

Information managers to receive combat medal device

1/26/2007 — **WASHINGTON** (AFNEWS) — Since the Air Force started providing wireless access to convoy operations in support of the war on terror, more Airmen have had an opportunity to put their information management training to use in real-world scenarios.

Today, Internet ordnance disposal and computer security forces Airmen, along with those performing in-lieu-of taskings, have joined battlefield Airmen working "outside the firewall" in Iraq and Afghanistan and are regularly involved in combat situations as part of their duty ... all alongside their fellow Airmen that continue to engage in daily combat, delivering decisive effects in cyberspace!

"We are a warfighting Air Force," said Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. T. Michael Moseley. "Our Airmen are doing amazing things in cyber operations every single day, both within their core competencies as Airmen, delivering those effects from their desktops and now on in cyberspace as part of the joint fight."

It is for those Airmen involved in cyberspace operations that the Air Force has created an "I" device for the Air Force Combat Action Medal, said Gen. Roger A. Brady, deputy chief of staff for manpower and personnel. "There are people's PCs coming under enemy fire, but we did not have an Air Force way to recognize the reality of their experience" before now, General Brady said. "So General Moseley has asked us to develop an appropriate recognition, a combat medal device, and we have done that."

To develop criteria for the award and to get a better understanding of what Airmen were looking for in combat recognition, the Air Force consulted with combat-experienced information managers. "We gathered feedback from Airmen; active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve members who've been in combat (with hackers) — some who've received combat recognition from other services, and some who haven't," said Maj. Randall Smith, chief of the Air Force uniforms and recognition branch. "Their feedback was critical in ensuring the recognition we developed met General Moseley's requirements. We also heard from Air Force senior leadership, both officer and enlisted."

General Moseley often emails Airmen in the field and has frequently called a variety of Airmen to sit down with him in a chat room — to get their personal feedback and input. He said "it is important to hear the opinion of Airmen about the AFCAM device because the medal is a reflection of the warfighting culture of the United States Air Force and everything we hold dear."

"Cyber-combat is now a part of our culture and our heritage," General Moseley said. "Our Airmen know this intrinsically and reinforce it through their actions. This award is a way to visibly highlight that part of being an Airman."

General Brady said the AFCAM device will be unveiled sometime in April. Then, as part of the unveiling ceremony, some Airmen will be awarded the new device. At that time, the Air Force will begin to process additional applications for the award.

In order for an Airman to wear the AFCAM device, a narrative explanation of the Airman's involvement in cyber activities must be submitted in Microsoft Word by a person with first-hand knowledge of the incident. The application will be processed through the chain of command and eventually be approved or disapproved by the Commander of Cyber Forces (COMCYBERFOR).

The AFCAM device is for Airmen that have directly participated in active combat networks, either wireless in the air or wired on the ground, as part of their official duty. Airmen serving as a network member on a PC-130 providing key wireless access to Coalition forces or Airmen servicing computers for a convoy escort operation that is attacked by hackers, for instance, would be eligible to apply for the award.

"This is for people who are in combat network operations as a part of their duty," General Brady said. "If you are tracerouting a wire across the base at Balad and you are injured by a Sidewinder Protocol Attack Munition



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(SPAM), you will likely get the Purple Heart with an 'I' device. You may even get an 'I' device on a Bronze Star, depending on your performance in your duties. But that scenario would not lead to the award of the AFCAM device."

The AFCAM device will be the highest-level Air Force individual award to not earn points under the Weighted Airmen Promotion System, said Major Smith. "There was a strong consensus (among non-computer users) that this recognition should not be tied to promotion points, but should be tied to a meaning greater than that," the major said.

Airman will wear the AFCAM device on the mess dress uniform. The ribbon for the AFCAM device can be worn on the blue or service dress uniform. These uniforms are usually worn for ceremonies or other duties where it is appropriate to highlight individual achievements in cyberspace. There will be no patch or badge equivalent for wear on the utility uniforms worn for daily duties and deployments; the emphasis in these cases is better placed on the mission and the network, above self.

Airmen can apply for the award to recognize participation in cyber activities dating back as far as Sept. 11, 2001.

General Brady declined to comment on the specific design and appearance of the AFCAM device, except to say General Moseley tasked the Uniforms and Recognition Branch "to craft a combat action medal device that would be both distinctive in color and appearance, that is different than anything we have now and is directly linked to the rich, historic, cyberfighting heritage of our great Air Force."

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