ORDERS and MEDALS of the REPUBLIC of SLOVENIA’S “War for Liberty, Independence and Democracy” 1991

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The Republic of Slovenia is an independent state with about 2 million people. It lies by the Adriatic Sea between Austria, Italy, Hungary and Croatia. Slovenian has its own language and the country is famous for its skiing champions at the Olympic games and its beautiful snow capped mountains.

Slovenians also fought in the American Revolutionary War and served as missionaries in the Indian Territory — like Bishop Friderig Baraga. By the end of the 19th century about 100,000 Slovenians had emigrated to the United States. Cleveland, Ohio was a popular destination and the city eventually became a “Slovenian” town. Some Slovenians became important American admirals and generals (4-star general Ferdinand Chesarek).

The first Slovenian state was Caranthania from 7th to 9th century A. D. In modern history, Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. The first independent Slovenian state in modern history was declared on 29 October 1918. In 1941 Slovenia was occupied by Germans, Italians and Hungarians. Slovenian partisans continued to fight on the side of the Allies against the Germans and Italians. These partisans saved the lives of more than a hundred American pilots who were shot down over German occupied territory during WW II. From 1945 Slovenia was one of the Federal Republics in Tito’s Yugoslavia. After Tito’s death the Serbs attempted to exert absolute domination and this was brought about the breakup of Yugoslavia.

On 25 June 1991, Slovenia declared its independence and on 26 June Belgrade sent tanks and troops to the new Slovenian border. On 27 June the war for independence began. There were about 22,300 former Yugoslavian officers and soldiers in Slovenia and they formed the core of the new Slovenian Army (named Teritorialna Obramba or T.O. which means Territorial Defense). In addition to the T.O., 10,000 Policemen and 100,000 men and women of the Civil Defense joined in the defense. The war ended on 7.

The leader of the Slovenian Army was Janez Jansa, who in 1988, was held as a political dissident in a Yugoslavian prison. During this brief war, which ended on 7 July, there were 72 major engagements. Yugoslavian losses amounted to 45 killed, 146 wounded, and 4,693 captured. In addition, and 3,090 officers and men deserted to join the Slovenian Army. The Yugoslavs also lost 31 tanks, 22 armored cars and 2 helicopters. At the same time, Slovenian loses amounted to 19 killed
and 182 wounded. Twelve foreigners were also killed, among them two Austrian journalists.

The war for independence also brought about the development of new Slovenian awards, and officers and soldiers were decorated with the following Orders and Medals:

**Honor War Badge** (Castni vojni znak) — This award was instituted by Minister of Defense Janez Jansa as the first, and highest, decoration for heroism in the war and for extreme bravery in the face of the enemy. It is equivalent to the Congressional Medal of Honor in the United States, or the Victoria Cross in Great Britain.

The Honor War Badge was first awarded on 26 October 1991 on the day the last Serbian soldiers left Slovenia. The first badges were pin-back but they were later changed to a neck ribbon and made of silver. The ribbon is white/blue/red. The reverse of each badge is named and dated. For the 1991 war there were 22 Honor War Badges issued, 8 posthumously.

**Order of General Maister** (Red generals Maistre) — The order was instituted by Minister of Defense Janez Jansa on 23 December 1991. The order is named for the famous Slovenian General and poet Rudolf Maister (1874-1934), a leader of Slovenian troops against Austria in the border wars of 1918-1919. It is the highest award for commanding officers and generals in the Slovenian Army in war or peacetime.
The order has three classes. The first class is silver and gilt. The second class is silver, and the third class is silver with a bronze wreath. The ribbon is red-white-blue. On the reverse is the name of the recipient and the year of the award. When awarded for combat heroism, The Order of General Maister is awarded with swords.

For the 1991 war there were 2 first class awards, 6 second class awards and 21 third class awards. By the end of 1993 there had been 4 first class awards, 7 second class awards, and 33 third class awards. The first orders, featured the head of General Maister facing left. In 1992 the order was made larger and the head was turned to face right.

**Medal of General Maister** (Medalja Generala Maistra) — This medal was instituted by Minister of Defense Janez Jansa on 23 December 1991.

The Medal of General Maister is awarded to officers in war or peacetime. For military action it is awarded with swords. The medal was instituted in three classes; the first class is gold, the second is silver, and the third is bronze. The ribbon is dark blue and on the reverse of the medal is engraved with the name of the recipient and the date of the award.

For the 1991 war there were 99 gold, 136 silver and 273 bronze medals awarded. By the end of 1993 there were a total of 104 gold, 142 silver and 278 bronze medals awarded. On the 1991 medals General Maister’s head facing left and the diameter of the medal was 26 mm. On the 1993 medals the head of General Maister faces right and the diameter in 31 mm.