

§ 850a. Art. 50a. Defense of lack of mental responsibility

(a) It is an affirmative defense in a trial by court-martial that, at the time of the commission of the acts constituting the offense, the accused, as a result of a severe mental disease or defect, was unable to appreciate the nature and quality or the wrongfulness of the acts. Mental disease or defect does not otherwise constitute a defense.

(b) The accused has the burden of proving the defense of lack of mental responsibility by clear and convincing evidence.

(c) Whenever lack of mental responsibility of the accused with respect to an offense is properly at issue, the military judge shall instruct the members of the court as to the defense of lack of mental responsibility under this section and charge them to find the accused—

- (1) guilty;
- (2) not guilty; or
- (3) not guilty only by reason of lack of mental responsibility.

(d) Subsection (c) does not apply to a court-martial composed of a military judge only. In the case of a court-martial composed of a military judge only, whenever lack of mental responsibility of the accused with respect to an offense is properly at issue, the military judge shall find the accused—

- (1) guilty;
- (2) not guilty; or
- (3) not guilty only by reason of lack of mental responsibility.

(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 852 of this title (article 52), the accused shall be found not guilty only by reason of lack of mental responsibility if—

- (1) a majority of the members of the court-martial present at the time the vote is taken determines that the defense of lack of mental responsibility has been established; or
- (2) in the case of a court-martial composed of a military judge only, the military judge determines that the defense of lack of mental responsibility has been established.

(Added Pub. L. 99-661, div. A, title VIII, §802(a)(1), Nov. 14, 1986, 100 Stat. 3905; Pub. L. 114-328, div. E, title LVII, §5233, Dec. 23, 2016, 130 Stat. 2915.)

AMENDMENTS

2016—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 114-328, in introductory provisions, struck out “, or the president of a court-martial without a military judge,” after “the military judge”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2016 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 114-328 effective on Jan. 1, 2019, as designated by the President, with implementing regulations and provisions relating to applicability to various situations, see section 5542 of Pub. L. 114-328 and Ex. Ord. No. 13825, set out as notes under section 801 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 99-661, div. A, title VIII, §802(b), Nov. 14, 1986, 100 Stat. 3906, provided that: “Section 850a of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), shall apply only to offenses committed on or after the date of the enactment of this Act [Nov. 14, 1986].”

§ 851. Art. 51. Voting and rulings

(a) Voting by members of a general or special court-martial on the findings and on the sentence shall be by secret written ballot. The junior member of the court shall count the votes. The count shall be checked by the president, who shall forthwith announce the result of the ballot to the members of the court.

(b) The military judge shall rule upon all questions of law and all interlocutory questions arising during the proceedings. Any such ruling made by the military judge upon any question of law or any interlocutory question other than the factual issue of mental responsibility of the accused is final and constitutes the ruling of the court, except that the military judge may change a ruling at any time during trial.

(c) Before a vote is taken on the findings, the military judge shall, in the presence of the accused and counsel, instruct the members of the court as to the elements of the offense and charge them—

- (1) that the accused must be presumed to be innocent until his guilt is established by legal and competent evidence beyond reasonable doubt;
- (2) that in the case being considered, if there is a reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the accused, the doubt must be resolved in favor of the accused and he must be acquitted;
- (3) that, if there is a reasonable doubt as to the degree of guilt, the finding must be in a lower degree as to which there is no reasonable doubt; and
- (4) that the burden of proof to establish the guilt of the accused beyond reasonable doubt is upon the United States.

(d) Subsections (a), (b), and (c) do not apply to a court-martial composed of a military judge only. The military judge of such a court-martial shall determine all questions of law and fact arising during the proceedings and, if the accused is convicted, adjudge an appropriate sentence. The military judge of such a court-martial shall make a general finding and shall in addition on request find the facts specially. If an opinion or memorandum of decision is filed, it will be sufficient if the findings of fact appear therein.

(Aug. 10, 1956, ch. 1041, 70A Stat. 54; Pub. L. 90-632, §2(21), Oct. 24, 1968, 82 Stat. 1340; Pub. L. 114-328, div. E, title LVII, §5234, Dec. 23, 2016, 130 Stat. 2915.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

<i>Revised section</i>	<i>Source (U.S. Code)</i>	<i>Source (Statutes at Large)</i>
851(a)	50:626(a).	May 5, 1950, ch. 169, §1 (Art. 51), 64 Stat. 124.
851(b)	50:626(b).	
851(c)	50:626(c).	

In subsection (a), the words “in each case” are omitted as surplusage.

In subsection (b), the word “is” is substituted for the words “shall be” in the second sentence. The word “constitutes” is substituted for the words “shall constitute”. The word “However,” is substituted for the word “but”. The word “his” is substituted for the words “any such”. The words “the ruling is” are substituted for the words “such ruling be”. The words “voice vote” are substituted for the words “vote * * * viva voce”.

In subsection (c), the word “must” is substituted for the word “shall” in clause (2), since a condition is prescribed, not a command. The words “United States” are substituted for the word “Government”.

AMENDMENTS

2016—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 114-328, §5234(1), struck out “, and by members of a court-martial without a military judge upon questions of challenge,” after “on the sentence”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 114-328, §5234(2), struck out “and, except for questions of challenge, the president of a court-martial without a military judge” after “The military judge” and substituted “is final and constitutes the ruling of the court, except that the military judge may change a ruling at any time during trial.” for “, or by the president of a court-martial without a military judge upon any question of law other than a motion for a finding of not guilty, is final and constitutes the ruling of the court. However, the military judge or the president of a court-martial without a military judge may change his ruling at any time during trial. Unless the ruling is final, if any member objects thereto, the court shall be cleared and closed and the question decided by a voice vote as provided in section 852 of this title (article 52), beginning with the junior in rank.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 114-328, §5234(3), struck out “or the president of a court-martial without a military judge” after “the military judge” in introductory provisions.

1968—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 90-632, §2(21)(A), limited the balloting on the question of challenges to courts-martial without military judges.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 90-632, §2(21)(B), substituted “military judge” for “law officer” and inserted reference to the military judge’s ruling upon challenges for cause when a military judge is part of a court-martial and reference to questions of law.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 90-632, §2(21)(C), substituted “military judge” for “law officer” and made minor changes in phraseology eliminating the division between general and special court-martials.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 90-632, §2(21)(D), added subsec. (d).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2016 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 114-328 effective on Jan. 1, 2019, as designated by the President, with implementing regulations and provisions relating to applicability to various situations, see section 5542 of Pub. L. 114-328 and Ex. Ord. No. 13825, set out as notes under section 801 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1968 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 90-632 effective first day of tenth month following October 1968, see section 4 of Pub. L. 90-632, set out as a note under section 801 of this title.

§ 852. Art. 52. Votes required for conviction, sentencing, and other matters

(a) IN GENERAL.—No person may be convicted of an offense in a general or special court-martial, other than—

(1) after a plea of guilty under section 845(b) of this title (article 45(b));

(2) by a military judge in a court-martial with a military judge alone, under section 816 of this title (article 16); or

(3) in a court-martial with members under section 816 of this title (article 16), by the concurrence of at least three-fourths of the members present when the vote is taken.

(b) LEVEL OF CONCURRENCE REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (a) and in paragraph (2), all matters to

be decided by members of a general or special court-martial shall be determined by a majority vote, but a reconsideration of a finding of guilty or reconsideration of a sentence, with a view toward decreasing the sentence, may be made by any lesser vote which indicates that the reconsideration is not opposed by the number of votes required for that finding or sentence.

(2) SENTENCING.—A sentence of death requires (A) a unanimous finding of guilty of an offense in this chapter expressly made punishable by death and (B) a unanimous determination by the members that the sentence for that offense shall include death. All other sentences imposed by members shall be determined by the concurrence of at least three-fourths of the members present when the vote is taken.

(Aug. 10, 1956, ch. 1041, 70A Stat. 55; Pub. L. 90-632, §2(22), Oct. 24, 1968, 82 Stat. 1340; Pub. L. 114-328, div. E, title LVII, §5235, Dec. 23, 2016, 130 Stat. 2916.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised section	Source (U.S. Code)	Source (Statutes at Large)
852(a)	50:627(a).	May 5, 1950, ch. 169, §1
852(b)	50:627(b).	(Art. 52), 64 Stat. 125.
852(c)	50:627(c).	

In subsections (a) and (b), the word “may” is substituted for the word “shall”.

In subsection (b)(2), the words “for more than” are substituted for the words “in excess of”.

In subsection (c), the word “disqualifies” is substituted for the words “shall disqualify”. The word “is” is substituted for the words “shall be” in the last two sentences.

AMENDMENTS

2016—Pub. L. 114-328 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section consisted of subsecs. (a) to (c) relating to number of votes required for conviction of an offense for which the death penalty is mandatory, sentences, and all other questions, respectively.

1968—Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 90-632, §2(22)(A), inserted reference to the exception provided in section 845(b) of this title (article 45(b)).

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 90-632, §2(22)(B), provided that a determination to reconsider a finding of guilty or to reconsider a sentence, with a view toward decreasing it, may be made by a vote of less than a majority vote which indicates that the reconsideration is not opposed by the number of votes required for that finding or sentence.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2016 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 114-328 effective on Jan. 1, 2019, as designated by the President, with implementing regulations and provisions relating to applicability to various situations, see section 5542 of Pub. L. 114-328 and Ex. Ord. No. 13825, set out as notes under section 801 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1968 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 90-632 effective first day of tenth month following October 1968, see section 4 of Pub. L. 90-632, set out as a note under section 801 of this title.

§ 853. Art. 53. Findings and sentencing

(a) ANNOUNCEMENT.—A court-martial shall announce its findings and sentence to the parties as soon as determined.