



THE UNDER SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR BENEFITS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420

DEC 27 2007

The Honorable Mike Thompson
Member, United States House
of Representatives
1040 Main Street, Suite 101
Napa, CA 94559

Dear Congressman Thompson:

I am responding to the inquiry you submitted to the Acting Secretary on behalf of your constituent, Mr. [REDACTED] regarding his compensation claim, as well as your questions about the review of extraordinary benefits awards by the Compensation and Pension (C&P) Service.

The San Diego VA Regional Office denied Mr. [REDACTED]'s claim for service connection for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in January 2007 and again in October 2007. The regional office provided your office a copy of a May 2007 drift rating decision that granted service connection for PTSD; however, the eventual decision of the regional office, which was promulgated in October 2007, continued the denial of Mr. [REDACTED]'s claim. His case will be transferred to the Board of Veterans' Appeals for further consideration if the regional office remains unable to grant the benefit sought on appeal.

VA laws and regulations are binding on all regional offices, the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and the C&P Service. No variances in standards exist among VA's adjudicative entities.

The C&P Service issued Fast Letter 07-19 on August 22, 2007, which provided new procedures for regional offices to follow in cases involving awards with a retroactive effective date of eight or more years or that result in a lump-sum payment of \$250,000 or more. These awards require a review by the C&P Service prior to award authorization. This policy was implemented to ensure maximum accountability and integrity in decisions involving extraordinary awards.

The C&P Service has not reviewed any decisions pertaining to Mr. [REDACTED]'s claim, including the May 2007 draft decision. It has reviewed, to date, a total of 494 regional office decisions involving extraordinary award grants. The C&P Service has concurred with 403 grants and returned 91 cases to the regional offices for corrective action.

I hope this information assists you in responding to Mr. [REDACTED].

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Daniel L. Cooper in cursive script.
Daniel L. Cooper