

DECISION



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

Mr. Zel Kowitz
14756
PL II

[Authorization for Procurement of Desk Type Medallions]

FILE: B-184306

DATE: August 27, 1980

MATTER OF: Awarding of desk medallion by Naval Sea
Systems Command

DIGEST: Government Employees Incentive Awards Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 4501-4506, and corresponding act applicable to military personnel, 10 U.S.C. § 1024, and instructions issued pursuant thereto, give authority to Naval Sea Systems Command to issue special awards tailored to its own needs. Awarding of desk medallions to its civilian and military personnel "for accomplishment of significant deeds which further the mission of the Command" is proper under these statutes and related internal instructions.

The Naval Sea Systems Command proposes the procurement of desk type medallions, which resemble paperweights, to be awarded to civilian and military personnel in recognition of their significant accomplishments. For reasons stated below, we conclude that the procurement of these medallions, to be used as honorary awards, is authorized by the Government Employee's Incentive Awards Act and the corresponding provision available for military personnel.

The Naval Sea Systems Command promulgated regulations concerning the issuance of incentive awards (NAVSEA Instruction 5305.2 as amended by Change Transmittal 1 dated February 14, 1977). The NAVSEA Medallion, the award in question, is to be granted to civilian and military personnel "for accomplishment of significant deeds which further the mission of the Command but which do not meet the criteria for Special Achievement Awards or other formal recognition under the Navy Incentive Awards Program." NAVSEAINST 5305.2 (C)(g). The Naval Sea Systems Command seeks to purchase 250 of these medallions.

The Government Employee's Incentive Awards Act provides in pertinent part that:

"The head of an agency may pay a cash award to, and incur necessary expense for the honorary recognition of, an employee who—

- (1) by his suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, or other personal effort

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contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations;" 5 U.S.C. § 4503 (1976).

This provision is applicable to civilian employees of the armed services. B-184306, October 2, 1975; see, 5 U.S.C. § 4501 (1976).

The Office of Personnel Management was given wide latitude to issue regulations to implement the Government Employees Incentive Awards Act. 5 U.S.C. § 4506 (1976). The regulations it adopted were designed to "[encourage] agencies to make use of their authorities . . . to establish and administer awards programs that best support and enhance agency and national goals, and meet employee recognition needs." 5 C.F.R. § 451.202 (1980). To achieve this goal, the Office of Personnel Management gave great latitude to the individual agencies to develop incentive awards programs which would meet their unique requirements. 5 C.F.R. § 451.206 (1980).

The Secretary of Defense has been granted authority to issue honorary awards to a "member of the armed forces under his jurisdiction who by his suggestion, invention, or scientific achievement contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of operations or programs relating to the armed forces." 10 U.S.C. § 1124 (1976). The legislative history of this provision indicates that the program it created was meant to be similar to the civilian program (Senate Report No. 678, 89th Congress, 1st session, 1965 U.S. Code Cong., and Ad. News. 3161). Thus, the same criteria used to determine the validity of awards under the civilian program can be used to determine the validity of awards under the military program. In fact, the Department of Defense used its combined authority under these two statutes to implement one regulation applicable to both civilian employees and members of the armed forces. DOD Instruction 5120.16, "Department of Defense Incentive Awards Program: Policies and Standards," July 15, 1974.

The Department of Defense Instruction only establishes broad standards for the incentive awards program; the various components of the DOD are given the authority to implement the program.

The Department of Defense Instruction establishes the basic eligibility criteria for the receiving of awards under the incentive awards program. The instruction states that both civilian

and military employees of the DOD, paid from appropriated funds, are eligible to receive cash or honorary awards. DOD Instruction 5120.16 § VI A, supra.

Honorary awards which can be received by employees from all DOD Components, are allowed by the Instruction. Moreover, the Instruction provides that the various Components can grant honorary awards "in the form of wall or desk plaques, citations, or other appropriate symbols" to their respective employees for recognition of special contributions. DOD Instruction, 5120.16 (Encl. 3) "Honorary Awards and Career Service Awards § I (D), supra.

Pursuant to DOD Instruction 5120.16, the Department of the Navy issued guidelines for the implementation of the incentive awards programs to its various Commands. The Navy's instructions closely parallel the DOD Instruction. The Commands are given the authority to create honorary awards specifically tailored to their particular needs. Desk medallions, which can be displayed, are an approved form for awards.

In view of the statutory language, and the various regulations, it is clear that the Naval Sea Systems Command has the authority to establish a unique class of honorary awards to be used for the recognition of achievements of its employees. See, 46 Comp. Gen. 662 (1967). Furthermore, a desk medallion is an appropriate form for honorary awards. See, 55 Comp. Gen. 346, 348 (1975). Accordingly, since the desk medallions are to be awarded to civilian and military employees of the Naval Sea Systems Command in recognition of their accomplishments which further the mission of the Command pursuant to its award program, the purchase and dissemination of these medallions is in accord with the authority contained in the Government Employee's Incentive Award Act and the corresponding Act for military personnel and is thus authorized.

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For The Comptroller General
of the United States