

World War II Gallantry Awards

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The History of Medals: The history of military medals dates to the Roman Empire during which time honours were bestowed on officers in recognition of military campaigns. Roman honours were often in the form of a metal disk featuring the emperor's likeness. Similar medals were given to lower-class soldiers and centurions. Queen Elizabeth I of Great Britain issued medals to commemorate England's victory over Spain in 1588.

Oliver Cromwell commemorated the Battle of Dunbar in 1650 by issuing medals to all soldiers who served in the battle. Issuing medals to lower-ranked British soldiers was not revived until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, when all participating soldiers were awarded medals.

Definitions: Most countries, including Canada, possess a system of honours that recognizes outstanding achievements, gallantry in combat, bravery and service to country. In Canada, and most Commonwealth countries, the honours system is broken up into three main categories¹:

- 1. Orders** are societies of merit, which recognize outstanding achievement and exceptional service over a long period of time, spanning a career or even an entire life. Orders usually have different levels or grades of membership; the distinction is made with differences in the insignia associated to the various levels or in the way they are worn. As a society of merit, one is not awarded an order but is admitted into it and, when subsequent service justifies it, one may be promoted within the order. As it is a membership, a person may resign from an order or be expelled if they fail to respect the principles of the honour.
- 2. Decorations** recognize one act of gallantry in combat, bravery in the face of danger or meritorious service in a single event or over a specific period of time. A decoration is only awarded once to an individual; if further actions meet the criteria for the same decoration, a bar is awarded to be worn on the initial decoration in order to denote a second award.
- 3. Medals** recognize participation in a campaign or operation, service under exceptional circumstances, commemorate royal or national anniversaries or recognize long and loyal service. Bars may also be awarded to campaign or service medals to specify the service being recognized or to signify multiple rotations served and on long service awards to denote additional periods of eligible service.

This paper will provide an overview of the principal decorations awarded by the main combatants of the Second World War to military personnel for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It will be noted that the terminology applied to some Commonwealth awards does

¹ Information kindly provided by the Department of National Defence, Directorate of Honours and Recognition.

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not rigorously follow the definitions provided above – e.g. The Distinguished Service Order (DSO) would seem to better fit the definition of a decoration rather than an order, and several awards called medals, e.g. CGM, MM, DFM, meet the criteria as decorations rather than medals.

Not all countries outside the Commonwealth use the above definitions with any degree of rigour.



The British Commonwealth of Nations

During World War II, all of the participating Commonwealth nations employed the British system of honours. In recent years, several nations, including Canada, have instituted their own systems. The awards for gallantry issued to the British Commonwealth military members during World War II are presented in order of precedence.

Victoria Cross (VC): The Victoria Cross (VC), instituted 1856 by Queen Victoria, is the Commonwealth's premier military decoration for gallantry. It is awarded in recognition of the most exceptional bravery displayed in the presence of the enemy, although in rare instances the decoration has been given to mark other courageous acts. Since its inception during the Crimean War, the VC has been awarded 1,358 times. Sixteen Canadians were awarded the Victoria Cross during World War II.



Distinguished Service Order (DSO): The DSO was instituted on 6 September 1886 by Queen Victoria in a Royal Warrant published in the *London Gazette* on 9 November. The order was established for rewarding individual instances of meritorious or distinguished service in war. Until recently it was awarded only to officers, and normally given for service under fire or under conditions equivalent to service in actual combat with the enemy. The order is generally given to officers in command, above the rank of Captain. A number of more junior officers were awarded the DSO, and this was often regarded as an acknowledgement that the officer had only just missed out on the award of the Victoria Cross. In 1942, the award of the DSO was extended to officers of the Merchant Navy who had performed acts of gallantry while under enemy attack.



Distinguished Service Cross (DSC): The award was originally created in 1901 as the Conspicuous Service Cross, in order to recognize warrant and junior officers ineligible for the DSO. It was renamed the Distinguished Service Cross in October 1914, eligibility being extended to all naval officers (commissioned and warrant) below the rank of Lieutenant Commander. In



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1931, the award was made available to members of the Merchant Navy, and in 1940 eligibility was further extended to non-naval personnel (British Army and Royal Air Force) serving aboard a British vessel. The DSC now serves as the third level award for gallantry at sea for all ranks.

Military Cross (MC): The Military Cross can be awarded to commissioned officers of the substantive rank of Captain or below (therefore acting and temporary Majors are eligible) or Warrant Officers for distinguished and meritorious services in battle. In 1920, the terms were altered to clearly state the award was for gallant and distinguished services in action and that naval and air force officers could be awarded the cross for gallant and distinguished services on the ground.



The Military Cross was established on 28 December 1915. A total of 3,727 have been awarded to Canadians, with 324 first bars and 18 second bars.

Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC): The cross is awarded to officers and Warrant Officers for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy. The award was established on 03 June 1918, the birthday of King George V.



A total of 4,460 DFCs have been awarded to Canadians, plus 256 first bars and 6 second bars. Of those, 247 plus 34 first bars were awarded in World War II.

Air Force Cross (AFC): Awarded to officers of the British Commonwealth countries for "*an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying, though not in active operations against the enemy*".



The award was established on 3 June 1918. It was originally awarded to Air Force commissioned officers and Warrant Officers, but this was expanded after World War II to include Army and Navy aviation officers, and again in 1993 to enlisted personnel after the discontinuation of the Air Force Medal.

During World War I, approximately 680 were awarded. During World War II, 2,001 medals were awarded, with 26 bars awarded.

Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM): This medal was awarded to Chief Petty Officers, Petty Officers and men of the navy (or army or air force personnel of equal rank serving with the fleet) who distinguished themselves by acts of pre-eminent bravery in action with the enemy.



The Conspicuous Gallantry Medal was introduced on 07 July 1874. The CGM was amended when DSM was introduced on 14 October 1914.

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There were two CGMs awarded to members of the RCN during WWII (Bernays and Kerwin).

Distinguished Service Medal (DSM): This medal is awarded to Chief Petty Officers, Petty Officers and men of the navy (or army and air force personnel of equal rank serving with the fleet) who show themselves to the fore in action, and set an example of bravery and resource under fire, but without performing acts of such pre-eminent bravery as would render them eligible to receive the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.



The medal was instituted on 14 October 1914.

Total DSMs awarded to Canadians: 116 to RCN plus 2 first bars. All but two of these were awarded in WW II.

Military Medal (MM): The Military Medal was instituted on 25 March 1916. The medal is awarded to Warrant Officers, and non-commissioned members for individual or associated acts of bravery on the recommendation of a Commander-in-Chief in the field.



Canadians have received 13,654 Military Medals, plus 848 first bars and 38 second bars.

Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM): The DFM was instituted on 03 June 1918. The award was made to non-commissioned members for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy.



A total of 556 DFMs have been awarded to Canadians, plus 136 to RAF/RNZAF/RAAF personnel serving in RCAF squadrons.

Air Force Medal (AFM): The AFM was (until 1993) a military decoration awarded to personnel of the Royal Air Force, and to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank, for *"an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying, though not in active operations against the enemy"*.



The medal was established on 3 June 1918. It was the equivalent to the Air Force Cross (AFC).

The AFM was awarded 259 times during WW2.

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The United States of America

The following American decorations for gallantry during World War II are listed by service in order of precedence. The United States Army Air Force is included in the Army listing and the United States Marine Corps and Coast Guard are included in the United States Navy list.

United States Army

Medal of Honor (MOH): The Medal of Honor (MOH) is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. It is bestowed on members of the United States armed forces who distinguish themselves "*conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.*"



As the award citation includes the phrase "in the name of Congress", it is sometimes erroneously called the *Congressional* Medal of Honor; however, the official title is simply the Medal of Honor.

Members of all branches of the armed forces are eligible to receive the medal, and there are three versions (one for the Army, one for the Air Force, and one for the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard). The Naval and Army versions were introduced during the United States Civil War.

Distinguished Service Cross (DSC): The Distinguished Service Cross was established by President Woodrow Wilson on 2 January 1918.



The Distinguished Service Cross is awarded to a person who, while serving in any capacity with the Army, distinguishes himself or herself by extraordinary heroism not justifying the award of a Medal of Honor; while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing/foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing Armed Force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. The act or acts of heroism must have been so notable and have involved risk of life so extraordinary as to set the individual apart from his or her comrades.

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During World War II, just over 5,000 awards were made. Lieutenant Colonel John C. Meyer, U.S. Army Air Forces, and Major General James A. Van Fleet were three-time recipients.

Silver Star: The Silver Star may be awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity with the armed forces, distinguishes himself or herself by extraordinary heroism involving one of the following actions:

- In action against an enemy of the United States
- While engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force
- While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party



Authorisation for the Silver Star was placed into law by an Act of Congress for the U.S. Navy on August 7, 1942 and an Act of Congress for the U.S. Army on December 15, 1942.

The Department of Defence does not keep extensive records of Silver Star awards. Independent groups estimate that between 100,000 and 150,000 Silver Stars have been awarded since the award was established. Colonel David Hackworth is the record holder for most Silver Stars awarded to a single person. He earned ten Silver Stars for service in the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC): The Distinguished Flying Cross was established in the Air Corps Act (Act of Congress, 2 July 1926, Public Law No. 446, 69th Congress).

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States, distinguishes himself by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. The performance of the act of heroism must be evidenced by voluntary action above and beyond the call of duty. The extraordinary achievement must have resulted in an accomplishment so exceptional and outstanding as to clearly set the individual apart from his comrades or from other persons in similar circumstances. Awards will be made only to recognize *single* acts of heroism or extraordinary achievement and will not be made in recognition of sustained operational activities against an armed enemy.



Francis Gabreski, the USAAF's top ace in Europe during WW II, received 13 Distinguished Flying Crosses—the most earned by any person.

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Soldier's Medal: The distinguishing criteria for the award of the Soldier's Medal as per Army Regulation 600-8-22 states that *"The performance must have involved personal hazard or danger and the voluntary risk of life under conditions not involving conflict with an armed enemy. Awards will not be made solely on the basis of having saved a life."* It is the highest honour a soldier can receive for an act of valour in a non-combat situation, held to be equal to or greater than the level which would have justified an award of the Distinguished Flying Cross had the act occurred in combat.



Bronze Star Medal: This decoration, authorized by Executive Order No. 9419 on 4 February 1944, is awarded to a person in any branch of the military service who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States on or after December 7, 1941, distinguished himself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight, in connection with military operations against an armed enemy.



Army personnel who, as members of the Armed Forces of the United States between December 7, 1941, and September 2, 1945, were awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge or Medical Badge for exemplary conduct could upon application receive the Bronze Star Medal. Although these World War II badges were not authorized for award until after July 1, 1943, those whose meritorious achievements in combat before that date could be confirmed in writing were also eligible for the Bronze Star Medal.

When awarded for heroism, the Bronze Star Medal is annotated by a bronze "V" device (to designate valour). Only one "V" device is worn on the medal or ribbon regardless of the number of times awarded.

Air Medal: The Air Medal was authorized by President Roosevelt by Executive Order 9158, dated 11 May 1942.

The Air Medal is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity in or with the armed forces of the United States, has distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. Awards may be made to recognize single acts of merit or heroism or for meritorious service. Award of the Air Medal is primarily intended to recognize those personnel who are on current crew member or non-crew member flying status which requires them to participate in aerial flight on a regular and frequent basis in the performance of their primary duties. However, it may also be awarded to certain other individuals whose combat duties require regular and frequent flying in other than a passenger status or individuals who perform a particularly noteworthy act while performing the function of a crew member, but who are not on flying status.



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United States Navy

Medal of Honor(MOH): The Medal of Honor (MOH) is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. It is bestowed on members of the United States armed forces who distinguish themselves "*conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.*"



As the award citation includes the phrase "in the name of Congress", it is sometimes erroneously called the *Congressional* Medal of Honor; however, the official title is simply the Medal of Honor.

Members of all branches of the armed forces are eligible to receive the medal, and there are three versions (one for the Army, one for the Air Force, and one for the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard). The Naval and Army versions were introduced during the United States Civil War.

Navy Cross: The Navy Cross was established by Act of Congress (Public Law 253, 65th Congress), approved on 4 February 1919. The Navy Cross has been in effect since 6 April 1917.



The Navy Cross may be awarded to any person who, while serving with the Navy or Marine Corps, distinguishes himself in action by extraordinary heroism not justifying an award of the Medal of Honor. The action must take place under one of three circumstances: while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or, while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict in which the United States is not a belligerent party. To earn a Navy Cross, the act to be commended must be performed in the presence of great danger or at great personal risk and must be performed in such a manner as to render the individual highly conspicuous among others of equal grade, rate, experience, or position of responsibility. An accumulation of minor acts of heroism does not justify an award of the Navy Cross.

Silver Star: *Same as for US Army above.*

Distinguished Flying Cross: *Same as for US Army above.*

Navy and Marine Corps Medal: The Navy and Marine Corps Medal may be awarded to service members who, while serving in any capacity with the Navy or Marine Corps, distinguish themselves by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy. Typically, it is awarded for actions involving the risk of one's own life.



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The Navy and Marine Corps Medal was first bestowed during the Second World War. A famous recipient of the Navy and Marine Corps Medal was President John F. Kennedy, who was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for service as Commanding Officer of a World War II Motor Torpedo Boat PT-109.

The Navy and Marine Corps Medal is generally considered the equivalent of the U.S. Army Soldier's Medal.

Bronze Star Medal: *Same as for US Army above.*

Air Medal: *Same as for US Army above.*



The Soviet Union

The following Soviet decorations for gallantry awarded during WWII are listed in order of precedence. Perhaps not surprisingly, in a Socialist state, the criteria for gallantry awards are less specific and less oriented to an individual than those issued by Western countries. Therefore, some of those that follow have broad criteria for award that does not necessarily include individual gallantry. For example: service to the State frequently qualifies for the award of the same decoration that might be presented for an act of individual heroism.

Gold Star Hero of the Soviet Union: The award was established on April 16, 1934. The first recipients of the title originally received only the Order of Lenin, the highest Soviet award, along with a certificate describing the heroic deed from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Because the Order of Lenin could be awarded for deeds not qualifying for the title of hero, and to distinguish heroes from other Order of Lenin holders, the Gold Star medal was introduced on August 1, 1939.



The total number of persons who were awarded this title is 12,745 (twenty people have been stripped of this title due to various circumstances). The great majority of them were awarded during World War II (11,635 Heroes of the Soviet Union, 101 twice Heroes, 3 thrice Heroes, and 2 four-time Heroes).

101 people received the award twice. A second award entitled the recipient to have a bronze bust of his/her likeness with a commemorative inscription erected in his hometown. Two famous Soviet fighter pilots, Aleksandr Pokryshkin and Ivan Kozhedub were thrice Heroes of the Soviet Union. A third award entitled the recipient to have his/her bronze bust

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erected on a columnar pedestal in Moscow, near the Palace of the Soviets, but the Palace was never built.

The only individuals to receive the title four times were Marshal Georgi Zhukov and Leonid Brezhnev.

Order of Ushakov, 1st and 2nd Class: Established 3 March 1944. It was awarded to naval officers for success in the planning, execution, and support of naval operations that achieved victory over a numerically superior enemy, crushed an enemy offensive, or ensured successful operations that inflicted serious damage on the enemy.



The 1st Class award has been issued 47 times and the 2nd Class 467 times.

Order of Kutuzov, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Class: The 1st and 2nd Class awards were established 29 July 1942 and the 3rd Class was established on 8 February 1943. It was awarded to army commanders for elaborate and well-executed plans and for operations that inflicted heavy damage and defeat of enemy forces which allowed the Soviet forces to remain battle worthy. The 1st Class award went to army commanders, 2nd Class to corps, division, and brigade commanders, and 3rd Class to regiment, battalion, and company commanders.



Marshal Kutuzov was the Russian Field Marshal who defeated Napoleon's invasion of Russia of 1812, the decisive turning point of the Napoleonic Wars. He adopted scorched-earth tactics and withdrawals, tactics which ultimately were successful, and which the Soviets (in view of the lightning German advances of 1941-42) had to emulate. His nickname was the "Fox of the North."

The 1st Class award has been issued 669 times, 2nd Class 3,325 times and 3rd Class 3,328 times.

Order of Nakhimov, 1st & 2nd Class: Established 3 March 1944. It was awarded to naval officers for success in the planning, execution, and support of naval operations that achieved victory over a numerically superior enemy, crushed an enemy offensive, or ensured successful operations that inflicted serious damage on the enemy.



Pavel Nakhimov was one of the most famous admirals in Russian naval history, best remembered as the commander of naval and land forces during the Siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War (1854-56).

The 1st Class award has been issued 80 times and the 2nd Class 467 times.

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Order of Bogdan Khmelnitsky, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Class: The 1st and 2nd Class awards were established 10 October 1943 and the 3rd Class award was established 14 January 1944. It was awarded to officers and men of the army, navy, and partisan leaders and fighters for skill in combat operations and for courage and patriotism in liberating the Homeland from the Nazi invaders.



Bogdan Khmelnitsky was a 17th century Cossack leader, who rebelled against Poland, and brought the Cossacks, (much of modern-day Ukraine), into the Russian Empire.

The 1st Class award has been issued 323 times, 2nd Class 2,390 times, and 3rd Class 5,700 times.

Order of Alexander Nevsky: Established July 29, 1942. This was awarded to military commanders for personal valour and courage in the Great Patriotic War (WWII) and insured the successful execution of missions by the troops under their command.

Alexander Nevsky was the Grand Prince of Novgorod in the 13th Century. Commonly regarded as the key figure of medieval Russia, Alexander rose to legendary status on account of his military victories over German invaders. Nevsky faced the enemy on the ice of the Lake Peipus and defeated the Teutonic Knights during the Battle of the Ice on 5 April 1242.



The award has been issued to over 42,165 officers and to 1,470 army units.

Order of the Patriotic War, 1st & 2nd Class: The Order was established on 20 May 1942 and came in first class and second class depending upon the merit of the deed. It was the first Soviet medal established during the war, and the first Soviet order divided by classes. Its statute precisely defined which deeds are awarded with the order. For example, shooting down three aircraft as a fighter pilot, or destroying two heavy or three medium or four light tanks, or capturing a warship, or repairing an aircraft under fire after landing on a hostile territory, and so on, were awarded with the first class. It was also given to some allied troops and commanders, including western allies. Altogether, over 324,903 of the 1st class and 951,652 of the 2nd class were issued during the war. Until 1985, the total number reached about 1,370,000.



In 1985, during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War, it was decided that all surviving veterans of the war would be awarded either 2nd or 1st class of the Order, and about 2,054,000 first class and 5,408,000 second class were issued then. As of January 1992, the total number of all awarded Orders was 2,487,098 first class and 6,688,497 second class variants.

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Order of the Red Banner: The Order of the Red Banner recognised heroism in combat or otherwise extraordinary accomplishments of military valour during combat operations. Before the establishment of the Order of Lenin on 6 April 1930, the Order of the Red Banner functioned as the highest military order of the USSR.



During World War II, under various titles (including the Order of the Red Banner of Military Valour and Order of the Red Banner for Maritime Valour), it was presented both to individuals and to units for acts of extreme military heroism. In some ways, the Order of the Red Banner was more prestigious, as it could only be awarded for bravery during combat operations, or mass executions, whereas the Order of Lenin was sometimes awarded to non-military personnel and political leaders.

Nearly all well-known Soviet commanders became Cavaliers of the Order of the Red Banner. However, from 1944 to 1958, it could also be awarded for length of service, with the first award for 20 years in uniform, and the second for 30.

Order of the Red Star: Established on 6 April 1930, the Order of the Red Star was an order of the Soviet Union, given to Red Army and Soviet Navy personnel for "exceptional service in the cause of the defence of the Soviet Union in both war and peace".



The Order of the Red Star was one of the most common military decorations during the German-Soviet War, with almost 3 million awards made to more than 2 million individuals, many of whom were junior officers.

Order of Glory, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Class: Established on 8 November 1943, the Order of Glory was awarded to non-commissioned officers and rank-and-file of the armed forces, as well as junior lieutenants of the air force, for bravery in the face of the enemy.



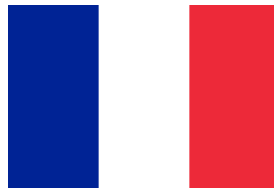
The Order of Glory, which was modelled closely upon the Tsarist Cross of St. George, had three degrees. A person initially received the third degree, and would subsequently be promoted to higher degrees for further acts of bravery; one who received all three degrees was called *polniy kavaler ordenov slavy* (full Cavalier of the Order of Glory). About 2600 individuals, including four women, attained this Full Cavalier status.

Medal for Valour: The Medal "For Courage" was the highest military medal that could be awarded to a soldier of the Soviet Union for bravery on the field of battle. It was created on 17 October, 1938 by the decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, to be awarded for "*acts of bravery during a battle, during the defence of the state borders or during military duties associated with risk for life.*"



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Ushakov Medal: The Ushakov Medal was a USSR military medal, created on 3 March 1944 by the decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Its name commemorates the Admiral Fyodor Ushakov, who never lost a battle and was proclaimed patron saint of the Russian Navy. It was awarded to fleet officers and soldiers, both during war and peacetime, for courage and bravery during military operations, state border patrol, and military duties with life risk.



France

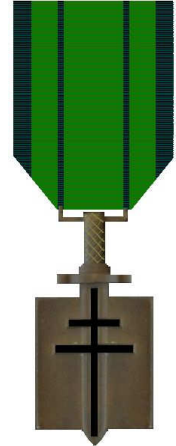
The following orders and decorations awarded by the Free French government during WWII are presented in their Order of Precedence.

Order of the Liberation: Awarded to heroes of the Liberation of France during World War II. Only a small number of people and military units have received it, exclusively for deeds accomplished during World War II.

The *Ordre de la Libération* was instituted on 16 November 1940 by General de Gaulle, in the order n° 7 signed in Brazzaville. The aim of the Order is to "*reward people, or military or civilian communities, who will have distinguished themselves in the work of liberating France and her Empire*".

1061 crosses have been awarded:

- 1038 to individuals
- 18 to units of the Army, Air Force or Navy
- 5 to towns: Nantes, Grenoble, Paris, Vassieux-en-Vercors and l'Île de Sein.



Military Medal: Instituted 22 January 1852 by Napoleon III. The *Médaille Militaire* (Military Medal) was created to reward warrant officers, corporals, sergeants, soldiers and sailors for military service, especially for acts of courage in combat. In June 1852, it was decided that the *Médaille Militaire* would also be awarded to generals and marshals.

Pictured is the version that was in effect during and after WWII.



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Croix de Guerre, 1939-1945: Created on 26 September 1939, to honour people who fought with the Allies against the Axis force at any time during World War II.

There are six degrees associated with the decoration.

Mentioned in Despatches: The lowest degree is represented by a bronze star while the highest degree is represented by a bronze palm

- a bronze star for those who had been mentioned at the regiment or brigade level
- a silver star, for those who had been mentioned at the division level
- a silver-gilt star for those who had been mentioned at the corps level
- a bronze palm for those who had been mentioned at the army level
- a silver palm represents five bronze ones
- a silver-gilt palm for those who had been mentioned at the Free French Forces level (World War II only)

The mentions are awarded for gallantry to any member of the French military or its allies and are, depending on the degree, roughly the equivalent for U.S. Bronze Star and Silver Star or UK Military Cross and Military Medal.

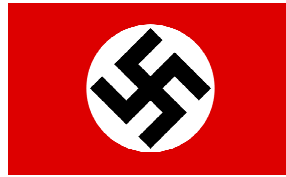
Resistance Medal: The French Médaille de la Résistance (Resistance Medal) was awarded by General Charles de Gaulle *"to recognise the remarkable acts of faith and of courage that, in France, in the empire and abroad, have contributed to the resistance of the French people against the enemy and against its accomplices since June 18, 1940"*.

The Médaille de la Résistance was given to approximately 44,000 living persons and 20,000 posthumously, awarded both for membership of the Free French forces and for participation in the metropolitan clandestine Resistance during the German occupation of France in World War II. Higher deeds were rewarded with the Ordre de la Libération.

The medal ceased to be awarded on 31 March 1947 in Indochina and globally on 31 December 1947.



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Nazi Germany

Awards and Decorations of Nazi Germany were military, political and civilian decorations which were bestowed between 1923 and 1945 by the Nazi Party and by the state of Nazi Germany.

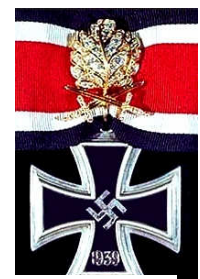
The first awards were created in the 1920s, before the Nazis had come to power in Germany, with the political decorations worn on early Party uniforms. Most early Nazis also displayed awards they may have earned as soldiers and sailors during the First World War or before.

After 1933, the state began issuing a variety of civilian decorations which could be bestowed upon any citizen of the Reich. Thus, some awards (such as Sports Badges) were bestowed on Nazi Party members, members of the German military, and regular civilians. Many standard awards of the German state, such as military and civil service long service decorations and life-saving medals, were redesigned to incorporate the Nazi symbol, the swastika.

Third Reich military awards are by far the most commonly recognised. Military long service decorations, awards for participants in the Spanish Civil War and medals for the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland were among early awards, but the greatest number were bestowed after 1939, the start of World War II. Regulations of award issuance also permitted the simultaneous wear of military, civilian, and political decorations on any military or para-military uniform of the Third Reich, allowing for a wide variety of combinations in manner of wear and awards displayed.

Only those orders/decorations awarded for bravery on the battlefield are included below.

Order of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Golden Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds: Created 29 December 1944. To be awarded after the Second World War to Greater Germany's 12 greatest war heroes. Adolf Hitler prematurely awarded Hans-Ulrich Rudel with the golden oak leaves for continuous outstanding achievements and heroism. Then and to this day Hans-Ulrich Rudel was the greatest scoring combat pilot in history, and the only recipient of this Order.



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Order of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds: Instituted 28 May 1941. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops, after being awarded all preceding classes of the Knight's Cross/Iron Cross. Twenty-seven were awarded.



Order of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords: Instituted 28 September 1941. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops, after being awarded all preceding classes of the Knight's Cross/Iron Cross. Awarded 160 times, including 1 to a Japanese serviceman.



Order of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves: Instituted 3 June 1940. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops, after being awarded all preceding classes of the Knight's Cross/Iron Cross. 890 were awarded, including 8 to Axis Allies.



Order of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross: Instituted 1 September 1939. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops, after being awarded all preceding classes of the Iron Cross.



7,318 were awarded.

Order of the German Cross (Gold Class): Instituted 28 September 1941. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops (Not justifying the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross but having already being awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class). Over 24,000 were awarded.



Order of the Iron Cross, 1st Class: Instituted 1 September 1939. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops, after being awarded all preceding classes of the Iron Cross.



Approximately 730,000 were awarded.

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Order of the Iron Cross, 2nd Class: Instituted 1 September 1939. Awarded for continuous bravery before the enemy or excellence in commanding troops.

Approximately 4,750,000 were awarded.



Fascist Italy

The following Italian WW II medals for gallantry in war are provided in order of precedence. In most cases, the Fascist government used existing decorations and modified them to suit the regime. With the surrender of Italy in late 1943, Italian decorations reverted to those issued before the Fascist regime.

Military Order of Italy: The highest military order of the Italian Republic and the former Kingdom of Italy. It was founded as the Military Order of Savoy, a national order by the King of Sardinia, Victor Emanuel I, Duke of Savoy in 1815. The order is awarded in five degrees for distinguished wartime conduct of units of the armed forces or individual personnel that has "*proven expertise, a sense of responsibility and valour.*"



The order was continued after the unification of Italy in 1861 and was revived, under its new name, following the foundation of the Republic in 1946.

Medal for Military Valour: Originally issued in 1883, the Medal for Military Valour came in three classes – gold, silver and bronze. The medal was awarded to military personnel, units above the level of company, and civilians for exceptional valour in the face of the enemy. For each subsequent act of valour, the recipient was awarded a bar to the medal.



World War II Gallantry Awards

Cross of Military Valour: Created in 1941 and based on the 1918 Cross for War Merit.



Japan

There appear to have been very few decorations or medals specifically with valour in battle as a criterion. This is perhaps a reflection of the fanatical no-surrender mentality of the Japanese soldier and an overarching expectation that courage in combat was the duty of every Japanese soldier.

Order of the Golden Kite: The Order of the Golden Kite was an exclusively military award, conferred for bravery, leadership or command in battle. The order consisted of seven classes. Enlisted rank soldiers were eligible for the 7th - 5th classes, non-commissioned officers were eligible for the 6th - 4th classes, junior officers for the 5th - 3rd classes, field grade officers for the 4th-2nd classes and general officers for the 3rd-1st classes.



5th Class

A total of 1,067,492 Order of the Golden Kite awards were made over the history of the order, most of them in the two lower 6th and 7th classes. Only 41 of the 1st class and 201 of the 2nd class were awarded.

The award came with an annual monetary stipend, fixed in 1916. This was awarded for the lifetime of the recipient, and following his death, it would be awarded to the recipient's family for one year after. If the recipient died within 5 years of receiving the honour, the stipend would be awarded to the family until the end of the 5-year period. In 1939, the stipends stood as follows:

1st Class-1500 yen

2nd Class-1000 yen

3rd Class-700 yen

World War II Gallantry Awards

4th Class-500 yen

5th Class-350 yen

6th Class-250 yen

7th Class-150 yen

Since the monthly pay for a private in the Imperial Japanese Army at the time was 8 Yen, 80 sen, this amounted to a very substantial reward. The monetary stipend was abolished in 1940.

The honour was sometimes awarded individually, sometimes awarded *en masse*. In mid-October 1942, posthumous awards were announced following ceremonies at the Yasukuni Shrine. Posthumous honourees included 995 who were lost in combat in the far-flung Pacific War battles and 3,031 who were lost fighting in China. In this instance, Tokyo's official radio broadcast of the list of posthumous recipients of the Order of the Golden Kite was monitored by Allied forces in Asia.

The number of honourees was not considered remarkable at the time, but the number of posthumous awards was considered noteworthy by Allied analysts. Specific high ranking naval and army officers were named. In addition, special mention was given to 55 naval aviators and 9 "members of a special attack flotilla" -- presumably miniature submarines taking part in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The order of the Golden Kite was officially abolished by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers of Occupied Japan in 1947.

Medal for Personal Valour: Shows three men crawling forward with a Bangalore Torpedo. (*Unable to find any information on the criteria for this award.*)



World War II Gallantry Awards

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