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7/15th FA Vietnam Era Service Medals

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There have been many inquiries about the service medals a 7/15th FA Veteran can or should display. As most veterans have been out of the service for many years, this information can be hard to find. It is easy to find information on the Internet regarding the subject, but any of this information can be incorrect. If any, the information found at genuine U.S. Government military web sites would tend to be the most believable.

Types of medals can be broken down into a few categories:

- 1.) "Personal/Individual" awards/medals awarded you are usually found listed in box # 24 on your DD-214 discharge form. Unit Commanders recommend awards, award clerks add DD-214 information. Items may include "badges" for various qualifications such as sharp-shooter, mechanic, various driver, airborne, infantry, etc. Other medals/awards could include various individual types such as Purple Heart, Silver/Bronze Stars, Army Commendation, Air Medal, overseas bars (one each six months), years of service hash-marks (one = three years, not listed on DD-214), etc. Vietnam Medals "should" be at least National Defense Service, Vietnam Service, Vietnam Campaign, and Good Conduct Medal.
- 2.) "Unit Citations" awarded to the unit you were in during the prescribed periods designated. They would include RVN Gallantry Cross w/Palm. This type is awarded by government decree, as the RVN awarded to the 7/15th FA. Information on these types of awards normally have documentation that can be very hard to find.
- 3.) "Commemorative Medals" struck (issued) to honor various wars, time periods, and honorable military services. These include Republic of Vietnam Defense 1960-1975, Army Commemorative 1775-2000, Cold War Victory Commemorative 2 Sep.1945 - 26 Dec. 1991 (you can apply for a certificate).
- 4.) "Others Medals" can include various foreign country medals awarded to individuals or units while serving in those countries. Information on these are also hard to find to confirm correct protocol.

Some information can be found in catalogs and on web sites, but is not clear. While medal companies claim that you can display some of these, they do not appear to offer documentation of awarding those from foreign governments. Be sure to see the D.O.D. webpage titled "Manual of Military Decorations and Awards" at: <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/>

(requires Acrobat Reader to view)

5.) "Devices" are medal or medal ribbon attachments. These include very small stars, leaves, letters, knots, or palms. Three Bronze Stars on the Vietnam Service medal indicates three campaigns, more if you served longer. One Silver Star equals five Bronze Stars. Stars are also used to indicate multiple awards. Knots on Good Conduct medals indicate one for each three years service: bronze 2nd-5th, silver 6th-10th, gold 11th-15th awards. The Good Conduct Medal can be issued after completion of first enlistment, draftees after two years.

All medals listed on your DD-214 form should have been issued to you. If not, you can order them from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO:

National Personnel Records Center
Medals Section (NRPMA-M)
9700 Page Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Send in your DD-214, completed DA Form 180 (down-load from <http://www.nara.gov>) and you will receive them free in about 9-12 months from the supply center in Philadelphia. All medals will "normally" have your name inscribed on the back.

All foreign and commemorative medals, devices, service bars and hashes must be purchased from medals companies at your own cost. Most medals are about \$20-30 for full size, ribbons \$1-\$2.50., some include the ribbons. Miniature medals and hat pins are available also, some sell tie tacks.

Companies that sell medals, awards, devices, collar insignia, some patches, and display cases are Medals of America, Call to Colors, H. J. Saunders, R.W. Fuller, and others smaller companies.

H.J. Saunders appears to have the largest assortment of Unit Crests for sale.

Danang Enterprises sell various small hat pin type items in the form of unit patches, awards, military equipment, location script, POW/MIA, flags, and humorous. These range in price from \$4-\$5. In addition, they offer many other memorabilia items. These types of items can also be found at flea markets.

A few other companies offering items are: Graco Industries, Vets Supply Line, Quartermaster, "12 O'Clock High ", National Capitol Historic Sales, and Overload Military Collection.