

Running Head: FALSELY CLAIMING MILITARY AWARDS OR DECORATIONS

Falsely Claiming Military Awards or Decorations

SGM Torres, Evaristo Jr.

United States Sergeants Major Academy

WO1 Pete Green

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Abstract

You can't pick up an Army Times paper and not read about a Soldier found guilty for wearing an award or decoration he did not earn. This issue is happening across the services and these false heroes think they may get away with it. Some research by their supervisor or peers turns up the truth about these false heroes who have manipulated their military records and they have some explaining to do not only to their branch of service but to their friends, loved ones and family members. These Soldiers turn out to be something they wish they were a War hero.

Falsely claiming military awards or decorations is an ethical problem facing the Army today. The war on terrorism in both Iraq and Afghanistan are operations that continue today. These operations have created war heroes out of Soldiers going beyond and above on the battlefield to save or protect their comrades against the enemy. Soldiers return home from these battlefields and embark on new assignments to other locations in the Army or return to their civilian sector if they were only mobilized for their service against the war on terrorism. The Soldier displays these awards or decorations on their military uniforms to show other Soldiers, family members or the civilian sector an accomplishment on the battlefield that they did not earn during the war to bring attention to themselves. This issue is happening in every component of the Army from the Active duty, the Reserves, and the National Guard.

Soldiers make false claims of military awards or decorations they never earned or qualified for onto their Enlisted or Officer Records Brief (ERB/ORB) or on their DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. Some of the awards that have been falsely claimed are the Silver Star, Bronze Star with V device, and Soldier's Medal. Combat and Special Skill Badges and Tabs include Combat Infantry Badge, Airborne, Pathfinder, Diver, Special Forces and Ranger tabs. These false claims have surfaced in records of Soldiers on Active duty, retired military, Soldiers in the Reserves or National Guard. Soldiers' hands carry their personal records from one duty station to the next. This allows the Soldier time to manipulate their current records or place a false entry into their official records while they are on leave or in transit to their next assignment. Access to military forms are acquired on the internet and downloaded with false information. Records can be scanned and the award falsely changed to reflect a higher award never earned. The Soldier arrives at his new duty station and in processes the post, and then the Soldier submits his military records to the enlisted records section. The Soldier verifies

his ERB/ORB with the personal section and updates his records with the more prestigious award or decoration the Soldier never earned claiming his past post never updated his records correctly or forgot to add the false award into their records. The only proof the personal section needs is a copy of the award or decoration with orders number on it to update their records. The award or decoration is placed in their personal records with out ever being verified that the award was earned by the Soldier.

To resolve this issue of a Soldier falsely claiming an award or decoration will cause some investigating by the unit to prove the Soldier never earned the award or decoration. One solution is a phone call to his prior unit and speaking to his former chain of command to verify what the Soldier had earned while he or she was under their command. Some issues that arise are the unit is deactivated and has transitioned to another unit or relocated to another location. For the badges and tabs earned at places such as Fort Benning, Georgia or Fort Bragg, North Carolina, these schools keep track of all the students that have graduated from their schools. Take for example the airborne badge, you may place a call to the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 507th Infantry Regiment who conducts airborne school and verify if the Soldier ever graduated from airborne school. The Ranger school is also located on Fort Benning and may be called also to verify if a Soldier has ever graduated from that course. The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is responsible for training Soldiers to become Special Forces Soldiers. The school keeps information on everyone that has attended and graduated from the course at Fort Bragg. The National Personnel Records Center and Human Resources Command (HRC) in St. Louis, Missouri, is the section that tracks your awards in your military official file. Send HRC a copy of the award to verify, if the award was legally earned and requesting to receive a list of all the awards that Soldier has received while in the service.

Many Soldiers have earned a lot of awards and decorations from past operations in different countries. It is not common to see Soldiers with a couple of rows of ribbons due to the high optempo in the war on terrorism and frequent deployments to the Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility. Taking notice of Soldiers when they are in their uniforms to see if anything stands out on their uniform or the Soldier just brags about the awards he has received from past deployments. The Soldier does not have the proof in his records to wear an award or decoration that he is wearing or claiming he has earned. These are a few indicators to start questioning if the Soldier really earned those awards. Most Soldiers do not realize that it is a felony for making a false statement or they could serve some jail time. Showing them examples of previous Soldiers that have been caught and the consequences each had to endure for wearing a ribbon or badge they never earned or qualified for. Doing random checks on your Soldiers ERB/ORB to verify they are wearing what is on their records, especially during an in-ranks inspection of your unit. When receiving new Soldiers to your unit ask them questions on where they have deployed to and what awards they have earned.

In conclusion, falsifying of their ERB/ORB or personal records will arise because the Soldiers seek the attention of being a war hero and showing off those prestigious awards and decorations to everyone during formal functions or home town parades. It is just a matter of time before they are caught or someone notices that they are receiving a lot of attention over those awards or decorations and are investigated to see if they have really earned them. Measures will be created to stop Soldiers from wearing false awards or decorations, but will cause the Soldier to start being created on how to over come the current system being used. In the end they will only embarrass themselves when they are caught and proven a phony to everyone. This is an ethical problem that they will have to resolve with themselves when they have all that time in a

jail cell to think about it or when they have to pay a fine. Was it really worth it to them to wear an award or decoration that was never rightfully earned but falsified to earn them some glamour amongst their peers, friends or family? Soldiers earn respect and are looked up to by our society by just being a Soldier and don't need an award or decoration to get that respect. There are a few bad apples in the batch, but it does not mean the whole batch is bad.