SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

APR 15 2013

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

Thank you for expressing your concerns with the Distinguished Warfare Medal (DWM). As you know from my recent letter to you, I asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs to conduct a review of the DWM.

The Military Department Secretaries, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I all clearly recognize that the character of modern warfare has changed and will continue to evolve. Technological advancements have led to remarkable military accomplishments that have direct bearing on battlefield success even though they entail less direct physical risk to our force. My predecessor Leon Panetta was acutely aware of how remotely piloted vehicle and cyber operators were directly and significantly impacting combat operations. He realized, as do I, that the extraordinary and meritorious achievements of our Service men and women who employ this technology deserve distinct recognition. I am grateful to him for initiating this effort.

Based on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and concurred in by the Military Department Secretaries, I have determined that such recognition is best accomplished through the creation of a distinguishing device that may be affixed to existing medals at various levels instead of a separate medal. I have directed that within 90 days, final award criteria and the specifics of the distinguishing device be developed and presented to me for final approval.

Use of a distinguishing device to recognize impacts on combat operations reserves our existing combat medals for those Service members who incur the physical risk and hardship of combat, perform valorous acts, are wounded in combat, or as a result of combat give their last full measure for our Nation. Accordingly, I have issued a new memorandum superseding the memorandum dated February 13, 2013, that announced the creation of the DWM.

Thank you for your interest in this matter and for your continued support of the men and women who serve our great Nation.

Sincerely,

Chuck Hagel

Attachment:
Secretary of Defense Press Statement, April 15, 2013

DISTINGUISHED WARFARE MEDAL REVIEW ANNOUNCEMENT THE PENTAGON - MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2013
[388 WORDS]

On February 13, the Department of Defense announced the establishment of the Distinguished Warfare Medal to recognize the achievements of a small number of service men and women who have an especially direct and immediate impact on combat operations through the use of remotely piloted aircraft and cyber operations. I agree with my predecessor, the Honorable Leon Panetta, that such recognition is justly warranted for these men and women and thank him for raising the level of awareness of their hard work and critical contributions.

When I came into office, concerns were raised to me about the Distinguished Warfare Medal's order of precedence by veterans' organizations, members of Congress, and other stakeholders whose views are valued by this Department's leadership.

After consulting with the Service Secretaries, along with General Dempsey and the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I directed them to review the Distinguished Warfare Medal. The medal was originally conceived to be awarded only to those men and women who, while serving off the battlefield, have an extraordinary impact on combat operations. While the review confirmed the need to ensure such recognition, it found that misconceptions regarding the precedence of the award were distracting from its original purpose.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the concurrence of the Service Secretaries, have recommended the creation of a new distinguishing device that can be affixed to existing medals to recognize such extraordinary actions of this small number of men and women. I agree with the Joint Chiefs' findings, and have directed the creation of a distinguishing device instead of a separate medal.

The Joint Chiefs also recommend further consultation with the Service Secretaries, the service senior enlisted leaders, and veterans' organizations regarding the nature of the device as well as clear definition of the eligibility criteria for the award. I have directed that within 90 days final award criteria and the other specifics of the distinguishing device be developed and presented to me for final approval.

The service men and women who operate and support our remotely piloted aircraft, operate in cyber, and others are critical to our military's mission of safeguarding the nation. I again want to thank my predecessor, Leon Panetta, for raising the need to ensure that these men and women are recognized for their contributions.