



# U.S. Merchant Marine Awards and Flag Program

## Maritime Administration Fact Sheet

### Service Medals for Civilian Merchant Seafarers

#### U.S. Merchant Marine Medals and Decorations

#### Service Medals for Civilian Merchant Seafarers

On May 19, 1992, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the availability of new medals for civilian merchant seamen, in recognition of their service in World War II, Korea, Vietnam Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and most recently Operations Restore Hope and United Shield and related operations in Somalia from 5 December 1992 to 31 March 1995. The medals are being issued to supplement war zone ribbon bars previously awarded to civilian mariners who supported the nation's armed forces in these wars.

Merchant marine medals approved for distribution to eligible merchant mariners for World War II merchant marine service are:

- **Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal** – The Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to any Seaman in the U.S. Merchant Marine who, on or after September 3, 1939, has distinguished himself during the war by outstanding conduct or service in the line of duty. Not more than one medal shall be issued to any one seaman, but for each succeeding instance sufficient to justify the award of a medal, there will be awarded a suitable insignia to be worn with the medal. [Designed by Paul Manship.]
- **Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal** – The Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal is awarded to Seamen of any ship operated by or for the War Shipping Administration who is commended by the Administrator for conduct or service of a meritorious nature, but not sufficient to warrant the Distinguished Service Medal. [Designed by Paul Manship.]
- **Gallant Ship Citation Ribbon** – Awarded to officers and seamen who served on a ship which at the time of service, was cited for gallantry by the Maritime Administration. The bronze plaque is awarded to the ship. [9 awarded for World War II service. 8 awarded between 1956 and 1965. Designed by Jo Davidson. ]
- **Mariner's Medal** – The Mariner's Medal is awarded to any seaman who while serving in a ship during the war period is wounded, suffers physical injury, or suffers through dangerous exposure as a result of an act of enemy of the United States. In the event any such seaman dies from the wounds or injuries before the award can be made to him, the medal may be presented to the person named in the War Risk Policy as his beneficiary. [Designed by Paul Manship.]
- **Merchant Marine Defense Medal** – Awarded for service in the U.S. Merchant Marine prior to Pearl Harbor. It may be worn by all merchant seamen who served as members of the crews of U.S. merchant ships from September 8, 1939 and December 7, 1941.
- **Atlantic War Zone Medal** – for mariners who served in the Atlantic War Zone including the North Atlantic, South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Barents Sea, and the Greenland Sea, between December 7, 1941, and November 8, 1945. Design: The compass rose is traditionally associated

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with maritime navigation and the superimposed triangle with duty and service other than in the Armed Forces. The eagle symbolizes the United States and freedom.

- **Pacific War Zone Medal** – for merchant marine service in the Pacific War Zone, which included the North Pacific, South Pacific, and the Indian Ocean east of 80 degrees east longitude, during the period December 7, 1941, to March 2, 1946. Design: The trident, a symbol of naval prowess, rests upon a shaft of bamboo denoting the Pacific theater of operations. The sea seascape suggests maritime activities and service.
- **Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Medal** – for seafarers who served in the zone including the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and Indian Ocean west of 80 degrees east longitude, between December 7, 1941, and November 8, 1945. Design: The shield and anchor symbolize a strong maritime service. The palms suggest the Mediterranean-Middle East area while denoting victory and achievement.
- **Merchant Marine Defense Medal** – honoring civilian seafarers who served on merchant vessels between September 8, 1939 and December 7, 1941. Design: The shield and anchor, from the United States Maritime Service Seal, are superimposed in a ship's wheel, denoting control and maritime service. The laurel branches symbolize achievement and excellence.

**The other new medals are:**

- **Korean Service Medal** – recognizing service in the American merchant marine during the Korean Conflict. It is awarded for service between June 30, 1950, and September 30, 1953, in waters adjacent to Korea. Design: The torii gate and taeguk are traditionally associated with Korea. The ship's chain alludes to maritime service.
- **Vietnam Service Medal** – for maritime service between July 4, 1965, and August 15, 1973, in waters adjacent to Vietnam. Design: The dragon is traditionally associated with Vietnam, the shoreline denotes service in the coastal waters adjacent to Vietnam, and the anchor symbolizes maritime service.
- **Merchant Marine Expeditionary Medal** – awarded to American merchant seamen who serve on U.S.-flag ships in support of operations involving American and allied military force. It was first authorized for service in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This medal is also authorized to mariners who served in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and most recently in 2016 for Operations Restore Hope and United Shield and related operations in Somalia. **Instructions on applying for this medal can be found here**– Design: The anchor, symbolizing naval prowess, is flanked and supported by two seahorses, suggesting maritime service in support of the United States Armed Forces.
- **Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement** – awarded to recognize merchant mariners who have participated in an act or operation of humanitarian nature directly to an individual or groups of individuals. This medal may be awarded to those leaders in the maritime industry who have dedicated years of service or achievement and/or given an extraordinary valuable contribution or work to the maritime industry. This medal requires the Maritime Administrator's approval for award.

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The reverse of all new medals is a shield adapted from the Seal of the U.S. Maritime Service.

According to Maritime Administration records, over 12,400 mariners were awarded the Merchant Marine Defense Bar; 143,000 mariners were awarded the Atlantic War Zone Bar; 111,000 Pacific War Zone Bars were distributed; and, 94,000 bars for service in the Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone were presented. In addition, over 2,000 mariners received the Korean Service Bar, and 5,000 were given the Vietnam Service Bar.

All of these recipients of the war zone bars are eligible to obtain the new corresponding medal. The immediate families of deceased mariners are also eligible.

Some mariners who sailed in these wars never applied for the war zone ribbon bars. MARAD's authority to process applications for the original issuance of war zone bars expired in 1954. Under the new authority of Public Law 100-324, enacted in 1988, the Maritime Administration may again accept original applications for the decorations listed above.

Applicants must provide proper documentation of their merchant marine service in order to be considered for the medals. In general such documentation must include the mariner's full name, "Z" or book number, and copies of voyage discharge certificates

## **U.S. Merchant Marine Flag Program**

### ***U.S. Merchant Marine Flags for Qualified Organizations***

The Maritime Administration (MARAD) has developed a U.S. Merchant Marine Flag Program authorized by Public Law 84-759, 46 CFR Part 350 or Maritime Administrative Order (MAO) MAO 550-3 which prescribes the procedures under which Merchant Marine flags may be given or loaned to qualifying organizations.

MARAD receives requests for Merchant Marine flags and logos from organizations that wish to honor the historic and continuing contributions of merchant mariners to the United States. MARAD also has received requests for Merchant Marine flags and logos from various educational organizations that perform maritime training.

It has been determined that honoring certain of these requests supports MARAD's mission. Providing these flags, and displaying them with the flags of the U.S. Armed Forces, recognizes the role United States merchant mariners have played and continue to play in the national defense of the United States. In recognizing the achievements and importance of the service of U.S. merchant mariners, the displays would also enhance public awareness of the U.S. Merchant Marine as a career path for citizens of the United States and focus individuals considering such careers on the importance and value of the work they would do as merchant mariners. This recognition would also underscore the dignity and significance of the United States Merchant Marine as a whole. In addition, such flags would remind those training to be merchant mariners that they are part of a long tradition and profession whose mission goes beyond individual gain, in support of the highest principles of public service.

However, Merchant Marine flags are neither gifts nor awards for individuals. They are intended to serve the central purpose of recognizing and memorializing the past and continuing role and contribution of the merchant mariners of the United States.

A Merchant Marine Awards and Flags Committee has been established to make recommendations to the Maritime Administrator regarding which groups satisfy the criteria set forth below and should receive either the donation or a loan of the Merchant Marine flag and under what terms and conditions. The Merchant Marine Awards and Flag Committee is further authorized to develop and recommend to the Maritime Administrator changes to this MAO governing the award of merchant marine flags and replacements thereof.

**Criteria: Merchant Marine flags may only be given or loaned to the following groups:**

1. Public entities, or civic organizations in the United States qualified under United States Code, Title 26, section 501(c)(3), which at the location in which the Merchant Marine flag would be displayed have, at the time of application, at least 100 members and host visits by at least 2500 other members of the public annually in that location; and, at the time of application, publicly display the United States flag and the flag of at least one United States military service.
2. Educational institutions providing maritime training that would lead to a career in the United States Merchant Marine.
3. Institutions qualified to receive donated property under 46 U.S.C. § 51103.
4. Non-profit organizations as defined by Section 501(c) of the United States Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. § 501(c)), memorial/museum ships, and public bodies that:
  1. Are registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit organization;
  2. Are open to the public, or have and will display the flags in publicly accessible areas; and
  3. Possess an educational, maritime, or civic mission.
5. Federal, State or local government entities that will display the flags in publicly accessible areas.
6. Cemeteries or other locations at which U.S. merchant mariners are buried and where the Merchant Marine flag will be displayed with the flags of at least one other of the Armed Forces of the United States.