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Veterans are outraged by the new Distinguished Warfare Medal

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The new Distinguished Warfare Medal



http://www.defense.gov/DODCMSShare/NewsStoryPhoto/2013-02/hrs_130213-D-999ZZ-999.jpg

"The Distinguished Warfare Medal (DWM) "provides distinct DoD-wide recognition for extraordinary achievement, not involving acts of valor, directly impacting combat operations or other military operations such as operations authorized by a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CFCS) Execute Order (EXORD), as approved by the Secretary of Defense."

Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense

Last year, the Department of Defense **proposed** the Distinguished Warfare Medal (DWM) to be awarded to pilots of unmanned air vehicles (UAV), more commonly called drones, and other cyber-warfare experts who are specifically involved with supporting ground operations and the troops conducting them. However, unlike soldiers fighting the enemy, these participants in modern day warfare are far removed from the battlefield. The medal is retroactive to September 11, 2001.

On February 13, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta officially **announced** the creation of the DWM which, in the **list of medals**, ranks below the Distinguished Flying Cross and above the Bronze Star. Needless to say, veterans are **outraged** over the new warfare medal.

One Austin Resident, a former Air Force captain, said, "Really? How can they demonstrate bravery w/o any physical risk? I have no issues with them being awarded medals for superior performance but how is a remote pilot any different than flying a desk?"

Another Austin resident, who was an Army awards clerk (Spec 5, combat engineer) in Vietnam pointed out, "There already exists a medal for meritorious achievement by pilots: the [Air Medal](#). I personally recommended a number of Air Medals with and without the "V" for valor attachment to

Huey pilots who supported our units in the field. There was no need for a new medal! The Air Medal may be awarded to anyone "who, while serving in any capacity in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard of the United States, distinguishes, or has distinguished, himself by meritorious achievement while participating in an aerial flight." I guess the Pentagon wanted new medal for these modern day warriors."

However, the high placement of the DWM in the [order of precedence](#) of all military medals has also created a storm of protest. For example, earlier this month, Veterans of Foreign Wars ([VFW](#)), a national veterans' organization, has joined veterans in protesting the high ranking of the DWM. Indeed they want the medal to be [lowered in status](#) just above than the National Defense Medal, which is the lowest medal awarded to all military personnel.

Even a congressman has jumped into the foray. [Rep. Tom Rooney](#) (R-FL) has officially asked the Pentagon to reconsider the order of ranking for the [DWM](#). In adding to his support for the creation of the medal, he said, "I firmly believe there is no greater sacrifice than risking your own life to save another on the battlefield, and that the order of precedence should appropriately reflect the reverence we hold for those willing to make that sacrifice."

In the mean time, the outcry by veterans has been so vociferous that there a petition to lower the ranking of the DWM to just above the National defense Service Medal has been launched at the White House. The petition reads:

"We the people of the United States believe that the Distinguished Warfare Medal should not be considered in a higher precedence of those earned for direct combat valor. This medal should be placed in order or precedence directly above the National Defense Service medal." Readers are asked to logon to the White House website and sign the petition.

With a deadline of March 13 before the petition expires, all readers are invited to sign the petition; and you don't have to be a veteran participate in this protest.

Please note: the White House has mandated that you create a whitehouse.gov account before you are allowed to sign any of the petitions created so far.

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