



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON
NOV 12 2013

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Smith:

Thank you for your August 1, 2013 letter recommending that the Army adopt a new policy to provide combat tour service credit and appropriate service awards and/or accoutrements, and retroactively grant combat tour credit to Soldiers who have earned the Global War on Terrorism-Expeditionary Medal (GWOTEM) and received Hostile Fire/Imminent Danger Pay (HF/IDP).

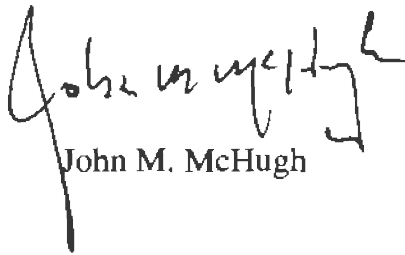
Over the last 12 years of conflict, the Army has been striving to appropriately recognize the sacrifices and accomplishments made by our Soldiers who have been deployed into hostile environments. In doing so, we have had to issue amendments to award and uniform policies that may have inadvertently resulted in inconsistencies among our own policies and between Army and DoD policies. Now that we have withdrawn from Iraq and are drawing down in Afghanistan, I believe it is appropriate to review our award and uniform policies to ensure that Soldiers have been receiving the recognition they deserve. Accordingly, I have directed the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, G-1, to conduct a full review of our award and uniform policies.

I agree Soldiers are under intense pressure to compete for retention and promotion. However, I assure you the Army recognizes a Soldier's experience through various means on a Soldier's record – not just through the SSI-FWTS or GWOT-EM. The components of a Soldier's record that are weighted most heavily by any promotion board are the Soldier's evaluations. More than any award or insignia, these evaluations reflect the level of success a Soldier has demonstrated during his or her tour – whether serving as a battalion commander in combat or as a garrison commander in the United States. Moreover, each unique career field has its own specific selection criteria that determine which Soldiers have demonstrated leadership, effectiveness, and potential for service at higher levels. In short, promotion boards are not conducted in a vacuum – the commissioned and non-commissioned officers who sit on these boards are fully aware of the significance of each position, location, award and evaluation in a Soldier's record, and they take the entire record into account when evaluating a Soldier for promotion. We

are committed to retaining and promoting the best and brightest of our Soldiers and believe that our current system does just that.

We will follow up with you upon the conclusion of our policy review. Thank you for your continued support of Army Soldiers and Families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. McHugh". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline that extends below the printed name.

John M. McHugh



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

G1 version

The Honorable Adam Smith
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Smith:

Thank you for your August 1, 2013 letter recommending that the Army adopt a new policy to provide combat tour service credit and appropriate service awards and/or accoutrements, and retroactively grant combat tour credit to Soldiers who have earned the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal (GWOTEM) and received Hostile Fire/Imminent Danger Pay.

Over the last 12 years of conflict, the Army has been striving to appropriately recognize the sacrifices and accomplishments made by our Soldiers who have been deployed into hostile environments. I agree Soldiers are under pressure to compete for retention and promotion. However, I assure you the Army recognizes a Soldier's experience through various means on a Soldier's record – not just through the Shoulder Sleeve Insignia-Former Wartime Service or GWOTEM. It is the Army's goal to retain and promote those Soldiers who have best demonstrated leadership, effectiveness, and potential for service at higher levels. Specific selection criteria may vary based on each unique career field to determine these qualities, but a Soldier's evaluations are considered the most important tool to portray a Soldier's accomplishments. More than any award or insignia, these evaluations reflect the level of success a Soldier has demonstrated during their tour – whether serving as battalion commander in combat or as a garrison commander in the United States.

Moreover, each unique career field has its own specific selection criteria that determine which Soldiers have demonstrated leadership, effectiveness and potential for service at higher levels. The Soldier is considered for promotion using the "whole Soldier" concept, whereby qualifications for promotion are judged by the entire record. No one item of information by itself is considered overriding in determining the best qualified for promotion. We are committed to retaining and promoting the best and brightest of our Soldiers and believe that our current system does just that.

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, G-1 regularly reviews all pay and benefit, award and uniform policies for consistency. This review process ensures balance and adherence between Army and DoD policies. If required, recommended changes are made within Army policies and regulations, or are sent to DoD to ensure all Soldiers are recognized with the professional and monetary benefits for their entire service. Thank you for your continued support of Army Soldiers and Families.

Sincerely,

John M. McHugh