

National Defence Medal Summary

The Sovereign

The Sovereign is the fount of all honours in the United Kingdom and while the honours system operates through government it is not at the disposal of the government of the day which cannot, by its own decision, alter, or abolish it. The Sovereign has already approved an identical award for the Australians, and a New Zealand equivalent is imminent. An award can only be considered official with The Queens approval.

Do our Service personnel deserve official recognition?

Almost everyone we speak to is startled to learn that in Great Britain there is no official recognition for military service. A recent BBC Survey reported 91% of the UK population though being a member of HH Armed Forces was a worthwhile occupation.

Military Covenant

Under the Military Covenant, British soldiers must always get fair treatment, be valued and respected as individuals, and be sustained and rewarded by terms of service that match the personal sacrifices that they make. The proposed National Defence Medal would support the terms of the Covenant in helping to demonstrate personal endeavour is valued by their Country.

Exposing the Arguments

The medal would be divisive. However all medals could be called divisive. Clear qualification criteria using an established successful model will clearly minimise the likelihood.

Models of Success

Australian Defence Medal (ADM) there are so many to choose from.

Administration

Another argument that has been put forward is that the award would somehow be difficult to administer. That is a famous argument because we often hear it from the MoD. However, in the First World War, we had 965,703 people killed and 2,272,999 wounded in four years, as well as all the survivors and every single one received some type of medal. A similar situation occurred after the Second World War. There would be far fewer administrative difficulties these days.

Cost

The Mod have stated on record that cost has never been an issue when instigating a new medal. However if it was, then our research that most veterans would willingly make a contribution if any profit was put towards care for veterans or service charities.

Tradition and Morale

It is important, and most service personnel would, we think, take the view that the awards are not just for them, but for their families as well. They can be passed down through families as a way of remembering the service that was given. It is an example to many especially today that our freedom is worth preserving and we can show and use the NDM as a vehicle to raise awareness throughout the Nation. Medals are passed on through generations and are a source of pride and belonging.

Political Pressure

Reticence about putting pressure on politicians at the Ministry of Defence is just not good enough. The men and women we are talking about are prepared to go to war on the command of politicians, and many currently are, with many more supporting those operations either directly or indirectly. It is time to grasp the nettle.

Long Service Anomaly

The Government states that, with the exception of long service awards, it has never been Government policy to consider service in the Armed Forces the sole justification for the institution of a medal. Long service rules are woefully inconsistent, and do not apply to all members of HM forces.

What Is The Policy?

Medals are not awarded as a record of service, as is the case in some countries. The British military medal system is held in the highest regard around the world.

Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have all opted out of the Imperial system, why would they opt out if they supported this view.

Badges

Procured by various Government departments for daily wear (unit price 80p). They do not need approval by The Queen as they are not classed as an official award. Adequate first step.

Time to Change

If you are familiar with the incredible story of Harry Patch, 'The last fighting Tommy' from the First World War, you will know he immediately evokes respect and admiration. But have you also noticed that he wears his unofficial commemorative medals with pride, both his 'National Service Medal' and the 'Hors de Combat' to recognise the wounds he sustained in the line of duty. No such recognition has been forthcoming from any British Government or the MoD.

National Service - 75% Support Honour

An article in Soldier magazine ('Chocolate box decorations') on veterans' anger at the increased appearance of unofficial medals and souvenirs on parades and at reunions, resulted in a flood of letters and emails to the magazine. Although there was little sympathy with those who wore insignia they were not entitled to, **more than 75% of those who contacted them believed the Government should recognise time spent in military uniform**, and in particular those who completed National Service. This was above and beyond the Veteran's Badge.

The HD Committee

The matter of a National Defence Medal may have been discussed at the MoD, but at the time of writing this paper; we have no record of a case being put to the HD Committee. There is not mechanism available for the public to put a cogent case forward directly.

HM Armed Forces Veteran's Badge – HMAFVB

The authority for the instigation of the HMAFVB was the, then Minister for Veterans, Ivor Caplin MP. The original concept behind this Ministry of Defence initiative was for it to be made available to those Second World War veterans who applied for the Heroes Return scheme in 2004/5, which formed part of the celebrations for 60th Anniversary of the events that led to the end of the Second World War. The scheme has gradually widened to what we have today. Alternatives have never been explored.

Armed Forces Recognition For The Fallen

The UK finally followed the example of Commonwealth partners such as New Zealand when the 'Official' award of the Elizabeth Cross was instigated for the families of the fallen.

This demonstrates that we do follow the commonwealth examples, and new awards can be approved with the right will determination. It took a long time to, in Sir Jock Stirrup's words, **"receive some tangible evidence of the Nation's gratitude"**.

Previous Defence Medal

Here is a clear example of the type of medal we are seeking, being widely issued to British military and civilian personnel engaged in the defence of the realm. At the end of World War Two a General Defence Service Medal was issued to all ranks of the Armed Forces and also the Police, Fire Service and Ambulance Service. Clearly and unequivocally a universally awarded service medal by its actual title and therefore a valid precedent for the NDM.

Case Studies, Include (By no means an exhaustive list)

- Post-Armistice Korea – 1953 to 1957
- Cyprus – 1954 – 1959 – Those who didn't achieve 120 days though exceeded the normal 30 days
- Irish Republicanism - The War Outside Of The Provenance
- Active Service Post World War Two – Include all occupied territories, including Europe and Japan. Very arduous 'peacekeeping'.
- Berlin Airlift, British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) which was active service to 1955
- The Cold War era,
- Dates of conflicts outside of qualification ie Malaya, Suez (incidentally that GSM was 50 years late)
- Accumulated operational service that is not concurrent ie Air crews flying in and out of theatre, Gulf war 1
- South Atlantic, in theatre but fell short of qualification even though some received medal 3000 miles from the action.
- Mine clearance, outside of operational medal dates (many examples Falklands being one)
- Global War on Terror – Targeted by the IRA but now Muslim extremists.
- Normal Service Life, is there such a thing? Count the number of deaths in training.
- Other tours, 6 month unaccompanied tours such as Falklands and Belize.
- Nuclear and Chemical Warfare Testing Victims (Commonwealth have rewarded their veterans)

A View From A Recognised Expert In The Field –

There is a case for something on the lines of the USA Defence Service Medal being given to all, at times when the Armed Forces are engaged in operations. This would probably include almost every day since 1945 and would recognise the added work due to operations throughout the entire organisation. If this had been done earlier, it might have lessened the popularity of, and need for, many of the "Bling" medals." **By Lt Col Ashley Tinson, Medal News, Medal advisor to the RBL.**

The Answer; Defence Service Medal

The NDM proposal is structured to replicate the ADM (Australian Defence Medal) which our Queen has already approved. This approach ensures an eventual submission to HM would not cause any controversy and would, I feel, meet with 100% approval.

We would relish the opportunity to make the case to whomever I need to, to get this process moving. We hear there is to be a new medal instigated for the Queens Diamond Jubilee, and doubt there will be much opposition, or the number of barriers will be rolled out in such a fashion that we have endured so far in our campaign. This proves that there must be a mechanism for us to put our case forward in an open and transparent way. That is all we seek but what we have so far been denied.