

§ 536.40 Claims under Article 139, Uniform Code of Military Justice.

(a) *Statutory authority.* The authority for this section is Article 139, Uniform Code of Military Justice (10 U.S.C. 939) which provides for redress of damage to property willfully damaged or destroyed, or wrongfully taken, by members of the armed forces of the United States.

(b) *Purpose.* This section sets forth the standards to be applied and the procedures to be followed in the processing of claims for damage, loss or destruction of property owned by or in the lawful possession of an individual, whether civilian or military, a business, a charity, or a State or local government, where the property was wrongfully taken or willfully damaged by military members of DA. Claims cognizable under other claims statutes may be processed under this section.

(c) *Effect of disciplinary action.* Administrative action under Article 139 and this section is entirely separate and distinct from disciplinary action taken under other articles of the UCMJ or other administrative actions. Because action under Article 139 and this section requires independent findings on issues other than guilt or innocence, the mere fact that a soldier was convicted or acquitted of charges is not dispositive of a claim under Article 139.

(d) *Claims cognizable.* Claims cognizable under Article 139, UCMJ are limited to—

(1) *Claims for property willfully damaged.* Willful damage is damage which is inflicted intentionally, knowingly, and purposefully without justifiable excuse, as distinguished from damage caused inadvertently or thoughtlessly through simple or gross negligence. Damage, loss, or destruction of property caused by riotous, violent, or disorderly acts, or by acts of depredation, or through conduct showing reckless or wanton disregard of the property rights of others may be considered willful damage.

(2) *Claims for property wrongfully taken.* A wrongful taking is any unauthorized taking or withholding of property, not involving the breach of a fiduciary or contractual relationship, with the intent to temporarily or permanently deprive the owner or person

lawfully in possession of the property. Damage, loss, or destruction of property through larceny, forgery, embezzlement, fraud, misappropriation, or similar offense may be considered wrongful taking.

(e) *Claims not cognizable.* Claims not cognizable under this section and Article 139 include—

(1) Claims resulting from negligent acts.

(2) Claims for personal injury or death.

(3) Claims resulting from acts or omissions of military personnel acting within the scope of their employment.

(4) Claims resulting from the conduct of reserve component personnel who are not subject to the UCMJ at the time of the offense.

(5) Subrogated claims, including claims by insurers.

(f) *Limitations on assessments—(1) Time Limitations.* To be considered, a claim must be submitted within 90 days of the incident out of which the claim arose, unless the special court-martial convening authority (SPCMCA) acting on the claim determines that good cause has been shown for the delay.

(2) *Limitations on amount.* No soldier's pay may be assessed more than \$5,000 on a single claim without the approval of the Commander, USARCS, or designee. If the commander acting on the claim determines that an assessment against a soldier in excess of \$5,000 is meritorious, he or she will assess the pay of that soldier in the amount of \$5,000 and forward the claim to the Commander, USARCS, with his or her recommendation as to the additional amount which should be assessed.

(3) *Direct damages.* Assessments are limited to direct damages for the loss of or damage to property. Indirect, remote, or consequential damages may not be considered under this section.

(g) *Procedure.* Area claims offices and claims processing offices with approval authority are responsible for publicizing the Article 139 program and maintaining a log for Article 139 claims presented in their areas (see Personnel Claims Adjudication appendix G, Claims Manual). Area claims offices and claims processing offices with approval authority are required to monitor action taken on Article 139 claims

and ensure that time requirements are met. If assessment action on a particular claim will be unduly delayed, the office may consider the claim under 31 U.S.C. 3721 and chapter 11 of this regulation if it is otherwise cognizable under the authority. The office will counsel the claimant to repay any overpayment if the Article 139 claim is later successful (see para 11-2e).

(1) *Form of a claim and presentment.* A claim must be presented by the claimant or his or her authorized agent orally or in writing. The claim must be reduced to writing, signed, and for a definite sum in U.S. dollars within 10 days after oral presentment.

(2) *Action upon receipt of a claim.* Any officer receiving a claim will forward it within 2 working days to the SPCMCA over the soldier or soldiers against whom the claim is made. If the claim is made against soldiers under the jurisdiction of more than one such convening authority who are under the same general court-martial convening authority, the claim will be forwarded to that general court-martial convening authority, who will designate one SPCMCA to investigate and act on the claim as to all soldiers involved. If the claim is made against soldiers under the jurisdiction of more than one SPCMCA at different locations and not under the same general court-martial convening authority, the claim will be forwarded to the SPCMCA whose headquarters is closest to the situs of the incident, who will investigate and act on the claim as to all soldiers involved. If a claim is made against a member of one of the other military Services, the claim will be forwarded to the commander of the nearest major Army command (MACOM) of that Service.

(3) *Action by the SPCMCA.* Within 4 working days of receipt of a claim, the SPCMCA will appoint an investigating officer to investigate the claim, using the procedures of this section supplemented by the procedures of AR 15-6. The claims officer of a command, if he or she is a commissioned officer, may be appointed as the investigating officer.

(4) *Action by the investigating officer.* The investigating officer will provide notification to the soldier against whom the claim is made.

(i) If the soldier indicates a desire to make voluntary restitution, the investigating officer may, with the convening authority's concurrence, delay proceedings until the end of the next pay period to accomplish this. If the soldier makes payment to the claimant's full satisfaction, the claim will be dismissed.

(ii) In the absence of full restitution, the investigating officer will determine whether the claim is cognizable and meritorious under the provisions of Article 139 and this chapter and the amount to be assessed each offender. This amount will be reduced by any restitution accepted by the claimant from an offender in partial satisfaction. Within 10 working days or such time as the SPCMCA may provide, the investigating officer will make findings and recommendations and submit these to the SPCMCA. The investigating officer will also provide a copy of his or her findings and recommendations to any soldier against whom an assessment is recommended.

(iii) If the soldier is absent without leave so that he or she cannot be provided with notification, the Article 139 claim may be processed in the soldier's absence. If an assessment is approved, a copy of the claim and SPCMCA approval will be forwarded by transmittal letter to the servicing finance and accounting office (FAO) for offset input against the soldier's pay account. In the event the soldier is dropped from the rolls, the servicing FAO will forward the assessment documents to Commander, U.S. Army Finance and Accounting Center, attn: Department 40, Indianapolis, Indiana 46249.

(5) *Legal review.* After completion of the investigating officer's report, the SPCMCA will refer the claim to the area claims office or claims processing office servicing his or her command to review for legal sufficiency and advice. That office will furnish within 5 working days or such time as the SPCMCA will provide a written opinion as to—

(i) Whether the claim is cognizable under the provisions of Article 139 and this chapter.

(ii) Whether the findings and recommendations are supported by evidence.

(iii) Whether there has been substantial compliance with the procedural requirements of Article 139, this chapter, and AR 15-6.

(6) *Final action.* After considering the advice of the claims office, the SPCMCA will disapprove the claim or approve the claim in an amount equal to or less than the amount recommended by the investigating officer. The SPCMCA will notify the claimant, and any soldier subject to his or her jurisdiction, of the determination and the right to request reconsideration. The SPCMCA will then suspend action on the claim for 10 working days pending receipt of a request for reconsideration unless he or she determines that this delay will result in substantial injustice. The SPCMCA will direct the servicing finance officer for the soldier or soldiers against whom assessments are approved to withhold such amount from the soldier or soldiers up to \$5000. For any soldier not subject to the SPCMCA's jurisdiction, the SPCMCA will forward the claim to that commander who does exercise special court-martial jurisdiction over the soldier for collection action.

(7) *Assessment.* Subject to any limitations provided in appropriate regulations, the servicing finance officer will withhold the amount directed by the SPCMCA and pay it to the claimant. The SPCMCA's assessment is not subject to appeal and is conclusive on any finance officer. If the servicing finance officer finds that the required amount cannot be withheld because he or she does not have custody of the soldier's pay record or because the soldier is in a no pay due status, the servicing finance officer will promptly notify the SPCMCA of this in writing.

(8) *Post settlement action.* After action on the claim is completed, the claims office servicing the command which took final action will forward one copy of the claim together with a cover sheet and all attachments, to include information that money has or has not been withheld and paid to the claimant by the servicing finance officer, through any command claims service, to the Commander, USARCS.

(9) *Remission of indebtedness.* Title 10, United States Code, section 4837(d), which authorizes the remission and

cancellation of indebtedness of an enlisted person to the United States or its instrumentalities, is not applicable and may not be used to remit and cancel indebtedness determined as a result of action under Article 139.

(h) *Reconsideration—(1) General.* Although Article 139 does not provide for a right of appeal, either the claimant or a soldier whose pay is assessed may request the SPCMCA or a successor in command to reconsider the action. A request for reconsideration will be submitted in writing and will clearly state the factual or legal basis for the relief requested. The SPCMCA may direct that the matter be reinvestigated.

(2) *Reconsideration by the original SPCMCA.* The original SPCMCA may reconsider the action so long as he occupies that position, regardless of whether a soldier whose pay was assessed has been transferred. If the original SPCMCA determines that the action was incorrect, he or she may modify it subject to paragraph (h)(4) of this section. If a request for reconsideration is submitted more than 15 days after notification was provided, however, the SPCMCA should only modify the action on the basis of fraud, substantial new evidence, errors in calculation, or mistake of law.

(3) *Reconsideration by a successor in command.* Subject to paragraph (h)(4) of this section, a successor in command may only modify an action on the basis of fraud, substantial new evidence, errors in calculation or mistake of law apparent on the face of the record.

(4) *Legal review and action.* Prior to modifying the original action, the SPCMCA will have the claims office render a legal opinion and fully explain his or her basis for modification as part of the file. If a return of assessed pay is deemed appropriate, the SPCMCA should request the claimant to return the money, setting forth the basis for the request. There is no authority for repayment from appropriated funds.

(5) *Disposition of files.* After completing action on reconsideration, the SPCMCA will forward a copy of the reconsideration action to the Commander, USARCS, and retain one or more additional copies with the claim file.