

Combat Medical Badges, 1941-present.



WD Circular 151, May 1945, established the badge that initially was known as the Medical Badge. The army intended it for medical personnel attached or part of an infantry regiment or smaller infantry units. Award was retroactive to 7 December 1941. Congress passed a law approved 6 July 1945 that provided \$10/month for enlisted men who had the medical badge and for six months after the war's end.

The Army Chief of Staff approved the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th awards for separate wars in February 1951. The star place for subsequent awards was unusual. While the second award (one star) went at the wreath top, the second star (third award) went at the wreath bottom, while for the 4th award had three stars at the wreath top and at each end of the stretcher. These changes were published in September 1951.

For many years only combat medical personnel attached to infantry units were eligible for the combat medical badge. After the Vietnam War this slowly changed. Special Forces medical personnel assigned to Special Forces units and who performed medical duties while a unit was engaged in ground combat on or after 19 December 1989, could receive the combat medical badge. Retroactive award was not authorized. During Desert Storm, after 16 January 1991 the army authorized the badge for medical personnel assigned to or supporting armor or ground cavalry units. The next expansion came when the army allowed medical personnel "performing medical duties" to earn the badge, provided they were assigned or attached to any ground combat unit and the medical personnel were personally present and under fire. No retroactive awards were allowed before 11 September 2001.

With the creation of the Combat Action Badge in June 2005, the army changed the criteria for Special Forces medical sergeants and allowed them to receive the combat infantry badge. Under this change the Special Forces medical sergeants could not earn the combat medical badge. The rationale was the all members of a small Special Forces team engaged in combat and many Special Forces medics had been frustrated that they could not receive the combat infantry badge while they did the same job as other team members. The June 2005 change also expanded retroactively the eligibility to include medical soldiers in Korea who actually came under fire after the Korean armistices, 28 July 1953.