current military affairs within the U.S. Marine Corps.<sup>127</sup> Two articles have been written that detailed the valor awards received by U.S. Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. One discussed how the U.S. Marine Corps does not have any recipients of multiple top valor awards. All other services have at least one member with a combination of two top valor awards: a Medal of Honor, Service Cross, or the Silver Star.<sup>128</sup> “While dozens of Marines have earned at least one of the top three valor awards, none have earned more than one, raising questions about whether the service branches impose different standards in their own approval processes for top valor awards.”<sup>129</sup> These media articles highlighted how the decreased number of top valor awards in OIF/OEF is being reported to service members and shaping their negative perception.

A review of an autobiography by recently retired Secretary of Defense Robert Gates provided two telling viewpoints about valor awards. The reviewer, Leo Shane, a staff writer for *Stars and Stripes*, a U.S. Army newspaper, listed these two views, one from Mr. Gates, and one from a U.S. Army general:

He believes there are too few Medal of Honor recipients. Gates said the heroism he saw from reports in Iraq and Afghanistan indicated that more troops should have been recognized with the nation’s highest military honor. But Pentagon generals forwarded only a few names. Officials said publicly that the standards hadn’t changed since previous wars, but Gates wrote otherwise.<sup>130</sup>

I once asked (Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Pete) Chiarelli why so few had been recommended,” Gates wrote. “He said because the medals had been passed out so freely in Vietnam, succeeding officers were determined to raise the bar. They had raised it too high, he thought.<sup>131</sup>

These quotations are interesting, given that Mr. Gates overturned a Medal of Honor submission for Sergeant Peralta, U.S. Marine Corps. Mr. Gates requested his own independent investigation, finding that Sergeant Peralta was not living when he jumped



on a grenade to save fellow Marines. However, Sergeant Peralta was awarded the Navy Cross. The media have become more interested in Marines or Soldiers and their awards for valor, since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have continued for over a decade.

### Valor Awards and Congress

On December 6, 2006, there was a congressional hearing before the HASC.<sup>132</sup> The HASC conducted an examination of criteria for awards and decorations in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan compared with those of previous wars. Several high-ranking service members addressed questions from the HASC pertaining to their individual services. In addition, executive members of the Office of the Secretary of Defense answered questions regarding the DOD awards process as a whole.

Several telling findings resulted from this hearing. Accordingly, the HASC requested that a study be conducted to address the disparity between the number of valor awards in OIF/OEF and in previous wars.<sup>133</sup> The two key items that came from the HASC hearing were the quantifiable difference in numbers of valor awards and the length of time to approve valor awards nominated in OIF/OEF.

### Summary and Conclusion

There is a noticeable gap in research when a search is conducted for scientific analysis of valor awards for any war. It appears that the question of why valor awards appeared less prevalent had not been asked until OIF/OEF. The majority of the current material related to this thesis provided evidence to validate the negative perception of fewer awards, given the interest from news media, service-member articles, and Congress in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The HASC hearings pertaining to

the topic of fewer valor awards in OIF/OEF lend credibility to the view that the negative perception among service members is valid. No study exists regarding the U.S. Marine Corps and top valor awards in OIF/OEF, compared with valor awards for U.S. Marines in past conflicts. This study will address the question of whether the perception that the U.S. Marine Corps is awarding fewer awards than in previous conflicts is valid. Published research on this topic failed to identify a link between the number of valor awards and those perceptions or why there could be a difference in the number of valor awards for each war. This study will try to identify a link between the number of valor awards and those negative perceptions for OIF/OEF, and will try to identify causes of the decreased number of valor awards. Based on these findings, the resulting information could provide useful to the U.S Marine Corps awarding authority. The next chapter will detail how this study will accomplish its intended purpose.

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<sup>1</sup>The HASC conducted an Examination of Criteria for Awards and Decorations to address concerns that military members were not receiving the appropriate valor awards for combat and those that were awarded were not awarded in a timely manner.

<sup>2</sup>Bureau of Naval Personnel, Naval Personnel Manual 15.790, *Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1953), intro. ltr.

<sup>3</sup>The Naval Archives at the Washington Naval Yard provided the only historical awards manuals in their possession for use in this thesis.

<sup>4</sup>Borch and McDowell.

<sup>5</sup>Wise and Baron.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Veterans Affairs, *The Congressional Medal of Honor: The Names, The Deeds*.

<sup>7</sup>Ray D. Tassin, *Double Winners of the Medal of Honor* (Canton, OH: Daring Books. 1986). Dan Daly was awarded the Medal of honor in China (August 14, 1900) and Haiti (October 24, 1915). Smedly Butler was awarded the Medal of Honor in Vera Cruz (April 22, 1914) and Haiti (November 17, 1915).

- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 156-157.
- <sup>9</sup>“Military Decorations,” *Leatherneck* 9, no. 3 (February 1926): 6.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid. The Medal of Honor and Service Cross were for Valor. The Distinguished Service Medal was for conspicuous service in a position of great trust.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid. The Distinguished Service Medal was only awarded to senior officers or civilians whose service was less conspicuous but still needed by the military.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup>“For Valor,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 16, no. 2 (August 1931): 36.
- <sup>15</sup>P. B. McNicol, “Ribbons-How They’re Awarded,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 29, no. 7 (July 1945): 52.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., 53.
- <sup>21</sup>Harry Polete, “The Nation’s Highest,” *Leatherneck* 29, no. 10 (October 1946): 37.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., 38.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., 39.
- <sup>27</sup>Jane F. Blakeney, “Your Korean Decorations,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 38, no. 3 (March 1954): 39.
- <sup>28</sup>Marvin T. Hopgood, Jr., “A Bit of Ribbon,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 52, no. 10 (October 1968): 53.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>31</sup>John C. McKay, "Too Many Awards," *Marine Corps Gazette* 66, no. 3 (March 1982): 27.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Brendan P. Ryan, "Our Flawed Awards System," *Marine Corps Gazette* 69, no. 10 (October 1985): 37-38.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>38</sup>Amphibious Warfare School is a year long course taught in Quantico, VA. The students are selected by a board to be trained in the Marine Corps Operations Planning Process. The class consists of approximately 180 senior captains.

<sup>39</sup>Fred Anthony, "Decorations and Awards: An Update," *Marine Corps Gazette* (October 1985): 38.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Robert W. Putnam, "Fixing the Awards System," *Marine Corps Gazette* 71, no. 4 (April 1987): 66.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Charles J. Potempa, "The Awards System Needs Revision," *Marine Corps Gazette* 75, no. 4 (April 1991): 65-66.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 65. Operation Urgent Fury (Grenada in October 1983) and Operation Just Cause (Panama in December 1989). The author concedes that the naval services did not award as many medals as the Army or Air Force. The Army awarded 9,802 that included 812 Bronze Stars with V. The Air Force awarded 3,077 medals that included 272 Bronze Stars and 841 Air Medals. Award numbers for naval services were not listed.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>See tables in chapter 4.

<sup>50</sup>Potempa, 66.

<sup>51</sup>John C. Berry Jr., “Medals: For Warriors or Bureaucrats?” *Marine Corps Gazette* 75, no. 4 (April 1991): 64.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Peter F. C. Armstrong, “Meaningless Medals,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 75, no. 7 (July 1991): 51-52.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Charles V. Mugno, “Maintaining the Quality of Our Military Awards System,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 78, no. 3 (March 1994): 79.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>65</sup>Thomas X. Hammes, “The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor Says it All,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 84, no. 4 (April 2000): 16.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. The Navy Achievement Medal is the lowest personal decoration for merit and is presented in the form of a medal and corresponding ribbon.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>At the time of this articles writing Colonel Hammes, was the G-5 (plans officer) at 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, a three star command. After retiring Mr. Hammes earned a Ph.D. from Oxford University, and published books on 4th Generation Warfare. Mr. Hammes also worked as a defense contractor. He is very well respected in counter-insurgency theory.

<sup>70</sup>Hammes, 17. This standard was one of which Hammes thought had existed prior, however the criteria for awards has remained unchanged since WWII.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>R. R. Keene, “Medals & Decorations Acts of Valor: How the Corps Awards Combat Medals and Decorations,” *Leatherneck* 88, no. 8 (August 2005): 32.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.* This Congressional hearing will be discussed in great detail later in the literature review.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>85</sup>Wes J. Deaver, “The Medal of Honor, An Era of Overprotection,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 94, no. 9 (September 2010): 63.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.* This number of Medals of Honor represents the totals of all awards to all branches of service.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*

- <sup>89</sup>Ibid., 64.
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>91</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid. See Appendix C, selected Navy Cross citations.
- <sup>93</sup>Ibid. Operation Phantom Fury was the battle of Fallujah, Iraq.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., 65.
- <sup>95</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>96</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid., 66.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., 67.
- <sup>101</sup>Michael D. Grice, “For a Bit of Colored Ribbon,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 95, no. 10 (October 2011): 6.
- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., 8. All data reported in this article was downloaded from IAPS website under the section “Average Time to Process Awards” on 18 April 2011.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., 10.
- <sup>104</sup>Lee W. Freund, “Enabling Timely Combat Awards,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 2 (February 2012): 79.
- <sup>105</sup>The Combat Action Ribbon is a personal award, although it is only represented with a ribbon and does not have a corresponding medal.
- <sup>106</sup>Roberto Scribner, “The Awards Buffet: Eliminate the Issuing and Wearing of Personal Awards for Officers,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 4 (April 2012): 76.
- <sup>107</sup>Ibid., 77. A U.S. Marine Corps Fitness Report is the evaluative report which rates a Marine. The superiors evaluate that Marine. A Marine’s Fitness Reports are used for promotion and determining a potential for future service.
- <sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Scott A. Huesing, "A Flawed Awards System," *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 6 (June 2012): 18.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup>Eileen Chollet. "Gallantry and Intrepidity: Valor Decorations in Current and Past Conflicts," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 72 (1st Quarter March 2014): 61.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 62. Note: she was comparing the battle of Chosin Reservoir during Korea to current war Medal of Honor numbers.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup>Chollet; Jim Tice, "If it's easy medals you're after, you've come to the wrong war," *Army Times*, September 1, 2003, quoted in Chollett, 64.

<sup>122</sup>Chollett, 62.

<sup>123</sup>This thesis research found 23 articles pertaining to the topic of fewer awards and the perception in the military that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in fewer valor awards.

<sup>124</sup>"The Undecorated," November 16, 2006, *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/node/8173810> (accessed 15 October 2013). At the time of publication, no Marines had received the Medal of Honor. On November 10, 2006 President Bush announced Corporal Jason Dunham, U.S. Marine Corps would receive a Medal of Honor (posthumously) for actions in Iraq.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup>Mike Mount, "Flap over military combat awards grows," CNN, November 26, 2012, <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/26/flap-over-military-combat-awards-grows/> (accessed March 31, 2014).



<sup>127</sup>*The Marine Corps Times* is not endorsed or affiliated with the U.S. Marine Corps.

<sup>128</sup>A Service Cross is the second highest award for valor in each U.S. military service. Those awards are the Distinguished Service Cross (U.S. Army), Navy Cross (U.S. Navy and Marine Corps), the Air Force Cross (U.S. Air Force), and they are all equivalent.

<sup>129</sup>Andrew Tilghman, “Honor Roles,” *Marine Corps Times* 15, no. 37 (September 16, 2013): 10.

<sup>130</sup>Leo Shane, III, “Gates as VP? Memoir is Full of Interesting Tidbits,” *Stars and Stripes*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.stripes.com/gates-as-vp-memoir-is-full-of-interesting-tidbits-1.261813> (accessed January 14, 2014).

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup>The HASC conducted an Examination of Criteria for Awards and Decorations to address concerns that military members were not receiving the appropriate valor awards for combat and those that were awarded were not awarded in a timely manner.

<sup>133</sup>The HASC commissioned the study to examine the difference in awards that has been identified with previous awards. That report was to be completed by the Under Secretary for Defense of Personnel and Readiness by May 2007. That report has not been found and likely was never completed due to not being authorized by the Congressional Budget.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Statistics are no substitute for judgment.

— Henry Clay, “ThinkExist Quotations”

The purpose of this research is to determine if there is quantitative and qualitative evidence that supports or refutes the validity of the perception of the decreased awarding of valor awards in OIF/OEF. The research questions will be addressed utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis will compare two or more sets of data or items and examine the relationships among them and the importance of those relationships, if any. The findings will define the results and how those results answer the research questions.

It is inherently difficult to compare all major wars with Marine Corps participation over a 100-year period. All the wars from WWI to present day Afghanistan were fought for different reasons, by different administrations, with different technologies, and by different men. Although the time frame of this study does present its challenges, it also represents a period that includes large scale Marine Corps employment on the world stage. A 100-year period allows for those variables of time and technology potentially to have an effect on why those valor decorations were awarded. Looking at the number of casualties, Marines in service and in theater, and length of conflict will provide a basis for comparison. Although this study might not be able to explain differences that arise from the data, those differences can be examined and interpretations will be identified. In addition, HQMC records are most complete and accurate from WWI to OIF/OEF, reducing the effects of pre-WWI errors.<sup>1</sup> Chapter 3 is organized to outline

the steps taken to compile the necessary research material to conduct the study. Once data are collected, the methodology outlined here will be used to analyze the results and to integrate the awards data findings and writings reviewed.

### Research Material and Data Collection

The first step taken to obtain information relating to this topic was locating primary and secondary source documents. This research began with contact to the Marine Corps Archives at the Gray Research Library in Quantico, Virginia and the Navy Archives at the Washington, D.C. Naval Yard. Simultaneously, it involved conducting research independently and with the assistance of the Combined Arms Research Library research staff. The Marine Corps Foundation's digital archives proved to be an invaluable source of material relating to awards and U.S. Marines since WWI.

Accurate data for U.S. Marine valor awards was sourced and verified by HQMC. The U.S. Marine Corps Awards Branch, located in Quantico, VA, supplied the requested awards data, from before WWI to OIF/OEF, with the caveat that they were the most accurate data the U.S. Marine Corps possessed. The DOD manages a website that accounts for all personnel data pertaining to all wars and all services.<sup>2</sup> The DOD also manages websites that publish all force data concerning total force numbers, casualties, and selected valor awards data.

### Criteria

The DOD and HQMC as the governmental reporting agencies established the credibility of sources for the data. Verification of credibility for the information obtained from HQMC was confirmed from personnel within the Awards Branch. The casualty,

personnel, and service data are understood to be credible based on the following disclosure from the Defense Casualty Analysis System: “DCAS is an application maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). The data that DCAS contains is provided from multiple sources, the primary source being that of the military services themselves.”<sup>3</sup> Based on the oversight of Congress, the media, and the American people it is understood that all data reported by the DOD and HQMC are as reliable as possible even if lacking due to incomplete record keeping and the effects of time. It is the most complete data set available to conduct the quantitative analysis.

All published articles, Congressional hearings, and media reports provide the base of information for determining the general perception regarding awards. This thesis relied on professional Marine journals as the primary means to establish the perception of that time period within the service whether it was positive or negative regarding awards. The media reports and Congressional testimony add to the overall understanding of the perception of awards outside of the service.

### Analysis Conducted

A quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis was conducted with the intent to identify trends and links among the perception of Marines, media, Congress, the Naval Awards Orders; the valor awards data; manpower data; and casualty data. Conducting the analysis of each set of data and comparing it to others where any potential links could be established, like comparing one war to another war. A chi-square test will be utilized to examine the relationship among medals awarded, number of casualties, and conflict duration from WWI to OIF/OEF. The longer the war and the larger the number of casualties, the greater the number of valor awards we would expect to see. The null

hypothesis, which posits proportionality among medals awarded, numbers of casualties, and conflict duration will be investigated using the chi-square analysis. Rejecting the null hypothesis would suggest that differences exist which could not be explained reasonably by chance.

Table 2 shows a simple illustrative example of a two-by-two contingency table along with formula used for estimating the expected count for each cell. The chi-square statistic measures the difference between the observed and expected cell counts. The decision to reject the null hypothesis or not is based on the sum of the chi-square values for the various cells.

Table 2. Example ( $X^2$ ) Chi-Square Table

	C1	C2	Total
R1	<p>Observed = 1</p> <p>Expected = 1.20 = <math>(10)(3/10)(4/10)</math></p> <p><math>X^2 = 0.033 = (1 - 1.20)^2/1.20</math></p>	<p>Observed = 2</p> <p>Expected = 1.80 = <math>(10)(3/10)(6/10)</math></p> <p><math>X^2 = 0.022 = (2 - 1.80)^2/1.80</math></p>	3
R2	<p>Observed = 3</p> <p>Expected = 2.80 = <math>(10)(7/10)(4/10)</math></p> <p><math>X^2 = 0.014 = (3 - 2.80)^2/2.80</math></p>	<p>Observed = 4</p> <p>Expected = 4.20 = <math>(10)(7/10)(6/10)</math></p> <p><math>X^2 = 0.010 = (4 - 4.20)^2/4.20</math></p>	7
Total	4	6	10
$X^2 = 0.033 + 0.022 + 0.014 + 0.010 = 0.079$			

*Source:* Created by Dr. David Bitters, Quality Assurance Department, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, May 16, 2014.

Quantitatively, data from each war from WWI to OIF/OEF will be compared with data from every other war during the period studied. Two comparisons will be made: duration of conflict versus number of top three valor awards and total number of Marine Corps casualties versus total number of top three valor awards. The construction of separate tables will facilitate these comparisons, allowing trends to be established and analyzed.

Qualitatively, five areas of research were reviewed: historical background information on valor awards, Naval Awards Manuals, professional journal writings by U.S. Marines, current media reports and articles on valor awards or the awards process, and Congressional testimony on valor awards and the process. An analysis was conducted by reviewing articles from each period compared to different wars from WWI to OIF/OEF.

The validity and reliability of measures will be assured by maintaining a consistent approach for all periods from WWI to OIF/OEF. Any similarities or trends must be compared to similar trends from different wars. For example, the number of casualties from WWI is independent of the number of awards in Korea.

### Summary and Conclusions

The complexity of the problem and the length of the time frame reviewed add to the difficulty of this study. The goal of using a mixed methodology is to ensure that all research materials are reviewed and potential linkages identified and investigated. The awards data, service population data, and casualty data provide the raw data for the quantitative analysis. The written works, media articles, and Congressional hearings on this subject provide the qualitative material. By conducting a comparative analysis all

potential trends can be identified, investigated, and analyzed. The next chapter will review the findings and analysis.

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<sup>1</sup>Based on conversations with Mr. Herbert at Headquarters Marine Corps Awards Branch.

<sup>2</sup>Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. “Manpower Data for Service Members.” Defense Manpower Data Center, <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml> (accessed October 12, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Uncommon valor was a common virtue.

— Chester Nimitz, “Battle for Iwo Jima, 1945”

The purpose of this research was to determine whether there is quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the perception of decreased awarding of valor awards during OIF/OEF. This research question was addressed utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research attempts to answer several secondary questions, listed below, regarding the awarding of fewer valor awards in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the secondary questions, as discussed in chapter 1, which support the primary research question. Any significant discrepancies will be discussed in light of the qualitative findings for the documents reviewed and discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Intuitively one would expect that the longer a war lasts and the more casualties are incurred, the more top valor decorations would expect to be awarded. In other words, one might expect there to be a proportional relationship among these factors. A contingency table analysis was conducted to test this assumption of proportionality based on wars from WWI to OIF/OEF. Rejection of the hypothesis of proportionality would mean that discrepancies exist, i.e. one that would be difficult to explain by chance.



### Secondary Research Questions

Have the criteria and processes for the top valor awards changed during the past 100 years? A review of the information provided by the Naval Archives in the naval awards manuals indicates that the criteria for each of the top three valor awards have not changed greatly in the last 100 years. Change was not to be expected since each award criterion is authorized by an act of the U.S. Congress.

The awarding criteria for the Medal of Honor were approved and authorized by an act of Congress on August 7, 1942, overriding previous acts establishing the Medal and criteria: February 4, 1919; March 3, 1915; March 3, 1901; and December 21, 1861.<sup>1</sup> The Congressional Act of 1942 standardized the awarding criteria and included the removal of the Department of the Navy's authority to award this medal. The Act of 1942 remains in effect to the present day.<sup>2</sup> It established the President of the United States as the awarding authority for the Medal of Honor. The current naval awards order Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H maintains the same criteria as past naval awards manuals, but includes an extra provision that provides further clarification:

There must be no margin of doubt or possibility of error in awarding this honor. To justify the decoration, the individual's service must clearly be rendered conspicuous above his or her comrades by an act so outstanding that it clearly distinguishes his or her gallantry beyond the call of duty from lesser forms of bravery; and it must be the type of deed which if not done would not subject the individual to any justified criticism. The deed must be without detriment to the mission of the command or to the command to which attached.<sup>3</sup>

The awarding criteria for the Navy Cross were established by an act of Congress on February 4, 1919, and amended by an act on August 7, 1942.<sup>4</sup> Although first authorized in 1919, the Navy Cross was awarded retroactively for actions in WWI. The *Congressional Act of 7 August 1942* established the Navy Cross as a valor award for

combat only; this act established the Navy Cross as equal to the Army's Distinguished Service Cross.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it fixed the Navy Cross as the second highest award for valor in the Naval Services. Along with those of the Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross' criteria have been expanded to provide further guidelines for recommendation of this award:

To warrant this distinctive decoration, the act or execution of duty must be performed in the presence of great danger, or at great personal risk, and must be performed in such a manner as to set individuals apart from their shipmates or fellow Marines. An accumulation of minor acts of heroism normally does not justify the award. The high standards demanded must be borne in mind when recommending the award.<sup>6</sup>

The Silver Star originally was the "citation star" for U.S. Army soldiers as established by the War Department on January 12, 1918.<sup>7</sup> It was established as the Silver Star in 1932. It was not approved for an award to the Naval Services until the August 7, 1942 Congressional Act. The Silver Star also was approved retroactively for actions from December 7, 1941.<sup>8</sup> As with those of the Medal of Honor and Navy Cross, the criteria for the Silver Star have remained unchanged except for the addition of this provision to the current awards manual: "The heroic act(s) performed must render the individual conspicuous and well above the standard expected. An accumulation of minor acts of heroism normally does not justify the award, but unusual or exceptional cases will be decided on their merits."<sup>9</sup>

As noted in chapter 2, the awarding authority for each of the three highest valor awards has varied during the past 100 years. The President of the United States must approve the Medal of Honor in the name of Congress. Presidential approval has always been the requirement for the Medal of Honor since Congress originally approved the award. This continues today, although the Navy could present the Medal of Honor prior to August 7, 1942. In the current naval awards order the Secretary of the Navy must

approve the Navy Cross and Silver Star. As specified in the *Navy and Marine Corps*

*Awards Manual*:

“AUTHORITY RETAINED BY THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

1. All awards to O-10 Flag and General Officers
2. Silver Star Medal and above.
3. Presidential Unit Citation and Navy Unit Commendation.
4. All awards to foreign nationals, unless specifically delegated in writing
5. All determinations of Extraordinary Heroism
6. All awards for personnel serving with the Secretariat Staffs, including the staffs of the Assistant Secretaries of the Navy.”<sup>10</sup>

The Secretary of the Navy is authorized to delegate awarding authority to all commanders within the Department of the Navy for all awards approved for naval service members. However, this rarely occurs except in times of war. During OIF/OEF the Secretary of the Navy has delegated all awards below the Silver Star (see table 3). This has not been the case in previous wars, when all but the Medal of Honor were delegated. The fleet commander could approve up to the Navy Cross Medal. This expedited the awards process, enabling the Navy Cross and Silver Star awards to be presented in weeks or months, versus the 18 months or longer for OIF/OEF.

Of the four naval awards manuals reviewed for this thesis, the current awards order is the longest at 252 pages. The purpose of this document is: “To provide guidance and regulations concerning awards available for recognizing individuals and units in the Naval Service.”<sup>11</sup> In manuals prior to Vietnam, the documents contained less than 15 pages for guidance and regulations pertaining to personnel awards and decorations. The current awards manual contains mostly administrative information for the submission and processing of awards. The administrative guidance in the current order is much more detailed and specific than that in previous orders. Although more detailed in the current

manual, the congressionally mandated awards criteria remain unchanged from those in previous naval awards manuals. There is evidence that in WWII the awarding authority for the Navy Cross was delegated to Admiral Nimitz.<sup>12</sup> Although the awards system and communications predated those of the digital era, awarding authority at lower levels expedited approval. Table 3 lists all naval decorations on the left and those leaders authorized to approve those awards at the top. An X indicates approval authority for that medal. This table is current as of 2013.

Table 3. Current Awarding Authorities

Awards	DELEGATION AUTHORITY						
	Delegation of Wartime Approval Authority-OEF/OIF						
X = AUTHORIZED TO AWARD	SECNAV	CMC	MARCENT	CG I MEF	CG II MEF	CG 3d MAW/ 2d MAW	MSC Cmdrs
Medal of Honor ( <i>SEE NOTE 1</i> )							
Navy Cross	X						
Silver Star	X						
Legion of Merit for Valor (Ref: SecNav memo dtd 13 Jan 05)	X						
Legion of Merit	X	X					
Distinguished Flying Cross for Valor (Ref: SecNav memo dtd 13 Jan 05)	X	X					
Distinguished Flying Cross	X	X					
Navy and Marine Corps Medal	X	X					
Bronze Star Medal for Valor (Ref: SecNav memo dtd 13 Jan 05)	X	X					
Bronze Star Medal	X	X	X				
Purple Heart (Ref: SecNav msg 061312 Sep 02)	X	X	X				
Air Medal for Valor (Ref: SecNav memo dtd 13 Jan 05)	X	X	X				
Air Medal	X	X	X				
Air Medal (Strike/Flight) (Ref: CMC msg 242232Z Mar 05)	X	X	X			X	
Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal for Valor (Ref: CMC msg 242232Z Mar 05)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Navy & Marine Corps Commendation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal for Valor (Ref: CMC msg 242232Z Mar 05)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Combat Action Ribbon (Ref: CMC msg 242232Z Mar 05)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## NOTES:

1. The Medal of Honor is approved and awarded by the President in the name of Congress.

*Source:* Headquarters Marine Corps, Awards Branch, “Delegation Authority, Delegation of Wartime Approval Authority-OIF/OEF,” Quantico, VA, 2013.

As detailed in chapter 2, the top three valor awards currently take 12-24 months or longer for approval. As illustrated in table 3, the Secretary of the Navy has retained all approval authority for the top valor awards. However, the secretary could delegate awarding authority to the Commandant of the Marine Corps or to a regional service

commander (i.e. Marine Central Command). It appears neither the naval awards manual nor the criteria for the top three valor decorations contribute to the decrease in awards in OIF/OEF.

Is there a noticeable change in perception for valor awards in each war during the period studied? Twenty-two professional articles written by U.S. Marines were reviewed. These provided insight into the perception of valor awards, both positive and negative, and the awards process during the time period for which the articles were written. Figure 1 illustrates that the perception of personal awards shifted at some point during the Vietnam War and remained negative until the start of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

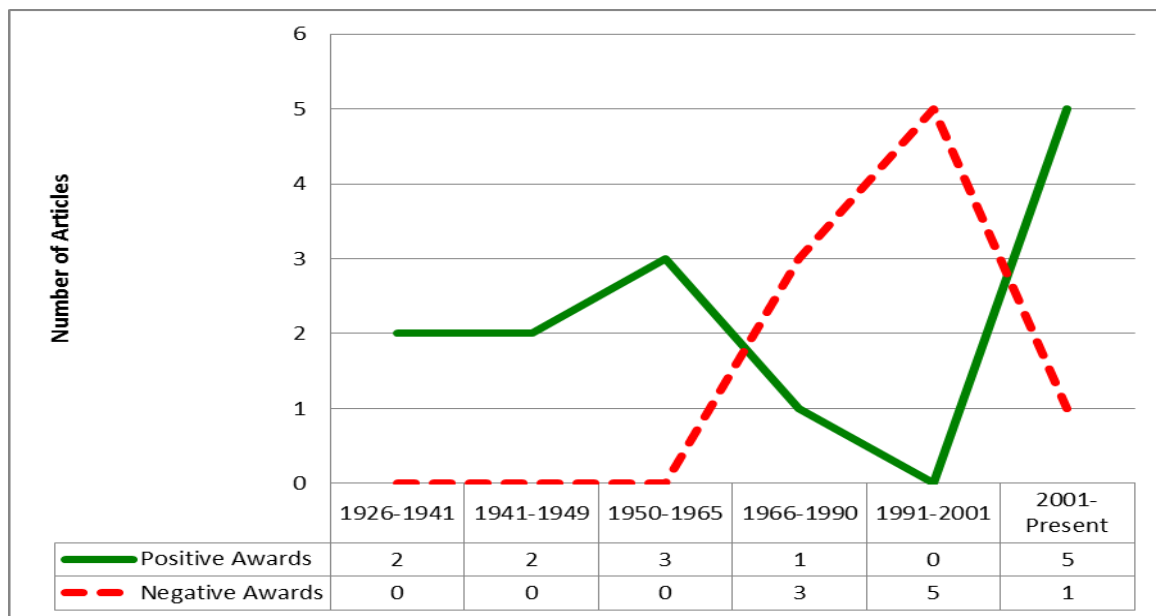


Figure 1. U.S. Marine Corps Professional Articles Regarding the Value of Awards

*Source:* Created by author.

What was different about the Vietnam War compared with other wars since WWI, to include the current war in Afghanistan? There is no definite explanation as to why more negative articles were written following the Vietnam War. The lack of social support for the war in Vietnam could have had a significant impact on the awarding of valor decorations and how awards in general were perceived by the military and the public. As noted by Dr. Chollet:

the broader military culture has, and these changes may be causing the rest of the observed decrease in award rates. Following Vietnam, several decorations received authorization to include the Valor Devices for combat service, and commanders may now nominate Service-members for these awards instead of decorations specifically for valor.<sup>13</sup>

The Vietnam War is the only war throughout this study that did not have widespread support of the American people. This lack of support could have affected the Marine Corps' perception of the value of awards received during the Vietnam War. The articles supporting the negative perception of awards after the Vietnam War discussed that awards were presented for doing one's job. This departure from the positive perception of valor awards during previous wars is the only indication of a cultural shift that became the new norm until the early 21st century.

A Congressional hearing in 2006 addressed the concern of fewer top valor awards given during OIF/OEF. At the time of this hearing, the U.S. Marine Corps had only one Medal of Honor recipient, Corporal Jason L. Dunham, Killed In Action. Since that hearing, the U.S. Marine Corps has awarded a second Medal of Honor to Sergeant Dakota L. Meyer, who was the first living U.S. Marine Corps recipient in 38 years. Congressional members were concerned about the dearth of Medals of Honor during OIF/OEF, about the posthumous nature of all Medals of Honor that were awarded and

about the extended length of time for those awards to be approved. These concerns of Congressional members resulted in further questions about the disparity in numbers of other top valor awards during OIF/OEF.

Is there a significant difference in the number of valor awards awarded for each conflict or war during the period from WWI to the War on Terror? In the past 100 years, the number of valor decorations awarded has varied greatly. There has been a decline in the number of awards since the Vietnam War (see figure 2). There are many variables that explain the differences in the number of top three valor awards presented for each war (except Vietnam), but there is no disputing the lower number of awards presented for each war since WWI. It is understandable that WWII had the most awards due the length of this war and the number of Marine service members participating. The data in figure 2 begin to get more interesting when considering other factors: number of Marines in theater, number of Marines in the Marine Corps, number of casualties, length of the war.



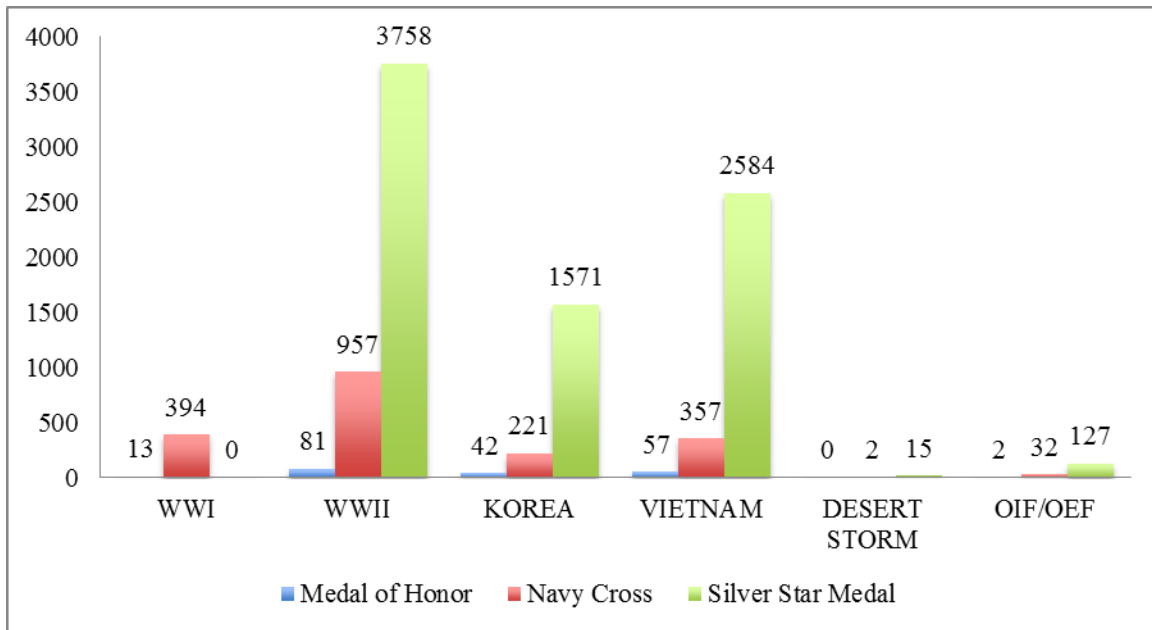


Figure 2. By War the Top Three Valor Awards for Marines from WWI to OIF/OEF

*Source:* Headquarters Marine Corps, Awards Branch, “Historical Division Reports of Awards and Decorations from Civil War to Present Day,” Quantico, VA, undated. Note: Data current as of October 2013.

Is there a consistent relationship among the number of casualties, length of war, and the number of valor awards? Tables 4 and 5 display all the pertinent information to make a comparison from WWI to OIF/OEF, in relation to awards and casualty data.

Table 4. USMC Top Three Awards and Casualty Numbers from WWI to Current Wars

<u>Award</u>	<u>WWI</u>	<u>WWII</u>	<u>KOREA</u>	<u>VIETNAM</u>	<u>DESERT STORM</u>	<u>OIF/OEF</u>
Medal of Honor	13	81	42	57	0	2
Navy Cross	394	957	221	357	2	32
Silver Star Medal	No Medal	3758	1571	2584	15	127
TOTAL	407	4796	1834	2998	17	161

<u>Casualties</u>	<u>WWI</u>	<u>WWII</u>	<u>KOREA</u>	<u>VIETNAM</u>	<u>DESERT STORM</u>	<u>OIF/OEF</u>
Killed in Action	2461	19733	3320	11501	22	1220
Died of Wounds	U/A	U/A	532	1486	2	U/A
Missing in Action - Declared Dead	U/A	U/A	386	98	0	U/A
Captured - Declared Dead	U/A	U/A	29	10	0	U/A
TOTAL HOSTILE DEATHS	2851	24511	4267	13095	24	1220
WOUNDED - NOT MORTAL	9520	67207	23744	51392	92	13476
NUMBER SERVING WORLDWIDE	78839	669100	424000	794000	213000	550000*
NUMBER SERVING IN THEATER	40431*	343134*	130000	513000	90866	235000*

*Source:* Created by author using data from Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, “Manpower Data for Service Members,” Defense Manpower Data Center, <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml> (accessed October 12, 2013); Headquarters Marine Corps, Awards Branch, “Historical Division Reports of Awards and Decorations from Civil War to Present Day,” Quantico, VA, undated. Notes: Due to reporting and records some data were not recorded and are unavailable (denoted with U/A). All data are for the duration of the war designated. Data collected is valid through October 2013. DOD does not have number serving in theater prior to Korean War. DOD has published the OIF/OEF numbers.

Table 5. Summary Table

<u>Award</u>	<u>WWI</u>	<u>WWII</u>	<u>KOREA</u>	<u>VIETNAM</u>	<u>DESERT STORM</u>	<u>OIF/OEF</u>
Medal of Honor	13	81	42	57	0	2
Navy Cross	394	957	221	357	2	32
Silver Star Medal	No Medal	3758	1571	2584	15	127
TOTAL	407	4796	1834	2998	17	161

<u>Casualties</u>	<u>WWI</u>	<u>WWII</u>	<u>KOREA</u>	<u>VIETNAM</u>	<u>DESERT STORM</u>	<u>OIF/OEF</u>
Killed in Action	2461	19733	3320	11501	22	1220
WOUNDED - NOT MORTAL	9520	67207	23744	51392	92	13476
TOTAL	11981	86940	27064	62893	114	14696

*Source:* Created by author using data derived from table 4. These are the figures used for the chi-square test.

The DOD defines a service member who is or has been classified as deceased, wounded, ill, or injured as a casualty.<sup>14</sup> Only those Marines who were either wounded or killed by enemy action were counted casualties for this study. Only counting casualties caused by enemy action allowed for a more accurate representation for the chi-square test. The totals listed in table 5 represent the data used in the contingency table for the comparison of combat casualties versus total top three valor awards.

Table 6 shows the results of the comparison of the total number of the top three valor decorations with the length of the war. The null hypothesis is that there is proportionality when comparing the length of the war to the number of valor decorations for that war. Block one; line one shows the observed number of top three valor awards for each war, line two gives the expected count<sup>15</sup> and line three provides the chi-square contribution. Block two; line one shows the observed length of each war in days, line two gives the expected length and line three provides the chi-square contribution. The results show that OIF/OEF is the most disproportionate between the observed and expected values when comparing top valor awards with the length of the war. An unexpected finding was the disparity between actual and expected values (per the null hypothesis) for WWII when comparing total medals versus length of campaign. WWII (with more awards than expected) and OIF/OEF (with fewer awards than expected) by themselves are sufficient to reject the null hypothesis (proportionality of awards and days); the proportionality assumption is not supported by the comparison. The p-value of 0.000 in Table 6 suggests that the observed results would be very unlikely under the assumption of proportionality of awards and casualties.

Table 6. Chi-Square Test: WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, OIF/OEF-Total Medals vs. Length of Campaign

	WWI	WWII	KOREA	VIETNAM	DESERT STORM	OIF/OEF	Total
Awards	407	4796	1834	2998	17	161	10213
	476.54	2980.05	1429.61	2937.83	28.15	2360.84	
	10.147	1106.591	114.391	1.232	4.414	2049.820	
Days	575	1345	1112	3056	41	4704	10833
	505.46	3160.95	1516.39	3116.17	29.85	2504.16	
	9.566	1043.258	107.844	1.162	4.161	1932.503	
Total	982	6141	2946	6054	58	4865	21046

Chi-Sq = 6385.089, DF = 5, P-Value = 0.000

Expected counts are printed below observed counts

Chi-Square contributions are printed below expected counts

*Source:* Created by author using the MINITAB program and the data listed in tables 4 and 5. Note: the p-value gives the probability that the observed numbers of valor awards and days of war could have occurred by chance, under the proportionality assumption.

A chi-square test was also used to test for proportionality between casualties and top valor awards. Table 7, block one; line one represents the observed total number of top three valor medals for that war. Block one; line two is the expected total number of top three valor medals for various wars. Block one; line three provides the chi-square contribution to the test for each of the blocks. Highlighted in table 7, OIF/OEF is the most disproportionate between the observed and expected values for the number of top valor medals. Block two; line one represents the observed total number of casualties for each war. Block two; line two gives the expected casualties for various wars and line three is the chi-square contribution. OIF/OEF shows the greatest amount of disproportionality in regard to casualties. Table 7 shows the chi-square results for total top three awards and total casualties. As was the case with the comparison of awards and

days (table 6), the p-value of 0.000 in table 7 suggests that the observed results would be very unlikely under the assumption of proportionality of awards and casualties.

All things equal, one would expect proportionality among medals awarded, casualties, and duration of war. However, tables 6 and 7 show clearly that this is not the case. Moreover, these tables show the direction of the disparity with more medals than expected awarded in WWII and Korea, and fewer than expected in OIF/OEF. The chi-square results do not explain why these results occurred; they simply highlight the magnitude and direction of the disproportionalities.

Table 7. Chi-Square Test: WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, OIF/OEF-Total Medals vs. Total Casualties

	WWI	WWII	KOREA	VIETNAM	DESERT STORM	OIF/OEF	Total
<b>Awards</b>	407	4796	1834	2998	17	161	10213
	591.48	4380.06	1379.78	3146.06	6.25	709.37	
	57.540	39.498	149.532	6.968	18.459	423.909	
<b>Casualty</b>	11981	86940	27064	62893	114	14696	203688
	11796.52	87355.94	27518.22	62744.94	124.75	14147.63	
	2.885	1.980	7.498	0.349	0.926	21.255	
<b>Total</b>	12388	91736	28898	65891	131	14857	213901

Chi-Sq = 730.799, DF = 5, P-Value = 0.000

Expected counts are printed below observed counts

Chi-Square contributions are printed below expected counts

*Source:* Created by author using the MINITAB program and the data listed in tables 4 and 5. Note: the p-value gives the probability that the observed numbers of valor awards and casualties could have occurred by chance, under the proportionality assumption.

Casualties tend to be the standard by which the intensity of combat is measured.

As Chollet stated, casualties could be used as a proxy for combat actions since each

casualty due to hostile action may represent a chance for valorous action.<sup>16</sup> For example, if a conflict lasted 10 years and had 10,000 casualties or a conflict lasted 10 days and had 10,000 casualties, they both had 10,000 casualties. In either example, the duration is not as important as the potential for combat action. It could be possible that at least 10,000 soldiers had the potential for valorous actions.

The number of Marine Corps casualties in OIF/OEF was listed at 13,476 as of October 2013. WWI and Desert Storm were the only two wars in the past 100 years that had fewer Marine casualties than OIF/OEF. WWII had five times as many as casualties as OIF/OEF. Vietnam had four times as many and Korea had almost two times as many casualties as OIF/OEF. It would be expected that with unchanged awards criteria, valor awards would follow a similar pattern, if there were proportionality. However, OIF/OEF valor awards are 2.5 times less numerous than in WWI, 30 times less than in WWII, 11 times less than in Korea, and 19 times less than in Vietnam. Table 8 highlights this disparity when comparing the ratio of casualties to valor awards by war. Using the casualty data provided by the DOD in table 4 and 5, OIF/OEF casualties are at least three times less likely to have a top valor award than in all previous wars, with WWII at 4.5 times more likely, Korea six times more likely, Vietnam four times more likely, and even Desert Storm 13 times more likely.

Table 8. Marine Corps Valor Awards per Casualties by War

	WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Desert Storm	OIF/OEF
Medal of Honor	13 awarded 1 per 951 casualties	81 awarded 1 per 1,132 casualties	42 awarded 1 per 667 casualties	57 awarded 1 per 1131 casualties	0 0	2 awarded 1 per 7,348 casualties
Navy Cross	394 awarded 1 per 31 casualties	957 awarded 1 per 96 casualties	221 awarded 1 per 127 casualties	357 awarded 1 per 181 casualties	2 awarded 1 per 58 casualties	32 awarded 1 per 460 casualties
Silver Star	No Medal N/A	3758 awarded 1 per 24 casualties	1571 awarded 1 per 18 casualties	2584 awarded 1 per 25 casualties	15 awarded 1 per 8 casualties	127 awarded 1 per 116 casualties
Total	407 awards 1 per 30 casualties	4796 awards 1 per 19 casualties	1834 awards 1 per 15 casualties	2998 awards 1 per 22 casualties	17 awards 1 per 7 casualties	161 awards 1 per 91 casualties

*Source:* Created by author using data from Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, “Manpower Data for Service Members,” Defense Manpower Data Center, <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml> (accessed October 12, 2013); Headquarters Marine Corps, Awards Branch, “Historical Division Reports of Awards and Decorations from Civil War to Present Day,” Quantico, VA, undated; info from table 5. Note: Due to reporting and records some data were not recorded and were unavailable (denoted with U/A). All data are for the duration of the war designated. Data collected are valid through October 2013. Methodology and format are similar to those in Dr. Chollet’s 2014 Joint Forces Quarterly article. DOD does not have number serving in theater prior to Korean War.

Table 9 represents the number of valor awards per U.S. Marine serving in theater during various wars. Again, there is a significant disparity between OIF/OEF and all other wars since WWI except Desert Storm, which only had 17 of the top three valor awards. A U.S. Marine serving in OIF/OEF is 38 times less likely to receive a Medal of Honor than one serving in the Korean War and 13 times less likely than one serving in Vietnam. This difference should be cause for concern regarding the current medal rates from 2001-2013.

Table 9. Marine Corps Valor Awards by War

	WWI	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Desert Storm	OIF/OEF
Medal of Honor	13 awarded 1 per 3,118 in theater	81 awarded 1 per 4,236 total in theater	42 awarded 1 per 3,095 in theater	57 awarded 1 per 9,000 in theater	0 0	2 awarded 1 per 117,500 in theater
Navy Cross	394 awarded 1 per 103 in theater	957 awarded 1 per 359 in theater	221 awarded 1 per 588 in theater	357 awarded 1 per 1,437 in theater	2 awarded 1 per 45,433 in theater	32 awarded 1 per 7,344 in theater
Silver Star	No Medal N/A	3758 awarded 1 per 91 in theater	1571 awarded 1 per 83 in theater	2584 awarded 1 per 199 in theater	15 awarded 1 per 6,058 in theater	127 awarded 1 per 1,850 in theater
Total	407 awards 1 per 99 in theater	4796 awards 1 per 74 in theater	1834 awards 1 per 71 in theater	2998 awards 1 per 171 in theater	17 awards 1 per 5,345 in theater	161 awards 1 per 1,460 in theater

*Source:* Created by author using data from Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, “Manpower Data for Service Members,” Defense Manpower Data Center, <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml> (accessed October 12, 2013); Headquarters Marine Corps, Awards Branch, “Historical Division Reports of Awards and Decorations from Civil War to Present Day,” Quantico, VA, undated; data from table 5. Note: Due to reporting and records some data were not recorded and were unavailable (denoted with U/A). All data are for the duration of the war designated. Data collected are valid through October 2013. Methodology and format are similar to those in Dr. Chollet’s 2014 Joint Forces Quarterly article. DOD does not have number serving in theater prior to Korean War.

While casualties and numbers of U.S. Marines in theater represent two popular methods of comparing medal rates, it is also interesting to compare the duration of the wars included in this study with numbers of top valor medals awarded. Table 10 provides a way to compare the lengths of the wars in this study with the top valor awards. Again, there is a significant difference between OIF/OEF and the other wars. It is interesting that Desert Storm is more in line with the previous wars when comparing the durations of the wars with number of top valor decorations awarded. Although there were only 17 of the top three valor awards in Desert Storm the short duration could account for valor awards numbers comparable to those of earlier wars. When comparing duration of war to the number of valor awards, OIF/OEF averaged one award per month and all the previous wars averaged one or more per day. Comparing the length of each war to the number of



valor awards helps to clarify the perception that award rates for OIF/OEF are not proportional to those in previous wars.

Table 10. Average Number of Days per Award for Top Three Valor Awards

WAR	Start	End	Number of Days	Total Top 3 Awards	Average days of Combat between Awards
<b>WWI</b>	4/6/1917	11/11/1918	575	407	<b>1.41</b> days of combat per award
<b>WWII</b>	12/7/1941	9/2/1945	1345	4796	<b>.25</b> days of combat per award
<b>Korea</b>	6/25/1950	7/27/1953	1112	1834	<b>.60</b> days of combat per award
<b>Vietnam</b>	8/1/1964	1/27/1973	3056	2998	<b>1.01</b> days of combat per award
<b>Desert Storm</b>	1/17/1991	2/28/1991	41	17	<b>2.4</b> days of combat per award
<b>OIF/OEF</b>	10/7/2001	10/31/2014	4704	161	<b>29</b> days of combat per award

*Source:* Source: Created by author using data from Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, “Manpower Data for Service Members,” Defense Manpower Data Center, <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml> (accessed October 12, 2013); Headquarters Marine Corps, Awards Branch, “Historical Division Reports of Awards and Decorations from Civil War to Present Day,” Quantico, VA, undated. Note: Data collected are valid through October 2013. Dates represent U.S. involvement in each war as reported by DOD. Top three awards represent the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star. Note: OIF has officially ended, while OEF is expected to continue until winter of 2015.

### Primary Research Question

Is it a valid perception that the U.S. Marine Corps is more restrictive in OIF/OEF when awarding valor awards than in previous wars? The short answer is yes, but why this perception is valid is complicated by several factors. The articles written by Marines show clearly that a negative perception regarding the value of awards had developed since the Vietnam War. This negative perception about the value of awards has only begun to change in the last 12 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. If it were not for OIF/OEF this cultural shift might not have been identified.

Chollet discredited the idea that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are different (with drones and improvised explosive devices) and this has lessened the opportunity for valor. Every war is different from previous ones, but they all share similarities. She established that the standoff effect accounted only for a fraction of the lower number of top valor awards in OIF/OEF. Although the standoff effect has been the DOD's answer to the lower number of valor awards, it is incomplete. Secretary Gates alluded to a cultural effect that had a much larger impact: "I once asked (Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Pete) Chiarelli why so few had been recommended;" Gates wrote, "He said because the medals had been passed out so freely in Vietnam, succeeding officers were determined to raise the bar. They had raised it too high, he thought."<sup>17</sup> That is only the opinion of one man, but he was the leader of the entire DOD and as such should have had a view of every service under his charge, including the U.S. Marine Corps.

The perception of fewer valor awards given in OIF/OEF is further solidified by the interest in this subject by senior civilian leadership inside the DOD and in Congress.<sup>18</sup> With more people taking an interest including the military, government, and media, this only cements that perception in the minds of U.S. Marines. As evidenced by the writings of U.S. Marines, each war presented a different idea about valor awards and what those awards represent.

### Summary and Conclusions

The quantitative data support the qualitative findings and together these support the perception that the Marine Corps has awarded top valor awards at a lower rate in OIF/OEF than in previous conflicts. There is clear evidence of a cultural shift in awards policy following the Vietnam War. This cultural shift went unchallenged for nearly 30

years before another major war thrust U.S. Marines into combat on a large scale for an extended period.

There is also clear evidence of disproportionality for OIF/OEF in those factors that are deemed to have the most significance when comparing wars. The chi-square test results highlight this disproportionality; they do not explain why there are differences. The cultural shift that occurred during or because of the Vietnam War helps to explain this disproportionality. The Vietnam War affected the United States and the military in a manner that never occurred at any other time from WWI to OIF/OEF. The final chapter will discuss possible solutions and highlight unanswered questions that should be considered for further research.

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<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Naval Personnel, Naval Personnel Manual 15.790; Bureau of Naval Personnel, Naval Personnel Manual 15016, *Summary of Regulations Governing the Issuance and Wearing of Decorations, Medals, and Ribbons* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, June 1943).

<sup>2</sup>Borch and McDowell, 9.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 2-22.

<sup>4</sup>Borch and McDowell, 10.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>6</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 2-22.

<sup>7</sup>Borch and McDowell, 18.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1650.1H, 2-23.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, app. A, ch. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., cover letter.

<sup>12</sup>Grice, 6.

<sup>13</sup>Chollet, 64.

<sup>14</sup>As defined by the Defense Casualty Analysis System.

<sup>15</sup>See the example chi-square table in chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup>Chollet, 63.

<sup>17</sup>Shane.

<sup>18</sup>See chapter 2 and the HASC hearing on the awards process in OIF/OEF.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon.

— Napoleon Bonaparte, in Michael Grice,  
“For a Bit of Colored Ribbon”

The purpose of this thesis was to determine if the perception regarding significantly fewer valor awards having been given during OIF/OEF was valid in the U.S. Marine Corps. If it could be established that this perception was valid, could a cause for the decrease be determined or the right questions be asked to properly frame the problem. If the perception was not valid, could it be explained why not?

The findings in chapter 4 showed that the negative perception of fewer top valor awards within the Marine Corps was validated through professional articles, Congressional testimony, media reports, and statistical data. The quantitative analysis showed that there is a significant disparity between OIF/OEF and all previous wars from WWI to Desert Storm. Even though the awards criteria had not changed since 1942 for the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, and Silver Star, there has been a definite cultural shift in how those decorations have been awarded. The most remarkable finding involved the Korean War awards number compared to the number of casualties, which was significantly larger than expected relative to all other wars studied. In addition, WWII showed a statistically significantly larger number of valor awards than expected when compared to length of campaign. Those unexpected findings will be addressed later in this chapter.

## Results

Have the criteria and processes for the top valor awards changed during the past 100 years? Of the research questions, this one provided the most direct results. The findings show that there were no significant changes in the criteria for awards from August 1942 to OIF/OEF. It is not the awards orders that account for the disparity in numbers of awards in OIF/OEF. From the end of WWI until WWII, there was refinement in the criteria for the top two valor awards, as well as the addition of the Silver Star. The criteria and awards orders have had little effect on the number of top valor awards from WWI to OIF/OEF. The only significant change was the development of the computer based submission system IAPS (which does not affect criteria or requirements) and the reduction in delegation of approval authority over the period from WWI to OIF/OEF. This is not the reason for the decreased number of top valor decorations in OIF/OEF.

Is there a noticeable change in perception of the value of valor awards during the period studied? Perception is difficult to measure, especially over a 100-year period during which time perception could change several times. However, professional articles written by Marines could provide insight into the perception of award value at the time the article was written. This did provide insight into opinions in the Marine Corps regarding awards for the periods in which the articles were written. Articles written after every major conflict from WWI to OIF/OEF were located that discussed valor awards in the U.S. Marine Corps. The most prevalent period for articles was from the end of the Vietnam War to OIF/OEF. In addition, the post-Vietnam era was when the negative perception of awards first appeared and remained the subject of articles until the wars in support of OIF/OEF. These negative articles highlighted a cultural shift in opinions

regarding awards in the U.S. Marine Corps. It appears this negative cultural phenomenon only shifted to a positive perception after OIF/OEF began; however, this shift has had little effect on increases in awards given during OIF/OEF. Though the perception of fewer awards given than in past conflicts is valid, that perception has not helped to increase the number of awards to a level even close to that which might be expected in proportion to all previous conflicts.

Is there a significant difference in the total number of valor awards awarded for each conflict or war during the period from WWI to the War on Terror? This question was relatively straightforward in both research and findings. The findings showed that there were differences for every war from WWI to OIF/OEF. This was to be expected given the many variables: length of campaign, number of Marines, types of conflict, etc. The findings did help develop the questions that could assist in explaining the differences in proportion.

Is there a consistent relationship among the number of casualties, length of war, and the number of valor awards? The hypothesis of proportionality was rejected. The chi-square test showed that there is significant disparity between the number of valor awards for OIF/OEF and for previous wars from WWI to Desert Storm. The chi-square tests do not explain this disparity, only show that it exists. Analysis of professional articles from Marine Corps journals supports the perception of fewer awards in the OIF/OEF. The negative perception of awards that developed following the Vietnam War persisted until the wars in OIF/OEF.

The results of the chi-square tests showed disproportionality for OIF/OEF, but findings also showed disproportionality for WWII and Korea. However, the results in

WWII and Korea showed that more valor medals were awarded than expected. WWII had almost twice as many medals as expected when comparing the length of campaign versus the total number of valor medals. Again, the chi-square test does not explain why, it only showed that there is a lack of proportionality. In this same test, the results of OIF/OEF show a significant disparity when compared to length of campaign. It indicates that fewer awards were given than expected.

The Korean War also had a significant disparity when comparing total medals versus total casualties. There was a significant increase in the observed number of medals compared to the expected number. There was a positive perception of awards for both WWII and the Korean War. Could this positive perception of valor awards and the awards process in general explain the statistically significant increase in those two Conflicts? The research showed that there were only positive articles pertaining to awards from WWI until the Vietnam War. The negative perception awards articles did not appear until after the Vietnam War and persisted until OIF/OEF began. A consistent result from the chi-square comparisons of medal counts with casualties and conflict duration was that OIF/OEF showed a significant shortfall of medals awarded when compared with all previous conflicts.

Is it a valid perception that the U.S. Marine Corps is more restrictive in awarding valor awards in OIF/OEF than in previous wars? This question can be answered in the affirmative, but explaining why is more complicated. A cultural shift was identified in the professional writings of Marines, media reports, and Congress. The research in this thesis provides clear evidence that the perception of fewer awards in OIF/OEF was valid. As detailed by Dr. Chollet, the DOD explanation of the standoff effect created by the modern



battlefield does not fully answer the significant shortfall in OIF/OEF valor awards.<sup>1</sup> The standoff effect is only responsible for a portion of the difference in awards during OIF/OEF compared to those given in previous wars for all services.<sup>2</sup> The official response from the Marine Corps Awards Branch defends the way in which it awards medals.<sup>3</sup> The Marine Corps Awards Branch Head, Mr. Lee Freund stated, “A much more correct observation would be that the Marine Corps staunchly avoids inflation of valor awards and consistently seeks to ensure that the level of valor required to earn a specific valor award remains consistent with awards earned by Marines in previous conflicts.”<sup>4</sup> However, the findings detailed in chapter 4 do not agree with the statements made by the head of the Awards Branch, numerically speaking. There is a disparity in the number of valor awards given during OIF/OEF when compared to all previous wars from WWI to OIF/OEF.

### Implications

What does this mean for the U.S. Marine Corps and potentially the DOD? The results of the DOD directed comprehensive review of the awards process for each service should have the greatest impact.<sup>5</sup> The findings of that review could affect each service. The U.S. Marine Corps should invest in the manpower to conduct a more thorough study that could compare even more data from WWI to OIF/OEF. The available evidence clearly shows a significant disparity in the top valor awards in OIF/OEF when compared to all previous wars. If this holds true not only for the U.S. Marine Corps but for all other services as well, there should be a joint solution. The Joint Capabilities Integration Development System is the DOD’s method for fulfilling a joint capability gap.<sup>6</sup> Using the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Manpower, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and

Facilities construct the DOD might be able to establish some common ground for a joint solution, if there exists a joint problem and not simply a service specific cultural issue.<sup>7</sup> The difficulty would be in solving the problem without affecting individual service culture.

### Recommendations

This thesis offers several recommendations for further study. This additional research could prove insightful to the understanding of the research questions.

First, a more detailed analysis should be conducted that compares specific battles in each war to other battles within that war, also to battles within other wars. For example, the number of awards from the Battle of Fallujah should be compared with the “March Up”<sup>8</sup> and with the Battle of Hue City. In addition, specific data that best focuses the chi-square test should be identified. A possibility would be the total number of days that individual Marines received combat pay. Combat paydays apply only to U.S. Marines in harm’s way and who have a reasonable expectation of seeing combat, making the potential for valorous action possible. Combat pay might be a useful metric, although it might prove difficult and time consuming to get the data from every war.

Second, award citations should be compared from each war from WWI to OIF/OEF. How does a Navy Cross citation from WWII compare with one from Vietnam or OIF/OEF; are the summaries of action as detailed for each or is one less substantial? Each award citation is unique; however, it is easier to compare citations in hindsight than to compare combat actions.

Third, a detailed survey should be conducted of those Marines who have served since 2001 and who have joined prior to 2001. Their perceptions of the value of valor

awards, the nature of the awards process and the disparities found in this study should be compared.

Fourth, a study should be conducted that reviews all submitted awards and determines how many awards were downgraded, upgraded, denied, and approved during OIF/OEF compared to previous wars. This would be the most sensitive study to conduct, due to the personal nature of the process and how each award is representative of the action for which they were submitted. However, if done with respect and sensitivity the results could provide valuable insight into the current and previous perception of the value of valor awards.

The most confounding issue is why there is a large disparity in the number of awards given during OIF/OEF when compared to other wars. The cultural shift following the Vietnam War helps explain how this disparity could have developed but it does not explain why the cultural shift developed during the Vietnam War. Does society's view of the military or the conflict have an effect on the number of awards or how those valor awards are perceived by the service members? This question could only be answered by conducting a much more detailed analysis of this subject.

### Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine if the perception of fewer top valor awards in OIF/OEF was valid. That perception is not only valid; there is a significant difference in the number of top valor awards given in OIF/OEF versus those in previous wars, beginning with WWI. The modern battlefield with its standoff effect does not entirely explain this difference. The U.S. Marines, civilian media and Congress all see the differences in OIF/OEF, compared to the number of valor awards in previous wars. Even

though the U.S. Marines, civilian media, and Congress have only anecdotal evidence, it represents a meaningful genesis to the understanding. This study showed that behind the circumstantial indications there is some evidence that corroborates not only a cultural shift in the awarding of valor decorations, but also how perception of the value of these awards might shape the frequency with which they are given.

The problem has been properly framed, the DOD is conducting a thorough review, and the U.S. Marines are still conducting combat operations in Afghanistan in support of OEF. As the longest war in our nation's history ends, we must ensure that the heroes of this generation do not go unnoticed. It rests with the leadership of today to ensure that the legends of tomorrow are not overlooked and forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup>Chollet, 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. The standoff effect ratio was not determined by this study for the U.S. Marine Corps. More specific casualty data would be necessary.

<sup>3</sup>Dan Lamothe, "Corps Gives Fewer Valor Awards," *Marine Corps Times* 15, no. 37 (September 16, 2013): 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>In reference to the DOD directed study of each services awards systems and processes. Secretary Hagel ordered this study to be completed by 2015.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *F100: Managing Army Change*, Selected Readings and References (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, June 2013), 68.

<sup>7</sup>DOTMLPF is an acronym for Doctrine, Organization, Training, Manpower, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities. It is the means through which the DOD first looks for a non-material or material solution to fulfill a joint capability gap.

<sup>8</sup>The "March Up" is the name given by the U.S. military to the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent attack north to Baghdad.

## GLOSSARY

**Award.** A military decoration is an award bestowed on an individual for a specific act or acts of gallantry or meritorious service. In this Thesis award is used synonymously with personal military decoration and/or decoration.

**Causality.** The Defense Casualty Analysis System defines as a Service member that is or has been classified as deceased, wounded, ill or injured.

**Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ).** A test derived from the chi-square distribution to compare the goodness of fit of theoretical and observed frequency distributions or to compare nominal data derived from unmatched groups of subjects

**Personal Military Decoration.** A military decoration is an award bestowed on an individual for a specific act or acts of gallantry or meritorious service.

**Valor.** An act of personal courage, especially in battle.

## APPENDIX A

### U.S. NAVAL AWARDS, PRECEDENCE ORDER, AND DATE OF ORIGIN

Award	Service	Heroism	Meritorious Service	Outstanding Achievement	Date of Origin	
Medal of Honor	USN and USMC	Yes	No	No	December 21, 1861	
Navy Cross	USN and USMC	Yes	No	No	February 4, 1919 August 7, 1942*	*Combat only in 1942, became the 2nd highest award.
Defense Distinguished Service Medal	USN and USMC	No	Yes	Yes	July 9, 1970	
Navy Distinguished Service Medal	USN and USMC	No	Yes	Yes	February 4, 1919	
Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal	USCG	No	Yes	Yes	August 4, 1949	
Silver Star	All	Yes	No	No	July 9, 1918* 1932** August 7, 1942***	*Citation Star until 1932. **Renamed and authorized for Army ***Authorized for Navy/USMC
Defense Superior Service Medal	All	No	Yes	Yes	February 6, 1976	
Legion of Merit	All	No	Yes	Yes	July 20, 1942	
Distinguished Flying Cross	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	July 2, 1926	
Navy and Marine Corps Medal	USN and USMC	Yes	No	No	August 7, 1942	
Coast Guard Medal	USCG	Yes	No	No	August 4, 1949	
Bronze Star Medal	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	February 4, 1944	
Purple Heart	All	No	Yes	No	February 22, 1932	
Defense Meritorious Service Medal	All	No	Yes	Yes	November 3, 1977	
Meritorious Service Medal	All	No	Yes	Yes	January 16, 1969	
Air Medal	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	May 11, 1942	
Joint Service Commendation Medal	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	June 25, 1963	
Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal	USN and USMC	Yes	Yes	Yes	November 1, 1943*	*Renamed the current name in 1994
Coast Guard Commendation Medal	USCG	Yes	Yes	Yes	August 15, 1947	
Joint Service Achievement Medal	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	August 3, 1983	
Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal	USN and USMC	Yes	Yes	Yes	1961 August 14, 1994*	*1961 Navy medal, changed to current name in 1994
Coast Guard Achievement Medal	USCG	No	Yes	Yes	January 29, 1964	
Combat Action Ribbon	USN and USMC	No	Yes	No	February 17, 1969	
Commandant's Letter of Commendation	USCG	No	Yes	Yes	March 17, 1979	

*Source:* Fred L. Borch and Charles P. McDowell, *Sea Service Medals: Military Awards and Decorations of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009). Table expanded by author to include date of origin.

## APPENDIX B

### CHI-SQUARED TESTS CONDUCTED

Table 11. Chi-Square Test: WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, OIF/OEF-  
Total Medals vs. Total Casualties

	WWI	WWII	KOREA	VIETNAM	DESERT STORM	OIF/OEF	Total
Awards	407	4796	1834	2998	17	161	10213
	476.54	2980.05	1429.61	2937.83	28.15	2360.84	
	10.147	1106.591	114.391	1.232	4.414	2049.820	
Days	575	1345	1112	3056	41	4704	10833
	505.46	3160.95	1516.39	3116.17	29.85	2504.16	
	9.566	1043.258	107.844	1.162	4.161	1932.503	
Total	982	6141	2946	6054	58	4865	21046

Chi-Sq = 6385.089, DF = 5, P-Value = 0.000

Expected counts are printed below observed counts

Chi-Square contributions are printed below expected counts

Source: Created by Dr. David Bitters, Quality Assurance, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, April 23, 2014.

Table 12. Chi-Square Test: WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, OIF/OEF-  
Total Medals vs. Length of Campaign

	WWI	WWII	KOREA	VIETNAM	DESERT STORM	OIF/OEF	Total
Awards	407	4796	1834	2998	17	161	10213
	591.48	4380.06	1379.78	3146.06	6.25	709.37	
	57.540	39.498	149.532	6.968	18.459	423.909	
Casualty	11981	86940	27064	62893	114	14696	203688
	11796.52	87355.94	27518.22	62744.94	124.75	14147.63	
	2.885	1.980	7.498	0.349	0.926	21.255	
Total	12388	91736	28898	65891	131	14857	213901

Chi-Sq = 730.799, DF = 5, P-Value = 0.000

Expected counts are printed below observed counts

Chi-Square contributions are printed below expected counts

Source: Created by Dr. David Bitters, Quality Assurance, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, April 23, 2014.

## APPENDIX C

### SELECTED NAVY CROSS CITATIONS

#### **Sergeant Rafael Peralta**

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to Sergeant Rafael Peralta, United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism while serving as Platoon Guide with 1st Platoon, Company A, First Battalion, Third Marines, Regimental Combat Team 7, FIRST Marine Division, in action against Anti-Coalition Forces in support of Operation AL FAJAR, in Fallujah, Iraq, on 15 November 2004. Clearing scores of houses in the previous three days, Sergeant Peralta asked to join an under-strength squad and volunteered to stand post the night of 14 November, allowing fellow Marines more time to rest. The following morning, during search and attack operations, while clearing the seventh house of the day, the point man opened a door to a back room and immediately came under intense, close-range automatic weapons fire from multiple insurgents. The squad returned fire, wounding one insurgent. While attempting to maneuver out of the line of fire, Sergeant Peralta was shot and fell mortally wounded. After the initial exchange of gunfire, the insurgents broke contact, throwing a fragmentation grenade as they fled the building. The grenade came to rest near Sergeant Peralta's head. Without hesitation and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, Sergeant Peralta reached out and pulled the grenade to his body, absorbing the brunt of the blast and shielding fellow Marines only feet away. Sergeant Peralta succumbed to his wounds. By his undaunted courage, intrepid fighting spirit, and unwavering devotion to duty, Sergeant Peralta reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.<sup>1</sup>

#### **First Lieutenant Brian R. Chontosh**

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to First Lieutenant Brian R. Chontosh, United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism as Combined Anti-Armor Platoon Commander, Weapons Company, Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, FIRST Marine Division, First Marine Expeditionary Force in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM on 25 March 2003. While leading his platoon north on Highway I toward Ad Diwaniyah, First Lieutenant Chontosh's platoon moved into a coordinated ambush of mortars, rocket propelled grenades, and automatic weapons fire. With coalition tanks blocking the road ahead, he realized his platoon was caught in a kill zone. He had his driver move the vehicle through a breach along his flank, where he was immediately taken under fire from an entrenched machine gun. Without hesitation, First Lieutenant Chontosh ordered the driver to advance directly at the enemy position enabling his .50 caliber machine gunner to silence the enemy. He then directed his driver into the enemy trench, where he exited his vehicle and began to clear the trench with an M16A2 service rifle and 9 millimeter pistol. His ammunition depleted, First Lieutenant Chontosh, with complete disregard for his safety,



twice picked up discarded enemy rifles and continued his ferocious attack. When a Marine following him found an enemy rocket propelled grenade launcher, First Lieutenant Chontosh used it to destroy yet another group of enemy soldiers. When his audacious attack ended, he had cleared over 200 meters of the enemy trench, killing more than 20 enemy soldiers and wounding several others. By his outstanding display of decisive leadership, unlimited courage in the face of heavy enemy fire, and utmost devotion to duty, First Lieutenant Chontosh reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.<sup>2</sup>

### **Lieutenant General Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller**

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to First Lieutenant Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller (MCSN: 0-3158), United States Marine Corps, for distinguished service in the line of his professional while commanding a Nicaraguan National Guard patrol. First Lieutenant Lewis B. Puller, United States Marine Corps, successfully led his forces into five successful engagements against superior numbers of armed bandit forces; namely, at LaVirgen on 16 February 1930, at Los Cedros on 6 June 1930, at Moncotal on 22 July 1930, at Guapinol on 25 July 1930, and at Malacate on 19 August 1930, with the result that the bandits were in each engagement completely routed with losses of nine killed and many wounded. By his intelligent and forceful leadership without thought of his own personal safety, by great physical exertion and by suffering many hardships, Lieutenant Puller surmounted all obstacles and dealt five successive and severe blows against organized banditry in the Republic of Nicaragua.

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Award of the Navy Cross to First Lieutenant Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller (MCSN: 0-3158), United States Marine Corps, for exceptionally meritorious service in a duty of great responsibility while in command of a Guardia Patrol from 20 September to 1 October 1932. Lieutenant Puller and his command of forty Guardia and Gunnery Sergeant William A. Lee, United States Marine Corps, serving as a First Lieutenant in the Guardia, penetrated the isolated mountainous bandit territory for a distance of from eighty to one hundred miles north of Jinotega, his nearest base. This patrol was ambushed on 26 September 1932, at a point northeast of Mount Kilambe by an insurgent force of one hundred fifty in a well-prepared position armed with not less than seven automatic weapons and various classes of small arms and well-supplied with ammunition. Early in the combat, Gunnery Sergeant Lee, the Second in Command was seriously wounded and reported as dead. The Guardia immediately behind Lieutenant Puller in the point was killed by the first burst of fire. Lieutenant Puller, with great courage, coolness and display of military judgment, so directed the fire and movement of his men that the enemy were driven first from the high ground on the right of his position, and then by a flanking movement forced from the high ground to the left and finally were scattered in confusion with a loss of ten killed and many wounded by the persistent and well-directed attack of the patrol. The numerous casualties suffered by the enemy and the Guardia losses of two killed and four wounded are indicative of the severity of the enemy resistance. This

signal victory in jungle country, with no lines of communication and a hundred miles from any supporting force, was largely due to the indomitable courage and persistence of the patrol commander. Returning with the wounded to Jinotega, the patrol was ambushed twice by superior forces on 30 September. On both of the occasions the enemy was dispersed with severe losses.

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Second Gold Star in lieu of a Third Award of the Navy Cross to Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller (MCSN: 0-3158), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service as Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, Seventh Marines, FIRST Marine Division, during the action against enemy Japanese forces on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, on the night of 24 - 25 October 1942. While Lieutenant Colonel Puller's battalion was holding a mile-long front in a heavy downpour of rain, a Japanese force, superior in number, launched a vigorous assault against that position of the line which passed through a dense jungle. Courageously withstanding the enemy's desperate and determined attacks, Lieutenant Colonel Puller not only held his battalion to its position until reinforcements arrived three hours later, but also effectively commanded the augmented force until late in the afternoon of the next day. By his tireless devotion to duty and cool judgment under fire, he prevented a hostile penetration of our lines and was largely responsible for the successful defense of the sector assigned to his troops. His conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Navy of the United States.

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Third Gold Star in lieu of a Fourth Award of the Navy Cross to Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller (MCSN: 0-3158), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service while serving as Executive Officer of the Seventh Marines (Reinforced), FIRST Marine Division, serving with the SIXTH United States Army, in combat against enemy Japanese forces at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, from 26 December 1943 to 19 January 1944. Assigned temporary command of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marines, from 4 to 9 January, Lieutenant Colonel Puller quickly reorganized and advanced his unit, effecting the seizure of the objective without delay. Assuming additional duty in command of the Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, from 7 to 8 January, after the commanding officer and executive officer had been wounded, Lieutenant Colonel Puller unhesitatingly exposed himself to rifle, machine-gun and mortar fire from strongly entrenched Japanese positions to move from company to company in his front lines, reorganizing and maintaining a critical position along a fire-swept ridge. His forceful leadership and gallant fighting spirit under the most hazardous conditions were contributing factors in the defeat of the enemy during this campaign and in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Fourth Gold Star in lieu of a Fifth Award of the Navy Cross to Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller (MCSN: 0-3158), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United Nations while serving as

Commanding Officer of the First Marines, FIRST Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against aggressor forces in the vicinity of Koto-ri, Korea, from 5 to 10 December 1950. Fighting continuously in sub-zero weather against a vastly outnumbering hostile force, Colonel Puller drove off repeated and fanatical enemy attacks upon his Regimental defense sector and supply points. Although the area was frequently covered by grazing machine-gun fire and intense artillery and mortar fire, he coolly moved along his troops to insure their correct tactical employment, reinforced the lines as the situation demanded, and successfully defended the perimeter, keeping open the main supply routes for the movement of the Division. During the attack from Koto-ri to Hungnam, he expertly utilized his Regiment as the Division rear guard, repelling two fierce enemy assaults which severely threatened the security of the unit, and personally supervised the care and prompt evacuation of all casualties. By his unflagging determination, he served to inspire his men to heroic efforts in defense of their positions and assured the safety of much valuable equipment which would otherwise have been lost to the enemy. His skilled leadership, superb courage and valiant devotion to duty in the face of overwhelming odds reflect the highest credit upon Colonel Puller and the United States Naval Service.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Military Times Hall of Valor, "Sergeant Rafael Peralta," Military Times Group and Gannett Government Media, <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/search.php?service=3> (accessed April 2, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>Military Times Hall of Valor, "First Lieutenant Brian R. Chontosh," Military Times Group and Gannett Government Media, <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/search.php?service=3> (accessed April 2, 2014).

<sup>3</sup>Military Times Hall of Valor, "Lieutenant General Lewis B. 'Chesty' Puller," Military Times Group and Gannett Government Media, <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/search.php?service=3> (accessed April 2, 2014).

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