

Soldiers, vets initially denied Purple Heart for concussive injury may resubmit

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Aug. 19, 2011) -- Active-duty and reserve-component Soldiers, as well as veterans, who were denied Purple Heart awards for concussive or mild traumatic brain injuries, are encouraged to resubmit documentation for reconsideration of the medal.

Since the Vietnam War, concussions or mild traumatic brain injuries, or MTBIs, as a direct result of an enemy action has always been an injury that warranted the award of the Purple Heart -- according to Defense Department guidelines. Nevertheless, field commanders have sometimes been unclear on what constituted concussion.

With medical advances in the treatment and knowledge of concussion and MTBI injuries, the Army has been able to further identify the characteristics of the unseen wound and clarify guidance for entitlement to the Purple Heart, said Col. Tom Quinn, chief of Soldiers Programs and Services Division at Army Human Resources Command.

"In the past, concussion or MTBI injuries were very hard to diagnose," Quinn said. "Treatments varied and were not the same across the board and medical officers weren't always documenting that information in the Soldier's records."

To receive a Purple Heart, a wound has to be the result of enemy or hostile action and the treatment for that injury must be documented in a Soldier's official medical records by a medical officer, Quinn said.

For Purple Heart award reconsideration, **the injury must have occurred on or after Sept. 11, 2001.** Active-duty and reserve-component Soldiers must work with their chains of command, through the first general officer, by submitting a copy of their deployment orders, various Department of Army forms, a one-page narrative describing the incident and the conditions under which the Soldier was wounded.

"Two eyewitness statements, some type of incident report of the action or the cause of the wound that was the result of enemy action, and documented treatment by a medical officer in the Soldier's official medical records are needed," said Quinn. While treatment may have been performed by personnel other than a physician, documentation of the prescribed treatment must be solely by a medical officer.

Veterans should submit packages directly to Army Human Resources Command.

They can obtain copies of their deployment orders from the Veteran's Inquiry Branch by emailing veterans@conus.army.mil.

Veterans will also need to submit their DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty). More information on how submission requirements are available at:

<https://www.hrc.army.mil/awards>.

Submission for reconsideration is not a guarantee of approval. Quinn said the Awards and Decorations Branch at HRC will make the final determination, then notify the Soldier or veteran in about 30 days on the board's decision.