



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

October 6, 2017

The Honorable Joni K. Ernst
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ernst:

This is a follow up to former acting Secretary Stackley's letter of June 21, 2017 concerning your request for review of the Navy and Marine Corps Medal awarded to the late Lieutenant Junior Grade Aloysius H. Schmitt, Chaplain Corps, U. S. Navy. A review was completed, and I am pleased to inform you I have awarded Chaplain Schmitt the Silver Star Medal, the Nation's third highest decoration for valor in combat, for his gallant actions aboard the battleship USS OKLAHOMA on December 7, 1941.

The Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals conducted an exhaustive review of the circumstances surrounding Chaplain Schmitt's actions and original award, other awards approved for actions at Pearl Harbor, and award policies and practices during World War II. The Board concluded Chaplain Schmitt's actions occurred under conditions the Navy defined officially in 1945 as *actual combat*, and his heroism would have been more appropriately recognized by a combat heroism, or valor, decoration, rather than by the non-combat Navy and Marine Corps Medal. Following publication of the *actual combat* definition in 1945, the Navy reviewed previous non-combat heroism medals. Many were changed to the Bronze Star Medal, while others were changed to the higher award of the Silver Star Medal. The Board determined Chaplain Schmitt's actions were consistent with and fully deserving of the Silver Star Medal.

This award of the Silver Star Medal is an upgrade of the Navy and Marine Corps Medal awarded in 1942, which has therefore been rescinded. Chaplain Schmitt's personnel record will be updated accordingly, and the Navy will arrange a ceremony for presentation of the Silver Star Medal to a surviving family member. Your office will be kept apprised of the ceremony planning should you wish to attend or participate.

Thank you again for bringing this important matter to the Department's attention, and for your unwavering support of the Navy. If I may be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,


Richard V. Spencer



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

October 6, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Award of the Silver Star Medal

Based on the recommendation of the Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals, I have awarded the Silver Star Medal, posthumously, to Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Aloysius H. Schmitt, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy, for his actions on 7 December 1941 at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The statutory time limit was waived as the request was made by a Member of Congress under provisions of 10 U.S.C. §1130. Please ensure an appropriate and timely Flag level presentation ceremony is arranged, and that Senator Ernst's office is kept apprised of the planned ceremony.

This Silver Star Medal is an upgrade of the Navy and Marine Corps Medal previously awarded to Chaplain Schmitt on 31 October 1942, which is hereby rescinded. This revocation is administratively required to comply with Department of Defense regulations prohibiting recognition of the same act by multiple decorations, and in no way reflects negatively on Chaplain Schmitt or the original awarding authority.



Richard V. Spencer

cc:
ASN (M&RA)
CNO (DNS-35)
VCNO
NAVIG
PERS 312
NDBDM/152-17



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the SILVER STAR MEDAL posthumously to

LIEUTENANT (JUNIOR GRADE) ALOYSIUS H. SCHMITT
CHAPLAIN CORPS
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity on 7 December 1941 while serving as Chaplain aboard USS OKLAHOMA during the attack by Japanese forces on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. When OKLAHOMA capsized, Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Schmitt, along with other members of the crew, became trapped in a compartment where only a small porthole provided outlet for escape. With unselfish disregard for his own plight, he assisted his shipmates through the aperture. When they in turn were in the process of rescuing him, his body became tightly wedged in the narrow opening. Realizing that other men had come into the compartment seeking a way out, Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Schmitt insisted he be pushed back into the ship so the others might escape. Calmly urging them on with a pronouncement of his blessing, he remained behind while his shipmates crawled out to safety. In so doing, he gallantly gave up his life for his country. Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Schmitt's magnanimous courage and self-sacrifice reflected great credit on him and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

For the President,

Secretary of the Navy



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HAS AWARDED THE

SILVER STAR MEDAL

TO
LIEUTENANT (JUNIOR GRADE) ALOYSIUS H. SCHMITT, CHAPLAIN CORPS
UNITED STATES NAVY

FOR
GALLANTRY IN ACTION

ON 7 DECEMBER 1941

GIVEN THIS 6th DAY OF October 2017.




SECRETARY OF THE NAVY