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Understanding Army Regulation 672 5 1: A Comprehensive Guide to Army Awards and Decorations

When a soldier's performance, valor, or dedication reaches a level that deserves formal recognition, the Army has a structured system in place to ensure that the right honors are awarded in the right manner. Central to this system is **Army Regulation 672 5 1**, often abbreviated as **AR 672 5 1**. This regulation outlines the policies, procedures, and eligibility criteria for all Army awards and decorations, ensuring fairness, consistency, and transparency across the force.

In this article, we'll explore the purpose of AR 672 5 1, break down its key components, discuss how awards are processed and documented, and provide practical guidance for soldiers, leaders, and administrators who need to navigate the award system. Whether you're a junior NCO looking to nominate a fellow soldier or a senior officer preparing a commendation list, this guide will help you understand the full lifecycle of Army awards.

1. The Role of Army Regulation 672 5 1

Army Regulation 672 5 1 is the definitive policy reference for all Army awards. It establishes the framework for:

- Defining the types of awards available
- Setting eligibility and performance criteria
- Outlining the nomination and approval process
- Ensuring proper documentation and record keeping
- Providing guidance on appeals and corrections

By codifying these elements, AR 672 5 1 guarantees that every award is granted based on merit, not favoritism, and that the award chain remains consistent across all commands.

1.1. Historical Context and Evolution

First issued in the early 2000s, AR 672 5 1 replaced earlier regulations that were fragmented across multiple documents. Over the past two decades, the Army has updated the regulation several times to reflect changes in operational tempo, new awards introduced by the Department of Defense, and lessons learned from field operations. The most recent update in 2023 added new language to address digital documentation and electronic award management systems.

2. Scope and Applicability

AR 672 5 1 applies to all active duty, reserve, National Guard, and Army National Guard soldiers, as well as civilian employees who are eligible for certain non military awards. The regulation explicitly excludes:

- Non Army awards granted by other services unless specifically authorized
- Personal or unofficial commendations not following the formal award process
- Awards that are part of a separate, service specific regulation (e.g., Navy"s N-1 awards)

Despite its broad reach, the regulation is designed to be flexible, allowing commanders at all levels to tailor award

nominations to their unique operational contexts.

3. Types of Awards Covered by AR 672 5 1

The Army offers a wide range of awards, each with its own criteria and significance. Below is a categorized overview of the most common awards you'll encounter:

3.1. Valor and Heroism Awards

- Silver Star – for gallantry in action against an armed enemy
- Bronze Star Medal – for heroic or meritorious achievement in a combat zone
- Purple Heart – for wounds or death sustained while serving

3.2. Meritorious Service Awards

- Army Commendation Medal – for sustained acts of meritorious service or achievement
- Army Achievement Medal – for outstanding achievement or meritorious service at a non command level

3.3. Unit Awards

- Presidential Unit Citation – for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy
- Army Superior Unit Award – for outstanding meritorious performance of a unit mission

3.4. Special Recognition Awards

- National Defense Service Medal – for service during designated periods of national emergency
- Army Service Ribbon – for successful completion of basic training

3.5. Awards by NA

In addition to the standard Army awards, certain recognitions may be granted by the National Academy (NA) or other external organizations. These awards are typically supplemental and may require additional documentation or separate approval chains. While AR 672 5 1 primarily governs Army awards, it provides guidance for incorporating external recognitions into a soldier's official record.

4. Eligibility Criteria and Performance Standards

AR 672 5 1 defines eligibility not only by rank or duty assignment but also by the nature of the service performed. The regulation emphasizes the following core principles:

1. Merit-Based Recognition – Awards are granted based on documented acts of valor, achievement, or service.
2. Consistency Across Commands – Eligibility standards are uniform, ensuring that a soldier's performance is evaluated against the same criteria regardless of assignment.
3. Time Limits – Certain awards have a statutory time limit for submission (e.g., the Army Commendation Medal can be awarded up to 3 years after the event).

Below is a quick reference table summarizing eligibility for some common awards:

Award	Eligibility	Time Limit
Silver Star	Gallantry in action against an armed enemy	Unlimited, but recommended within 1 year
Army Commendation Medal	Sustained meritorious service or achievement	3 years
Army Achievement Medal	Outstanding achievement or meritorious service	3 years
National Defense Service Medal	Active duty during specified periods	Unlimited

5. The Nomination Process

AR 672 5 1 lays out a step by step process to ensure that nominations are thorough, accurate, and compliant with policy. Below is a detailed workflow:

5.1. Identify the Award

Before initiating a nomination, confirm that the action or performance matches the award's criteria. Use the award matrix in the regulation's annex for quick reference.

5.2. Gather Supporting Documentation

- After action reports
- Official mission briefings
- Witness statements or affidavits
- Photographic or video evidence (if applicable)
- Previous award citations (for cumulative awards)

5.3. Complete the Nomination Forms

The primary form is **AR 600 8 22, Award and Decorations**. Ensure all required fields are filled, including:

1. Nominee's personal information
2. Nomination details (event date, location, description)
3. Supporting evidence attachment list
4. Signature of the nominating officer

5.4. Command Review and Approval

1. Immediate Superior Officer (ISO) – Provides initial review and endorsement.
2. Unit Commanding Officer (CO) – Final approval before submission to higher headquarters.
3. Higher Headquarters (e.g., Brigade, Division) – Conducts a policy compliance check and issues the award decision.

5.5. Award Issuance and Presentation

Once approved, the award is issued through the Army's electronic award management system, and the soldier receives a physical medal or ribbon. Presentation ceremonies are typically conducted by the unit commander or a senior officer, emphasizing the significance of the award to the individual and the unit.

6. Documentation and Record Keeping

Proper record keeping is essential to maintain the integrity of the award system. AR 672 5 1 mandates the following:

- All award documentation must be stored in the soldier's Personnel File (PF) or Electronic Personnel System (ePIS).
- Digital copies of nomination forms and supporting evidence should be archived in the Army Awards Database (AAD).
- Any corrections or updates must be documented with a Correction Notice and approved by the relevant authority.

Failure to maintain accurate records can result in administrative penalties and may delay future award processing.

7. Appeals and Corrections

In rare cases, a soldier may believe that an award was unjustly denied or that a nomination was processed incorrectly. AR 672 5 1 provides a clear appeals pathway:

1. Initial Request – The soldier submits a written appeal to the immediate superior officer, outlining the grounds for the appeal.
2. Command Review – The commander reviews the appeal, consults relevant documentation, and makes a recommendation.
3. Higher Authority Review – If the appeal is unresolved, it is escalated to the next level of command (e.g., Brigade or Division). The final decision is documented in the award's official record.

Corrective actions may include re issuance of the award, adjustment of the award level, or, in rare instances, revocation if policy violations are discovered.

8. Common FAQs About Army Awards

A **medal** is a physical object worn on the chest, while a **ribbon**is a small strip worn on the uniform to denote the award. Some awards are issued as both.

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