

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON SPYMASTER MEDAL

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The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has approved a new senior level decoration for extraordinary contributions within the intelligence community. The medal has been designed and approved but not yet awarded.

The medal's inspiration is based on the history of the Culper Spy espionage network that provided Washington with information on the British troop movements. It was led by Major Benjamin Tallmadge who was tasked with creating a spy ring in New York City. It operated with great success in New York City with none of its members being identified by the British.

DESCRIPTION

Obverse: A silver metal circular device consisting of a blue heraldic garter, edged and bearing sixteen stars, rose, extended throughout the garter, surmounted by a sub-rosa, bearing a disc and edged, all silver, displaying three horizontally placed stars above two stacked bars, all red. Attached above the disc, the crest of President George Washington blazoned as follows - from a wreath Argent and Gules, a demi-griffin, wings elevated issuant from a ducal coronet, all Argent (Silver).

Reverse: Within a ring of thirteen six-pointed stars, the words AWARDED TO, all within a blue designation band, edged silver and inscribed above, between two small circles from left to right EXITU ACTA PROBAT, which translates to "The Ends Justify the Means" and below GEORGE (to the left) and WASHINGTON (to the right), all silver.



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Obverse and Reverse

SYMBOLISM

Obverse: Silver denotes the assessment of truth. The garter, adapted from the British coat of arms displayed on the gorget worn by General Washington, symbolizes independence. Blue signifies allegiance and the solidity to lead a network of spies during the American Revolution, known as the Culper Spy Ring. The group operated successfully for five years without a casualty and provided critical information on British troop movements, and was led by General Washington. The placement of the compass rose surmounted by the sub-rosa (which bears his coat of arms) upon the garter is a tribute to President Washington's wisdom and shrewdness in becoming the head of the spy ring - in effect, as the Nation's first "Director of Intelligence." The sixteen stars symbolize the major agencies that comprise the current U.S. Intelligence Community. Displayed above the ring is a griffin (flying griffin) rising from the coronet, (that was substituted by President Washington for the raven); the flying griffin crest was used throughout his life. The griffin symbolizes wisdom, vengeance and strength.

Reverse: The thirteen six-pointed stars represent the stars displayed on Washington's war flag that he used while serving as the commanding general during the Revolutionary War. The circular position symbolizes the cycle of time to accomplish intelligence that has an impact on the mission. The inscription is adapted from President Washington's family motto.

Ribbon: The ribbon represents the colors of General Washington's military uniform.

It remains to be seen exactly how this award will fit in with the other senior level awards of the intelligence community, especially with respect to the National Security Medal (also a Presidential Award) and the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal. The National Security Medal was created by President Harry Truman to be awarded to Senior Intelligence personnel, who through their personal expertise made a major contributions to the winning of World War II and the Cold War. Since the end of the Cold War nearly all recent recipients have been retiring Directors of the CIA and other major intelligence agencies. There has not been any legislation terminating that award.

The National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal is currently awarded to any member or contributor to the National Intelligence Community, either civilian or military, who distinguish themselves by meritorious actions to the betterment of national security in the United States of America through sustained and selfless service of the highest order.

The National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal was, and still is, considered junior to the National Security Medal. With the establishment of the National Intelligence Awards (NIA) Program by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal was the highest decoration in the program until it superseded by the National Intelligence Cross, and the National Intelligence Medal for Valor. The National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal will now follow the George Washington Spymaster Medal, the National Intelligence Cross and the Medal of Valor in order of precedence.



Barack Obama and James R. Clapper presented the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal to James L. Jones. (October 20, 2010)

Sources:

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Photos of the medal courtesy of the US Army Institute of Heraldry

Comments and photo National Intelligence DSM presentation from Wikipedia